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Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

The Gods.

A MODERN French writer sums up the present attitude of science by saying, "Science conducts God to the frontiers of the universe and having thanked him for past services dismisses him into the unknown." The only expression here that I should feel inclined to quarrel with is "thanked him for past services." "Reminded him of past interferences" would far better fit the facts. Services imply something useful. But one does not confer a service on a pedestrian by directing him along the wrong road, nor upon a student by cramming him with inaccuracies. Religiously God's interferences with mankind have been very numerous, but his services have been a minus quantity. "God" has been as serviceable as an earthquake and as useful as a pestilence. If he did no harm it was well. But his interferences have been dangerous in proportion as they were marked. The alleged exceptions to this generalization are based on a confusion. Good and bad would have existed had man never believed in God, but by associating God with them man made the good less valuable, and the bad worse, than it would have been without him.

The assumption that man owes to God his knowledge and practice of what is good is sheer fallacy. In the earlier stages of civilization man believes he owes everything to the Gods, both the good and the evil, the necessary and the unnecessary. But society can no more persist in actions that are fatal to its welfare than a man can profitably substitute prussic acid for potatoes. Sooner or later what is done and what is generally beneficial are brought into something like a working harmony. Man may believe that he gets from the gods the knowledge of what to do and the practice of what is beneficial, but that is only another illustration of confusing the casual with the causal and mistaking a coincidence for an act of causation. Tribal honesty and loyalty, the love of mother for child are not lessons that man learns from the gods;

they represent frames of mind, habitual actions which become stereotyped as conditions of existence. Ultimately things persist in virtue of their social utility, or to put the reverse aspect of the same truth, there are certain things eliminated with a speed that is proportionate to their social danger. With advancing knowledge man modifies his conception of the gods and of what he owes them. It is this, that, with a certain humour, has been called the development of religion. On the ethical side it is a paraphrase for the humanizing of God; on the intellectual side it means leaving God with less and less to do. Religion is the only thing that develops as it dwindles.

But in all cases where the pressure of life is not strong enough to exert a rapid and purificatory influence on religious beliefs the evil of the supposed interference of the gods is unmistakable. The persistence of brutal habits, the resistance to new knowledge, wide-spread intolerance, the belief in magic and witchcraft, all these help us to realize the profound harm religion has done to human life. The service of God to man is pure myth. The evil of the belief in gods is one of the plainest facts in human history.

* * *

Civilization and the Gods.

Civilization and the belief in gods have flourished in inverse proportions. It is not the Atheist who alone says this: it is said by all kinds of believers in God. When our missionaries wish to excite the sympathies and unloose the pockets of their dupes they dilate on the evil which religion works upon people who are less civilized than themselves. But the majority of the evils, from cannibalism onward, on which these missionaries dwell are of a wholly religious origin. I agree with the missionaries that these people will never be civilized until their native religious beliefs are broken down. But that is equally true of Christians themselves. In due measure it is true of every religious body on the face of the earth. The savage is only a particular and a more striking illustration of this truth than is the Christian. The savage is less civilized than the Christian because he is more religious. The Christian is more civilized than the savage because he is less religious.

This is only another way of saying that civilization depends upon the negation of the gods. Even before man is fully conscious of why he is doing certain things he has to so conduct himself as to treat the gods as to some extent negligible factors. There is a prominent school of anthropologists which holds that civilization began when man had learned to grow his food instead of hunting it. But to do this he had to prepare the ground, to sow seeds, and to garner his crops. Of course, in those days the gods were still nixed up with these knowledgable processes, and, indeed, we still have these semi-magical performances with us in the shape of spring and harvest festivals.

But when man began to grow food he did recognize that his own knowledge and his own efforts were necessary to the success of his results. Human judgment counted for something, and human control over some of the forces around him counted for more. And from that stage to the complete elimination of the gods is a question of degree, of development and of time. The first stage of civilization is always and everywhere a direct challenge to the gods. It evidences a dim perception of the truth that the world we live in is a knowable world, a controllable world, and that we need not bother about the gods in order to get the best out of it.

* * *

Science and Religion.

It is from these beginnings that man's independence is born, and with a more developed self-consciousness, Science. And science is, in essence, incurably atheistic. True Science is only possible when even the possibility of an interference by an outside power is set on one side. Science implies prevision, and prevision involves not merely a knowledge of what has occurred and what does occur, but also the conviction that what will happen will be substantially similar to what has already happened. Science is only complete when this is taken for granted. The formula of science is "Given this and that will follow," and so it makes no allowance for the interference of any supernatural agency, and allows no room for answer to prayer. On the most favourable interpretation of science it sets God on one side. At most it says that if God exists he does not interfere, and the non-operative soon equals the non-existent. Human history presents us with a magnificent panorama of variegated folly, but it nowhere exhibits the supreme folly of men and women continuing to believe in a God after they are convinced that even if he exists he does nothing. To-day and in the world of actual events God is one of the most unemployable of the unemployed.

When I say that science dismisses God as a sheer irrelevancy I mean, of course, *science*, not scientists. Unfortunately there exists in this country a number of scientists who are always ready to provide a reconciliation between science and religion, by which they can never—even when quite honest—mean more than a rationalizing of their own religious and pre-scientific convictions. But their God plays no part in their scientific work, they find nothing for him to do, and in all their calculations and speculations no allowance whatever is made for the action of a God. They disown Atheism in theory and adopt it in practice. They believe in a God in the world, but not in the laboratory. They may use him in their idle hours, but he has no place in their work-a-day world.

* * *

Truth Versus Illusion.

A good example of the way in which the findings of modern investigators are treated may be noted in a recent utterance of Professor Julian Huxley. In the course of a broadcast address he said that science left the question of a future life where it was. It had nothing to say for or against. Well, that is simply not true, and is about as near the truth as it would be to say that science leaves the belief in demonic possession where it was, and that if anyone cares to believe that men are still possessed by demons there is nothing in modern science to contradict them. But merely on *a priori* grounds the belief in a future life is so strongly discredited that it would take very strong evidence to remove the presumption against its truth. Considerations drawn from biology and physiology, the inconceivability of a personality developed with regard to this life being possible in any other form of existence,

these and similar considerations place the belief in immortality among wholly discredited speculations.

But the scientific criticism of the belief in a soul and its survival after death is more than the mere criticism of a speculation. It amounts to a practical demonstration of its falsity. What does Professor Huxley, or any one else, make of our knowledge of the origin of the belief in a soul? In what way does it differ from the scientific demonstration of the falsity of the belief in witches and demons? When one has traced a belief to its source and one has shown that it rests upon a sheer illusion, how can one then say that the truth of that particular belief remains undecided? Its falsity is decided by its history. Science is full of the history of beliefs that have been exploded by explanation. One really cannot have it both ways. One cannot logically hold that witchcraft belongs to the region of hysteria and magical hocus-pocus, but that it is possible that there are really "spirits of the air" with whom witches enter into communication. There should be a limit to absurdity, even with a B.B.C. religious supervision.

Fundamentally, the issue between science and religion is that of a difference of interpretation of identical sets of facts. The believer in a God is not living in a world different from that in which the Atheist lives. He is living in the same world; all his beliefs, all his theories deal with the same world, and whether the interpretation of that world is religious or scientific entirely depends upon the theory adopted. It is not from one branch of science that the denial of the truth of religious speculations comes, but from all science. It is not a question of carefully weighing the evidence for and against the belief in gods; when the question is properly stated there is nothing left to discuss. All there is for discussion is the origin and history of the world's greatest illusion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Speck in Garnered Fruit.

"Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man."
Matthew Arnold.

"Persons who call themselves Christians are always the stumbling-block in the path of progress."
Sunday Dispatch, May 28.

MR. J. L. GARVIN, editor of the *Observer* (London), is a distinguished journalist, a writer of very different calibre from the many hundreds of pen-pushers in Newspaper Land. His weekly *causerie* is, from his particular viewpoint, the finest thing in contemporary journalism. The paper he conducts is one of the best of its kind, sane and trustworthy, and he has gathered round him a staff of which any editor might be proud. Yet there is a fly in the ointment. For, Mr. Garvin will persist in using the cant of clericalism, for purposes best known to himself.

In a recent leading article (*Observer*, May 21), entitled, "Clear the Slums," he exhorts the clergy of this country to rouse the public conscience with respect to this blot on our boasted civilization. So far, so good, for the clergy want far more rousing than the sleepest of their congregations. But in the course of his appeal, Mr. Garvin points to the choice example of the Prince of Wales, and the lead of the two Archbishops in the matter, forgetting, in the excitement of the moment, that no reform has ever been initiated in royal or ecclesiastical circles; and, when patronage has been given to any cause by very august personages, the cause itself has been well nigh hoary with anti-

quity. If Mr. Garvin hopes to dazzle his numerous readers by thus referring to Debrett's "Peerage" he might be reminded that the hindmost of the Tory papers have long since abandoned this practice as being unsuited to a Democratic Age.

It is when he "wallows in the pathetic" that Mr. Garvin "out Herod's Herod," and introduces the clerical snuffle, which, however suitable in a parish magazine, is decidedly out of place in a great newspaper. Listen to Mr. Garvin "playing the sedulous ape" to the dear clergy:—

The call for obliteration of the slums offers the clearest of issues in its appeal to moral sense, social duty, and religious feeling. The dullness of conscience, the indifference to humanity, the ignoring of physical and spiritual injury by which such things are allowed to remain—these are the very pith of Paganism and Unbelief.

"An ounce of civet, good apothecary!" The racy words of Shakespeare rise to the mind on reading the unsavoury twaddle in the quoted paragraph. If this much had been written by a young curate, or shouted by a hot-gospeller, anxious like the fat boy in Pickwick to make his hearers' flesh creep, one could understand it; but that a man occupying a responsible editorial chair should let it pass, is so remarkable as to excite comment. What needs strong criticism is his rehashing of the silly slander on Freethinkers which has done such service in so many Christian pulpits and on so many platforms.

Mr. Garvin glibly ascribes "indifference to humanity" to Freethinkers. Does he remember that Florence Nightingale, "the lady with the lamp," who ministered to the wounded in the Crimea, was a heretic? Has this editor never heard of Walt Whitman, who spent four years of his life attending the war-hospitals during the American Civil War, and who wrecked his superb constitution by his untiring devotion to his suffering fellows? And what of Robert Owen, who built infant schools, and improved houses for his workers, and strove to construct the ideal society of the future? Even the activities of Henry S. Salt and the Humanitarian League, which did such magnificent work for a quarter of a century, should be sufficient to shame Mr. Garvin.

Other names leap to the memory. Thomas Paine pleaded for the abolition of slavery; and for old-age pensions for the poor. He besought the young French Republic not to imitate the bad example of Monarchy, and not to stain itself with blood. Shelley, the Atheist poet, was a thorough humanitarian. To help the needy and relieve the sick seemed to him a simple duty. He even attended a London hospital to acquire the medical knowledge that should prove of service in his philanthropic work. And what of the Sunday League, founded by Freethinkers for the express purpose of enlivening Sunday when Christians had succeeded in making it the gloomiest of all the days in the year.

Mr. Garvin, in his haste, has been guilty of the worst form of cant. He understands little of the religion he defends, and less of the Freethought, which he attacks. If belief in a God is actually necessary to make a man a humanitarian, how comes it that the votes of the Christian Bishops in the House of Lords is a shameful record? Scores of measures for bettering the conditions of the working class have been opposed consistently by these very pious ecclesiastics. Nothing but self-interest excites their action. To the workers of this country they were as indifferent as the Negus of Abyssinia to his slaves, of whom there are over three millions to-day. And Abyssinia has been a Christian country far longer than Britain!

Humanism, indeed! Not even one bishop voted in the House of Lords for the abolition of the flogging of women in prisons, or for the abolition of the lash in the British Army and Navy. If Mr. Garvin knows these things, why does he seek to discredit Freethought. If he does not know them, what is to be said of the education of journalists who pose as leaders of public opinion, and light-bearers in darkness.

Royal and priestly patrons of reform have never been wanting when all the danger is over, and all the work done. They prefer to enter the arena when the fighting is finished, and to share in the victories that were won by better men than themselves. Their function is to pat the pioneers on the back, and to enjoy the social and political profits of this ingenious policy. In this particular instance, after years of hard fighting by real humanitarians, the National Government has decided at long last that the evils of slums must be dealt with on a large scale. It does not matter a straw whether the clergy approve or disapprove. To-morrow they will be once more blessing regimental flags, and christening battleships. Should war again occur, they will be once more ready to act as *padres* with officers' pay, at a safe distance from the front. They are the Messrs. Facing-Both-Ways, ready to address their supplications to the "Prince of Peace," or the "God of Battles," as occasion prompts, and for the usual consideration.

Sixty years ago Lord Shaftesbury, himself a philanthropist, asked scornfully, "Of what use are the Bishops in the House of Lords?" He had reason for asking, for the Bishops never supported him in his life-long crusade on behalf of British children. These prelates, who mouth ethics for a living, were very shy of putting their precepts into practice. They could not admit that it was wrong to hang people for stealing a few shilling's worth of goods. They could not be made to see that Jews, Freethinkers and Nonconformists were human beings. They were cold to the suggestion that tired shop-assistants needed seats. To popular control of education they always turned very deaf ears. The pages of Hansard's Parliamentary Reports show that the record of the Bishops as legislators is a bad one, and Mr. Garvin's diatribe against Freethinkers will not hide from the discerning reader the priestly record of inhumanity extending over a century and a quarter in the House of Lords. If there were no other indictment of the assumed value of religion, the votes of the Christian Bishops in Parliament would condemn it utterly.

In sober truth, and not in the cant of journalism, let us wish for the recovery of Mr. Garvin. There are plenty of editors for whom the inscription, "Died of the Christian Fallacy," is good, and good enough. But the editor of the *Observer*, which is a great newspaper edited by a remarkable man, should not be one of these. Let British readers have one weekly newspaper that is free from slop and sentimentalism; one that a sane man can read without being too much ashamed of his own species.

MIMNERMUS.

They that do take more delight to have their affections chafed and warmed by the labour of another man speaking ardently out of a Pulpit, than by their own labour in doing that which they already know, are like those idle ones that chose rather to heat themselves at an unhealthy fire than by their own bodily exercise and labour.

George Snell (1649).

You've Said a Mouthful, Big Boy!

THE annotated anthology of apothegms which we set out to compile has thus far covered the utterances, during 1932, of eminent persons, in varied walks of life, on such subjects as the B.B.C., the Cinema, Politics and Religion (*Freethinker*, May 21). We now come to the final stage in which the opinions expressed treat of miscellaneous topics, of which science claims the lion's share. As in the case of Religion, of the Cinema and most other subjects, the largest amount of verbosity emanates from those irrepressibly wild weavers of words, the clergy. However, since the poor creatures have really little else to do in life but talk, let us at least derive what benefit we can from that source—whether it be serious or humorous.

Dr. Percy Dearmer—who, despite the conveniently misleading title, is not a medical man—declared that: "*Scientists have enormously helped the cause of religion, and in evolution they have gone a long way to explaining the problem of evil.*" They have, of course, not gone so far in explaining this problem as the Bible and Dr. Dearmer. But coming from such quarters, it must be admitted that this remark is a great and gracious concession to that father of heresy, Science. God's unvarnished explanation of this problem, as given by his own inspired Word, really was a trifle hard to swallow—even though it did take the shape of an apple. Yet to some clerics Science appears to be doing the very opposite to solving problems. Father Ronald Knox—who, despite the inconveniently misleading title, is not a paterfamilias—said: "*Is it really true that modern science is making it difficult to believe in miracles? I am only frightened of waking up to find that modern science will not allow us to believe in anything else.*" Did we not know the fondness of Roman Catholics for mentally-obfuscating figures of speech, this statement might puzzle us. For why should Father Ronnie be scared at finding his own fond beliefs and teachings vindicated? Surely he ought to be thankful to science for convincing the public of matters that Christian teaching alone has failed to convince them of, despite a couple of millenia of every form of mental and physical persuasion. But the truth, of course, is that this holy word-spinner is slyly inviting those who are sufficiently gullible to confuse the "miracles," or marvellous discoveries, of Science with the "miracles," or marvellous yarns, of the Bible. That the former are matters of verifiable fact, while the latter are specimens of unverifiable fiction is, to Pa Knox, an entirely negligible consideration.

In this connexion the statement of Mr. Martin Armstrong is pertinent. "*To most of us to-day,*" said this gentleman, "*science is a vast collection of mysteries which we take on trust from those who are competent to tell us about them. This, in fact, is an age of superstition if ever there was one.*" We do not know what Mr. Armstrong's variety of religion is, but if we were given one guess we would say Roman Catholic. We admit that the acceptance of "mysteries" on trust, whether from those who are or who are not "competent" to tell us, savours strongly of "superstition." At the same time we confess to a preference for that form of "superstition" which takes on trust "mysteries" that are based on verified and verifiable knowledge, to the other form of "superstition" which takes on trust "mysteries" that are declared, by the very persons "competent" to tell us about them, to be beyond human understanding. Personally we take nothing on trust, unless we have

some cogent reason for trusting. And our most cogent reason is a trustworthiness that has been proved by repeated verification and consistency. Which does not mean just believing what scientists or parsons tell us to believe.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton—another Roman Catholic with a predilection for mentally-obfuscating paradox—would scarcely approve of this attitude of ours. He declared that: "*There is something strange in the modern mind, by which a material cause always seems more like a real cause.*" The probable explanation of this is that, to the modern mind, an immaterial cause always seems more like an unreal cause. This may seem strange to Mr. Chesterton. To us, however, it would seem stranger still if a spade were not a spade and the product of material manufacture, but were the ectoplasmic emanation of some phantasmic phenomenon.

The fact that seems to emerge from these racy comments on Science is that their authors appear to be dealing with a subject which is somewhat beyond the capacity of their intelligence to understand. But need we wonder at it? "*The scientific mind,*" asserts Mr. Harold Nicholson, "*is a trifle shocked by the increasing tendency to popularize its mysteries.*" (How these journalists do love that beautiful word "mystery"! Mr. Nicholson implies that scientists have some hidden reason for wishing to conceal their "mysteries" from public gaze. But the truth is quite otherwise. The scientific mind, unlike the priestly mind, is only too anxious that intelligible explanations should be provided for the facts it asserts. What does shock it, however, is the unintelligible and often semi-religious gibberish with which penny-a-liner journalists cloak what purports to be an "explanation." For the benefit of such mystery-lovers as Messrs. Armstrong, Chesterton, Knox and Nicholson, we might point out that the difference between the "mysteries" of Science and those of Religion is this: the former are understood by those competent to tell us about them, and can be understood by anyone who will go to the trouble of personal study; whereas the latter are admitted to be baffling and beyond comprehension by the very persons who claim to be the most competent to tell us about them. Moreover, these very persons proclaim to be in direct communication with that reputedly omniscient cause of the mysteries themselves.

Let us now leave Science and pass on to the Miscellanea. On the general subject of knowledge we have a few interesting utterances. Lord MacMillan declared that: "*While you are all presumed at your peril to know the law, no steps whatever are taken by anybody to tell you anything about it.*" This knock at our educational methods deserves notice. We still have that useless subject religion taught in our schools, while thousands of clerics profess to give us instruction on this topic once in seven days, not to mention the periodic lectures and talks from the B.B.C. Yet the odd thing is that, when it comes to understanding and obeying the secular law, a knowledge of God's law is about as much use as a sick-headache. Here is a mystery indeed! Then we have the remark by Dr. S. Heming Belfrage, who said: "*At present the average citizen bases his ideas on health and disease on traditional beliefs and old wives' tales.*" What a name to give to those inspired utterances on these subjects which are to be found in God's Holy Word and the writings of the Holy Fathers! Can Dr. Belfrage really mean that prayer and fasting will not cast out devils, that spittle and mud do not cure blindness, that the bones of Saints and bits of the True Cross will not heal diseases, that the miracles at Lourdes and elsewhere are

not more potent than all the doctors and surgeons in the world? Does he really lump all these traditional beliefs with old wives' tales? Tut, tut!

Another aspect of knowledge is touched upon by that gentle, scientific soul, whose wisdom on one subject and credulity on another constitute the most brilliant example of dual personality—Sir Oliver Lodge. "The word sceptic," he said, "properly means one who looks into a thing; and I have no objection to that kind of scepticism." Of course, this interpretation of the word is not likely to meet with religious approval. To do this, Sir Oliver should have covered himself by adding: "provided that when they look, they do not look too closely." For it is a notorious fact that, the closer one investigates a mystery, whether it be spiritistic or religious, the more rapidly do vague scepticism and agnosticism melt into clear Rationalism and Atheism. Apropos of which the Bishop of Durham prophesied that: "There is going to be a catastrophe to religion, we can well certainly prove a catastrophe to religion, we can appreciate the opposition of the Churches to the progress of education on rational lines. "Since religion must lose when education wins," the Churches chant in unison, "then to hell with education, and let's all crash together." The Pope, on the other hand, sees a different alternative before the world. "Humanity has once again to decide whether it is to be with God or against God," declared His Infallible Holiness. This shifting of responsibility from the broad back of the Omnipotent Creator to the scrawny shoulders of his insignificant creatures, seems rather hard lines on the latter. Let it be whispered, however, that the choice does not daunt us overmuch. For all that the priests may blare from their pulpits, God and his Mighty Hosts become more soporific and quiescent as common-sense and education spread. As a "very present help in trouble," the Almighty and his minions seem to be growing ever more conspicuous by their absence—for the very simple reason that, imagination apart, "there ain't no sich thing."

In conclusion, we cannot do better than quote Mr. G. K. Chesterton again. "Even good writers," quoth he, "can write too much, and bad writers cannot write too little." We accept the rebuke in good grace, merely adding *en passant*: "Why not have a good pull at your own pipe, G.K.?"

C. S. FRASER.

Human Cattle and Sheep.

In one of his novels Mr. Warwick Deeping makes a suggestive observation which must be valued by lovers of freedom. He is writing of a wealthy and aristocratic lady: "Mrs. St. George had influence. She knew people who knew other people who had only to say a few words or write a chit, and doors were conveniently opened. For regulations are fences erected to control the mass of unimportant citizens who are passed in and out like cattle, good, orderly cattle." The period in which these words were written was the last year of the war.

The educational system imposed upon the nation by religious bigots has kept alive the cowardly mob instinct with all its concomitant evils. As ecclesiastical tyranny diminishes the exercise of freedom in thought becomes more general. Perhaps it was somewhat cynical to say, as Carlyle did, that the population of these islands were mostly fools; but it contained a considerable sub-stratum of truth. Only Carlyle never escaped the influences of his early teaching in matters religious—though he marched far ahead of the ortho-

doxy of his native land—and never fully appreciated what a terrible part supernaturalism had played and continued to play in retarding progress and keeping human beings in a condition of servility and intellectual bondage.

Christians begin as sheep and they finish up in ultimate glory as sheep. All they like sheep originally went astray, and at last they are to assemble as sheep at the right hand of God on the Judgment Day. The giddy, self-willed and independent goats on the left are to be consigned to hell. Meanwhile most Christians thoroughly enjoy roast or grilled mutton and lamb; but few appear to care for cooked goat. This may arise from some mysterious dispensation, conceived in parable or allegory whereby, symbolically, the roasting and grilling of the goats are postponed until after the Last Day. One has some difficulty in seeing why the goat should be likened to the most wicked and abandoned human being. It is rather a slur on the goat, who after all seems to us who have had him (or her) for a pet, a being with more character than the bleating sheep who is wholly devoid of intelligence. If it is said his wool furnishes us with clothing one may retort that the goat during life provides us with the finest milk, and after death with food for non-vegetarians who have a taste for goat, and with shelter in the form of his skin.

Human cattle and sheep, the products of centuries of feudal despotism and false clerical teaching, always have their noses near the ground. To them the clarion call, "Give me Liberty or Death," is but a noise which for a moment causes them to raise their heads and dumbly look about them with an empty, unknowing and unmeaning stare. They only understand the commands of their shepherds, rulers and governors and others set in authority over them. These they must obey and be damn thankful to them too for letting them graze and fatten for the Christmas markets. They are promised a great feast some day in the future—and they will be there. But they will be the feast. They won't see the glittering decorations on the walls, or hear the sounds of singing men and singing women, or the notes of the harp, psaltery, sackbut and fiddle. Perhaps their spirits will pass into future animals of their own type by a process of reincarnation, and the old vicious circle will be gone round again and again—world without end—Amen!

They say you must not confuse the human soul with the beast that perisheth. We are aware of the vanity and conceit of the Christian which tells him that he is immortal, and that all other beings perish when they expire, because they have no "soul." But says another religionist, the human being who dies as an infidel also perishes like one of the beasts that perish. He is snuffed out and eternally annihilated. Not so, says yet another—he will spend eternity—(how you "spend" eternity is a problem—it is a contradiction in terms) you will spend eternity, you damned unbelieving wretch, on a hot plate in the nethermost hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, where there is continual wailing and gnashing of teeth, where the smoke of your torments rises up for ever and ever and ever.

Pretty picture—what? Burns wrote:—

The fear o' Hell's the hangman's whip
Tae haud the wretch in order.

How many have understood what the Scottish Bard implied by that? *Firstly*, he saw the crude hideousness of this terrorist coercion, and *secondly*, he demanded an appeal to and an educing of the finest human qualities in its place. He lauded the glory of being independent. He denounced and satirized the overbearing oppressor and the Holy Willies who were his sycophants. In his correspondence he reveals his

inability to place or identify the "Poores Abune." But he knew *man*—he loved *man*—he praised the honest, sturdy, rustic wight—he encouraged *man* to shake off the shackles of superstition and wrong, and lying and ignorance, and tyranny and fear. But has Burns' teaching been obeyed? On the contrary his teaching, particularly in his own land has been misrepresented, twisted and distorted to suit the clerics who are represented at many a Burns' Anniversary, and who mouth banalities—banal and false enough to make the great poet turn in his grave! If the teaching of Burns had been thoroughly understood, appreciated and followed, should we see these masses of pious cringers who to-day abase themselves in this so-called free country? "Mostly fools," said Carlyle. But how, with a religious system of education which suppresses freedom and individuality, could we expect anything else?

All we, or most of us, like sheep have been led astray by priestcraft and humbug. Dumb driven cattle, we bear the yoke of tyranny without a murmur. Have Freethinkers not a mission? Governments do nothing to emancipate their peoples. The peoples are their milch kine! So it is that the international usurer, moneylender and gambler flourish like the green bay tree, and millions are consigned to a state of existence that is but a living death. Will it boot the blood-sucking parasites and leeches for ever to bluff hungry humanity with the mirage of mansions in the sky?

IGNOTUS.

National Secular Society.

EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT.

THE period covered by this report has been a busy, if not a very eventful one. The work at headquarters tends steadily to increase, and that may be taken as an indication of greater activity throughout the country. In this connexion it may be mentioned that in addition to an increase in the number of new members admitted, six new Branches of the Society have been formed and several more are in process of formation.

Accounts of the work of the Branches appear so regularly in the *Freethinker* that it is not necessary to give more than a rapid survey of what is being done. The Glasgow Branch, to which reference was made in the last report, is laying itself out for an extended and intensive campaign, and bids fair to act as a centre of revival for that part of Scotland. It is taking for the next winter season a larger and more centrally situated hall, and the Executive has promised its assistance in the venture. On Tyneside the activities of Mr. J. Brighton and others have led to the formation of new Branches and these are working well together. We are glad to see that the veteran, Mr. J. Bartram, is here as active and enthusiastic as ever in the work. Liverpool reports a better season than usual. It opened with the large Picton Hall crowded to listen to a lecture from your President; and other speakers have been lecturing to a "Full House" nearly every Sunday during the winter, and with good results. This Branch owes much to the devoted work of several local speakers to whom the thanks of the Society are due. Birkenhead has also been busier than usual and reports well-attended meetings.

Manchester keeps the flag flying well, and, we believe is considering an extension of its work. There is room for greater activity in so large a city, and the number of unattached Freethinkers there, if they can

be induced to lend a hand, should make the work easier for all. The neighbouring Branch at Stockport is doing good work, not merely by meetings, but by its active interest in all social questions that touch the work of the Society. Birmingham is not quite so active as one would wish, but a change for the better may occur there soon. The large meeting addressed by the President in the Town Hall leaves no doubt as to the amount of latent support that exists in the city. South Wales is again getting active in the work. Swansea has, with the assistance of the Executive, acquired a home for itself in which it holds regular meetings; and a couple of debates—one in Swansea and one in Port Talbot, in which the President represented Freethought—appear to have excited interest in the Society's work. In the West of England, Plymouth remains the only place in which there exists a Branch of the Society. This Branch is fortunate in having discovered and developed new local talent, which has enabled it successfully to carry on its work. But lack of Branches in the West does not mean lack of Freethinkers. The question is that of bringing them together and to set them working.

In London, indoor meetings are held regularly in South London, and frequently by other Branches, with occasional special lectures arranged by the Executive. But the main part of the work in London is carried on in the open air. Hundreds of meetings are held during the year and none can tell how far the message thus delivered reaches. Open-air work is also becoming a stronger feature of the work of Branches outside London, and the Executive wishes to place on record its high appreciation of the ungrudging and arduous labours of the men and women engaged in this task.

It is also to be noted that the Study Circle at the Society's Offices is being carried on by Mr. A. D. McLaren, and is proving helpful and interesting to those who attend. This is a feature we should like to see become part of the regular work of every Branch in the country.

On the social side the annual dinner held in January, and a "Social" held in the Caxton Hall in March were notably successful. At the dinner well over 200 guests were present, a larger number than had ever before assembled at such a function. The number of visitors from the Provinces showed a marked increase, Liverpool members quite filling one of the tables. We hope to see this success more than equalled next year. The "Social" serves the purpose of bringing many members of the younger generation of Freethinkers into a more intimate intercourse than is found possible at other public gatherings, and more than one of this kind of gathering might profitably be held during ensuing years.

During the year we have to regret the death of Mr. Samuel Pulman, a very old member of the Manchester Branch, and of Mr. James Neate, one of the oldest of the Society's members, and whose active work in connexion with the Society goes back for half a century. James Neate was one of the least self-seeking of men, unfaltering in his adherence to principle, and a devoted Freethinker. By his will the residue of his estate passes to the Secular Society Limited on the death of his widow.

Another loss to the ranks of London Freethinkers occurred in the death of Mrs. R. H. Rosetti. The sympathy of the whole of the Society was with our Secretary on the death of his wife. Hypatia Rosetti was a fine character and a lovable lady. The daughter of staunch Freethinkers, she made a stand for her opinions from her earliest years. Her death

(Continued on page 378.)

Acid Drops.

The world is full of ingratitude! After Mr. Macdonald's care in attending Church regularly, when in Lossiemouth, an attack upon him was made in the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. The speaker said:—

I am sorry he is a Scotsman. He has done much to obliterate the clear line of demarcation between the sacred and the secular. While paying lip homage to the value of the Scottish Sabbath, Mr. Macdonald is responsible for holding more Cabinet meetings on the Lord's Day than any of his predecessors.

But has any of his predecessors attended Church more regularly, when on holiday, than has Mr. Macdonald?

We are informed that Mr. Macdonald will shortly issue a reply to this attack, in which he will explain that he does not attend Cabinet meetings on the "Lord's Day," to do business, or to decide anything, but merely in the soothing atmosphere of the Sabbath to gain an impression whether it is advisable to contemplate the sense of what the rest of the Cabinet is discussing, or whether the appointment of a Conference to settle the advisability of having an open mind that will enable one to look at world problems from a world point of view, or as to the possibility of there ever being peace in a world while it is constantly at war, and to affirm the truly Christian teaching that while men are filled with hate they can never love one another.

It is good to get the truth regarding the reading of the Bible by the Roman Catholic Church. Here it is given by one of its own journals:—

The Church does not and never did allow the indiscriminate reading of *unauthorized* versions of the Bible, but she always and still does encourage the reading of authorized Catholic versions accompanied by suitable notes.

That settles the question once for all on the reading of the English Authorized or Revised Versions of the Bible by Roman Catholics. They are *not* allowed to be read as of course they are not Catholic versions, and mostly are not accompanied by notes. Query—which is the True Word of God, the English or Catholic Versions of the Bible?

How refreshing it is to meet a Christian who believes everything in the New Testament, instead of trying to explain the miracles and other nonsense away as symbolical or allegorical. A writer in a religious journal recently had a long leader on the Ascension, in which he affirms his belief that Jesus flew straight up to God after the Resurrection. "Apart from the Ascension," he tells us, "the contribution of our Lord to history is impossible to understand, and the future of man is robbed of hope," and "The Ascension throws light not only on the Person and work of our Lord Christ, but also upon the nature of man as man." This ought to silence those voluble Christians who nowadays insist that the Ascension and the Resurrection should be understood only in the "spiritual" sense. If Jesus lived at all, he must have ascended to the Father exactly as described in the Gospels, for all things are possible to God Almighty. The only question now is, Did Jesus really live?

The New Education Bill seems to be received with very mixed feelings by Church people. The President of the National Society assured the members at a recent meeting that, "Our (Church) schools would appear to be in a more assured position to-day than they have been for many years past." On the other hand, a Church writer claims that "once the Bill becomes law, thousands—literally—of Church schools will be in jeopardy." In fact he becomes almost tearful when he considers the fate of the "village schools" all over the country—a blow

at the English Church—under the Bill. His final conclusion is that "It is a Bill for the disestablishment of the Church school, and the disintegration of the whole plan and system of the Church for its schools." If he is right, and we hope he is, then the first real advance in secular education is being made; and secular education is the only real and fair solution of the religious problem of State education to-day.

The Bishop of Exeter has been denouncing Birth Control, and points out he has had nine children himself. Safe in a good job with a fat salary, it is easy to talk of rearing a large family. We would like to see what the dear Bishop would do if he were unemployed, on the dole (or not), and living in a single slum room with nine children. Would his wife look forward with joy, in these circumstances, to each happy event? How would he clothe and feed nine children on the dole? The reasons he gives against Birth Control are about the last word in fatuity. How could builders be expected to live if no houses were required owing to the dearth of population? How could teachers possibly teach if there were no children to teach? To these questions we need only add, "How could Bishops live if there existed no encouragement to breed fools?"

Genuine Christians seem to be at loggerheads over the "Group Movement"—the movement which is to bring back the straying lambs to the fold, and also to annihilate infidelity. At a Diocesan Conference held recently in Newcastle, the Provost of Edinburgh Cathedral claimed that true Christian fellowship was to be found in the Movement, and that it was a real contribution to Christianity. The Rev. V. C. Johnstone flatly disagreed with the Provost. He proved that the tendencies of the Movement were harmful, and he objected to it as an "American short cut to God." Now what is the plain man to believe? Another example of the beautiful harmony of Christian thought?

A Christian writer has been analysing the various speeches made by Roosevelt, Hitler and other world-famous workers in the cause of peace, and sadly comes to the conclusion that there is "no security without God"—who is, unfortunately left out of the various conferences. Strange how Christians never learn. The late (and great) war brought God in on every possible occasion. Every German soldier had to carry a belt on which was described, "God with us," and every German officer had to reaffirm his thorough belief in religion. English, French, Italian, Russian and American flags and battleships were constantly blessed by various bishops and priests, and all soldiers had to take part in religious parades and ceremonies. The Bishop of London was certain that God sent a battalion of angels to beat the Germans at Mons, and crowds of surviving soldiers are quite sure God looked after them personally. Yet God allowed the war to last over four years with an appalling amount of bloodshed and misery, and seems to have done nothing since for His dear children. Our slogan would be, "No security *with* God!" Man alone is the arbiter of his fate.

Roman Catholic editors often get real "teasers" to answer. As the Holy Church believes in the Devil as a real personage with the same intensity as in God and Jesus, the question was put whether the Jews believed in a genuine Devil? The editor's answer is delightful. "The post-exile Jews possessed a clearer idea of the Devil than that possessed by the pre-exilic ones," and the only consolation offered was that the pre-exilic Jews believed in evil spirits! It was really too bad that these early Jews did not believe in exactly the same Devil so vividly and powerfully depicted by the Church; but believers were exhorted not to worry about the failings of the Jews in this matter. The question was settled once for all by the Church at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The existence of a genuine, real, personal Devil,

horns, tail and shovel complete, was then thoroughly established, and any Roman Catholic who has any doubts on the matter is in danger of discovering from personal experience the blunder he has made.

Dean Inge has been denouncing "spiritualism and the cult of necromancy" which, he says, show what "crude notions of the future life exist amongst the half-educated." This is rough on St. John the Divine, who is the reputed author of some of the crudest notions about the future life that have been printed. Any notion of a future life must be crude if, as Dean Inge says, "faith in human immortality stands or falls with the belief in God." The belief in God is still held in all its original crudity by negroes—for example see the play "Green Pastures"—but it has faded almost to vanishing point in such educated theological circles as those which the Dean of St. Paul's adorns. The Dean himself, we suspect, has his doubts about the "golden gates," and "jasper seas" of the Revelation, and if his idea is not as "crude" as that in the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible, it is not more credible than the necromantic and spiritualistic ideas about the future life which he denounces and deplores.

"Artifex," who writes with a certain grace on theological topics in the *Manchester Guardian*, deals in a recent paper with "Psychology and Religion." He fears that many ministers of religion who try to be physicians and surgeons for sick souls, are "bungling operators and unskilful in diagnosis." He calls attention to a recent work on *Pastoral Psychology*, in which, he says, "the most useful part is that which treats of clerical failures and mistakes." He admits that "some of the things we habitually pride ourselves on are made to look very different under the searchlight which the authors bring to bear on them." The clergy, not less than doctors and lawyers, must keep up to date to "avoid becoming settled on the lees." The trouble is that when the clergyman tries to keep up to date in this realm of psychology he must inevitably be impressed as much with the unfitness of "spiritual" remedies for physical and mental ills, as he is by the remarkable advance in understanding and treating them made by modern psychology—and pathology. The more he understands the nature of the task, the less he will think of his chances of being able to tackle it with the equipment which "pastoral" study can provide.

Quite a number of Catholics get a little mixed on questions of faith and fact these days, in spite of being constantly told by the Church to believe on faith irrespective of fact. The famous St. Veronica handed her handkerchief to "Our Lord" when on the way to Calvary, and he imprinted his likeness on it. The portrait shows a beautiful Saxon type (rather like Durer) with crown of thorns, and is perhaps responsible for many Nazis nowadays claiming Jesus as a true Nordic. While disclaiming any "historic proof" for the incident, all Roman Catholics must believe it, as "this remarkable relic actually exists in St. Peter's, at Rome." Fortunately, another genuine relic of the same kind, with a similar portrait of "Our Lord" exists also in Milan Cathedral, so believers now have "double proof" of its authenticity. Blessed indeed are those who believe on Faith alone!

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England, Rev. C. C. Goodiet, is apparently one of those seemingly liberal-minded clergymen who, faced by the problem of thought and life to-day, see them mainly as a danger to their creed. Mr. Goodiet, boldly proclaims the failure of the existing social and economic systems, and, as boldly, affirms the futility of the essentials, or what were the essentials, of Christianity. The "busy bee" ideal in industry, he finds as out of date as "the saint of bygone ages, who while working strenuously morning, noon and night, consoled himself with the reflection that he would enjoy perpetual rest in heaven." So he proposes that "the Church should form within itself a determination to seek

for such alteration of the economic system as would tend to bring about the disappearance of social maladies." If "social maladies" disappear the characteristic Christian "virtues" will have no use and no scope. All the elements that must go to a constructive change in world-order involve the negation of those standards of which the Church has always been the champion.

The following is, unlikely as it may seem, from the report (in the *Dundee Courier*, May 5) of the proceedings at the Representative Church Council of the Scottish Episcopal Church at Perth. The speaker was Miss M. H. Macdonald. She said, "An old Presbyterian Minister once had to give out a notice about a woman speaking. It was very much against the grain for him, and when he had done it he added, 'Whin I was a laddie I went in yin day and said to my mother there was a hen crawling in the back yaird. She said: 'Thraw its neck.'" Miss Macdonald, evidently a plucky one, went on to tell the assembled clergy that she "felt perfectly certain that there were a great many of them in that hall who would have the greatest pleasure in treating her in the same way, for she was there to advocate women clergy!"

Only the seconder of her motion voted for it, but Miss Macdonald hit out in a manner not likely to win approval from parsons. "How do you expect women to take orders from some snivelling curate?" she asked. She sneers at parsons who go to mothers' meetings and "pray that they may be good wives and mothers," and read the prayers "like a parrot." *The Primus* said "there was one thing a man could do that a woman could not, namely be a priest in the Church of God." Miss Macdonald, confident as ever, said that women are in heaven and on earth, and will not be kept out of either place. She did not mention the other region where, as is well known, it is hard to get near the fire for parsons.

Dr. Edward Woods, Bishop of Croydon, preached in Canterbury Cathedral on "Industrial Sunday" (April 30) a sermon on "Christianity and Industry to-day." It is printed in the *Listener*, and, in the same issue, is a talk by Father M. G. D'Arcy, on "Christ, the Son of God." *The Listener*, like the Corporation that issues it, is nothing if not pious, and piety, as exemplified by these two examples, is a mixture of assertion and falsehood. We will be content with the Bishop for example. He repeats Mr. Chesterton's threadbare epigram that "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and not tried." Mr. Chesterton, says the Bishop, was "perfectly right." He was, in fact, perfectly wrong. For a thousand years Christianity was tried, and, so far from it having been difficult to try it, those who tried it out had behind them the power of kings, the force of armies, the control of the bodies and minds of men. Its opponents were killed or imprisoned. It had a closed field and the favour of all who had wealth and self-interest to give to its service. And if ever anything in the records of human history was tried and found wanting it has been the Christian religion. It is only since the Renaissance, and, to a greater extent, since the Eighteenth Century that it has been more and more "difficult" to get it "tried" because its record is now the common knowledge of all literate communities. To say, as the Bishop of Croydon said, that "the Christian solution of the world's immediate problem" is the way to achieve "a stupendous transformation" in the lives of men and nations is, to put it bluntly, to talk rot.

Who murders hope in the world to-day, says the *Spectator*, literally murders flesh and blood. Nevertheless, freethinkers will continue to murder hope—the special hope which Christianity claims to provide. For they believe, on the evidence of Christian history, that this hope has everywhere and at all times been a pernicious inspiration and sustainer. Who murders a false hope in the world to-day literally renders valuable service to the human race.

THE FREETHINKER

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Sugar Plums.

Many people would regard the weather that prevailed over the period of the N.S.S. Conference as delightful. For ourselves we consider it damnable—using the word as properly and theologically descriptive. But in spite of the heat the delegates and members at the business meetings stuck doggedly to their task, and got through it with an attention and an earnestness that was inspiring to all. The President's hope that the Conference would not forget in whatever difference of opinions might arise that they were united in a common interest in a common cause was quite fulfilled.

Every Branch of the Society was represented, and the number of members present quite filled the Palm Court of the Grafton Hotel on both morning and afternoon. The discussions on the various resolutions reached a genuinely high level, and generally augured well for the future of the Society and of the Freethought Movement.

Considering the wonderful weather and the temptation to spend one's time outdoors, it was surprising to see how well-filled Conway Hall was for the evening meeting. A round of applause greeted the President when he led his speakers on the platform punctually at 7 o'clock. His opening words consisted of a few words of apology for inviting people to come indoors in such weather, but the audience was certainly a testimony to the strength of the N.S.S. in London. All the speakers were in good form, and it was remarkable that so many speakers, with no kind of arrangement beforehand could deal with the same topic from so many different angles.

Mr. McLaren was the first speaker, and dwelt upon the value to the country of men such as Bradlaugh and Foote, and upon our pressing need for sincere and plain speech. Mr. Le Maine said that the great work of the N.S.S. was to eliminate intolerance, and that to take part in its work was to share in the great work of the emancipation of mankind. Dr. Carmichael delighted the meeting with one of his characteristic speeches, the profundity of which is so well disguised under a charming simplicity. Mr. Whitehead amusingly, but convincingly dwelt upon some absurd characteristics of Christian Theism, and roused much laughter by his exposition. Mr. Rosetti's clear and incisive speech on the fear inspired by the Churches, and its consequences on life, was excellent, while Mr. J. Clayton caused roars of laughter with his exposition of the manner in which some faith-healing fakirs exploited the ignorance of the people.

Mr. A. B. Moss, who is now in his seventy-eighth year, all but sixteen of which has been passed in the service of

the N.S.S., was called upon for a speech, and well deserved the hearty applause that greeted him, and which followed its conclusion. There was nothing of the feebleness of age in either his thought or his voice. To him, at least, Freethought appears to have served as a constant inspiration. Finally, Mr. Cohen, who was obviously feeling the strain of a very long day, wound up the proceedings with a review of the work of Freethought, the part it played in the present and the part it was destined to play in the future.

On the Saturday evening preceding the Conference members and delegates were entertained by the Executive at the Grafton Hotel. The Palm Court was filled, and members overflowed into some of the lounges. Many happy greetings were exchanged, and the conversations were only interrupted to listen to the delightful singing of Miss Tuson. It was an enjoyable evening as a prelude to what turned out to be a very busy day.

We print the Executive's Annual Report this week. The report of the business proceedings will appear in our next issue.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Birmingham from to-day (June 17) until Friday. The local Branch of the N.S.S. will co-operate at all the meetings. If the local saints, whether members of the Branch or not, will support the meetings it might be made the starting point of increasing activity in the area.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. will hold open-air meetings on Sunday evenings at Platt Fields, at 6.30. The first meeting will be to-day (Sunday) and Mr. J. Clayton of Burnley will be the speaker. It is hoped to carry on the meetings until the commencement of the indoor season, and all local saints are invited to help make the series a complete success.

In *Health and Education Through Self-Mastery* (Watts, 3s. 6d.), Mr. Anthony Ludovici describes a treatment for the attainment of self-control of mind and body. The book has a Foreword by Dr. Alfred Cox, and is largely indebted to the well known work of Matthias Alexander. As to whether Mr. Ludovici has made "the most momentous discovery of modern times"—"book jackets" are often reminiscent of film posters in their adjectival extravagance—the reader can, and we expect will decide, for himself. People who see themselves with only "a thin partition" between them and the "borderline" of insanity would not, on the face of it, seem to be the best subjects for a treatment which the author says may be "the most humiliating experience a man can undergo." Character, we suggest to him, may be partly in "resistance"—especially Christian character—but "the use of the self" is a pre-occupation which may well be the first sign of failure in reasonable resistance. The whole theme bristles with what is, in essence, exactly the same fussiness about the life of the body and the mind as mystical writers indulged in about the soul.

The Religious Orders Bill has now become law in Spain. This Bill confiscates all Church property to the State, while allowing the Church full use of all property in the possession of the Church. It also forbids priests to play the part of teachers in schools. In this country there would be no need of a law taking property away from the Church, since all so-called Church property already belongs to the State. And all that the Spanish law appears to do is to prevent the Church taking the immense wealth it has acquired by more or less discreditable methods out of the country.

The Pope has denounced the Bill as a "master work of iniquity against God." But what on earth does God want with the property of the Church? We fancy that for God one ought to read "Roman Catholic Church." And the Pope appears to forget, although students of history will not, that it was the greed of the Church, and the immense wealth acquired that led other countries to take much the same step as a measure of self-protection.

(Continued from page 374.)

removed one who was a loved and loyal personality from the circle that knew her.

Although not at his death a member of the N.S.S. the death of John M. Robertson marked the passing of an outstanding figure in Freethought. His reading was of the widest, and his scholarship fundamentally sound. His contributions to the history of Freethought and to the study of religions are of abiding value, and many more than those who make acknowledgments will be indebted to his work. In addition to his distinctly Freethought writings, his work on Economics and on literary and Shakespearian subjects held a high place in this and other countries.

On the financial side it must again be noted that the statement presented to the Conference represents the income and expenditure of the Executive only. Each Branch collects and administers its own funds. But in spite of bad times it is pleasing to note that the income of the Executive shows an advance on that of previous years, although still falling very far short of the annual expenditure. During the year the Trustees of the Society have received £50 under the will of the late Miss A. M. Baker, of Birmingham, from the will of Mr. S. Pulman £45, and from that of Mr. M. F. Rose, of Bloemfontein, £143.

In the last report it was stated that the Executive had instituted an action against the Clerk to the Licencing Justices of Birkenhead for inducing a breach of contract with regard to a hall let to the Society for lecturing purposes. The facts of the case are simple. The hall in which the lectures were to be delivered held a music and dramatic licence. The Licencing Justices, acting without any legal authority whatever, had previously decided that they would not permit in any licenced hall a meeting on Sunday that was not for a religious purpose. As the law stands no Court has the power to prevent such a meeting, and the Justices were acting beyond their authority. A few days before the advertised lectures were to be delivered, the Clerk to the Justices wrote the lessee of the hall informing him of a previous decision of the Justices with regard to Sunday meetings, and stating that if the lectures were permitted this might jeopardize the renewal of his licence or necessitate the reconsiderations of his conditions as to Sunday opening of his hall. The hall was refused, and the breach of contract was obvious and indisputable.

The lessee of the hall was quite willing to pay the expenses involved in advertising the meeting, but this was not what was wanted, and acting on legal advice a writ was issued against the Clerk to the Justices for inducing a breach of contract. The case came on in the Birkenhead County Court, and to the surprise of both Solicitor and Counsel the Judge took the view of declining to consider anything but the letter, and refused to hear evidence which might prove that the letter was actually a threat, and so actionable, and not merely a warning.

As the right to a new trial seemed clear, application was made to the Divisional Court. But again the Judges took the view that the letter alone was enough on which to form a decision, re-affirmed the judgment of the County Court, and refused leave to appeal. The precedents in this case were clear. All the circumstances surrounding the writing of such a letter had to be considered, and in this case the evidence which the Society might bring forward to prove its case had not been heard. An application to a Superior Court for leave to appeal from the Divisional Court's decision

was accordingly made, and so soon as the Society's point of view was made clear, leave to appeal was given. But this time Counsel advised us that with the decision of two courts against us a favourable verdict would be very doubtful, and a further fight would open up the probabilities of lengthy and expensive litigation. In the circumstances it was decided to let the matter drop and treat it as a miscarriage of justice. We may, however, console ourselves with the reflection that the Birkenhead Licencing Justices are not likely to again attempt interference with Sunday meetings. And assuming a similar case to arise again there is small doubt but that a verdict in our favour would be gained; for unless there is a wide difference between law and common sense, and a wider gap still between the language of the law and the language of reasonable English, the letter of the Justices' Clerk could certainly not be regarded as a mere warning.

It is also an apt reminder that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance that this year the House of Commons has given a second reading to so retrograde a measure as the "Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching Bill." This Bill not merely extends the "crime" of blasphemy beyond its present limits, but it seeks to give the plastic common law of Blasphemy all the rigidity of a statute. Nothing more retrogressive has been seen in even the present Parliament. It is not likely that the Bill will ever get further than the Committee stage, but the fact of its being introduced and given a second reading is indicative of the activity of religious reactionaries. We may be certain that no opportunity will be missed by them that promises a check to freedom of thought. The Executive should closely question all Parliamentary candidates on this question and lose no opportunity of educating the general public on the meaning of laws which so long as they exist must always stand as a threat to liberty. The Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, on the Executive of which the N.S.S. is well represented, has circularized Members of Parliament and suggested the lines on which the Bill should be opposed.

This year sees the Centenary of the birth of Bradlaugh. At the last Conference a resolution was passed authorizing the Executive to take whatever steps it found necessary fittingly to mark the occasion. The Executive accordingly invited the Rationalist Press Association to co-operate in forming a Bradlaugh Centenary Committee, which should represent various societies and individuals willing to pay their tribute to one of the most striking figures of the nineteenth century. This was done, and a number of distinguished persons in science, politics, and Freethought lent their names to the end of making the celebration worthy of the man and the causes for which he fought. Thanks to the Committee considerable press publicity has already been achieved, and an elaborate programme has been drawn up which promises to make the date of the anniversary memorable in the annals of British Freethought.

In this matter the National Secular Society stands in the most intimate relation to Charles Bradlaugh. The Society was founded by him, and he remained its President until shortly before his death. We thus stand as representative of Bradlaugh in a way that no other Society can. We are the heirs of the Bradlaugh tradition. It was Bradlaugh's bold stand as an avowed Atheist, his unflinching and uncompromising struggle against all forms of superstition, his indomitable courage, his personal integrity and unrivalled platform ability that made him the best known, the most heartily hated and the most fer-

vently loved figure of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Like its founder the Society fights on, undismayed by temporary drawbacks, uncompromising in the principles proclaimed, and firmly convinced of their ultimate triumph. Rightly used this Centenary should have the effect of bringing the principles of Freethought prominently before the people of this country.

It is a striking coincidence that the same year should see the Centenary of one of the greatest of English and the greatest of American Freethinkers. Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll was born in July, 1833, and American Freethinkers intend celebrating that event in a befitting manner. Ingersoll would have been the first to admit that in the world of Freethought national barriers count for but little, and his own work and the extent of his fame would help to prove the truth of the statement. He was as well known and as influential in this as in his native country. For nearly sixty years Ingersoll's writings and speeches have been a tower of strength all over the English-speaking world. The wit and wisdom displayed, the eloquence and broad humanitarianism which speaks through every page of his writings appealed to thousands on whose ears the recondite arguments of other men fell without effect. He had the rare power to give in an epigram a truth which other men wrote laboured pages to express. No more human advocate of Freethought has ever existed. Your President had hoped to pay a long-promised visit to the United States in order to represent English Freethought at the Washington celebrations, but he now finds it impossible to leave England at present. Still our American brethren may rest assured that British Freethinkers are not behind them in their admiration for the work of this great apostle of Freethought.

The advance of opinion with regard to religion has been great since the days of Bradlaugh, and very much of this advance among the masses of the people has been the consequence of his influence and that of his fellow workers. But while the disintegration of theological ideas is proceeding at a rapid pace it would be foolish to close one's eyes to the possibility, even the probability of a period of reaction. This reaction may not extend to the absolute revival of the deeper superstitions which are enshrined in historic Christianity, but it may extend to the denial of that right to freedom of thought, speech and publication, for which Freethought has always stood. In fact this denial is already in being. In Germany and in Italy the Freethought Movement, as such, has been completely suppressed. In Russia freedom of thought and expression is practically suppressed in the interest of a particular sociological theory. And in this country there are growing up two opposing political parties who agree in asserting the right to suppress by force opinions of which their particular social theories disapprove. A real testing time may come for Freethinkers in this country earlier than many imagine. It will be well if, while strenuously fighting against the arrival of that day, we do what we can to prepare ourselves for its appearance. A Freethought that does not demand for its opponents the same freedom as for itself is false to its ancestry and its principles.

There are two things which may help Freethinkers to realize both the necessity and the value of stronger and more concerted action. The Sunday Cinema Act, passed because the Government saw the impossibility of enforcing the old Sunday law, and of taking from the people the freedom which in many instances

they had achieved, was an ill-advised and an iniquitous measure. But even with its gangster-like policy of levying a special tax on men who followed their usual profession on Sunday, in all but a very few places where the question has been tested, the overwhelming vote has been in favour of a free Sunday. The Act registers the collapse of that demoralizing institution the British Sunday, and the vote has proved that for too long the ban on Sunday entertainments has been maintained by the activities of a noisy minority.

The question of the maintenance of religious instruction in State-supported schools may yield the same moral. Those who are in favour of making everybody pay for the religion of Christians are noisily active, those who really desire to leave religious instruction to parents and parsons are too passive. A motion on the Agenda suggests the formation of local committees whose work shall be to organize all in favour of the policy of Secular Education for the purpose of withdrawing their children from religious instruction. If this could be done it is extremely probable that though the number in favour of Secular Education would not be so large as those in favour of Sunday entertainments, it would be large enough to prevent any further increase of the power of the parson in the school, and would certainly do much to bring home to the general public the importance of the question.

But while there is good ground for appreciating the advance made in this and other countries by the Freethought Movement, it would be very unwise to close our eyes to the dangers that surround us and to the possibility of there occurring one of those periods of retrogression that every now and again crop up in the history of humanity. It may be that Christian orthodoxy is now entering upon its final phase, but it is extremely probable that some last effort will be made for its re-establishment. There are indications that the present Parliament may attempt some measure that will establish definite religious teaching more securely in the nation's schools, and it does not look as though any of the political parties will risk votes to prevent this being done. Again, it is on the cards that there may be an attempt to disestablish the Church, but without disendowment, which would in effect make the Church as an organization stronger than it is at present. Nor must we lose sight of the fact that the Blasphemy Laws are still unrepealed, and while this is the case they are a potential menace to genuine freedom of thought.

Moreover, the fundamental aim of Freethought is and should be something larger than the mere destruction of Christianity. In the history of humanity Christianity is no more than a passing aberration of the intellect, although the period of its rule is a lengthy one reckoned in terms of years. That phase we believe to be passing. But it is unfortunately the case that a rejection of Christianity is not always accompanied by what can truly be called a liberated intellect. Alternative superstitions abound on every hand, and in many cases some alternative—religious, political, or ethical is adopted. While this is the case the orderly progress of Society is impossible. Liberation should mean more than the transfer of superstition from one department of life to another. Above all the value is small if the intolerance which has been so marked a feature of religious history is still active in the name of ethics, or sociology. Freethought wherever it exists, and however attained, must ultimately rest on, and must ultimately justify itself in, the intellectual freedom of the individual. The National Secular Society has

always stood for freedom of thought, speech and publication, and a denial of that freedom whether from Church or State is equally objectionable. The argument of force should never be taken as a fitting substitute for the force or argument. And so long as politics represent the struggle of competing opportunists, so long as established teachings in any direction strive to perpetuate their existence without regard to their veracity or their utility, there will be always a need for a Society that aims at truth before party and equal justice for all.

Austin Holyoake.

ON "DANIEL THE DREAMER."

(Continued from page 364.)

SIXTY years ago Mr. Austin Holyoake declared that Christians did not read very diligently certain books of the Old Testament such, for instance, as "The Book of Daniel," and "The Book of Esther," and others, and it is quite certain that many of the books of the Old Testament are almost entirely neglected to-day by many who profess and call themselves Christians. Take "The Book of Daniel," how many Christians can tell you what it is all about? Not many, it is certain; and those that have read it, like the late Mr. Austin Holyoake, find some of the stories so ludicrous as to make them feel quite merry over them.

Listen to some of the stories and see what you think of them. Austin Holyoake says:—

I do not stop to enquire whether Daniel was a real or a fictitious character, or whether the acts said to have been performed by him were real or metaphorical. The Bible says emphatically that Daniel did dream and interpret dreams; that he was cast into a den of lions and came out again unscathed, and the Christian world believes it, and artists paint the scene as they would any historical occurrence. And if any infallible book makes assertions who shall dare to doubt them? Certainly not the believers in the book.

Many so-called sound believers have tried to make sense out of the Book of Daniel, and to find a deep meaning in its obscure jargon, but nothing but confusion and humiliation have ever come of the attempts. If you agree that certain passages are metaphorical, others poetical, you open the door to individual interpretations, and then where are you to stop? One man's version may be as good as another and yet all may totally differ. I shall certainly not attempt to add to the embroglio, but shall treat the book as a true history knowing that I am sanctioned in so doing by that Protestant Church towards whose support I am compelled to contribute.

Again:—

When I was a child, the stories of the three men in the fiery furnace, of Daniel in the Lion's den and the mysterious writing on the wall were taught to me as veritable truths, and they naturally excited my youthful imagination, but I remember little else; when I became a man I read the Book of Daniel as a whole, and the following pages convey the impressions of my more mature years. I think if Bible believers, after they have left school were to take the trouble to read the Scriptures through, a book at a time, and reflect upon each we should have, if not more sceptics, at least fewer intolerant persecutors of unbelievers.

Then he goes on to examine the book and to give a description of its teaching. He says:—

The first intimation of the existence of Daniel is in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, 607 years before Christ. Jehoiakim was then at Jerusalem, but that singular man Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, objecting to him continuing there, besieged him; and the Lord, who throughout the Bible is always on the side of the winner, whether he be saint or rascal, gave Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hands. And why the Lord made Nebuchadnezzar the victor we are ignorant, seeing that he did not believe in him a bit, but had a God of his own, whom he vastly preferred, into whose house in the land of Shinar he carried the vessels which he stole from Jerusalem. After this exploit he ordered Ashpenaz to bring certain of the children of Israel—children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in all knowledge, and understanding science, when they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. In these days we do not expect to find all these acquirements and accomplishments in children; but this was not at all an unreasonable requirement for so sensible a King, as will presently be seen. These wonderful children having been collected, the King appointed them a daily provision of meat, and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the King. Why they should not be able to stand before him when first found, seeing that they possessed every requisite in the way of knowledge is not clear, unless it was that he required them to be not only sensible but fat, showing a very laudable anxiety for their physical well being, as he probably knew that generally flesh does not accompany great learning. Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Michael and Azariah; but the prince of eunuchs immediately rechristened them and gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar and to Hananiah, of Shadrach, and to Michael of Meshach, and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

Now these last three play a by no means small part in the life of Daniel, and ultimately immortalize themselves as the three greatest Salamanders on record. Daniel appears to have been a lad of spirit, possessing a will of his own; and no doubt smarting under the yoke of the King, he determined he would not partake of the King's meat and wine, but would be a teetotaler and a vegetarian. He therefore gave notice of his resolve to the prince of eunuchs, and requested that mighty man to allow him to change his diet. The prince, instead of enforcing obedience, by the aid of the bowstring, as eunuchs usually do, argued the point with Daniel, and told him that it was more than his head was worth to disobey the injunctions of the dread Nebuchadnezzar. This condescension had been procured for Daniel by God himself, for he had early brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince. In fact Daniel had a happy knack of making himself generally agreeable to all persons in authority over him. This faculty enabled him to take office in every succeeding administration regardless of politics or party bias.

And here we pause for a while.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

(To be continued.)

THE SEA.

Of all things I have ever seen, only the sea is like a human being; the sky is not, nor the earth. But the sea is always moving; always something deep in itself is stirring it. It never rests; it is always wanting, wanting, wanting. It hurries on; and then it creeps back slowly, without having reached, moaning. It is always asking a question, and it never gets an answer.

Olive Schreiner.

Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

XV.—BRADLAUGH'S INFLUENCE ON 'TYNESIDE.

MR. AARON WATSON, in his study of the late 'Thomas Burt in *A Great Labour Leader*, notes that Bradlaugh, in his later years, "was the ideal of the Northumbrian miners." From 1872 until the end of his life he was always invited to their Annual Demonstration and a poll for speakers thereat in 1874 was headed by Bradlaugh and Burt. In the latter year an Address was presented to him by them for what he had done "for the poor, the neglected and the oppressed." It further mentioned the prejudice against him because of his opinions but they wished to confirm that "no such paltry feeling as this blinds the mining population of Northumberland to your deserts as a politician and reformer. It may please you to hear, as it delights us to testify, that persons of all shades of opinion have combined in this present manifestation of approval and esteem." Mrs. Bonner tells us that this Address occupied a place of honour in Bradlaugh's study, and was among his most treasured possessions.

Mention has already been made in these Notes of Mr. Burt. During his parliamentary struggle, when friends inside the House were few, Bradlaugh had no stauncher friend and supporter in and out of Parliament. The "Pitman come to Parliament," was described by Earl Grey, the one time Governor-General of Canada, as "the finest gentleman I ever knew." They were fine types, these Tyneside men, quick to appreciate what they called the "genuine," and convinced of that, ready to give a passionate adherence to causes and men that had gained their confidence and devotion. Well one remembers the Weatherburns and Wharriers and other life-long helpers of the Freethought Movement; also Mr. Ralph Young, for many years the Secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Association, noted for his wisdom in their councils, and through it all a temperate yet outspoken Freethinker. "Caractacus," of the *National Reformer* (Mr. W. B. Adams) became a well-known figure in Northern Journalism, and in his *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, tells us how he originally obtained his position on the *Newcastle Chronicle* through Mr. Bradlaugh's good offices. He soon became Editor of the *Weekly Chronicle*, and during his regime it was a power of strength to all advanced causes. In "Open Council" week by week, with Milton's "Whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter," as its slogan, columns, even pages, were thrown open to controversialists. For a generation, before commercial necessity demanded a change, free discussion was a reality and even now when the demon of "space" has stepped in, the old traditions are not forgotten.

The influence of Bradlaugh on Tyneside was profound and permanent. There are men alive to-day who can repeat Bradlaugh's peroration in his debate with Rev. Marsden Gibson in Newcastle Town Hall, in 1889; and the late Rev. A. J. Harrison who spent most of his life at St. Thomas' Church, Newcastle was constantly referred to, and is now only remembered, as the "parson who debated with Bradlaugh." As late as 1906, when Mr. J. M. Robertson became the Radical candidate for the Tyneside Division, he had the good fortune to find in his committee a preponderance of men steeped in the Bradlaugh tradition. Their loyalty to that tradition was shown when Mr. Robertson, having failed in an action for damages he had brought against a Yorkshire Journal for comments of a fashion familiar enough to Freethinkers made on his character—put his resignation in their hands. They, at once, unanimously refused to accept it.

T.H.F.

Current Religious Propaganda.

AN important aspect of this activity consists in eulogy of the Middle Ages. This includes insistence on the idea that the earlier half of the period (the Dark Ages, about 500 to 1000 A.D.) was a "period of preparation," and the latter half (about 1000 to 1500 A.D.) a "period of fruition" or "realization." This view has appeared rather conspicuously in recent wireless talks.

On the politico-social side it is said that the Roman ideal of unity was maintained in the western world. The statement is, of course, unsusceptible of definite proof or disproof, partly because our knowledge of the period—and especially of some centuries included in the former—is so scanty.

But we know that soon after Christianity had triumphed the Roman Empire broke into two parts, the Western and the Eastern (Byzantine) Empires, which were soon fighting each other; that not long afterwards the Western Empire broke up into a mass of warring nations; and that political and social disorder was a common feature throughout the period. The Eastern (Byzantine) Empire, which it will be remembered was not overrun by the Teutonic barbarians, can have been in little if any better condition than the West, as we gather from the references of writers on the period to the "bloody record of dynastic crimes," and "the constant internal as well as external disturbances."

If "spiritual" unity is meant, we point to the division just mentioned and the formation of the Greek Church as a rival to the Roman; and so far as the West is concerned we can only admit a general uniformity of superstitious belief and observance, and a general acquiescence in the tyranny of churches on the part of masses of people who were almost wholly illiterate—acquiescence that did not long survive the renaissance of learning.

As regards the "period of fruition," the Renaissance, the "Flower of the Middle Ages," we note that it was not until some ten centuries of Christianity, accompanied by semi-barbarism and gross intellectual and other darkness had elapsed, that a tolerable state of civilization reappeared. But it is clear enough that the improvement was not due to Christianity, but mainly to the influence of the Moslems, who from the eighth to the eleventh century possessed a notable civilization, including that of the "Moors" in Spain. Of these people Stanley Lane-Poole writes (*Moors in Spain*): "The Arabs, rough tribesmen as they had been at their first arrival, had softened into a highly civilized people . . . devoted to the pursuit of learning." He contrasts with them their Christian neighbours: "They were rude unlettered people, and few of them could even read; their manners were on a par with their education; and their fanaticism and cruelty were what might be expected from such barbarians."

The Moors were visited by a few students from Christendom, e.g., Gerbert (who ultimately became Pope Sylvester II) studied at Cordova University. He afterwards opened a school in Italy; but the monks incited the mob to burn it and to destroy his instruments. (Such scientific implements, commonly in use among the Moors, were regarded by Christians as "infernal apparatus for the prosecution of magic and the invocation of demons.")

In further answer to the supposition that the "civilizing force of Christianity" brought about the resuscitation of Western civilization, we point to the significant fact that while Europe, under the domination of that religion, remained so long in so deplorable a condition, the Moslems, who were real barbarians in the time of Mahomet (seventh century), developed their civilization in a hundred years or so. The difference in the time required was doubtless mainly due to the earlier contact of the latter people with Greek thought, and their freedom to pursue intellectualism in general, and science in particular, without the embargoes imposed on Europe by medieval ecclesiasticism.

Among the results of obsession with the "Age of Faith" in Europe is the common absence in books (as in last year's wireless talks) on general ancient history of any mention of interesting and important advances made in other countries.

In China, while Europe was sinking into darkness,

there was much mental activity, including invention. Paper was made, probably in the second century, and in the course of time was brought to Europe by the Moors; printing was invented, probably in the sixth century—though this does not seem to have been known to the Moslems, and the invention was no doubt made again independently in Europe; and from the fourth century onwards repeated references to some compass-like device ("south pointing chariots") show that the Chinese had arrived at some knowledge of magnetism.

In India, following other achievements, mathematical works were issued from the seventh century onwards, and in the darkest European period, our "Arabic" numerals—so-called because the Arabs (Moors) brought them to Europe—including the all-important cypher, were devised in India.

It is of great interest to note that the Mayas, who during the European Dark and Middle Ages developed a semi-civilization in Central America, also devised the cypher, though written in different shape, and used in a vigesimal system of notation (based on twenty fingers and toes) instead of a decimal system (based on ten figures only); and also that they arrived at a calendrical division of the year which showed greater accuracy than any calendar in Europe until the Gregorian one of 1582, when Pope Gregory ordered the dropping out of ten days of October. But this country, being under Protestant rule, did not adopt the new system, at the time, but muddled along with the older calendar until 1752, when eleven days were dropped out of September.

J. REEVES.

Correspondence.

N.S.S. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Stafford's determination to defend an untenable position compels me, even at a risk of becoming tedious, to repeat that my letter of April 30 did not lend support, even by implication, to the idea that the N.S.S. should become a political party.

Mr. Stafford's main error is due largely, I think, to an inadequate grasp of the meaning of the phrase "our activities must be extended," and I commend to him the fact that, in spite of the wide scope for activity permitted by our present constitution, our activities under it are not as extensive as they might be.

He apparently prefers the expression "more intensive work on existing lines," and I can agree with it, but I cannot allow him, because of his predilection for a certain phrase (not differing here in meaning from my own), so to distort my published arguments as completely to misrepresent my opinions.

S. R. A. READY.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JUNE 2, 1933.

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Clifton, Le Maine, Easterbrook (W. J. W.), Ebury, Preece, McLaren, Sandys, Easterbrook (L. M. W.), and the Secretary.

A number of apologies for unavoidable absence were read. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and adopted. The monthly Financial Statement was presented. New members were admitted to Glasgow, Plymouth, Swansea, Newcastle, Oxford, W. London Branches, and the Parent Society. Permission was given for the formation of a Branch of the Society at Oxford. The President gave an outline of the later stages of the Beechcroft Settlement Case and the meeting endorsed the line taken. Reports and correspondence from Messrs. Brighton, Clayton, and from Birmingham, Liverpool, Preston, and Brighton were dealt with. The Executive's Annual Report was read by the President and adopted. Details in connexion with the Annual Conference were submitted. The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Freedom and Government."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mrs. F. Grout—"Christianity and the Family."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, June 11, Mr. C. Tuson. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, June 12, Mr. C. Tuson. Albert Street, Regents Park, 8.0, Thursday, June 15, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, June 11, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Wednesday, June 14, Mr. H. C. Smith. Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, June 16, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside the Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, June 11, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform 1, Messrs. A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. and Bryant. Platform 2, B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Platform 1, Messrs. Tuson and Bryant. Platform 2, Messrs. Saphin and Hyatt. Wednesday, June 14, 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Le Maine. Thursday, June 15, 7.30, E. C. Saphin. Friday, June 16, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. The *Freethinker* and other literature can be obtained during and after the meetings of Mr. Dunn outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square): 8.0, Sunday, June 11, S. Burke—"The World Economic Conference and God." "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Wednesday, June 14, Messrs. F. W. Smith and S. Burke. "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Friday, June 16, F. W. Smith and S. Burke.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level): 3.0, Mr. Keyes-Lecture.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps): 7.30, Friday, June 16, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Messrs. C. McKelvie and J. V. Shortt. Beaumont Street, 8.0, Monday June 12, Messrs. H. Little and D. Robinson. High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, June 15, Messrs. A. Jackson and F. S. Wollen.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields, Platt Lane, Manchester): 6.30, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley). Meetings will be held at Platt Fields each week until the commencement of the Winter Session.

MORPETH (Market Square): 7.0, Saturday, June 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, 7.0, Sunday, June 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Pier Head near Marine Park): 7.0, Wednesday, June 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

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