

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN

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## Views and Opinions.

### War and Peace.

The manner in which the papers skip from articles on the nearness of war to those on the early prospects of an agreement between the leading powers which shall prevent war is evidence of the uncertainty of the general situation and of the small chance of any lasting arrangements being made that shall secure peace. Only the other week one of the newspapers printed the plans which this country has decided on when war breaks out, and at the same time some of our die-hards of the navy and other branches of the fighting services are clamouring for more ships and for a greater fighting air force. The League of Nations, so long and so far as it strives to maintain the *status quo*, certainly cannot prevent war, and even though it may be able to lay down certain rules as to the size of tanks, or the size of armies and navies, these things will no more prevent war than war was prevented in the days when tanks, and poison gas, and aircraft were unknown.

Of course we shall be told, if and when war comes, that we did not want war, and other peoples with equal truth will say that they did not want war. It may, indeed, be taken that none but an irresponsible handful ever does want war—if it is possible to get what is wanted without it. I feel quite certain that fire-eating generals and bloodthirsty admirals would much more enjoy strutting about in full-war paint, with elaborate reviews and sham battles than actual warfare. It is frustrated ambitions, unsatisfied desires and the like, plus the other fellow's stubbornness, that are the immediate causes of war. And we are not yet civilized enough to realize that in present circumstances war can never give us what we desire, whatever it might have done in the good old piratical days of a couple of centuries—or less—ago.

### Words and War.

In several of his books Sir Norman Angell has dwelt upon the power of phrases in misleading the general mind, where the issue of war or peace is con-

cerned. I was reminded of some things he has said when reading the following from that usually well-informed publicist, Mr. Wickham Steed. He said:—

As things stand we are within measurable distance of war. If war comes ought we to fight? I would fight, and would encourage others to fight if the existence of my country were threatened. I would fight, and would encourage others to fight, if our social and political freedom were imperilled by any sort of tyrannical system—Fascist, Bolshevist, Hitlerite or other. A man who will not risk his own life for what he holds dear, leaves others to defend his birth-right. A conscientious objector may be a moral hero; yet if he elects to sever himself from his fellow citizens when the life of the community is at stake, he cannot claim the rights and privileges that are inherent in responsible membership of the community. There are moments when duty to others over-rides individual scruples.

Mr. Steed himself has spoken of the advantages of clarity of thought when dealing with international issues, but the above passage strikes one as a very excellent example of "How not to do it." Nearly every sentence could be interpreted for or against any war that one cared to select. During the last war, the sentiments expressed might have been cheered in Berlin, London or Paris, by those who were opposed to the war and by those who supported it. It is a string of generalities which men on each side of a disputed question might utter, and they would find therein full justification for going to war with each other. It leaves us where we began, having put into well-sounding phrases sentiments which all sides can heartily endorse. Their vagueness is worthy of the Prime Minister himself.

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### Agreeing with Both Sides.

As a slight contribution to a clearing of the war-mind a criticism of Mr. Steed may be worth while. One of the plainest facts in modern history is that in almost every war each country's honour and its interests are at stake. But as each country insists on being the ultimate authority as to what are its true interests and what does affect its honour, that kind of rule does not carry us far. Clearly, if when a nation's existence and honour are at stake it is justified in going to war, and if each nation has an unquestionable right to decide when its existence and its honour are at stake, then every war is right, and both parties in the war are justified. Neither is there any doubt that a man *ought* to fight on behalf of what he holds dear, and it is equally clear that if he does not do so, he leaves the fighting to be done by others. Again there is complete agreement between all parties, since each is fighting for what he holds dear. But whether what one holds dear is what one *ought* to hold dear, or whether it is worth fighting for, are quite distinct and quite different questions. It almost looks as though Mr. Steed is writing a "Word-

Book" for use in times of war, rather than saying anything that will help to create a type of mind that will make war improbable.

Again, with regard to conscientious objectors. This is a very elusive term, since a man may have conscientious objection to almost anything—I see that some of Mr. Wickham Steed's brother Christians have a conscientious objection to taking a penny a pint off beer, although they have no objection to their own taxes being reduced by the amount of tax paid by the beer-drinkers. The really important point here seems to be to recognize the value of a man having a genuine opinion about anything whether we agree with it or not. In the last war our own Government was both illogical and dishonest when dealing with the conscientious objector. As I said when the Act was passed, a conscientious objection to military service should only be tolerated so long as the army is a voluntary one. But where conscription is enforced on the plea that the country is in danger, it is illogical to conscript all, and then release some who say they do not agree with the war. But having done so it is dishonest to punish men who had availed themselves of their legal right to stand aloof from war. One might as reasonably make it legal for a man to refuse taxes because he has conscientious objection to paying them, and then imprison him or disfranchise him for non-payment.

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#### Man and Society.

Of course a man can never stand aloof from his country when it is at war. If the country is bettered by it he must share the gain, and if it is made worse he must share the loss. If vaccination lessens the danger of small-pox those who do not believe in vaccination benefit from the general freedom from small-pox, and if the general health is made worse by vaccination then we must all to some extent suffer. The dilemma created by an individual or a minority placing itself in opposition to a majority fronts every social unit on almost every question. War is only a special illustration of a general situation. The thing that emerges here is the necessity for carefully informed opinions on every subject on which the individual is called upon to express a judgment. The expression "If he elects to sever himself from his fellow citizens when the life of the community is at stake," etc., darkens counsel, mixes up several independent questions, and from one point of view is quite indefensible. How can a man sever himself from the community to which he belongs? Of course, if an Englishman, he can settle in America, or elsewhere, but that is only exchanging one community for another, and the problem he has left behind him in England meets him again in the United States or in whatever other community he finds himself.

All that can be meant by severing oneself from one's fellows is to disagree with the opinions of the majority on a particular question. And that, again, is not peculiar to war, it arises in connexion with all kinds of questions. I am severing myself—I and others, for no one is ever alone—from my fellow-citizens when I disagree with them on tariffs or any other question on which there is a difference of opinion. What happens in such cases is that a number of men and women differ from the views held by other men and women on a matter of immediate policy. To say that the instance of separation occurs only when "the life of the community is at stake," begs the whole question. To the medieval Christian the toleration of heresy involved the life of the Community. In Russia the life of the community is threatened by the preaching of anti-Communism, in

Germany by the toleration of Communism. If a number of people object to war in a special, or general sense, it is obviously because they do not believe that the life of the community is at stake, but believe that greater injury will be done by war. To say to the objector to a particular war that he pays no regard to the "life of the community" is an obvious and very childish begging of the question at issue. If war is to be ended, and if the ending of war is even largely dependent upon the prevalence of sound ideas as to the nature and consequences of war, we must have some clearer ideas than Mr. Wickham Steed has provided.

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#### A Need for Clarity.

The confusion involved in encouraging a man to "risk his own life when what he holds dear" is in danger, and in threatening him with a loss of social privilege and status if he differs from the rest of the community, and in the same breath speaking of a "responsible membership" of society, is almost hopeless. Had the men who opposed, say, the opium war with China, less sense of responsibility than those who believed in forcing opium upon the Chinese for the benefit of the Indian traders? Had John Wesley a weak sense of social responsibility when he separated himself from the other members of the Church of England? Was Bradlaugh lacking in a sense of responsibility when he severed himself from the overwhelming majority of his fellow countrymen by his championship of Atheism and Republicanism? Mr. Wickham Steed ought, as a Nonconformist Christian to be able to supply scores of illustrations to the same end.

The truth is that "responsible membership of the community" very often demands that a man shall very decisively sever himself from the actions or the opinions of the rest of the community. And this, not because he has a weaker sense of social responsibility, but because his sense of responsibility is stronger and keener than that of the majority of his fellows. It is when a man will not do this, when he is afraid to oppose "public opinion," when he joins in what is proposed because the vast majority support it, that he is declining to fight for what he holds dear and is leaving to others the defence of his birthright. It is the man who does exactly what Mr. Steed appears to think he should not do, whose sense of social responsibility is expressed by acting in opposition to the rest of the community, who is showing a genuine sense of "responsible membership," not the man who falls in with the crowd whether its humour be for war or peace.

The unfortunate thing is that comparatively few people have a lively and intelligent sense of social responsibility. They praise or curse with the crowd, support or denounce with the crowd, cheer with equal enthusiasm a cinema star and the King, and would flock in equal numbers to witness a coronation or a public execution. It is a greater sense of individual responsibility combined with a greater courage in defying the opinion of a majority that evince the highest type of character, whether the opinion formed be right or wrong.

I agree with Mr. Wickham Steed that the way to end war, and the way to end many other evils, is to form sound opinions on the problems that are before us. But I am afraid he will need to clarify his own thought, and to shun question-begging epithets, as his ancestors would have shunned the devil, if he is to act as a reliable guide either through the agency of the B.B.C. or of the press.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Cock-Eyed Criticism.

"Though few,  
We hold a promise for the race  
That was not at our rising."

George Meredith.

ALL Freethought lecturers have met the oily individual who asks, "Wher's yer orspitals?" Scarcely less insistent is the loud-voiced man, who wants to know whether the Freethought Party is to be identified with Bloating Capitalism? Or the suede-gloved person, newly escaped from some church, who wishes a Bodega or a Cafeteria to be attached to all meetings, preferably a Bodega and is sure that if a dance-hall, or boxing-booth were associated with Secularism the cause (and, perhaps, himself) would benefit.

Questions like these may be used as red herrings across the scent, but all of them are, what used to be called, "works of supererogation." They have nothing to do with Freethought, and the critics have only betrayed their own innocence of the ideals aimed at by the National Secular Society. It may be well to mention that its objects are 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.

This is a lengthy and ambitious programme for any single organization, even if supported by large resources, which the National Secular Society does not possess. Freethought is a poor, struggling cause; its members are comparatively few and scattered; and it has no wealthy endowments to meet the cost of national propaganda. Yet, the Society has kept the flag flying for over sixty years, and has managed to relieve its necessitous members. The Benevolent Fund has, during its existence, been well supported, and is, probably, the only such fund which is administered without a single farthing of expense. Until a few years back it was not possible to bequeath money for Freethought purposes with any sure prospect of the trust being carried into effect, as it was always in the power of the next-of-kin to invalidate the legacy on the ground that it was illegal. The famous Bowman Case altered all this, but Freethought was robbed of thousands of pounds before this memorable legal victory.

During the Society's existence two Presidents, Bradlaugh and Foote, died of sheer overwork and anxiety inseparable from such an onerous office. How Mr. Cohen escapes this fate is a miracle more marvellous than any mentioned in the Christian Bible. Despite the undeniable fact that the Freethinkers have compelled the clergy to refrain from thrusting their most repulsive dogmas on the innocent public, the fight between Freethought and Superstition is by no means over. We have not yet succeeded in eliminating the clergy from our national councils, nor from our schools. The Church of England is still the State form of religion. There are not wanting signs that this State-Church clergy and Nonconformists may yet combine their efforts against their common enemy, and a recrudescence of superstition may yet cause us need for greater vigilance and activity in the near future. The Brighter Sunday question is a case in point, for Church and Chapel combine against all who wish to put the "sun" into Sunday, and make life better worth living for the working class.

Thanks to the courage and devotion of Freethought leaders, heterodoxy is no longer the disgrace it was once to the ordinary citizen. Half a century's hard

and unremitting work has added familiarity to Secularist advocacy, placed its advocates on a strong platform, organized its forces, and justified its rights to equal citizenship. Through the religious prejudices of our time a real breach has been made large enough for the heretic to pass without danger to his life or his person. In many other directions our lives have been made easier and more civilized.

If Secularists do their own thinking in religious matters, they also do it in everything else. Spiritual and temporal authority are brought under the same rules, and they must justify themselves. Freethinkers are thus social reformers, and they are almost to a man and woman on the side of freedom, justice, and progress. To make the world a fit place for Democracy, no audacity contributes that is not in the first place intellectual. Man's greatest need is boldly honest minds, not big business bosses.

As for imitating the so-called "social activities" of the Christians, people should recognize that whilst charity is good in its way, what the world wants is justice and not doles and soup-kitchens. If the world were run on fair and reasonable lines, there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist. Christian charity is largely a bribe to attract people into churches and chapels. In the Far East astute missionaries bribe the natives with medical dispensaries, and at home the clergy use the lure of Sunday-school "treats," excursions, children's nurseries, musical services, and other attractions.

The social activity of Christians is not always what it seems. Stephen Girard, the American Freethinker, at his death left substantial bequests to charities, the principal being a munificent endowment of an orphanage. By express provision in his will, no ecclesiastic, or minister of religion, was to hold any connexion whatever with the college, or even to be admitted as a visitor, but the educational staff was required to instruct the pupils in secular morality, and leave them to adopt their own opinions. This will has been most shamefully perverted, for the officials are all Christians, and in order to keep within the letter of the law, only laymen are so employed. To-day the Girard Orphanage is pointed to as proof of Christian philanthropy, whereas it is an example of pious chicanery, like the perversion of the public schools of England, which were originally intended for poor people's children.

Freethought is not a religion, nor a substitute for superstition. It is not concerned chiefly with social reform as such, but it is actuated by the pure love of truth, and is justified in bending its whole energies to the destruction of delusions, ecclesiastic and supernaturalistic. Its mission is to free mankind from ancient ignorance, and in so doing it is rendering a service to the human race. Human nature does not need a supernatural religion, does not need an other-world superstition. It needs to be freed from the shackles of the priests. Although no ideal perfection may ever be reached, men and women will be happier for having escaped the control of the clerical caste, who at present absorb millions of money which might be devoted to worthy objects. For this so-called sacred caste is but a savage survival, and should have no place in a civilized country.

MIMNERMUS.

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Sir, though I would persuade, I'll not constrain :  
Each man's opinion freely is his own  
Concerning anything, or any body.

Philip Massinger (1583-1645).

## The Adultery Test in Ancient Israel.

IN various regions of the globe, in India, and especially in Africa, it is still the practice to submit serious accusations, particularly those relating to wizardry and witchcraft to the test of poison. When the drug proves fatal this is regarded as a certain evidence of guilt. But the turbulent multitude which assembles to witness the trial is usually too impatient to await its natural termination, and should the suspected criminal fail to vomit the poison in approved fashion he is torn to pieces with passionate fury. Such judicial murders were common in Africa in savage communities before the establishment of European authority, but have since been driven to the recesses of the Dark Continent.

Although traces of other forms of the ordeal have been detected in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the sacred lot associated with Urim and Thummim provides a puzzling example, the ordeal of the Bitter Water, or Jealousy test, is the sole survival from a more primitive past retained in the Priestly Code. According to theory, all modes of ordeal were appealed to for the purpose of obtaining the direct judgment of the deity, and this was the meaning of the Wager of Battle and similar observances which survived in Europe right down to modern times.

Under the old Jewish dispensation, the ordeal was admissible when the husband, suspecting his spouse's chastity, was precluded from obtaining witnesses for customary process of law, or for any other positive proof of her marital infidelity. The ordeal is set forth with great redundancy of detail in *Numbers* v. 11-28, where it is said that the suspected woman was conducted by her partner to the priest together with an offering of common barley meal with no intermingling of frankincense or oil. This oblation is described as "a meal offering of jealousy, a meal offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. And the priest shall bring her (the woman) near and set her before the Lord; and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water; and the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and let the hair of the woman's head go loose, and put the meal offering of memorial into her hands . . . and the priest shall have in his hand the water of bitterness that causeth the curse: and the priest shall cause her to swear, and shall say unto the woman, If no man hath lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness . . . be thou free from this water of bitterness which causeth this curse: but if thou hast gone aside . . . and if thou be defiled and some man have lain with thee besides thine husband: then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to fall away, and thy belly to swell; and this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels and make thy belly to swell and thy thigh to fall away and the woman shall say, Amen, Amen."

According to the account in *Numbers*, the priest then inscribes these curses in a book, and afterwards blots them out in the bitter water. The woman then drinks the water of bitterness, and the priest takes the meal-offering of jealousy from the woman's hand and waves it before the Jewish God. Later the priest places it upon the altar where part of it is burnt, and then the woman is made to imbibe the bitter water. If she be guilty of adultery her belly begins to swell and her thighs to decay and she remains evermore a

curse among her people. But should the test vindicate her character, she becomes free, and may bear offspring to the glory of her race.

The redundant nature of the narrative, as it has come down to us, suggests that it represents a clumsy compilation from at least two distinct, if closely related, versions of the sacerdotal procedure customary in adultery trials. This was the considered opinion of Professor Slade, and his conclusion is fully endorsed by several other eminent scholars. A careful reading of *Numbers* v. 11 to 28 debars any other view.

As we have seen, the ordeal of jealousy mainly consisted in the drinking of a specially prepared potion. When the accused woman was innocent, the bitter beverage proved innocuous, but if, on the contrary, she was guilty, the water injured her thigh and belly, the special organs of the body involved in her unfaithfulness. The enchanted water was provided from the holy temple laver, and was blended with dust swept from the floor of the tabernacle. Into this liquid the written text of the curse was dissolved. The dust and the water were sacred or *taboo*, and therefore full of danger to the transgressor.

It is suggestive that a form of trial in cases of suspected adultery survives in Sierra Leone, which reminds one of that of ancient Israel. There, the negro women demonstrate their matrimonial integrity by imbibing red water, much as in old Jewry the wives vindicated their honour by swallowing bitter water and invoking curses on themselves if they swore falsely during their trial. "So like is human nature or human folly," comments Frazer, "all the world over."

In his *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*, Sir James Frazer suggests that, "The use of the poison ordeal seems based on a theory that the poison is a personal and intelligent being who can detect and punish crime in the person of the criminal." This is, apparently, a part explanation, as it is obviously assumed in the prayers addressed to the poisonous substances in India and in some African communities. The superstitious belief in the intelligent nature of the poison, or the spirit that inhabits it, is clearly exhibited in several ceremonies associated with the preparation of the deadly drugs. Superhuman knowledge is also ascribed to these substances, for this is plainly implied by the widespread belief that "when the drug does not kill the drinker, it confers on him the power of divination, in virtue of which he is able to detect and expose the guilty witch or wizard."

Whether the water employed in the Jewish ordeal was charged with poison, or whether its impurities were merely those contained in the tabernacle dirt is uncertain. The magical influences of the written charm seemingly resided in the sacredness imparted to it when the inscribed curse was washed into the liquid. The belief that written charms act favourably or unfavourably on the person who drinks the water into which they have been dissolved was, and still is, a far-flung delusion.

Again, in Egypt a popular device for preventing sickness or other ailments is to transcribe certain passages from the Moslem Bible on the interior of a cup or bowl, fill the vessel with water, wash the words into it, and then drink it as medicine. This is certain to serve as a preventive, for the inspired words from the Koran which have entered the water have made it a potent charm. Numerous other examples of charm-cures occur in anthropological literature. Naturally, the ancient Hebrews in their then lowly culture participated in the misconceptions and misunderstandings of their time and state.

T. F. PALMER.

## Masterpieces of Freethought.

### XIV.

#### THE BIBLE AND ITS EVIDENCES.

By ROBERT COOPER.

#### II.

THERE seems to be an idea that because a Freethought book on the Bible quotes out-of-date Christian authorities, it itself is out-of-date and should no longer be relied upon as presenting our case at its best. I confess sharing that opinion till I carefully read Cooper's work. I think now a good case can be made against the assumption.

First of all, what can be the nature of the evidence in favour of the Bible? Reason, logic, truth, history, philosophy, science—or just simple faith? During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, hundreds of books were written in defence of the Bible, some extremely good and some supremely silly. Such men as Lardner, Jeremiah Jones, Westcott, Lightfoot, Horne, Tregellas, Angus and many others here in England—abroad there were many equally famous—were scholars and sincere believers, and they set about their task with every weapon they could find. Their works are almost forgotten, except to specialists, but it can safely be said that everything possible in defence of the authenticity and credibility of the Bible was said by them and nothing whatever has been added by the most modern of Fundamentalists to make that defence less pregnable. In what way could the Bible be better defended than it was by the older apologists?

Desperate efforts have been made and are being made by excavators in the so-called Holy lands to prove how thoroughly historical Bible events are, but so far not a scrap of evidence has been produced from excavations to prove that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua or indeed any of the Old Testament worthies ever lived (except some of the Kings of Israel and Judah), and I think I am right in saying no excavation has brought to light anything whatever about Saul, David or Solomon. The modern method of defending the Bible by throwing overboard everything the writer objects to, as crude, objectionable or impossible, explaining other things as allegorical or symbolical, and accepting only those things which are in harmony with modern science and thought, is no defence whatever, but a complete surrender to the Freethought position. If the Bible is God's Word and Divine, it must be completely true, and no defence can vindicate it except a defence of the Scriptures as God's Holy Book.

The defenders of the Bible who are quoted by Cooper served two purposes. He showed how often even the most orthodox made fatal admissions against the Bible's authenticity and credibility, and to what shifts they were put in defending impossible positions. *The Bible and Its Evidences* is full of these quotations from many writers, and I know of no other work which has so carefully collected them as model apologetics, and which could provide us with so much relevant ammunition.

Cooper faces all the apologists logically and relentlessly; and if anyone were to compare his scathing and searching criticisms and analysis with the works of a large number of our modernists, they would find he anticipated their conclusions eighty years ago. Point by point, he patiently examines all the evidence that was brought by his religious contemporaries in favour of the Old and New Testament's

genuineness, of miracles and prophecy, and I have often felt amazed not merely at his orderliness, but at his almost encyclopedic knowledge. He faces the whole of the heavy artillery of the enemy, as well as the lighter and keener attack on the "infidel" positions, with equal confidence. And I venture to assert no modern Biblical apologist could make a better show than did some of these older and now forgotten defenders of the faith whom Cooper quotes in such abundance. My own ideas on the Hebrew language are known perhaps to some readers of this journal, and it was interesting to meet in Cooper's work some citations I had not come across on the subject. Indeed the few pages in which the Hebrew language is discussed are full of quotations which convince me more than ever I am right in declaring that the Hebrew, in which the Old Testament has come down to us, never was a spoken language; and I feel sure those interested would enjoy reading the many admissions on the subject referred to by Cooper, and especially on the discrepancies which many learned commentators have never been able to solve between the Septuagint translation and the Hebrew original of the Bible.

On the New Testament, Cooper is equally destructive. He pulverizes the early Church Fathers whose opinions and beliefs were always so confidently referred to as irrefutable proofs of the genuineness of the Gospel records and he proves that the so-called Canon of the Bible is so much imposture. The canonical works have no more authority than the apocryphal ones, and the only safe way for the believer is to accept everything on faith because "the Church tells me to." I particularly commend both of Cooper's chapters on the Scriptures "historically" considered as they are full of Church history concisely put and backed by the fullest orthodox authorities. On the translation and interpretation of Scripture, Cooper quotes some of the most damning admissions I have ever read, and it would be interesting to see what the young modern clergyman or priest would make of these admissions in debate. Many new translations of the Bible have been made since Cooper wrote his book, but they would have been equally condemned with the others by orthodox authorities simply because there is no such thing as an authentic original. The various versions of the Bible which have come down to us differ in thousands of places from each other, and the Hebrew differs from the Greek and Latin, and is itself almost unintelligible in hundreds of places. It has even been proved that four or five meanings can be given to many Hebrew words, and it is almost impossible to say which is the right one.

If the reader wants our case against the genuineness of the New Testament put clearly and logically, I confess I know of nothing better than Cooper's chapter on the subject in his work. The combined labour of Harnack, Von Soden, Streeter and all the other great modern authorities would not turn Cooper's position one iota. Indeed, I think they would have to agree with him.

So with miracles and prophecy. Almost half the book is taken up with a discussion of these two one-time great defences of the Christian faith. Give them up and what is left of true Christianity? Yet religious people have given them up and still call themselves Christians. If one now-a-days reads with impatience a reasoned argument against belief in miracles and prophecies, it is only because these early Freethinkers did their work so well and compelled Christians to defend absurdities against the relentless march of logic and science. We have reaped the benefit. We start where they left off and imagine we are responsible for the growing unbelief in contemporary life.

Personally, I am puzzled that such a work as *The Bible and its Evidences* should ever have been allowed to get out of print. Without claiming for it the pioneer and creative spirit of such a man as Dupuis, I do feel that Freethought has not produced a better work on its particular subject as popular propaganda. The *Encyclopedia Biblica* contains its substance in its thousands of pages, but who, these days, can wade through its four thick volumes?

The memory of all the early pioneers in our cause is particularly dear to me; and so, I salute Robert Cooper, that modest and fearless fighter for Freethought.

H. CUTNER.

### Rank-and-File Bradlaughs.

FREETHINKERS have long ceased to look for any honesty, truth or justice from the "noble free Press" of England . . . those great-hearted champions of the people who are so bravely outspoken and so nobly appealing (at a penny or twopence a time) when demanding a "fair trial" for misjudged Englishmen fallen into the clutches of ignorant and brutal foreigners.

We know from bitter experience that these smooth-tongued seducers of culture and civilization are strictly impartial towards religion, but *after*, and only *after*, they have agreed that at no time shall anything be allowed to be said against the Christian religion, that Freethought and Freethinkers shall be mentioned only when there is plenty of scope for lies, invective, and misrepresentation, for all the hideous distortions which the diseased minds of our Fleet Street Douglasses can fashion.

But now and again—though all too rarely—occurs an exception, and when such a phenomenon does appear, Freethinkers should not be backward to pay tribute both to the writer who has the courage to be sincere in a world of insincerities, and to the newspaper which permits such courage. All power to your elbow, "Vanoc II.," and may the fortunes of the *Sunday Referee* prosper accordingly.

"Vanoc II.," writes "Our Handbook" regularly for the *Referee*, and an idea of this intellectual oasis in the Sabbath desert of ignorance, immorality and imbecility, may be seen from the following passage in *The New Blasphemy* on Easter Sunday:—

But it (the "Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching of Children Bill") will be a shock for that socially progressive minority which imagines that the noble work in the cause of religious freedom, achieved by such social heroes as Charles Bradlaugh, Richard Carlile, George Jacob Holyoake, G. W. Foote, and T. H. Huxley, must be immutable; that the clearings hewn in the jungles of savagery by self-sacrificing pioneers will never again be overgrown and that intellectual progress can be permanently maintained by its own virtue.

Alas! these gains are relative and strictly conditioned by economic conditions. The nineteenth century was peculiarly favourable to the growth of religious freedom, given lusty pioneers like Bradlaugh, because the economic needs of the time demanded free access to scientific instruction, particularly in the field of technocracy. And science and organized religion cannot live side by side.

So the Christian-capitalists of the nineteenth century chose science, or, rather, tolerated scientific teaching, even at the expense of organized religion, because it led to greater material profits.

To-day the position is almost reversed.

We are not concerned here with the economic side of "Vanoc's" argument—which, even though so true, detracts in no way from the value of Bradlaugh's work—nor with the main body of his article that the new Blasphemy and Seditious Bill, obviously more political than religious, is vitally connected with political considerations.

But, even if for our present particular purposes we ignore this, we still have something to do when we have paid our tribute to "Vanoc II." We have a message to hear from him. That message is contained in his remark that it is a mistake to "imagine that intellectual pro-

gress can be permanently maintained by its own virtue." That is where many Freethinkers make their biggest mistake, and, framed in appropriate words, this gratuitous advice should be taken to heart by every Freethinker, and engraven over every Freethought hall and meeting place.

We cannot and we must not be content to rest upon the laurels of those pioneers of ours, however much magnificent work they may have done, however significant and far-reaching the advances that they made. We must man every fortress that has been captured, we must guard every advance that has been effected, and every position must be defended as stoutly and as ably as it was won.

The forces of darkness and of savagery are never still, the armies of reaction and of ignorance are ceaseless in their efforts to undermine the culture that mankind has painfully built up. Ceaseless also must we be. For ours is by far the more important task. Ours is the duty not only to consolidate the positions which have been gained, but to make further advances possible for the spread of knowledge and the betterment of the humanity that is to come.

Freethinkers are too often inclined to be apathetic, to confine their Atheism to the fireside and the library, to leave the other chap alone. That is suicidal. Let us have done with this laissez-faire. Militancy has been, and remains, our only hope. So let us be militant.

We may have to suffer for our militancy, but we should have suffered more for less had it not been for those pioneers of ours. We may be victimized, we may lose the world's good opinion, but that is no matter. We must fight.

It is not the fortune of all of us to have the talents or the opportunities of a Bradlaugh, but we of the rank and file still have our part to play. The impassioned eloquence of a Bradlaugh, the noble orations of an Ingersoll, the flashing, searing, tearing wit of a Voltaire or a Cohen, all these would not be the same were it not for the courage, the nobility, and the idealism which were their inspiration. And these qualities, though not these talents, are attainable by us all.

We can all have our courage and our nobility of character and our idealism of purpose, and we can all live our lives according to those lights, even though we are not called upon to lead multitudes or to defy multitudes. Like Bradlaugh, we can all be "thorough" in our every deed, but, most of all, in our Freethought.

That is the great need of our times, and to that need must come such a unanimous and enthusiastic response from the rank and file as has never before been witnessed in the history of our cause. That a Bradlaugh has lived and worked, struggled and died, is not sufficient. The great cause to which he devoted his labour goes on after him, and that cause needs the self-same devotion from all. To-day, in this year of Bradlaugh's centenary, honour his name in the only way he would have wished—give us a million keen rank-and-file Bradlaughs to follow in his footsteps, to extend the sway of his principles, and to further that cause which would have been so much the poorer without him, and will be so much the poorer without the best efforts that we can give it.

RONALD H. S. STANDEFAST.

### THE QUESTIONING CHILD.

Nor yet alone to toys and tales confined  
He sits, dark brooding, o'er his embryo mind;  
Take him upon your knees, peruse his face,  
While all you know, or think you know, you trace;  
Tell him who spake creation into birth,  
Arched the broad heavens and spread the rolling earth;  
Who formed a pathway for the obedient sun,  
And bade the seasons in their circles run;  
Who filled the air, the forest and the flood,  
And gave man all for comfort, or for food;  
Tell him all sprang at God's creative nod—  
He stops you short with "Father, who made God!"

Charles Sprague.

## Acid Drops.

We see from the *News-Chronicle* that Labour members of the Glasgow Corporation have protested against the appointment of a Director of Glasgow Technical College on the ground of his being an Englishman. If the paper report is correct, we do not see that the protesting members have anything to complain of in the policy of Herr Hitler.

After all our "high-falutin'" sentiment about the iniquity of bombing from the air in times of war the British representatives at Geneva protested that this country could not agree to the abolition of bombing for police purposes. So that while we are not willing to have bombing going on when two countries are at war, we are desirous of using explosive bombs against tribes in out-lying districts, who have no possible means of reprisal, and whose offence is that they have not paid taxes, or have indulged in tribal rows. What hypocrisy it all is! When the people recognize that this bombing from the air is more cowardly and more contemptible than much that goes on in times of war, we shall be nearer the end of the war era.

The Rev. Dr. F. W. Norwood says he "dreads weak nations for the reason that they will tempt the strong ones." Now that is a nice thing for a Christian parson to say. For by "weak" nations Dr. Norwood can mean only nations with small or no armaments. But the Christian teaching—not the Christian practice—is that it is to the meek that God will deliver the earth, and that the way to overcome the bully was to turn one cheek when the other is smitten. Dr. Norwood thinks that turning the other cheek is quite good—provided that the turner has a gun in his hand.

With the World Economic Conference at hand it is only fair to listen to what some of our spiritual leaders have to say. Mr. A. M. Moss, Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, said in his address to the Annual Assembly "We think that the present depression and its consequent suffering are a chastening from the Lord to which we must give earnest heed, for chastening unheeded will lead to dejection and ruin." So Mr. Macdonald is wrong when he assures that world problems can only be settled on a world basis, or that bad trade can only be ended by more business being done. It is all brought about by the Lord for the purpose of chastening us. And with the Lord's promiscuous way of doing things he chastens those who deserve it and those who do not. Verily, God's ways are not our ways. That is the most pleasing part of the situation.

The Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan says, "What does the Cross stand for? Submit! It begins there, and that is why it is unpopular." It is also, we suggest the reason why the religion of the Cross is a creed for slaves. And we hope it will continue to be unpopular. Anyway, the temper of the age is likely to regard it so. The tendency of modern thought is in the direction of freedom. It may be admitted that to-day there are many attempts to enforce prohibitions and to interfere with freedom of speech and thought. But in almost every instance the moves are made by people who see nothing objectionable in the creed of the Cross—the religion for slaves—and masters.

A pious writer exclaims, "Let us dream of peace and helping one another." But that is what Christians have been doing every Sunday for centuries, with an extra-special dream yearly added as make-weight at Christmas-tide. The nations, however, are as far from Peace and helping one another as ever they were. Dreaming about Peace is not the way to make it an actuality.

Von Papen, the notorious sabre-rattling apologist for the Nazis, had an illuminating sentence in a recent article he wrote for the *Evening Standard*. He said that

before the Nazi revolution, "German children were taught to forget the achievements of Frederick the Great and to ignore their *Christian heritage*." The blood-thirsty attack on a defenceless people living in their midst, accompanied not merely by murder but by rape and unmentionable physical violence, must therefore be a return to the glorious Christian heritage of which Von Papen is so proud? If not, will some Christian apologist indicate a century when Christians were not inculcating and practising murder, torture, hate and tyranny?

It will be interesting to see the developments arising from the settling of a number of "Hebrew Christians" in Palestine. They claim to be "Jews by Race, Christians by Grace," and they also look upon Palestine as their own land. They will no doubt conduct a vigorous propaganda among the other Jews who are not yet Christians, and possibly among those Jews who feel that both Judaism and Christianity are worse than plagues. What the original Jews, who are thoroughly orthodox, will say when they see their Christian brethren eating boiled pork on the Day of Atonement we will leave to the imagination. It's a great world.

Bishop Barnes has written a book on *Scientific Theory and Religion*. He claims that the Universe is inconceivably great but finite, and that it is expanding. On the other hand the atom is inconceivably small—you can put 100 million of them on an inch space. Where he manages to get God, the Father, God, the Son and God, the Holy Ghost in as well, we simply cannot understand. Perhaps they are living in that part of the Cosmos into which the Universe is still expanding. At all events, the Bishop ascribes everything as due to the "creativity of a God who is transcendent, and to whom we must ascribe at least such qualities as constitute personality in men." So now we know!

On Whit-Monday the new Liverpool (Roman Catholic) Cathedral will be the venue of forty bishops and, according to the press, 500,000 people. The foundation stone is to be laid of a building that may take a lifetime to complete, and may cost £3,000,000. "A gold and silver figure of Christ, eight and a half feet high will tower over the City." The high altar will remain in its present position for fifteen years, "and will have a broadcasting station hidden in its base." These details are printed without comment as "news," as if they were of general interest. Most people will marvel that, at this time of day, and in Liverpool—one of the most "distressed areas"—such a waste of money should be thought tolerable or praiseworthy. For ourselves we think the figure of Christ in gold and silver is a suitable emblem for this erection. Christ himself is supposed to have said, "silver and gold have I none"; but the Catholic Church and Christianity in general, is never likely to be in that position while there are people who will give money for such purposes as this.

The House of Lords recently gave a second reading to the University Spurious Degrees Bill, which is designed to bring an end to the scandal of bogus degrees and the sale of them. The Bill seeks to make the conferring of a degree, except by a properly constituted University authority, illegal. During the debate, the fact emerged that the Archbishop of Canterbury has a right to confer the degree of D.D. and certain other degrees to any person, whether or not that person had been to a University. The Archbishop appeared to think he must attempt a justification of this privilege, in order that it might be exempted from the scope of the Bill. There seems no reason why it should. For the Bill is concerned only with degrees which are spurious—that is, worthless. How else could an intelligent person regard a degree concerned with "divinity," but as bogus? The knowledge for which it is conferred is concerned with a "God" whom no one can prove exists, with a Christ whom no one has proved ever lived—with a hereafter which is only a Great Perhaps, with a "Revelation" from God to man

which is merely a supposition. What the Bill should do is to prohibit also worthless degrees being conferred by a University—that is, degrees for "Divinity."

A missionary society, after a careful review of the situation, appeals for prayer which shall express itself in informed thanksgiving and intercession, devoted planning, and sacrificial giving. The most important item quite naturally is stated last! We would suggest that the society's clients might do well to exercise strict economy where the "sacrificial giving" is concerned, and forward the money saved to some organization that is saving unemployed Britons from poverty and semi-starvation. This would be a more intelligent use of the money than devoting it to teaching "heathen" doubtful guesses about a presumed "other world."

Who supplies the money for war? enquires a reader of a daily paper. In fairness to our historic enemy we haste to assure him that the Christian Church is not the culprit. It is content with finding moral sanctions for a war when it occurs, with providing a God to win battles and award a final victory, with supplying first-class recruiting agents, with blessing banners and vessels of war, with administering spiritual refreshment to the combatants, and with supplying courage and consolation to bereaved parents or wives. In doing all these things it may be making the most of a—shall we say—heaven-sent opportunity. But it certainly doesn't supply the money for provoking the opportunity. It is quite definitely committed to a creed of Love and Peace.

The number of Roman Catholics in the world is estimated by Mgr. Canon Jackman to be 363,764,793, and Protestants, 177,862,523. We admire the accuracy of the final three in each case, it is so necessary to be absolutely exact. We give the figures, however, particularly for the benefit of those super optimists who insist that the fight for Freethought is virtually over, and that Freethought organizations should now take up other movements. A religion believed in by over 500,000,000 people, wonderfully organized, with immense wealth and power still, is not dead by any means. And until it is—or at least dying—Freethought has tremendous work to do. Let us get on with our job.

Eighteen schoolboys belonging to Malet Lambert College, Hull, have, according to the *Sunday Express* turned Agnostic. They are all members of the sixth form. So the Rev. Douglas Griffiths, a Methodist clergyman, has undertaken their conversion. The boys themselves suggested that Mr. Griffiths should talk to them, and Mr. Griffiths says he will finally say to them:—

You have heard the case for Christianity; you are more or less convinced; now try it. That is the best way to settle your doubts.

If the boys are converted by that kind of stuff their Agnosticism cannot be of a very serious character. Mr. Griffiths has made up his mind that they will be converted—more or less when he has finished talking to them, so we may depend upon it that they will be converted—according to his report. It looks as though his converts will be of the same order as the crowds of converts that follow professional evangelists like Gypsy Smith and Co.

But how on earth can these schoolboys, or anyone else, prove that Christianity is true by trying it? The boys, it is said, "agreed that the Gospels were unconvincing and the Old Testament incredible." Now how does one set about trying whether the virgin birth is true? Or the Resurrection? Or the doctrine of Hell? Or the miracles of Jesus? How does one try whether there is a future life or not? If those boys have a sense of humour they should greatly enjoy the coming of this parson's visit. We suggest that if he really wishes the boys to make up their minds he should put both sides of the cases before them. And the best of all ways would be to hold a discussion with some representative

Freethinker, and let the boys listen to all that can be said for and against. The debate could be either oral or written.

An artist claims to paint the minds of his sitters. He wouldn't need much paint to portray the mind of a Fundamentalist, Christian, or most Anglican bishops, judging by the amount they contribute to modern thought.

A reverend speaker at the Annual Conference of the Diocesan Sunday School Teachers Association, held in Canterbury, dolefully told the assembly that "they had to face the fact reluctantly that a great many parents cared little for God and his worship. They all know the difficulties when the home was pulling the other way." From which confession it would seem that the pious efforts of popular newspapers plus the B.B.C.—bringing religion into the home—have failed to get the stranger accepted as one of the family. Now, the child has a logical mind, and quite naturally it argues, "Grown-ups don't believe in and practise what is taught me in Sunday school. Why should I?" No wonder the Sunday school teacher confess to having "difficulties!"

Irish Roman Catholics are very angry that the censorship in Ireland is full of vexatious delays. In particular, its full powers have not been made sufficient use of in the case of birth-control propaganda. Mr. Frank O'Reilly, in a letter to the Irish Press, is indignant at the laxity of the censors and gives details of how he would deal with "indecent and offensive" literature. We think the best way would be to emulate the recent bonfires of the Nazis. Why not go round every public and private library and all the book-stalls with immense lorries and collect every book, paper or magazine which mentions sex in any way whatever, or even hints that the Roman Catholic religion may not be exactly divine and burn the lot? If medieval ways should require copying a little further why confine the burning to books? A few Birth-controllers, Freethinkers and Communists might be added to the flames as well. One ought to be at least consistent.

## Fifty Years Ago.

AN ESSAY ON ATHEISM.

(After Bacon, but by a much Rasher Man).

I HAD rather believe all the fables in the Bible, and the Talmud, and the Koran, than assert positively there is no God; and I would rather believe them all, and a thousand others besides, than say—there is a God. I merely say—I do not know if there be a God or not, therefore I may not presume to assert one thing or the other. The Scripture says: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God"; but how much more foolish is he than the one who says: "There is a God?" There can be no doubt that a want of philosophy inclines men's minds to superstition, which they call religion; but a knowledge of philosophy and an exercise of reason brings their minds about to Atheism, which is the result of true philosophy. Atheism, indeed, is most conducive to the secular welfare and general happiness of man—as, when he rests and assures himself upon divine favour and protection, and puts his trust in providence (whatever that may be), he is like to be deceived and miserably disappointed; but when man, with a correct knowledge of the duties and responsibilities resting upon him, perceives that, to prosper in life and fulfil those duties and responsibilities, it is necessary to constitute himself his own providence, he, as a natural consequence, gathers a force of mind and strength of character which could not be otherwise induced. It has been said by Bacon: "Atheism leads a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural pity, to reputation. . . . therefore Atheism never did perturb many States." The philosopher quoted thus, shows the superiority of Atheism over superstition.

The "Freethinker," June 3, 1883.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.  
Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

P.T.—The Prayer for the High Court of Parliament is an illustration, *i.e.*, it prays for (1) "the advancement of God's glory," (2) "the good of His Church," and (3) and a bad last, "the safety honour and welfare of our Sovereign and His Dominions."

F.E.—Long out of Print. Published 1886, entitled *Sins of the Church* (Eight pamphlets).

? ? ? (St. Mary Cray).—If this catches the eye of the sender of P.O. for 3s. 9d. for publications, will he please send his name and address, which were omitted from the order form.

B. L. BOWERS.—Thanks. Quite an interesting and useful cutting.

JACK BARTON.—The brutality of deliberately blinding a bird for any purpose is almost beyond conception.

L. AMEY.—Mr. Cohen will not be lecturing in London until the autumn.

A. HAYNES, S.J., and others.—Thanks for enthusiastic praise of the three "Views and Opinions" on affairs in Germany. But we do not think they will be re-printed. Why not send copies of the *Freethinker* to those whom you wish should see them?

VERITAS.—Pleased to have the praise of an old reader on the quality of the *Freethinker*. Hope to retain your appreciation.

R. BENDICOTT.—You are misinformed, at least so far as we are concerned. No reply from Mr. Arnold Lunn to our article on him in a recent issue has reached this office. If it had been received it would have been inserted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (June 4) the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held in the Palm Court of the Grafton Hotel, Tottenham Court Road. The Conference will sit at 10.30 and 2.30, and is open to members only. Admission will be by card of membership for the current year. Any member who is for any reason without his

card should send in his name to the Secretary. A luncheon will be provided at one o'clock at a charge of 2s. 6d.

In the evening there will be a public demonstration at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Admission will be free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seats at one shilling. The President will take the chair at each meeting.

On Saturday evening (June 3) a reception by the President and Members of the Executive will be held at the Grafton Hotel at 7 o'clock. Members, delegates and friends will have an excellent opportunity of renewing old friendships and exchanging views and a thoroughly enjoyable evening can be promised.

Now that we are entering the summer season we again bespeak the services of our well-wishers on behalf of this paper. We are unable to adopt the more expensive methods of advertising, and ever since its foundation the *Freethinker* has depended upon the services of its friends. An extra copy taken for a friend, or a supply of specimen copies for distribution wherever possible is a capital method of gaining new subscribers. To maintain a paper such as the *Freethinker* for over fifty years means a period of stress and struggle such as only those behind the scenes can appreciate.

Mr. G. Whitehead will hold meetings each evening from Tuesday, June 6, until Friday, June 9, at Highbury Corner. It is some time since the N.S.S. held meetings on that spot, and local saints should take full advantage of the situation. It is time a Branch of the Society existed at Highbury, and Mr. Whitehead can supply the information necessary for procedure.

Reports to hand from Messrs. J. T. Brighton and J. Clayton tell of good meetings and some useful work done in outlying places in Durham and Lancashire. The reception accorded to Freethought speakers is not always of a friendly nature even where propaganda has been carried on for some time, and one can imagine the situation where Freethought is presented for the first time in a remote village, and where the speaker appears to be without any friends.

Mr. Beverly Nichols writes a page of religious slush in a recent issue of the *Sunday Chronicle*, evidently under the impression that so long as it is religious any sort of nonsense goes. For example:—

If Christ could preside at the World Economic Conference, and if his orders were accepted by the heads of Governments, the economic situation would clear up over night.

Quite fittingly the page bears a portrait of Bramwell Booth. But the strange thing is that Mr. Nichols appears to have gone to the pages of our recently published *Christian Types* for his inspiration. What Mr. Nichols says would happen if Christ visited the Geneva Conference is precisely what "Criticus" puts into the mouth of the religious journalist exploiting his credulous public. "Criticus" evidently knows the kind.

'Tis from high life high characters are drawn;  
A saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn;  
A judge is just, a chanc'lor juster still,  
A gown-man learned; a bishop, what you will;  
Wise if a minister; but if a king,  
More wise, more learn'd, more just, more ev'rything.

Pope.

## "The Revolt against God."

"O fools, he was God, and is dead  
He will hear not again the strong crying of earth in his ears  
as before,  
And the fume of his multitudes dying shall flatter his  
nostrils no more.  
By the spirit he ruled as his slave is he slain who was  
mighty to slay,  
And the stone that is sealed on his grave he shall raise not  
and roll not away."

Swinburne. "Hymn of Man."

THE title of this article, is that of an essay by a Congregational clergyman, contributed to the May number of *Harper's Magazine*.

Mr. Stanley High, the pastor in question, is no ordinary preacher. After taking a theological degree at Boston University he spent some years in Europe as a newspaper correspondent, later he became assistant secretary to the Methodist Board of Foreign Missions; then editor of the *American Christian Herald*; and is now a minister of a Congregational Church in Stamford, Connecticut. Evidently, Mr. High is a man of wide and varied experience, both secular and religious, and, as an earnest Christian, not likely to exaggerate facts at the expense of his religion.

The drift of the times, says Mr. High, is away from religion, and particularly from the organized religion of the churches. "Despite," he continues, "the long-held doctrine of the theologians that man is 'incurably religious,' a vast and increasing number of people are demonstrating that he is not." Not that they are definitely opposed to religion, says Mr. High:—

If pressed, they would probably confess to some obscure but unconsulted convictions which might be identified as religious. Normally, however, they are indifferent to the whole matter. There is no point for them in the argument as to whether it is possible to get along without religion. For all apparent intents and purposes they are getting along without it. And the disturbing fact is not that so many of them get along, but that they appear to get along so well. In short they have no conscious religious life, and they do not seem to miss it. They do not revolt against God. They simply ignore Him.

Americans, before the war, were fond of speaking of the United States as "God's own Country," the expression is never heard now, except ironically. It is now thought that the less God had to do with the business the better for his reputation. Mr. High tells us of a newspaper man who recently made a sixteen-thousand-mile trip through the American countryside, during which in his search for information, he asked many questions, among others, as to what help they were getting from their religion in these disturbing times? "Only one man," he writes, "said that his church and his God were a prop to him. Nowhere did I encounter a genuine religious feeling. Everywhere I encountered scepticism, distrust, amusement at the beliefs of our fathers. Christianity is hardly to be considered at all as a force in American life, in directing its currents and desires."

Mr. High also cites from a letter he received from a successful business man, who has recently given more time to religion, sitting on religious councils, boards and commissions. Sent as a delegate to a denominational meeting, he writes: "I would be in a happier frame of mind if I had stayed at home . . . We went through all the religious motions. But I couldn't escape the feeling that we were shadow-boxing." Speaking from his own experience, Mr. High tells us: "I am the minister of a more than ordinarily loyal church. Normally, however, our one Sunday

service brings out not more than twenty per cent of our total membership." What must the attendance be like at the other churches!

Turning to other countries, and commencing with England, Mr. High cites the following from Mr. Joad's book, *The Present and Future of Religion*: "To-day nobody spares the money to build new chapels for the same reason that nobody would attend them if they were built. As for the Church of England, even if there were churches and congregations to fill them, which there are not, there would not be enough clergymen to attend to the congregations. It is difficult, indeed it is impossible, to keep up the existing numbers of the clergy and the supply of recruits falls off year by year." Even the fool of the family is no longer pushed into the Church, for no one can tell how much longer the Establishment is going to last. There are even members within the Church, who propose that the Church should disestablish itself, and thus anticipate the coming execution.

In Germany, says Mr. High, the German League of Freethinkers "has an active membership totalling something over 700,000. Two hundred thousand German children are enrolled in its schools of Atheism." Its propaganda among the working classes in the towns: "has now extended into the rural districts where it is making startling headway. Largely as a result of its propaganda, the churches of Germany for a number of years have reported a steady net loss in membership totalling as much as 300,000 in a single year." In Turkey, Russia, and Spain, religion has been disestablished, and secular education adopted in the schools. Any sceptic who, before the war had predicted that such a thing would shortly come to pass, would have been regarded as a weak-minded optimist; yet it has happened, and amid the crash of thrones and dynasties, the marvel has not attracted the attention it otherwise would have done.

Take, for instance, the disestablishment of the Caliphate in Turkey. Our own Government was extremely nervous about offending the religious susceptibilities of our Mohammedan and Hindoo subjects and so starting a holy war; even the missionaries, to their disgust, were not allowed a free hand here, as they were in China, Africa, and the South Seas. This was owing to the Indian Mutiny, which was caused by a belief among the Sepoys that their cartridges were greased with the fat of the cow and the pig, thus defiling both the Hindoo and the Mohammedan. Yet, when the heavy hand of the new Government descended on the Caliphate—the Caliph was the successor, or vicegerent of the prophet Mohammed and the spiritual and civil head of the Mohammedan State—there was no holy war proclaimed, no insurrection of the people to save their religion, there was no trouble at all, or nothing like we expected.

It was the same with Russia and with Spain, accounted as the two most backward and steeped in religion of all the European States. How different from the Middle Ages, when, during a period of two hundred years, Europe hurled army after army into Palestine, in the Holy War to take the tomb of Christ from the care of the infidel, and an empty tomb at that! Evidently we are witnessing a world-wide movement away from religion. France led the way in the eighteenth century, by disestablishing the Church during the French Revolution. It was restored by Napoleon under his Concordat with the Pope; only to be disestablished again, and the religious orders expelled, for interfering in politics and scheming against the Republic during the Dreyfus affair.

It seems passing strange, if, as Christians are never tired of claiming, Christianity is the source of all that is good in our civilization, the protector of the poor, the liberator of the slave, the advocate of women, and all the rest of it; that directly the proletariat attain freedom, their first action is to disestablish this beneficent faith which has conferred all these benefits upon them, and send its priests packing! But the workers do not judge by words but by deeds, and, as Mr. High, referring to the industrial areas of the United States observes: "Religion there, if not an opiate, is at least a sedative. Here, then, is a further reason for this drift from religion." Many religious leaders, says Mr. High: "are frankly bewildered because, in the present crisis, there has been no significant turning to religion." Previous periods of tribulation have been "great days for the Church." "Other help failing, men and women have sought the consolations of religion. It is difficult to see any significant indications of such seeking at present." No, the great war showed the futility of that. Mr. High considers that the drift from religion is plainer here than anywhere else.

In conclusion, Mr. High declares, that if organized religion is to regain its position, it will have to work to the principles laid down by Jesus. We do not think it would succeed. It is too late in the day. The trend is definitely away from religion. If the people do not turn to religion in the hour of adversity, it is very certain that they will not do so in the hour of prosperity. The chief driving force hitherto behind religion has been fear. People have now lost that fear, and with it they have lost their religion.

W. MANN.

## Austin Holyoake.

FREETHINKER, CRITIC AND HUMORIST.

It is a matter of great regret to me that I never knew Austin Holyoake personally. He was alive when I, as a very young man, used to visit Watts & Co.'s, publishing house at 17 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, where the *National Reformer* was then published. I heard afterwards that he was very seriously ill, and in a short time I learned of his death through the *National Reformer*. On the following Sunday, when I was only nineteen years of age, I made my way to "The Hall of Science," Old Street, City Road, and heard the late Charles Watts deliver a memorial address on his friend.

Mr. Charles Watts was a highly trained and experienced lecturer, and his address was a most moving and eloquent oration. This was not my first visit to "The Hall of Science." I had been there two or three times before; once, a year before, when barely eighteen years of age, I heard Mr. G. W. Foote oppose Dr. George Sexton on "Spiritualism," and later in a two nights debate with him, on the same subject.

But I was anxious to know more about Austin Holyoake, and I had to wait till 1889 to get the full information I wanted when my friend Joseph Mazzini Wheeler published his splendid *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*. From that work I gathered that Austin Holyoake was born in Birmingham on October 27, 1826, and was the younger brother of Geo. Jacob Holyoake, the famous Freethought lecturer and writer, and Socialist missionary. Austin owed his mental emancipation to hearing lectures by Robert Owen and his disciples. He took part in the agitation for the abolition of the newspaper stamp—assisting when risk and danger had to be met—and he co-operated

with his brother in the production of *The Reasoner* and other publications from 1845 to 1862. Soon after this he printed and sub-edited *The National Reformer* of which Charles Bradlaugh was editor. Austin Holyoake wrote several pamphlets, which I still possess in my collection, viz: *Daniel the Dreamer*, a Biblical Biography; *Heaven and Hell, Where Situated?* "Man's fervent hope and abiding terror"; *The Book of Esther*, A specimen of "what passes as the inspired word of God"; *The Apostles of Christ*, a farce in several acts; *Ludicrous Aspects of Christianity*.

I propose to give a few selections from one or two of these pamphlets as a sample of the brilliant, critical power, wit and humour displayed by Austin Holyoake in the examination of Biblical stories.

Few Christians, I imagine, read *The Book of Daniel* to-day. They may have read it in their childhood when they attended Sunday School, or perhaps they may have referred to it again to ascertain for certain, how Daniel comported himself in the "Lion's Den," and how it was the lion did not make a meal of him. But this is what Austin Holyoake says about the story. He opens in this fine scholarly fashion:—

The study of biography is at all times a pleasing occupation, and generally an instructive one. Poets afford us glimpses of the ideal life, statesmen of the real and the practical. The warrior teaches the lesson of heroism and daring in danger; the navigator, the pioneer and the explorer, set examples worthy of imitation, of perseverance, of endurance, of courage in secret, which when known, ennoble the character and strengthen the will and enable us to look with calmness upon the daily annoyances and trials of life. We learn how men can labour and endure; how friendships formed in the quiet of social life will yet survive the strongest shocks. We learn this from the lives of great and good men of all ages and of all countries. Men in every rank of society, from the highest to the lowest, may be found, whose lives will teach some lesson for our instruction—who have set some example worthy of imitation.

We turn to Biblical heroes expecting, as we have a right to expect, that in their lives we shall find everything worthy of emulation. These characters have superlative advantages over ordinary men. If not endowed with the attributes of Gods they have what stands them in as much need—they have the special instruction and guidance of Heaven.

In Daniel we shall find one of these highly favoured mortals—a man of a peculiar calling in life, but one who nevertheless excelled in his profession. He followed no industrial occupation, neither did he cultivate letters or the fine arts. He was a sort of a psychological curiosity. At first he dreamt other men's dreams and found out their interpretation; and afterwards he dreamt dreams for himself. The wise men who some centuries ago determined for us and for all future generations, if the priest can make it so, what was canonical, and what was apocryphal or spurious gospel, agreed that the Book of Daniel had about it the genuine ring—bore upon its face the unmistakable stamp of inspiration. We must therefore accept it as such, and try how much good we can extract from it.

Those who worship and defend the Bible as a sacred book, may say it is much easier to make bad jokes than to point out its errors—to ridicule than to refute it. I do not desire to indulge needlessly in ridicule or levity when dealing with the book which so many have been taught as children to regard as something holy; but when I read in it the account of certain men, whose doings appeal forcibly to my sense of the ludicrous, I must be excused if I laugh so loud that people at a distance hear me. Some reviewers charged me with being "slippant." Now I have no desire to earn such a reputation. With

things calling for serious consideration, I can be as serious as any man. But it is not always necessary to be dull to be instructive. Has not Voltaire abundantly proved that an argument may be contained in a witticism? Besides the Bible has different effects upon different minds. Some it has made misanthropical hermits, some gloomy, brooding lunatics; others fanatical persecutors; others blood-thirsty, ferocious exterminators. I am sorry that it only makes me merry.

He then proceeds to narrate the incredible stories of the *Book of Daniel*, that caused him to indulge in laughter—but I propose to give a sample of these stories in another article.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

(To be continued.)

## On Chain Gangs.

THOSE who wish to acquaint themselves with certain aspects of human life, with which they are not familiar, may often do so by paying a visit to the cinema.

In "I am a Fugitive," one of these aspects is presented. It reveals the extent to which society can indulge, even at the present day, in brutal treatment of those who fail to fit in with the approved ways of earning a living.

The "fugitive" is a young man who, on returning to his American home after playing his part in the Great War, found himself unable to settle down to his old job, which his pre-war employer gave back to him.

The routine of war service was found to be equalled by the routine of the factory; for the young man had conceived new ideas about life. He desired to do something worth while; to become an engineer instead of a receiving clerk; to construct bridges, and expand cities.

After trying, under family pressure, to go on with his old work, he set out in search of a new sphere of activity, only to find himself very soon on the "tramp."

When nearly starving he is offered food by another man tramp, and, at an opportune moment, the latter forces the "fugitive," at the point of a revolver, to rob the cash-till in an eating-house. He is caught immediately, tried and condemned to ten years of hard labour in a chain gang, without due consideration being given to the circumstances under which this petty theft was committed.

Life in the chain gang camp is faithfully and fearfully depicted on this film. Strong iron bands, with chains attached, are welded on to both ankles of each man; and when a body of men is taken to and from work a long chain, passed through a ring on the chains of each man, secures the gang. Armed warders supervise the chained and manacled workers; and the warders are the embodiment of the physical brutality of the system.

The "fugitive" ultimately escapes and, under another name, obtains employment in a State other than that to which he belongs. The police are ever on the hunt for him, but in time he succeeds in working his way to a high position as an engineer, and becomes a respected citizen.

When he is on the point of being promoted to a position of trust he is arrested by the police, after having been betrayed by a worthless wife.

The State Governor refuses to sign his extradition papers, and he is persuaded to give himself up on condition of being released in ninety days, from the chain gang to which he was to return.

He pays all the State's expenses for his escape and

recapture, and returns to hard labour only to find, at the end of the ninety days, that the word of the State Governor and officials, in the State to which the chain gang prison belongs, was worthless.

A second escape is accomplished and the film closes with the "fugitive" to be recaptured again, or hunted until death. Such is the ferocity of a society boasting of liberty.

To the thoughtful the physical brutality of the chain gang system is not the only outstanding feature of the film.

The intellectual and moral brutality of the governor and other officials of the State is a sinister characteristic of Christian American civilization, offset, as it is, by the general indifference to the way in which social "justice" is administered.

The governor of the persecuting State, after hearing an appeal for the fugitive (I understand the "fugitive" is still abroad; still hunted; and America is still civilized) based upon the petty theft having been committed under duress of a revolver, and the subsequent proved worth of the man as a citizen after his first escape, is able brutally to insist upon his return to the chain gang under the camouflage of justice.

The chain gang is even upheld as a means of effecting moral reform; the necessity of protecting the average citizen is urged; the further necessity of satisfying justice is pleaded; and, with triumphant brutality, the after-prison life of the fugitive is instanced as resulting from the moral uplift he has received from being in the chain gang. He must be sent back for more moral uplift, and to the fuller satisfaction of justice.

He is sent back by a set of Christian and social hypocrites who, if opportunity presented itself, would doubtless bring off a financial wangle, an hour after passing judgment upon the fugitive.

How many of the governor's councillors had not made more at a single stroke by trickery in business, or by industrial and social exploitation than could be equalled by a life-long series of petty thefts?

Yet they would look upon themselves as men of worth and standing in a Christian society; men who were in the habit of upholding the interests of the people, under the flag of liberty, although they were incapable of judging the case of the fugitive upon its merits. Or if capable of forming a sound judgment, their habit of giving way to majority opinion prevented their giving expression and execution to such a judgment.

Such men as those who condemned the fugitive the first or second time, belong to the chain-gangs of thought. They are the outstanding members of such chain-gangs, to one or other of which the majority of people belong. The chains are often of subtle texture whether their effects are expressed with subtlety or brutality; and the work of breaking the chains and setting free the gangs is one of the greatest tasks before humanity.

In Victor Hugo's, *Les Miserables*, we can read of the chain gangs which passed through France to the galleys during a less enlightened period of French history. In Samuel Smiles' *Huguenots in France*, the sufferings of many Huguenots in such gangs are described; but one would expect such an expression of barbarity to have vanished by now from all civilized countries.

The survival of such chain gangs in America at the present time, is an instance of the survival of barbaric mentality, passed on to us through Feudal days.

Christianity, in its various forms, is a system of

mental chain-gangs from which few if any people living in a Christian country entirely escape. Its effect upon those who retain the faith, even if watered down, is disastrous; and its total effect upon society, in preventing the full harvest of means to general improvement being reaped from science, cannot be fully measured. Christianity comes from the past and brings many of its worst ideas with it while attempting an adjustment to certain modern scientific teachings. Not only so, Christianity clings to old institutions until forced to tack on to new ones, and carries her baneful influence with her throughout modern society.

Although written of Europe, the following words from another pen may be applied to America: "Intellectual survivals are a heavy drag upon the influences making for some degree of cultural integration in Europe. When the general level of intellectual values is lowered, our whole moral currency is thereby debased; when doctrines which no educated man accepts are proclaimed in newspaper and pulpit, and taught in the school, the reaction on the political honesty of the community is inevitable. The hope of European civilization is inseparably connected with Europe's ability to unload this weight of consecrated falsehood which she has inherited from the ages of political, economic and mental servitude—an inheritance which has its natural counterpart in the existing oligarchical control of wealth and power." (A. D. McLaren, in *Scientia*, on "Is Europe's Political, Economic and Cultural Hegemony on the Wane?")

In one way or another, many who escape from the chain gang of theology find their way into other chain gangs in the sphere of ethics, sociology, economics, and so forth.

The work of attaining full freedom can only be accomplished by careful study, by continual self-criticism, by training the mind to reason as accurately as possible, and by the fearless application of the mind, by way of examination and criticism, to all subjects with which we can possibly deal.

Too many Freethinkers keep their critical attitude of mind for application to religious subjects only, and consequently do not even realize that they belong to the chain-gangs in other spheres of thought. Freedom of thought in all things must be striven for, if full manhood as a Freethinker is to be attained.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

### For the Bookshelf.

Two further volumes have been added to the "Thinkers Library" (Watts, 1s. net each). Messrs. Watts have also issued *A Short History of the Inquisition* by Sir Alexander G. Cardew (3s. net). It was a good idea to republish C. D. Collet's well known and authoritative *History of the Taxes on Knowledge*, the standard work on the subject. Although abridged, nothing is omitted which impairs the value of this calm and impartial survey of these infamous taxes and the struggle of the early pioneers to have them removed. Holyoake's preface gives some idea of the author and his work, and I warmly recommend the book to all Freethinkers who have not read it.

Mr. Joseph McCabe's *The Existence of God*, has been entirely rewritten—it was originally issued in the "Enquirer's Library" twenty years ago. A comparison of the two volumes makes interesting reading, as Mr. McCabe's views on some points have changed. For example, in 1913 he said, "I prefer the term 'Agnostic' to 'Atheist,' because there is a common tendency to conceive the Atheist as one who believes he can disprove the existence of God, and there are men who hold that position . . . At the same time the word 'Agnostic' is

not free from ambiguity . . . I mean only that no satisfactory evidence is offered to us of the existence of God (any God)."

In 1933, he says, "For many years I have, since I do not share the theory of the mind's limitations, preferred to call myself an Atheist."

For the rest, Mr McCabe's method of approach is different, and he has preferred to deal with the very latest works of religious apologetics which makes what he has to say all the more valuable to the modern reader. Many of the pre-war works on religion, which were considered by the orthodox as of supreme authority are mostly forgotten or only interesting to the student. Science, history and criticism have made enormous strides during the past twenty years and Mr. McCabe has wisely discarded a great deal of his criticism of authors who are mere names to the present generation.

His chapter, however, on God in ancient philosophy is a brilliant sketch of the God-idea in the old civilizations as are those chapters on the moral argument, the nature of the evidence and the popular apologists. Altogether the reader will find in the work, a detailed criticism of Theism from many angles, clearly and boldly stated, and it should prove a most valuable handbook for Freethinkers in debate.

Sir Alexander G. Cardew, in his *Short History of the Inquisition* has given an excellent sketch of that infamous body. It is, of course, mainly based on the laborious researches of Dr. H. C. Lea, whose magnificent and detailed histories are now the standard and undisputed authorities. Sir A. G. Cardew has given a good outline in a little more than 100 pages, and has tried to be as fair and impartial throughout as possible.

It is not an easy matter to write in cold blood of the foul and bloody Inquisition, which tortured and burnt human beings mostly for the crime of "heresy," and it is to be judged in the light of the quotation from Lord Acton, the Catholic historian, with which the author commences his work:—

The Inquisition is peculiarly the weapon and work of the Popes . . . No other institution is so distinctly the individual creation of the Papacy except the Dispensing Power. It is the principal thing with which the Papacy is identified, and by which it must be judged.

Nothing more damning than this could be adduced even from a bigoted Protestant, but nothing too damning could be said of the Inquisition whether in Spain or elsewhere. It was a foul blot on humanity and the Roman Catholic Church was directly responsible. The details given by the author are terrible, briefly put as they are. I heartily recommend the work to all those who want in a handy form, the truth of what the Inquisition really was.

H.C.

### Correspondence.

N.S.S. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I read with great interest the proposal to alter the Constitution of the National Secular Society. This revision of the principles and objects is, in my opinion, long overdue.

The present Constitution appears to give the maximum of verbiage, of what the principles of a militant Freethinker organization ought to be.

As I see them the proposals will delete from the Constitution redundant and erroneous aims, while seeking to have a Constitution that will permit any Atheist anywhere being able to join the Society.

Is it necessary, for instance, that the N.S.S. should insist that every person wishing to help in the anti-clerical struggle should subscribe to any particular views on happiness, peace, or self-government?

If the N.S.S. does this, is it not likely to exclude from our ranks many convinced Atheists?

Personally I do not think that the N.S.S. has the right to do this. It ought to be able to welcome to its ranks

any person who is prepared to take any part in the struggle against the churches.

The proposed Constitution is a step in the right direction, I am convinced, and it ought to have the whole-hearted support of the Conference.

JACK WALTON.

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Ready's letter of May 28, it is evident that my so-called pointless letter has not entirely failed of its objective, as far as he is concerned.

I asked for a more definite statement with regard to his attitude re the N.S.S. and political activity, and have received it.

Evidently, Mr. Ready fails to realize that the onus of definition was upon himself when he suggested *extended* activity on the part of the N.S.S., and, if he will read my letter again he will find that I did ask whether there is to be an attempt at "turning the N.S.S. into a political party?" The implications of his first letter justified the question.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

#### FREETHOUGHT AND ATHEISM.

SIR,—Since Mr. C. S. Fraser in the second part of his letter (printed in the *Freethinker* for May 21), has given such a good example of the value of an indefinite (*i.e.*, Agnostic) attitude with regard to the existence of "a Maker," or "a God," our little discussion comes towards a close.

If Mr. Fraser has "no proof" (1) that the universe was made; (2) that there was only one maker; has he any proof: (1) that the universe was not made; (2) that there was no maker?

Again, has he any "evidence to show" that the chain of cause and effect does not stop at some definite point?

If, as appears by Mr. Frazer's article "Atheist and Agnostic" (in the *Freethinker* for May 7), our criterion of the meaning of anything is to be what the "public understands" that meaning to be, we had better give up the tremendous struggle for truth immediately, but if truth is our Mecca, let us do our best to reach it. I at least, am not attempting to obtain truthful definitions by the test of their acceptance by the "general public." This test is "expediency" with a vengeance.

Let me earnestly appeal to Freethinkers to find real meanings for the words we use; then we shall find in relation to the matter of religion, that we are actually attacking parasitic institutionalism, and not religion, or religious feeling. Medicine-men to Popes, Priests, and Politicians, etc., have lived upon this feeling and will continue to do so until human character generally improves considerably upon its present condition, but I contend that religion is capable of progressive development for helpful use in civilized life, as it has undoubtedly been a solace to vast numbers through past ages.

"HOPE."

#### HITLER AND POPULATION.

SIR,—Mr. R. B. Kerr in his effort to excuse or explain Hitler and Hitlerism seems to forget the purpose and objects of the *Freethinker*. His thesis of "overpopulation" may be wholly or partly true, and judging by Mr. Kerr's many letters to the Press, he does not intend that we should overlook its importance.

The question for Freethinkers is clearly and cogently expressed in the current "Views and Opinions," and never mind what the excuses are that Hitler and his admirers choose to invent, we condemn in no measured terms this unexampled outbreak of mass persecution, suppression of opinion and free speech, the burning of books, and we hope, the fatuous attempt to re-introduce the Dark Ages.

Among the burned books, I understand are included everything of an advanced character on questions of Sex, Birth-Control and Family limitation, so surely Mr. Kerr would find a splendid virgin field for his propaganda in the "New" Germany?

He would be well advised, however, not to go in person.

R. TURNEY.

#### Obituary.

MR. A. C. WHITE.

WE regret to announce the death of Mr. A. C. White, whose writings, under the pen-name of Alan Handsacre, are well known to readers of this journal. Mr. White was a very capable and a lovable character, with a genuine interest in the Freethought Cause, and an indefatigable worker for any movement in which he was interested. He had in hand another work which was to follow his valuable *Revenues of Religion*. He was forty-six years of age. He had been in ill-health for the past three or four years, and there was little chance of his ever regaining perfect health.

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

##### LONDON.

##### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Albert Street, Regents Park): 8.0, Thursday, June 8, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town): 8.0, Wednesday, June 7, Mr. L. Ebury. Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, June 9, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Monday, June 5, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. 6.30, Messrs. Tuson and Hyatt. Wednesday, June 7, 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell. Ewerden. Thursday, June 8, 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Friday, June 9, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine.

WOOLWICH, "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Wednesday June 7, Messrs. S. Burke and F. W. Smith. Bessford Square, 8.0, Thursday, June 8, Messrs. S. Burke and F. W. Smith. "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Friday, June 9, Messrs. S. Burke and F. W. Smith.

##### COUNTRY.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Wigan, Market Place): 7.0, Messrs. Hanken and Sisson—"Bible Gods."

BURNLEY MARKET, 7.30, Tuesday, June 6, Mr. J. Clayton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 7.30, Friday, June 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Foil Square, Paisley): 8.0, R. Buntin. Peel Street, Partick, 8.0, R. White and Mr. Whitefield.

NELSON, 8.0, Wednesday, June 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor): 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders. Weather permitting.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Pier Head, near Marine Park): 7.0, Wednesday, June 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEX EDUCATION CENTRE: Century Theatre, Archer Street, Westbourne Grove. June 12, 7.30, Lecture by D. H. Lawrence, Janet Chance. Admission 6d. Following Mondays: consultations 2s. 6d. Library.

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