

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions.

### Woman and Christianity.

I HAVE long given up expecting to find a limit to the impudence and reckless mis-statements of a real Christian advocate. Politics has its limits, at any rate the falsifier must not be found out too easily. If he is, there is nothing for him but retirement—or the House of Lords. In business the word quickly goes round, and an untrustworthy man finds himself deprived of credit, which means disaster in the commercial world. In science falsification has no place, however large a margin one must allow for sheer error or prejudice. And in literature there are hosts of critics ready to pounce upon the dealer in inexactitudes. But in religion there is little or no check. If one falsifies it is apologetically attributed to his zeal. And even though some of his admirers may glance round fearfully at some hostile critic, should exposure occur—a very rare occurrence—it is the critic that gets slanged not the Christian representative of Ananias.

The Rev. F. L. Wiseman is the new President of the United Methodist Conference, and a full report of his Presidential Address appears in the *Methodist Recorder* for July 13. The address is, of course, full of the usual evangelical cant about morality, which is so familiar that it may pass without comment. But one would have thought that what the new President had to say about Christianity and Woman would have been too much for even a Methodist Conference to swallow, so clear is the misrepresentation of fact, and so childish the distortion of argument. Consider this:—

I need not remind you of the liberty wherewith Jesus set women free, and of the honourable position they held from the first in the Christian community. But because it was liable to be misjudged and misunderstood, a certain restraint was placed upon a woman speaking, and upon her dress in the Church. The inhibition was evidently designed with reference to the time . . . Speaking in the Church is no offence. Methodists have women preachers. Now people are saying how very arbitrary and absurd is the requirement that in Church woman shall cover

her head. Woman must have the freedom of man. But what are you to say of the uncovering of her form, to which modern fashion encourages and almost enjoins her to proceed. I ask Christian women . . . are they convinced of the propriety . . . of modern developments in woman's dress and attire as displayed on the beach, at the spa and on the high road . . . Science to-day comes to the aid of the libertine, while moral force and insight seem to be lacking.

I leave the general question of Christianity and Woman for a moment in order to examine one of the most dishonest of religious pleas that I have come across for some time.

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### Shall Women Preach?

A preacher must have unbounded confidence in the credulity and mental indolence of his hearers to venture on a mass of such sheer nonsense and falsity. To say that the Pauline inhibition on women speaking in Church was to prevent misunderstanding and was intended for a time is quite false. There is no indication that this was the meaning of the regulation. Why should there be such a fear? In the pagan world there was nothing new in women taking part in religious services. Pagan temples had priestesses as well as priests. In ordinary life Christian men went about with Christian women, and it was only the manner in which they did so that appears to have excited scandal among the pagans. It is very unlikely that Mr. Wiseman does not know that the Pauline inhibitions were a clear continuation of the Jewish practice which did not permit women taking part in the Synagogue services, and for religious purposes did not even reckon them as part of the congregation. More, the inhibitions were directly connected with a revival of the primitive conception of the nature of woman and was part of a general revival of primitive religious ideas which Christianity did so much to perpetuate. Paul's reasoning is quite clear. Man is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church, and she is to give to her husband the same obedience that Sarah gave Abraham. The quotation given last week in these columns from John Knox expresses this conception to the full.

It cannot be mere stupidity that makes Mr. Wiseman reply to the statement that the New Testament prohibits women speaking in the Church, by saying that the Methodist Church has woman preachers. Churches have had forced upon them many things to-day that are dead against the teaching and practice of historic Christianity. Mr. Wiseman must know that the demand is that women shall have the same liberty of preaching in the Church that men have. But the Roman Catholic Church will not permit this. The established Church of England will not permit it. The Presbyterian Church will not permit it. Many other Churches will not permit it. More striking still, Mr. Wiseman's own connexion has several times within

the past forty years discussed the question, and refused the admission of women to the ministry. Of course, the Methodist Church has had women who have evangelized the people, but the question at issue is not the admission of women to the lower ranks of preachers, but their being placed upon an equality with men in the Church. The true Methodist attitude to this question was stated by a well known Methodist leader of the last generation, the Rev. W. V. Tunstall, as follows:—

Woman is under a curse that subjects her to man. This curse has never been removed, nor will it be removed till the resurrection.

Woman under the Mosaic Law had no voice in anything—her identity was completely merged in that of her husband.

Woman is expressly prohibited from rule in the Church or usurpation of authority over the man.

After that it would seem to require a man of more than ordinary hardihood to claim that the Methodist Church raises no protest against the Pauline injunctions.

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#### Pulpit Ethics.

Mr. Wiseman exhibits still greater confidence in the docility of his listeners as he proceeds. He asks whether there is anything arbitrary in demanding that a woman shall not uncover her head in Church? Certainly there is, so long as the same rule does not apply to man. But one really wonders whether it is just stupidity or deliberate dishonesty that leads a man so to confuse two quite distinct and separate questions. The question at issue is whether a woman should be permitted to worship in Church with her head uncovered as does a man. Mr. Wiseman retorts on those who say yes, "Would you advocate that woman should go naked?" Can any public speaker be quite such a fool as to confuse these two questions? As well say that the demand of athletes to run races in "shorts" is equal to running races in a state of nudity. And further to liken the wearing of the modern woman's dress to a desire publicly to uncover her form, with the final remark that science in advocating a healthy dress is on the side of the libertine ought to be enough to put a man outside the bounds of decent controversy. The lecherous religious mind may not recognize the fact, but decent-minded people know that there never was a time in the history of Christianity when girls and women were so clean-minded and so healthy-minded as they are to-day. A short skirt, or a beach bathing dress is not nearly so suggestive to the youth of to-day as were the occasionally exposed ankles and the ostentatiously "proper" bathing suit were to the young and old men of Mr. Wiseman's kind and generation. If modernity has done nothing else it has placed the salaciously religious mind at a discount, and our young people are the better, mentally and morally for it.

\* \* \*

#### Women and the Church.

I have left myself but scant space for dealing with the general statement that Jesus set woman free, and that Christianity gave woman an honourable position in the community. I had little to say on this topic last week, for in my *Woman and Christianity* I have compiled the historic evidence on the subject; and although that indictment of Christianity has been in print for some years no Christian writer has ever attempted a reply. Nor do I imagine that the President of the Methodist Conference will undertake the task.

What freedom was it that Christianity brought woman? There is no denying the subordinate position given woman in both the Old and the New Testament, but Mr. Wiseman, safe before such an audience

as he addressed, in the very act of claiming a liberative influence, admits the restrictive character of Christianity, although he adds, quite wrongly that these restrictions were to avoid misunderstanding. As a member of the community there is simply no question that the civic liberty which a woman possessed under the Roman Empire disappeared under Christianity. Even in the capacity of wife and mother her position and independence worsened. The New Testament is not a family book, and the early Christian writers were not violent advocates of the family. Right through the New Testament and early Christian history the civilizing influence of the married life is set on one side, or is admitted only as the lesser of two evils. But the ideal state is that of celibacy, and this with the Christian view of the nature of woman were factors that were, as so many authoritative writers have pointed out, largely responsible for the brutal character of the purely Christian ages of Europe. Let anyone compare the ideal female figures in Greek and Roman literature with the ideal women of the Bible and of Christian history, and they will agree with Elizabeth Cady Stanton that those who can transform the woman of the Bible into an exalted, dignified personage must have a share of the occult mystic power of the Eastern Mahatmas. Woman was, of course, not ignored, she was far too dangerous an animal for that, but she was suppressed, and her civic independence has not yet reached in the Christian world what it was when the Church dawned upon the nations.

\* \* \*

#### History and Christian Claims.

Outside the ranks of present-day professional Christians no one of repute will seriously dispute that, and many Christian writers frankly admit it. No less a person than the Rev. Principal Donaldson, joint editor of the *Anti-Nicene Library*, confessed that he had lost his earlier opinion that woman owed "her present high position" to Christianity, and that his researches had shown that at the end of the first three centuries of the Christian era "the position of women among Christians was lower, and the notions in regard to them were more degraded than they were in the first." He further said that if we take man as a male human being and woman as a female human being, what the early Christians did was to strike the male out of the definition of man and the human out of the definition of woman, leaving woman as a mere female, with an unexpressed questioning of her right to "human." "Man was a human being made for the highest and noblest of purposes; woman was a female made only to serve one." Lecky points out that wherever Church law has influenced legislation in connexion with women her complete inferiority to the male was enforced. The personal rights she possessed under the later Roman Empire disappeared, and it was only after many years of hard fighting, conducted by Freethinkers, that in 1882 the right of a married woman to own property was restored to her. The general attitude of the Christian Church, at its best, was expressed by a memorial signed by large numbers of the clergy of London in 1916 that to grant women permission to preach in the churches was "contrary to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and to the mind and general practice of the whole Catholic Church"; and at its worst, in the discussion in the Church Council of Macon as to whether woman was a human being. And perhaps the most direct and most conclusive reply to Mr. Wiseman's distortion of history and of fact was supplied only a couple of days after he had delivered his address, when the report of a committee advising the admission of women to the ministry came before the Conference.

The report was adopted, but the President advised the gathering that it would have to go back to the synods for discussion and confirmation. So that his own statement "Methodists have women preachers" was shown, almost on the spot, to be one of those falsehoods that would have been howled down at any but a religious gathering.

Of course, there is nothing new in Christian annals in Mr. Wiseman's conduct. He did not originate the practice of "lying for the greater glory of God," he merely continued it. If his story was a little more clumsy than usual, it is because the times have changed a little, and one is inclined to look for a little more caution on the part of a present-day professional Christian advocate. Probably Mr. Wiseman felt that he was speaking before a perfectly "safe" audience. We are not sanguine that anything we have said will prevent Mr. Wiseman's repeating his statements when occasion offers. Neither have we any hope that Mr. Wiseman will attempt to establish the truth of his story. If he does feel so inclined these columns are open to him.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## A Dirge for the Dog Days.

"The glorious free press of England is one of the biggest impositions of the age."—G. W. Foote.

"Liberty is at present at a discount."—Lloyd George.

At this season of the year, when half the population is on holiday, news items are scarce, and anxious sub-editors occasionally resort to religious subjects to fill space. The clergy, who are past-masters of the noble art of exploitation, refer to this hardy annual as a revival of Christianity, and seek to pump up enthusiasm among their congregations. But things are not always what they seem in a saucy world, and in this instance the gain to Orthodoxy is far more apparent than real.

The journalists are far more concerned about news-interest than theology, and seize too readily on the pictorial and sensational. They will print portraits of Romish and High Church priests, not because they believe in their *abracadabra*, but simply because their dresses are as picturesque as African medicine-men. They will write columns concerning alleged faith-healing, or end-of-the-world anticipations, or British-Israel nonsense, which would be promptly consigned to the waste-paper basket if a first-class murder-case or social scandal came to hand. In their opinion such religious matter is of more interest than stories of the sea-serpent, or giant octopus, or big gooseberry, which have done duty for generations.

One of the favourite journalistic tricks is to start a discussion on the failure of religion. This has been considered a good "call-bird" for over forty years, ever since the *Daily Telegraph* (London) conducted the inaugural debate on that subject in its columns. But the original discussion was not the sham fight that modern editors are so fond of. The doughty Robert Buchanan led the attack for the Freethinkers, and Richard Le Gallienne did his best for Christianity. Other correspondents joined in the fray, but the attack and defence were actually conducted by the two poets, and it is no disparagement of Le Gallienne to add that Buchanan was left victor of a real fight.

So complete was the victory that editors got nervous, and latterly have worked the oracle to their own satisfaction, that is, by pandering to Orthodoxy. Since Buchanan's day, they have never allowed a Freethinker to fully state his views. What editors do

is to get one of their staff to put up an Aunt Sally, label it "Freethought," and let the other correspondents bowl it over. Sometimes, they do not even take so much trouble, but invite some publicists, such as popular novelists, or actresses, or people in society, and other "illustrious obscure," as Shelley calls them, to express their views on a subject of which they know next to nothing. The poor things perpetrate the most awful "howlers," like inattentive schoolboys in an examination, but they have served their temporary purpose of a journalistic stunt.

The latest example of this very curious phase of "the glorious, free press" may be found in the *Daily Mirror* (London), July 3. The discussion was headed "Is Religion a Spent Force?" and judging by the anæmic arguments advanced in its behalf, religion is in a really terrible condition. Atheism had to be mentioned, of course, but it was dragged in as follows:—

A complete Atheist may have a finer religion than the loudest psalm-singer in Little Bethel. But nowadays even the Atheists are losing their decency so that they might as well be singing psalms.

To criticize such rubbish at length would be a sheer waste of ink and paper, and what is more precious than both, time. It would be too cruel to mention the writer. To sign such a screed is a sufficient humiliation. Lord Headley, who joins in the discussion, makes a mild newspaper sensation by admitting that he is a Mohammedan, and not a Christian at all, and points out, with quiet unobtrusive humour, that the Moslem Faith has the advantage of possessing but one deity, a gentle reminder of the tangle of the Christian Trinity, with both the Mother of God and Satan on the Board of Directors. Another contributor, a novelist, is a veritable *enfant terrible*, and blurts out that "religious belief remains very strong in people who are no longer young," which is sufficient to make the entire Bench of Bishops fall out of their seats in Parliament, and demoralise their beautiful lawn sleeves in the process.

A woman novelist suggests that the youth of the country is disappointed with the Christian Religion because it raises costly cathedrals and does not trouble about the slums. This reminds me of the story that, when Thackeray visited America, a young woman asked the great writer what the English people thought of Martin Tupper. Thackeray's reply was "My dear young friend, the British public do not think of Mr. Tupper." So, in this instance, the youth of to-day do not worry about such things as slum-clearance, more's the pity!

A society-leader, who gate-crashes into this theological discussion, suggests in a very sprightly way that if "the Church" limited its teaching to the "Sermon on the Mount," and the "Ten Commandments," as applied to modern life, it would be roses all the way for the dear clergy. What the lady means precisely by the phrase, "as applied to modern life," is a little obscure. Perhaps she is thinking of the suggested eleventh amendment to the Decalogue by an unknown humourist, "Thou shalt not be found out," but it does not in any way minimise the delightfully unconscious humour of her own bright contribution to a subject so moth-eaten as to require re-upholstering.

Another author (O those novelists!), this time a man, puts forward the heretical suggestion that "communism with Omnipotence" is "true religion." According to the Christian tradition, that novelist is ear-marked for the red-hot-poker department in the next world, so we must leave him to his wretched fate. But still another novelist makes the suggestion that what the Church of Christ needs is the "uncon-

ventional preacher." This is by no means a self-evident proposition, for the last great man who preached Christ from a barrel got "the sack" from his ecclesiastical superiors."

Two bishops also contribute to the symposium, but their remarks are not very helpful. One thinks that special services for school-teachers, members of the theatrical profession, and similar "bait," might be useful; and the other insists that present-day religious indifference is but "a temporary phenomenon."

To such a pass has present-day journalism sunk. Indeed, contemporary editors are the merest flunkeys, obeying implicitly the nod of the advertising manager, who, in his turn, cares nothing for reputation, but only for circulation. This same circulation is largely waste, for in a recent law-case it was stated that one competitor alone had used eight hundred coupons, each cut from a copy of the same newspaper. The press-men of years ago would have disdained such methods, and, in that time, editors were real dictators for there was no appeal beyond Cæsar.

When William T. Stead realized that London was no better, morally, than Port Said, he dipped his pen into vitriol and he wrote "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon." He neither wrecked his career, nor ruined his paper, but he caused the Criminal Law Amendment Act to be added to the Statute Book of England. When "honest John" Morley edited the *Fortnightly Review*, he did not dissemble his love for Freethought, but he wrote scores of articles directed against the popular superstition. When Knowles edited the *Nineteenth Century*, he allowed Professor Thomas Huxley to indict Christianity in the most polished prose of his generation. In doing so, he sent the review victoriously on its way, and even achieved the glory of a fifth edition on more than one occasion. So, we might continue, but enough has been said to show that intellectual honesty does not spell bankruptcy, nor even mean loss of prestige. The most pressing need of our time is a bold intellectual honesty, and the man, be he politician or journalist, who chooses this path need have little fear of rivalry. He would find behind him a solid support from the best elements of the entire nation, which could be used as the spear-head of an army marching toward the attainment of better social and political conditions.

MIMNERMUS.

## Far, Far Away.

THE Presbyterian Church in Scotland that calls itself National is merely so in form and name and State recognition. A Committee of its leaders is at present conducting a pow-wow with a Committee of Chiefs of the Church of England at Lambeth with a view to the establishment of closer relations between the two establishments. And this is significant of much. It has occurred to some of us to enquire why, for example, the so-called Church of Scotland should require to make such a long journey from home for a conference of the kind, when it has at its very doors as a neighbour a Church identical in doctrine and ritual with the Church of England—namely the Scottish Episcopal Church. Why Lambeth? Why not Brechin?

Ah, but thereby hangs a tale—or more tales than one! *Firstly*, the Scottish Episcopal Church is a dissenting Church. It is an Episcopalian body in Presbyterian Scotland (so-called). "The Church of Scotland" is the proud title of the State-Established Presbyterian Church in Scotland; and how should it hob-nob with any mere dissenting sect? *Secondly*, The Scottish Presbyterians have never forgotten the

"Prelatism" against which the Covenanters contended. *Thirdly*, the Scottish Presbyterians have never forgiven Sir Walter Scott for being an Episcopalian and for his representation of the Covenanters in "Old Mortality." And *fourthly*, it is ever a bitter memory with Scottish Presbyterians that outstanding Episcopalian figures like the Rev. John Skinner the famous author of *Tullochgorum*; Bishop Jolly of Aberdeen and Dean Ramsay by their breadth of mind, fraternal feelings, tolerance and originality secured for themselves greater popularity with the common people of Scotland than Presbyterian clerics of their own or any other time. These men entered with sympathetic interest into the lives of the common people; and as the years pass their names shine brighter than ever—because of their humanity. Which of their Presbyterian contemporaries has left a memory to love and to cherish? No, as Buckle has shown, the Presbyterian parish ministers and Kirk Sessions by their oppressive and domineering methods alienated the good will of the masses of the Scottish people.

But it will be argued these are things of a long gone yesterday. As Mr. Gladstone said, pleading for Home Rule for Ireland: "Let the dead past bury its dead!" Eh, but thae Scots hae long an' dour memories! And so the cold shoulder is given to Brechin and the warm hand is extended to Lambeth.

It has already been pointed out that there are large communities of believing Christians in Scotland calling themselves Baptist, Methodist and Congregational so that when all is said the "national" Church of Scotland only includes a section of Christian Scotland. And that section cannot be so very big when the Episcopalian and Roman Catholic communities in Scotland are also taken into account. The former has always been strong in Eastern, Central and Northern Scotland, and the latter is also numerically strong, particularly along the Caledonian Canal and in the West, where it has been reinforced of late by a large number of immigrants from Ireland. There is a large Irish Roman Catholic population in Dundee, and throughout the whole of Scotland there are many Italians and their families, the vast majority of whom adhere to the Roman Catholic Church.

So it cannot be doubted that the section of Christians in Scotland who adhere to the Auld Kirk has "crined" (contracted—grown smaller). This makes the Annual Parade of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland more and more of a pompous yearly farce. Here and there one finds individual protesters against the military show associated with those anachronistic proceedings; and we may be sure that each such protester has a body of support among the laity. To listen to the solemn vapourings of some of the Ecclesiastics of the older school, one would imagine they had never heard of the Great War 1914-1918! It is sad; but it is true.

Far more individuals are now beginning to think for themselves even on supernatural questions, and they laughingly brush aside the wooden swords of these dons in black robes who would withstand them with the inhibition: "Thus far and no farther!"

The average Presbyterian Scot who never travels much is frankly puzzled by the moves of his pastors and masters. Lambeth to him is far, far away and very much of an unknown quantity. In Religion, Laws, Language and Customs, the South of England is to him very, very foreign also. Why all this hob-nobbing with old alien foes? As a simple Sandy he is becoming suspicious, and his horror of Mummery is renewed. He can work away alongside his mates who may not be of his faith, but who do not obtrude their religious views, and even

be friendly with *them*. The *known* is all right. It is there under your nose. You can spot and check its vagaries. But the *unknown* is always alarming. And Lambeth is far far away.

What boots it to tell such a man that a fellow countryman of his is Archbishop of Canterbury, and the very head of the Church of England? "Ay," he will say, "it's an ill-bird that fouls its ain nest." He can glow when he hears of a compatriot who beats the English in medicine, engineering, or manufacture—even politics; but he is impatient, in ecclesiastical matters, with apostasy. There is still some appreciation of principle and distaste for opportunism at the core of the average Scottish layman!

And he is beginning to realize that the subtle arguments addressed to him in defence of Lambeth boil down to this: that the State Churches everywhere are conscious of their diminishing influence and of the strength of the assaults that are being made upon them; that they are simply seeking to hang together so that they may not hang separately. Union is strength, and to secure it *doctrine* will have to stand a devil of a lot of pruning.

Even on the assumption of the usefulness of Christianity, one would naturally suppose if the actual good of the whole community was the zealous aim of the Church of Scotland, that it would seek to establish a basis of co-operation with its near neighbour, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and forgetting the things which are behind, press on to those which are before. For Lambeth is far, far away—whether it be a happy land or no!

Sectarianism has been digging its own grave for a good while; but perhaps it is not deep enough yet. Papa of Rome complacently regards Protestant wrangles and conferences with equal indifference. Nearer and nearer comes the final conflict of Rome against Reason.

IGNOTUS.

### Irish, English and Celtic Renaissance.

The last General Election in the Irish Free State returned the party of Fianna Fail to power, in combination with a smaller Labour Party, with a majority of seventeen members over all opponents. A leading speaker stated after the Election that their policy was to secure the complete independence of Ireland. Later, at a gathering of the "Irish Republican Army," it was declared that they supported Fianna Fail as a step towards the establishment of an Irish Republic embracing all Ireland. Under the excellent system in force of Proportional Representation, the number of members returned by each party corresponds fairly with the votes cast, which gave 770,000 to the Separatists and 615,000 to Unionists. In Northern Ireland, which includes about one-third of the population of the country (and allowing for a Nationalist minority), there is entrenched a resolute public determined at all costs to uphold their allegiance to the British Crown. So taken as a whole, there is at present a majority of Irish electors in favour of the existing form of union with Great Britain.

This position reduces the power of extreme counsels to just proportion in the face of reality. We indicate it here, not for a purely political purpose, but for its portents as regards another, perhaps more promising, aspect of Anglo-Irish association. But to view this aspect in due perspective involves, in the first place, certain considerations of origins and ethnical affinities.

The historic Irish belong to the Celtic branch of European stocks, found in dominant possession of these islands at the earliest recorded period. They are classed by ethnologists under two main heads, speaking a common or related language—the Brythons settled in England and Wales, and the Goidels in Ireland. The Irish, Scoti, or Hibernians, as they are variously known, have a tradition of descent from one Milesius and his followers, who reached the country from the Continent about 1,000 B.C. They subjected previous inhabitants, and their successors claim to have possessed a continuous story of their doings and genealogies down to the advent of the Norman. They interacted with Britain prior to the Anglo-Saxon era, raiding its coasts and planting settlements on the Western side far northward. A band of Scoti established themselves on the West Coast of Scotland at a time when the country was divided into tribal kingdoms. Through alliances, war, and marriage one of these Scoti rulers was eventually recognized as High-King of the territory north of the Tweed. He set up his capital at Edinburgh in the Lothians, after its English-speaking people had become separated from Northumbria, whence followed the historic kingdom and name of Scotland. To these distinctive Nordic peoples—Gael and Gall, Celt and Saxon, in their subsequent reactions and the inter-play of their respective qualities, is due the singular content, spiritual and material, of British civilization and culture.

The tragic side of the story of Anglo-Irish consociation, and the bitter memories thereof still retained in certain quarters, must now be passed over. The Nationalist agitations of the last hundred years, if mainly political, have had peculiar cultural effects. One is a revival of interest among Celtic scholars in early traditions, legends, sagas and poetry of the Irish people. Old MSS. and records, lying neglected in private and public libraries have been unearthed, deciphered and published; though there is evidence that much ancient literature has perished. Other workers have gathered up treasures of folk-song and melody—an effort with its fruitful parallel at home in England. A great part of this recovered literature and artistry is linked with the life of pre-Christian Ireland, and some of its legends and folk-lore are common to the Gaels of Scotland and Wales. Several consequences have followed. It has excited an endeavour to revive the Gaelic or Erse language as the spoken Tongue of the country, and to encourage original work therein. It has also led to a literary revival or expansion using English as its medium; and to the founding of a national drama drawing largely on stories and fantasies furnished by the rich imaginative genius of the Celt.

Among pre-Christian notions thus brought to light is a belief in some form of re-incarnation; in the existence of a half-human race who become visible at will—the Sidhi or Faery folk and in "a happy Other-world, peopled by a happy race, whither people were sometimes carried whilst still alive, and to gain which they either traversed the sea to the north-west, or else entered one of the Sidhi mounds, or else again dived beneath the water. A beautiful country is discovered where a happy race, free from care, sickness, and death spend the smiling hours in simple sensuous pleasures." As described in detail in an early poem entitled *The Voyage of Bran* :—

A beauty of a wondrous land  
Whose aspects are lovely,  
Whose view is a fair country.  
Incomparable in its haze . . .

The sea washes the wave against the land,  
Hair of crystal drops from its mane . . .

A band of gifted writers has utilized this quarry as material for drama; besides adventuring into realistic treatment of contemporary Irish life and character. It is the poetic side of this movement, and its wider significance, to which we draw attention within the limits at our disposal.

Mr. W. B. Yeats had won a reputation as a poet of distinction and interpreter of Celtic fancy, when, in 1899 he initiated the Irish Literary Drama in Dublin. After some performances in hired halls sustained by a few enthusiastic amateurs, the generous gift of an English lady, Miss Horniman, in 1904 placed at their disposal a theatre, since become known to fame through its work as the "Abbey Theatre." In a yearly review of this work, *Samhain* (the Irish term for the beginning of winter), Mr. Yeats has given an explication of his aims and ideals from which we will take one or two extracts of interest alike for their personal and esthetic content. Referring to the nature of drama itself he says: "What attracts one to drama is, that it is, in the most obvious way, what all the arts are upon a last analysis. A farce and a tragedy are alike in this, that they are a moment of intense life. An action is taken out of all other actions; it is reduced to its simple form, or at any rate to as simple a form as it can be brought to without our losing the sense of its place in the world. The characters that are involved in it are freed from everything that is not a part of that action; and whether it is, as in the less important kind of drama, a mere bodily activity, a hair-breadth escape or the like, or as it is in the more important kinds an activity of the souls of the characters, it is an energy, an eddy of life, purified from everything but itself. . . ."

Then he declares as to the essentials of a national literature: "Our friends have already told us, writers for the theatre in Abbey Street, that we have no right to the name, some because we do not write in Irish, and others because we do not plead the national cause in our plays, as if we were writers for the newspapers. I have not asked my fellow-workers what they mean by the words National literature, but though I have no great love for definitions, I would define it in some such way as this: It is the work of writers who are moulded by influences that are moulding their country, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end. . . . A writer is not less national because he shows the influence of other countries and of the great writers of the world. No nation, since the beginning of history, has ever drawn all its life out of itself. Even the Well of English Undefined, the Father of English Poetry himself, borrowed his metres, and much of his way of looking at the world, from French writers, and it is possible that the influence of Italy was more powerful among Elizabethan poets than any literary influence out of England herself. Many years ago, when I was contending with Sir Charles Gavan Duffy over what seemed to me a too narrow definition of Irish interests, Prof. York Powell either said or wrote to me that the creative power of England was always greatest when her receptive power was greatest. We call certain minds creative because they are among the moulders of their nation and are not made upon its mould, and they resemble one another in this only—they have never been fore-known or fulfilled an expectation."

In a similar spirit of receptivity we, on the English part, may approach the effort under review; one so intimately related to British tradition. There are famous names linked with Anglo-Irish literary and esthetic history, but their work was mainly done in England and belongs to English associations. This achievement is inspired by elemental, racial things,

presented through the medium of cultivated intellect, transcending creed and national limitations in its general appeal. The modern side of the movement is a subject in itself. We will next turn to a few scenic illustrations.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

(To be continued.)

### A Freedom-loving Australian Knight.

A CONTRIBUTION of mine in a recent issue of the *Freethinker* resulted in Sir Benjamin Fuller, whose friendship I have enjoyed for many years, favouring me with a few confidences that should be of interest to your readers generally.

Sir Benjamin was born in London, worked his way to Australia as a steward on a boat forty years ago, and for some time now has been in the millionaire class, due to the enormous success that has attended his picture and theatrical enterprises in this part of the world.

"When I was a boy nine years of age," he told me, "I used to play the piano in the hall where addresses were delivered by Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, and Annie Besant—Ball's Pond Institute, I think it was called. The practice was for me to play a few selections prior to the addresses. In my very early years, I won a Scripture prize—the only prize I ever did win. The result was that I was all the better enabled to appreciate what I heard through the three speakers from the Freethought platform. The Scripture prize was the result of a very retentive memory. Still, I shrink from confessing, to-day, the character of the passages that prompted me in my diligent reading of the Bible at that period in my life."

Sir Benjamin went on to recall a fact, hitherto unpublished, and unknown beyond the few parties immediately concerned in the matter.

"You," he remarked to me, "are the first person to whom I have ever spoken of it. Probably you will remember the Ross case in Melbourne, between fifteen and twenty years ago. Ross was interested in a paper, published in that city; and he was prosecuted for something that he had written that was alleged to be blasphemy.

"Quietly, I assisted in providing the money for the defence.

"The case was dismissed. Since then, there has not been, to my knowledge, a similar prosecution in Australia. Financially, I was not at that time in the position I am to-day. I mention this, because if a charge of blasphemy should again come before the courts here I would not hesitate to shoulder the whole of the cost of the defence.

"This I would do, if only because of my belief in the liberty of the subject, and freedom of speech. Let those who feel that they have a message to deliver be free to do it—provided, of course, that it is done within the ordinary decencies of speech. Surely this is a principle that should commend itself to all, in justice to the individual, and in furtherance of the general advancement of mankind."

Sir Benjamin, by the way, was the first person from the theatrical profession in this part of the world to be selected for a knighthood.

The title was largely the result of the many generous gifts made by him to educational movements of a national character.

To-day, he still finds time to give his wholehearted support to numerous health-promoting and freedom-asserting causes—even where their pretensions are of the most unobtrusive character.

F. HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W.

## Acid Drops.

"A.A.B.," who writes regularly in the *Evening Standard*, is a fine specimen of the crusted Tory, who is proof against anything in the shape of a new idea, and whose writings stand as irrefutable evidence of the immortality of folly. Perhaps it is that the *Evening Standard* keeps "A.A.B." on its staff so that his impene- trable stupidity may act as a foil for the brilliant wit displayed in the cartoons of "Low." But here, at any rate, is a characteristic statement from an article by "A.A.B." in the *Standard* for July 11:—

To succeed with the Russians, as with the Turks you must "treat 'em rough," for like all uncivilized people they mistake civility for kindness.

If one wished to pick out the worst type of man that exists in this or any other country, a type of irremovable stupidity and hopeless incompetence, one could not select a better specimen than "A.A.B." We can pass over the insolence of classing Russians and Turks with uncivilized peoples, although we may imagine that in all that constitutes real culture many a "savage" could give such a specimen as "A.A.B." points and a beating.

The monumental ignorance of the man is shown most clearly in the statement that "uncivilized" peoples mistake civility for weakness. If this person ever read anything, or understood what he read, he would very soon find that he is flatly contradicted by nearly all travellers and by others who have had to deal with uncivilized people. Their testimony is that whenever a primitive people are approached with good nature and honest intentions, hospitality and kindly treatment is the result. But when natives are ill-used by whites, their customs trampled on, and their rights ignored, the result is that uncivilized people become as indiscriminating in their hatred of the whites as we were in dealing with Germans during the late war. We have no hesitation in saying that 90 per cent of the troubles we have had with coloured people are due to the conduct of men like "A.A.B." The ignorant idea that anything different from British must be worse than British, and that the only way to deal with people backward enough to have customs different from ours must be to treat them "rough" in order to show how strong and brave we are is responsible for most of the trouble between the whites and the coloured races. Better men than "A.A.B." recognize that this prescription comes not from strength and courage, but from weakness and cowardice.

The *Manchester Guardian* is one of the most reliable newspapers we have, and one of the very few left that conducts its business with some degree of self-respect. But it makes a bloomer when it says that Catholicism by its concordat with Germany has acquired the status of a State religion. That is something we are quite sure the Roman Catholic Church would never accept. Its aim has always been, and still is, to make the State subservient to the Church and a State Church is subservient to the State. Of course, by the new arrangement the Roman Church will receive certain guarantees and certain privileges, but it will not admit itself to be a branch of the State. Like all the Christian Churches the Roman Church will always grab what it can, and receive all the privileges it can, but it takes all it can from the State as at least an equal of the State, and generally with the reserved claim of being a superior.

The *Daily Herald* declares that "Experience has shown that some of the existing social service centres, are being used to 'train' men to do work on a charity basis that would otherwise be done by properly qualified craftsmen at recognized trade union rates." Our contemporary might have added that some of the religious social service centres, especially that of the Salvation Army, are notable offenders in that respect. Religious charity organizations seem rather fond of causing unemployment in one

direction by relieving it in another. Probably an enquiry into this aspect of Salvation Army work, such as Mr. Manson undertook some years ago would not help to get a record circulation. So the *Herald*, like other papers, will keep on safer and more profitable grounds.

Bethersden (Kent) Church Council at a recent meeting made a protest against Sunday games in the village, and it resolved to ask Nonconformists to join the Church Council in opposing such games. No doubt the Nonconformists will agree on that score. The only time when Christians of various gangs do agree is when they purpose to interfere with somebody else. These Sabbatarian bigots would rather see the village lad loafing around on Sunday, and probably getting into mischief, than playing some healthy game. What a happy country England would be if the Sabbatarian kill-joys could control everything and everybody.

The latest visit of Our Lady to this vale of tears is reported from Beauraing in Belgium. One of its inhabitants, named Tilmant, was gravely ill and prayed to the Virgin. He was completely cured by her personal touch, and the news has, of course, caused a rush of pilgrims to the holy spot. A larger railway station is being built (we suggest that Our Lady should be asked formally to open it), and a large pilgrimage to Beauraing is being organized for August 5. We think a greater impetus would be given to the Catholic religion if Our Lady appeared in two different places precisely at the same time—say at Lourdes and at Beauraing—and broadcasted a (censored?) speech. That would be a miracle which would confound even the most confirmed sceptic.

Belgium was also honoured the other day with "one of its most picturesque celebrations"—the blessing of the sea. This took place "on the Sunday within the octave of the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul," the fishermen's own special patrons. Wooden statues of St. Peter were carried through the streets and thrown into the sea. Local fishermen try to net them and the one who succeeds first is the Master Fisherman of the year. A special altar was erected in Ostend and a huge procession went through the town towards it. The Dean then blessed the sea and the fishing fleet and most people forgot we were doing this in 1933 and not in the year 30. We suggest that the occasion would have been far more impressive and solemn had the Dean stopped by prayer, the tide from coming in—or going out. But, alas, our hopeless infidelity prevents us from witnessing even a paltry little miracle like that.

Mr. Ramsbotham, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education says that "a State in which religious education is neglected is bound to decay." All we can say is that up to date every State that has decayed *has paid special attention to religion*, while the most progressive States in the world are those in which religion is kept in check, in both religion and other matters. There is, for the first instance, the classic case of Spain, of Italy under the Popes, of Turkey under strict Mohammedanism, and dozens of other instances that might be cited. Mr. Ramsbotham was saying this nonsense before a religious gathering. We doubt if even a man of his intellectual quality would have the impudence to say it in a meeting where he could be promptly answered.

But while Mr. Ramsbotham believes in religious education, he is not too-ready to pay for it. In fact he favours the policy of not paying teachers at all. Thus, speaking at the Triennial Appeal Dinner of the Jewish Religious Education Board he said that education costs money, and he noted that in earlier times it was the rule among Jews that every teacher should learn a trade so that he might not receive money for teaching. He said he was prepared to bring this practice to the notice of the Secretary of the National Union of Teachers. We do not doubt it. The policy of the present Board of Education is to help the Churches as much as possible, to pay

the teachers as little as possible, and to lower the standard of Education as much as possible so as to prevent the children in the elementary schools from entering into too severe competition with the children of the "cultured classes." And yet we question whether any teacher in the country is not doing better service for his salary than is Mr. Ramsbotham as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education. It is an example of the impudence of a Jack-in-Office.

But to Mr. Ramsbotham we would seriously commend this statement of Canon W. T. Brown, Rural Dean of Leyton (made at a meeting of the Youth Conference Movement, and reported in *The Schoolmaster* for July 6). The Canon said, "Judging from his experience as a governor of high schools," he found that "the cleverer the boy the more he was opposed to religion." Like Mr. Ramsbotham, Canon Brown would like to see more religion in the schools. But the cleverer boys will not have it, and the dull boys do not need it. For the evident purpose of religion is to put a brake on intelligent questioning, and the brake can only be applied to the boys that need a spur. From the point of view of the two gentlemen, the only thing we can suggest that will be of any real help would be a movement for the intensive cultivation of stupidity, with a very vigilant eye for the weeding out of such "sports" as showed an indication of intelligence above the average.

Mr. James Douglas knows he is always sure of a hearing if he boosts up anything in the way of religious imbecility; so recently he turned his attention to the subject of hymns and how they were "inspired." Even the most fanatical Christian nowadays is rather loth to claim "inspiration," divine or otherwise, for most of the hopeless doggerel and silly tunes which are blessed with the name of hymns, but nothing daunts Mr. Douglas. He tells us that the Prince Consort repeated "Rock of Ages" on his death-bed, as if that really made this hymn any better and repeats the legend which has been disproved, that "Nearer, my God, to Thee" was played by the band when the Titanic was sunk—as if either the band or anybody else wanted to get any nearer to God on that tragic day.

A number of Catholics have been quite disturbed at the way in which—they think—the Church in Russia has been persecuted. They have prayed incessantly and attended daily Mass, but they are now concerned with those Catholics who are doing neither. They have therefore published the appointed prayers in a small leaflet, and it has also the picture of a "famous Russian Madonna." If this picture, together with plenty of fervour in reciting the prayers, does not do the trick, we are at a loss as to what can be done. We might suggest, on second thoughts, that a personal visit of a few thousand Catholics to Russia, each displaying prominently the picture of the famous Russian Madonna, might have a wonderful effect. Why not try it?

An Oxford University lecturer said recently:—

Each year we see more clearly that increased guidance from an aspect that has come to be called the biological point of view is essential if man is to continue to progress on this earth . . . it is increasing knowledge of our minds and bodies rather than of our environment which is the characteristic of to-day . . . We cannot live the higher life, seeking beauty, aiming at truth, striving after goodness unless we fully understand and act wisely upon what we have learned.

This is another way of saying that it is Science to which man must look for guidance rather than to Religion. Science is furnishing man with knowledge and understanding where Religion left him ignorant—and to the penalties of ignorance. Science is also robbing Religion of its opportunities of exploiting or misleading ignorant mankind. And yet we are asked to believe that there is no antagonism between Religion and Science!

Advertising, of course, pays, or such huge sums would not be spent on it. But a study of advertising is not a bad guide to the mentality of the general public. We remember being told by the marketer of a very popular brand of cigarettes, brought out during the war, that the success was entirely due to a particular picture that was used. The cigarette itself, under an ordinary name, and with another picture, had a very small sale. In the newspaper war that is going on, the *Daily Express*, as alive as any paper in Britain to the long-ears character of the public, announces that it uses 400,000 miles of paper to each issue. That appeals to those who, if they believe in heaven, and ever get there, will measure the intelligence of the angels they meet by the length of their wing-feathers.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer has drawn attention to the prevalence of superstition in the Church of England. (Did anyone whisper something about the pot complaining of the colour of the kettle?) Mr. Swaffer appears to us to be very ungrateful. No one would swallow his yarns about Spiritualistic miracles were it not for the superstition that has been kept alive by the Christian and other churches. It is superstition which forms the raw material of the "pull" that Spiritualism has over so many people.

In a Church in Rome the embalmed body of an early Christian saint is said to have winked during the celebration of High Mass. We find nothing surprising in the congregation seeing this. As a matter of fact when we read the item we winked ourselves.

### Fifty Years Ago.

MASS MEETING FOR THE RELEASE OF G. W. FOOTH AND W. J. RAMSEY. AND FOR THE REPEAL OF THE BLASPHEMY LAWS.

LONG before the hour advertised for the commencement of the meeting summoned to protest against the imprisonment of our two friends, St. James's Hall was crammed. Hundreds, I think I may say thousands, were turned away from the doors. Nor was the crowd remarkable alone for its numbers. The quality of it was scarcely less noticeable than its quantity. The great mass of the people were of the *upper* classes, that is, they were people, men and women, who worked for their living. It was no gathering of idlers. Yet there were not wanting a considerable number of what are commonly called "well-to-do" folk. Apparently they get their name from their not thinking it well to do anything. A very large number of women were present—a helpful and hopeful sign. The more thinking women, the more likelihood that the children of the future will be free.

The faces of the vast crowd were a wonderful study. It seemed as if a bad one were not amongst them. The sight from the platform of the thousands of upturned faces all alive with indignation at the wicked wrong done, and enthusiasm for the wronged, was for ever memorable.

The speaking was of a very high order. The Rev. W. Sharman was as vigorous and as brave as ever. The two other clergymen, Messrs. Geldart and Headlam, also spoke splendidly, the former moving the huge audience to hearty laughter as well as just anger. Mr. Moncre D. Conway gave us a very finished, thoughtful speech, and Mrs. Besant moved her auditors as no other woman in England could. Mr. Symes delighted everyone by his outspokenness, and Mr. Burrows also spoke.

The reception of Mr. Bradlaugh was as usual a tremendous burst of enthusiasm. In truth, how the audience on that midsummer evening kept up at the fever heat at which they started is a marvel. But speakers and resolutions alike were cheered to the echo. So loud were the voices of the gigantic mass of living beings that one might have hoped their sound had pierced through the prison walls and reached the ears of the two solitary men who were to every one of us the most real presences in that hall, despite their absence from us.

The "Freethinker," July 22, 1883.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- G. POWELL.—Thanks for address, paper being sent.
- W. SPRATT.—There are many editions of the *Origin of Species*; a cheap one is issued by Watts & Co., at 1s. 3d. post free. Darwin was buried in Westminster Abbey despite his disbelief.
- J. G. BARTRAM.—We have obtained a supply of E. C. Saphin's *What Does the Bible Conceal?* Shall we send your order on?
- H. W. GAME.—We know nothing whatever of any "secret understanding" between the Labour Government and the present Government on the question you name. What is the passage on which you build? There must surely be some misunderstanding.
- R. MACQUEEN.—So far as we can see no further reply is necessary. The statement that no member of the N.S.S. is warranted in using his membership of the N.S.S. as representing the Society, except with the sanction of the Executive should be clear to all. Unless English has lost all meaning there is a distinct and important difference between membership and representation. And the N.S.S., like every other Society must always retain the right of dealing with members who do not obey its rules.
- W. A. WILLIAMS.—We too are disappointed at the comparatively small response to the Bradlaugh Centenary Fund. But the Committee is going ahead, and there is every promise of the Anniversary celebrations being a pronounced success.
- The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The Secular Society, Limited Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.  
All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

## Sugar Plums.

August 11 will be the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll, and our American friends intend to mark the occasion with suitable celebrations. Some time ago the Ingersoll Centenary Committee appealed for twenty-five thousand dollars for the purpose of erecting a statue to the great Freethinker. In spite of the bad times two-thirds of this sum has been subscribed, and we see from an American paper that the statue is almost complete, and it is hoped to erect it at Washington by the date of the anniversary. We wish them every success, and trust it will awaken the whole of America to the magnificence of Ingersoll's work. No Freethinker, since the days of Paine had greater influence in the English-speaking world than Ingersoll, and it is fitting that this should be kept before the eyes of those who have benefited from his work.

We intend making the *Freethinker* for August 13 an Ingersoll number. There will be a portrait with a lengthy sketch of Ingersoll, and it will be a useful num-

ber for distribution. There will be no increase in price, but we should like those who intend ordering extra copies to let us know so that we may regulate our printing order.

We regret to hear, as will the older generation of Freethinkers, that our old friend William Heaford is very ill, following a stroke. Mr. Heaford was writing and speaking for Freethought over fifty years ago, and has been a very ardent Freethinker all his life. Of late years he has been resting on his laurels, but his interest in the cause has remained unweakened. We are hoping to hear better news of him soon.

A lengthy notice of Charles Bradlaugh appears in the Monthly Journal of the Amalgamated Engineering Union under the title "This Man Fought for Freedom." The article appears apropos of the Centenary.

While we are on this topic we may as well again remind our readers of the necessity of their securing tickets in good time for the public meeting that is to be held in the Friends Hall, Euston Road, on Saturday twenty-third, and also for the Centenary Dinner at the Trocadero Restaurant, on September 26. The cost of tickets for the dinner will be 10s. 6d. Admission to the demonstration will be by tickets, price sixpence and one shilling.

Two recent additions to *The Thinkers Library* (Watts, 1s. net) are MacLeod Yearsley's *Story of the Bible*, and *Savage Survivals*, by J. Howard Moore. Dr. Yearsley gives an excellent summary of the origins of Christianity and the Bible, the truth about which is as necessary to-day as ever. He points out in his preface that "the daily press of late lost no opportunity of propagating the old falsehoods about religion, and gleefully proclaiming the unprecedented rush of aspirants for "Holy Orders" while it remains discreetly dumb on all that savours of Rationalism." Such subjects as, The Development of Sacred Writings and Traditions, The Making of the Old and New Testaments, and The Origin and Rise of Christianity are well and succinctly dealt with—though, of course, even Rationalists would not always agree with the author's conclusions. Many of the dates given to the composition of the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles are still discussed. For example he puts the composition of Mark at the end of the first century. This is pure conjecture. The conclusions in Cassels' famous *Supernatural Religion* seem to us never to have been invalidated. What direct evidence, clear and indisputable, is there that the Gospels were known before 150 A.D.?

*Savage Survivals* makes very fascinating reading—the author's gift of easy and simple exposition contributing not a little to the value of the book. Here we get all sorts of out-of-the-way information on the Origin of Domesticated Animals, Wild Survivals in Dogs and Cats, chapters on the Mother and vestigial instincts, the spread of Mankind and *Savage Survivals* in Higher Peoples. It all makes the kind of book which subtly undermines religion by explaining away habits and ideas descended from our frightened and more or less savage ancestors, and the book will be just as eagerly read by children as by adults. There are many well produced illustrations by Mr. H. Cutner.

The would-be speaker and debater will find excellent advice by experts in a new quarterly journal which has just reached us, *The Public Speaker and Debater*. It is devoted entirely to such subjects, and the many articles which deal with them from various angles will prove of real practical help. We notice, in passing, an interview with Lord Snell whose advice on careful note-making as conducive to better speaking should be remembered, while "the first thing is to try to understand your opponent's case. It is a law of speech to understand thoroughly that which you are attacking." *The Public Speaker and Debater* (July-Sept.) is published at 6d.

The South London Branch N.S.S. continues to extend its activities, and on Thursday evening, July 20, Mr. F. P. Corrigan will commence a course of open-air meetings at Rainsden Road, Balham Station, at 8 p.m. The meetings will be held each Thursday evening at the same time and with the help of the local saints a centre of very useful work can be developed there.

Rambling saints are invited by the members of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. to join them in an outing to Grange Hill, Essex, on Sunday, July 30. Train 9.45 a.m. from Forest Gate Station (L.N.E.R.) to Grange Hill, 9d. return (Day Ticket). Lunch to be carried, tea arranged at Forest View Tea Rooms, Lambourne End. A day in the country is always an acceptable suggestion for spending Sunday, and if the weather is kind there should be a good response to the invitation.

Mr. H. V. Blackman who is the moving spirit behind the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. at Derby, reports excellent meetings in the Nottingham Council Square, Nottingham. The meetings are held on Wednesday evenings, at 7.30 p.m. Now that a start has been made with some regular lectures in Nottingham the next move should be the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. there. Mr. Blackman also speaks in the Market Square, Derby, on Sunday evenings at 7.30 p.m.

## Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

### XVII.—THE HALL OF SCIENCE: A CONTEMPORARY PICTURE.

ONE of these Notes (X) dealt with Lord Randolph Churchill's outrageous description of Bradlaugh's followers as "the mob, the scum and the dregs." In an extremely interesting work *Heterodox London*, published in 1874, the Rev. Dr. C. M. Davies in the course of his itinerary of Sunday meeting places visited the Hall of Science in Old Street and gives a graphic description of the audience and a remarkable impression of Bradlaugh's personality and influence. The Hall was crowded a quarter of an hour before the time of the lecture, and Dr. Davies was "amazed at the continuous stream of people which flowed into this building, each paying twopence and fourpence, and also at their character. The large majority, perhaps, were of the tradesmen and artisan class; but close by me, in the reserved seats, I had men-of-war's men in their naval uniform and real labourers and navvies in their working clothes. How is it Mr. Bradlaugh can get these people to pay for and listen to an abstruse subject (The Existence of God) while we 'compel them to come in'?" By the time "the colossal head and shoulders of Mr. Bradlaugh—for he is a son of Anak"—were seen struggling among the crowd, every inch of room for sitting or standing was occupied.

Then Mr. Bradlaugh rose—"a tall, commanding figure, with a clean shaven face, and hair brushed back from his forehead; a quick, bright eye, and that massive appearance of the jaw which is so often seen in the habitual speaker." An excellent epitome of the lecture is given, and at one point whilst Mr. Bradlaugh was reading a long passage he "took occasion to look round and notice the gaze of that vast audience rivetted on the lecturer. 'Truly, for good or ill, that man sways a vast power!'"

Then he sat down "amid a perfect storm of applause." In the discussion that followed, one Mr. Jenkins "passed most disadvantageously to the place Mr. Bradlaugh had occupied, winding up a rambling oration by a verbal struggle with Mr. Bradlaugh, in which he had decidedly the worst. I was really glad when Mr. Jenkins obeyed the forcible injunction of somebody in the audience to 'shut up,' though Mr. Bradlaugh and the Chairman protested strongly against the interruption." A Mr. Williams, we are

told, "was better, but still I cannot help thinking the Christian Evidence Society must be holding some stronger men in reserve. Why should not some of their *very* strongest dignitaries come down to the hall of Science and justify their title of 'Doctors of Divinity'?"

The Rev. Mr. Davies, who was Head Master of West London College, was so determined to be fair that he followed up his report of the lecture by printing in full a small pamphlet of Mr. Bradlaugh's entitled, "Is there a God?" which he purchased at the meeting for one penny. He also returned to the Hall of Science at a later date when Mr. Bradlaugh spoke on "The Queen's Speech and the Premier's Intentions." There was this advantage about Mr. Bradlaugh, he said, "It was impossible to mistake him," so he attended this lecture knowing that he would hear "definite and decisive utterances on political matters." Mr. Davies' previous eulogium on this occasion was repeated, and although he found, in this chapter, he had quoted Mr. Bradlaugh's republican arguments in words which "made the hair of his esteemed publisher stand on end," he would not suppress them as "he could not have done so with justice to his subject."

T.H.E.

## The Sphericity of Mother Earth.

PRIMITIVE peoples commonly picture the world as an even or mountainous country canopied by the heavens, and the sky itself as supported by pillars resting on the earth. A misconception so widespread is entirely in unison with the evidence of our unaided senses, and being thus perfectly natural it became a generally accepted theory of the earlier civilizations and was incorporated into their religious creeds.

It is true that the earth was regarded as a sphere by several Greek thinkers, and by a few select Roman sages and scientists, but the flat earth theory remained in the ascendant both in Athens and Rome, and was subsequently established as an integral part of the Christian cosmogony.

In ancient Egypt and Chaldea this erroneous idea seems to have been universal. According to the early Egyptians, the four corners of the earth each supported a pillar upon which the firmament of heaven rested. For when chaos and old night were replaced by the cosmos, one of the great gods raised the waters on high, and dispersed them over the firmament, and only when the windows of heaven were opened, did the rain descend to earth.

Thus we may witness in the temples of old time that still survive in the land of the Nile the ceilings studded with stars, planets and the signs of the Zodiac which reproduce the appearance of the nocturnal sky.

From Babylonia the Hebrews obtained their creation legends, and the Assyrian inscriptions commemorate the creative achievements of their mighty god Marduk in a manner which closely resembles the creation story in Genesis.

Associated with the naive conception of the universe as a kind of dwelling-house are many myths and legends. Preserved in the Jewish Scriptures is the story borrowed from Chaldea of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues. Then we have the old Greek tale of the Aloadæ, who attempted to scale the heavenly heights by piling mountainous masses one on another, only to be ignominiously cast down. Again, we possess the Hindu legend of the marvellous tree which aspired to ascend to the heaven of heavens which Brahma withered unto death, much as Christ is said to have blasted the barren fig tree, while even in far remote Mexico when the Titans endeavoured

to enter by means of the pyramid of Cholula they were driven by fire from the sky.

That the eternal gods dwelt above the clouds was long a practically universal belief, and this crude conception still colours the theology of the commonplace Christian. The story of Christ's ascension into paradise and his visit to Hell strongly support this superstition.

The vision of the Virgin in the sky at Lourdes—even in the sceptical France of the nineteenth century—was the beginning of all the pilgrimages and faith cures since associated with the shrine. After all, urged the pious, Jehovah came down from his heavenly abode to stroll in Eden's shrubberies in the cool soft evening hour. For centuries, credulous Italians firmly believed that St. Mark darted down from the skies to release a shackled slave in the market-place of Venice. Even the enlightened humanist Dante placed the Christian hell deep in the bowels of the earth. The Atlantic, as yet uncharted, was popularly supposed to be perforated with treacherous pitfalls into the place of eternal punishment, and the fear of falling with his ship into one of these openings deterred the navigator from venturing far into the ocean. As a matter of fact the terror inspired by this misconception proved one of the leading obstacles to the triumph of Columbus during his first voyage of discovery.

As already intimated, the theory of the rotundity of the earth was accepted in the ancient Mediterranean world by several eminent men, Aristotle, Cicero and Pliny among them. But in the succeeding Christian period the Fathers of the Church usually regarded as scandalous a doctrine which assumed the existence of the antipodes. Moreover, this impious opinion "that there were men whose footsteps were higher than their heads" was plainly unscriptural. Some of the Fathers grudgingly conceded that one who believed in the sphericity of the globe and the possibility of human inhabitants at its antipodes might perhaps secure salvation, but the great majority decided that there was little prospect of heaven for such impenitent heretics.

The contentions of St. Augustine carried enormous weight with the orthodox. While conceding the possibility of another side to the earth he repudiated the supposition that human creatures dwelt there. For the Bible makes no mention of any such offspring of Adam. Moreover, he argued, God would not permit people to live there because they would be unable to witness the descent of Jesus from heaven to earth at his second coming. But St. Augustine's most telling illustration was one that shaped the teaching of the Church for the succeeding ten centuries. This was his appeal to the nineteenth Psalm with its confirmation in St. Paul's alleged *Epistle to the Romans*. For does not the Apostle to the Gentiles assure us that the preachers of the primitive Gospel had traversed the entire earth, and that their words had gone "to the end of the world?" Therefore as the preachers did not travel to the antipodes this proves that the antipodes are non-existent.

As time passed away, here and there, men ventured to hint their doubts, usually in phraseology deliberately obscure. In the eighth century Virgil of Salzburg revived the theory of the antipodes but he was promptly silenced by the Pope, Zachary. His Holiness pronounced the doctrine "perverse, iniquitous, and against Virgil's own soul," and threatened him with the loss of his bishopric unless he recanted his heresy. This papal declaration settled the problem for another five hundred years.

With the recovery of classical culture in fourteenth century Italy, the Church resolved to suppress pesti-

lent heresies of this character with torture and the stake. Peter of Abano, a celebrated physician who championed the sphericity of the earth and other scientific heresies only evaded the attentions of the Inquisition by death, while in 1327, Cecco d'Ascoli, another pioneer humanist, was charged with sorcery, driven from his professor's chair at Bologna and burned at the stake in Florence.

When Columbus was seeking support for his projected voyage to discover the Eastern coast of Asia his scheme was mercilessly ridiculed by the clergy. Even when his voyage was accomplished and a new continent discovered, although this was unknown to the Genoese navigator, and when men of intelligence became more and more convinced of our globe's sphericity the unteachable Church obstinately persisted in its erroneous doctrines. Indeed, the bulls of Popes Alexander VI., and Julius II., promulgated respectively in 1493 and 1506, preserve for the entertainment of posterity the egregious blunders of men supposed to be inspired by God himself.

In 1519, however, the truth was made plain to every intelligent man, for Magellan in that year succeeded in circumnavigating the globe. He had demonstrated the rotundity of the earth by sailing right round it from east to west. Not only did Magellan and his sailors land at the antipodes, but they saw, and conversed with the native races dwelling there. Yet so powerful are the prejudices of religion that this now completely established verity was not universally acknowledged until fully two centuries later. With the advance of knowledge, however, and when French mathematicians and astronomers made their "measurements of degrees in equatorial and polar regions, and added to their proofs that of the lengthened pendulum" the long cherished fallacy was doomed.

Men now travelled and voyaged throughout the world, and there stood the antipodes with their strange plant and animal populations for all who desired to see. Then the triumph of truth was complete, although, even in England now, it is possible to meet curious people who declare the earth to be flat.

T. F. PALMER.

### The Myth of Abraham.

THE movement which calls itself "The British-Israel World Federation" is probably well known to all Rationalists, but I have not seen any criticism of its hypothesis in any Freethought journals during the last four or five years. Yet it undoubtedly calls for critical attention in-as-much-as it claims a large and growing congregation, and one of the believers, a recent convert, told me quite seriously that Bradlaugh "... was in possession of British-Israel truth before he died!"

The Federation was formed as recently as 1919,<sup>1</sup> but the theory is evidently much older.<sup>2</sup> The basic hypothesis is in two parts (a) that the British peoples are descended from Abraham, and (b) the so-called prophetic message of the Great Pyramid. For the purpose of this paper let us examine the first of these two propositions.

On page 54 of the journal<sup>3</sup> is set out "Abraham's Family Tree," tracing our descent through Sarah, and showing that the "lost ten tribes" are re-found in the "English," i.e., The British Commonwealth. There are other curious points in this ingenious family tree, such as that the "Brahmins" spring from Abraham by Keturah, but, for the present, let that pass. The hypothesis proceeds on the assumption that Abraham is an historical personage, chosen of God, and with whom God made an unconditional covenant—as if we can

<sup>1</sup> *The National Message Supplement*, April, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> D. Davidson, *Morning Post*, July 17 and 18, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> *The National Message Supplement*, April, 1933.

readily credit Omnipotence making a pact with a creature of its (his) own creation! But the historicity of Abraham has long been given up by competent scholars, and the archæological evidence found at Ur, or Mughier, shows him to be an ancient Moon-God reduced to human status by the compilers of Genesis.<sup>4</sup> This contention, that the composers and editors of the pseudo-history of the Hexateuch constructed it from myth, legend and folk-lore in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.,<sup>5</sup> is supported by the traces of the Moon cult of Ur retained in the names of the members of the Abrahamic family, viz. :—

Abram (Abraham) Abu-ramu (a title of the Moon-god).  
Sarah, Sarratu (Queen). Title of the Moon-goddess.  
Milcah, Milkatu (Princess). Title of the Moon-goddess.  
Terah, Tarakhu. The gazelle, sacred to the Moon-goddess Istar.  
Nahor, Nannar, the name of the Moon in Ur and Kharran.  
Laban, Labanu ("the white one") the name of the Moon-god of Kharran.<sup>6</sup>

Abraham is dated circa 2000 B.C., but there is no record of such a personage outside the Bible, no external evidence to save his historical existence although we now know a great deal about Chaldea and Babylonia as far back as 3800 B.C., the period of Sargon I.<sup>7</sup> This date is also given by Prof. Sayce.<sup>8</sup> It may be mentioned that Prof. Sayce gives the meaning of Abu-ramu as "the exalted father," a term which could be applied to a chief god, and although he says that the temples at Ur and Haran (Kharran) were dedicated to the Babylonian Moon-god, he refrains from showing the lunar significance of the Abrahamic family names.<sup>9</sup>

Mr. C. Leonard Woolley seems to accept Abraham as an historical personage.<sup>10</sup> He mentions the patriarch ten times in 208 pages, calling him "The Prophet" (see Index) amongst other titles, and writing of him as ". . . the founder of the Jewish nation and of their (the Bedouin) own race, Ibrahim Khalil Abdurrahman, the Friend of God." (p. 208.) Previously Mr. Woolley writes (p. 161), relative to the inscription on some fragments of fine grained black stone found in the ruined temple of the Moon-god. ". . . enough remained of the text to show that it enumerated the conquests of the famous king and law-giver, Hammurabi of Babylon, that Amraphael who is mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis as a contemporary of Abraham: Hammurabi reduced Ur to subjection, and this was his war memorial set up in one of the chief temples of the city." There seems to be some confusion here due to anxiety to make archæology confirm the Old Testament; the inscriptions do not mention Abraham himself, but they do mention a name quoted in Genesis xiv. 1. According to Mr. Boscawen<sup>11</sup> the Hebrew name "Amraphael" is almost an exact equivalent to the meaning of the ideogram, the form used to express in writing the name of Sin-muballit, namely Amar-Pal, a King of Sumir, or Shinar, and who is regarded as the father of Khammurabi, the Great. The confirmation of the existence of a person named Amraphael does not, however, establish the historical existence of an Abraham, and the dates are against such a reading of the inscription. Sin-muballit (Amraphael) died circa 2285 B.C.—i.e., 285 years before the supposed Abrahamic period.

Continuing (pp. 164-172) Mr. Woolley gives a detailed description of the private dwelling houses unearthed in ancient Ur ". . . of the time of Abraham." He writes :—

We must revise considerably our ideas of the Hebrew patriarch when we learn that his earlier years were spent in such sophisticated surroundings; he was the citizen of a great city and inherited the traditions of an ancient and highly organized civilization. (pp. 168-169.)

<sup>4</sup> See A. Drews, *The Christ Myth*, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> See B. Dujardin, *The Source of the Christian Tradition*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>6</sup> W. St. C. Boscawen, *The First of Empires*, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> Boscawen, op. cit. and Ragozin, *Chaldea*, p. 205 et seq.

<sup>8</sup> *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 162.

<sup>9</sup> *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> *Ur of the Chaldees* (1929).

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., p. 179.

Undoubtedly we must revise our ideas: in Genesis xii. 8, it is written :—

And he (Abraham) removed from thence into a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent . . .

In Genesis we are not reading of a man who had been accustomed for seventy-five years to live in a two-storied, brick-built house such as is described by Mr. Woolley. The man who pitched his tent on a mountain shows no signs of having "inherited the traditions of an ancient and highly-organized civilization"; all we have in Genesis is a purposive fiction based on myth and legend. And if the Biblical Abraham is a mythical personage, a vague recollection of the ancient Sumerian Moon-god, the whole family tree collapses, and with it that part of the British-Israel thesis. Finally, Mr. Woolley, after detailing the careful manner in which the Sumerians recorded all their business transactions, as shown by the hundreds of tablets found in the ruins of the temple, concludes. (p. 172) :—

It is all very practical and curiously modern, and again we see how very different from what we might have thought were the antecedents of the Hebrew people.

Quite so; but it took more than 2000 years for the Hebrews to reach the cultural level of their Sumerian ancestors. We may, perhaps, conclude with an adaptation of Mr. J. M. Robertson's words :—

So long, of course, as educated publicists like Mr. Woolley talk of Abraham as a historical character . . . it will be difficult to set up in the reading world that state of mind which shall at once encourage and chasten the activity of mythological science in the Biblical direction.<sup>12</sup>

EDWARD SIMPSON.

<sup>12</sup> *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 101, criticizing Max Muller and Matthew Arnold, for whom Mr. Woolley is substituted.

## Correspondence.

### A CORRECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Who Mr. Osborne Burdett may be I do not know, but it was not he that wrote the essay on Bernard Shaw in the June number of *The London Mercury*, which you mention. The author, if you will allow me to say so, was myself.

You are no luckier, I fear, in a more important point of accuracy. If your readers verify your references, they will look in vain for the words that you "quote." To have written that "all experience, reason, imagination forbids us to believe that 'intelligence can be the creator of a Force' would be, as you say, and very justly, "meaningless jargon." But, alas, you wrote the phrase, not I, and I really must disclaim responsibility for other people's errors. That yours was inadvertent (though it omits, without a sign, nine words and misquotes the most important) I am ready to believe, but your howler is a howler nonetheless.

OSBERT BURDETT.

[We regret that Mr. Burdett should have been misquoted, and we reprint the whole of the sentence in question :—

All experience, reason, imagination forbids us to believe that the less can be the cause of the greater; that intelligence can be the creation of a Force, personality the creature of an Impersonal.

Now the only difference between this quotation and the one which appeared in the *Freethinker* consists in a misprint of "creator" for "creation." For this we offer our most abject apology. But we have a suspicion that calling this passage, even when correctly cited, "meaningless jargon" is the real ground of our offence. And with all due respect to Mr. Burdett we beg to say that it is meaningless jargon, even when correctly quoted. To say that we are forbidden to believe that "the less can be the cause of the greater" is not forbidden by either reason or imagination or experience. Scientifically and philosophically "higher" and "lower" have no existence, save as convenient classifications that may be altered as our standards of value alter. And if "higher" and "lower" are used in the convenient sense of simpler

and more complex structures, then experience is constantly giving us examples of complex structures being broken up into simpler ones, and simpler ones giving rise to more complex ones; imagination enables us to foresee these happenings and reason helps to show us their inevitability. We are sorry to say it, but Mr. Burdett's statement is unscientific and unphilosophic rubbish. And rubbish remains rubbish whether served up in a sandalwood box or found in the depths of a garbage tin. We cheerfully admit that Mr. Burdett sits in a very numerous company, and that the particular kind of rubbish with which we are dealing has become standardized and so made the small talk of many incompetent thinkers. But that does not alter its character for those who have some acquaintance with the nature of scientific thinking. If the complex did not arise out of the simple, or as Mr. Burdett chooses to put it, if the less were not the cause of the greater, evolution would be a sheer impossibility.—EDITOR, *Freethinker*.]

VOLTAIRE AND THE MARQUISE DU DEFFAND.

SIR,—The quality and quantity of work done by the Editor of the *Freethinker* makes some of us wonder, at times, whether he is not possessed of super-human attributes. Hence it is a real pleasure to catch him tripping for once! In his leading article in the issue of July 16 he says: "When Voltaire was told of Saint Denis walking a hundred paces with his head under his arm, he said that it was easy enough to believe 99 of these steps, it was the first one that was difficult." Now it was not Voltaire but his and D'Alembert's friend, the beautiful and witty Marquise Du Deffand who first gave to literature this well-known aphorism. Cardinal Polignac was trying to impress upon her the miraculous nature of the alleged feat of Saint Denis who, after his decapitation at Paris, walked a hundred paces with his head under his arm. The devout Cardinal was enlarging on the distance covered by the headless saint when the Marquise cut him short with something like the following: "Pooh! The distance is nothing. Anyone can believe in the 99 steps who can believe in the first one; it is only the first step that really matters." In a letter he wrote to Madame Du Deffand in January, 1764, Voltaire called her attention to the quotation in the notes of *La Pucelle* of her witty epigram, "*Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.*"

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.

FREETHOUGHT AND ATHEISM.

SIR,—Perhaps a little amplification of my letter in the *Freethinker* for June 4 may help Mr. Fraser to see at least the relevance of universe making, with the original issue raised by this correspondence.

Surely the "real meaning" to-day of the word "God" is the same as "Maker of the Universe," "First Cause," "The Absolute," "The Unconditioned," etc., all of which are terms applied (to attempt much or little) to the limit of conscious thought, which baffles human conception of form, and if that definition is correct, unless Mr. Fraser has a different condition of intellect or method in the use of it, to that which I have, or am at present aware of (and to discover this was the purpose of the queries I put to him) he certainly cannot in strict truth assent, much less prove that "God," or "It," does, or does not exist.

If Mr. Fraser cannot now see any difference between the proposition "God exists" and (with the aid of his sense) "apples exist," then I cannot help him further.

I still assert that "the definite position restricts freedom more than a confession of ignorance," and may add that the definite position not only restricts freedom of thought but frequently distorts one's idea of justice.

Though fully appreciative, Sir, of the keen sense of justice usually present in your "Views and Opinions" over a range of difficult subjects, I think had you, in the issue of March 12, and Mr. Fraser, in his article of May 9 last, been more Freethinkers than Atheists, the quotation given below from Professor T. H. Huxley's Essay on Agnosticism in fairness to him, would have found a place in each contribution:—

When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an Atheist, a Theist, or a Pantheist; a Materialist or an Idealist; a Christian or a Freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer; until, at last, I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last. The one thing in which most of these good people were agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure they had attained a certain "gnosis," had, more or less successfully, solved the problem of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble.

My "attitude" is that, just as the ideas or thoughts of the Christian or Mohammedan are cramped to suit dogmatic assertions, so to a lesser degree are some thoughts of the Atheist cramped to suit a dogmatic assertion, and cramped thoughts are certainly not free thoughts.

"HOPE."

THE BIRCH AT WINCHESTER.

SIR,—I think Mr. W. Mann has made a mistake in names or dates. Some Headmaster of Winchester may have "castigated fifty boys at a time," but not Ridding. I was here the last six years of his reign, 1878-84. It was something of an event when someone "had his name ordered," that is, was taken to Ridding's study to be birched. I do not think it happened more than once or twice a week, among 400 boys (or, "men," as all Wykehamists are called, even at twelve years old). I was never birched myself (though often "tunded" by some prefect or other with an ash stick). But when I became a prefect myself (with power to use the ash), I sometimes had to take a victim to Ridding's study, and hold up his shirt-tail while the Headmaster applied five or ten smart strokes of the birch to the bare behind. I never saw blood drawn.

However, I quite agree with W. Mann that corporal punishment was excessive fifty years ago. If I did not have much at school, I had it at home. I do not think there was a day from my seventh to my eleventh year that my father (an Anglican parson) did not either cane me on the hands or take me to the stable and horsewhip me. My crime, 99 times in 100 was stupidity or inattention to Greek and Latin lessons. The hatred this implanted for classical Greece and Rome has lasted to my 67th year.

WYKEHAMIST.

PIETY AS BEDFELLOW TO INSOLVENCY.

SIR,—Sitting in the lounge of the Pacific Hotel at Cairns, North Queensland a few days ago I was a listener to a conversation carried on between two people. It concerned the recent hopeless insolvency of a business man of large pretensions, and, as it turned out, ditto piety. I listened to the expected reply of the second party, "hypocrite, so-called pillar of the Church," etc., and my mind wandered back many many years. Let us get back to the early sixties of last century. Here we have the failure of Paul's Bank. Sir John Dean Paul, the head of the banking firm, was a man of deep (sic) piety, yet all the time the inherited estate was not worth sixpence. Coming forward some twenty years, we have the disastrous failure of the Glasgow Bank, 1878. It was directed by men of effusive piety. Now in both these cases the shareholders had invested in banking companies of unlimited liabilities.

Ostensible Sabbath devotions have snared many followers in its time. Poor clients, poor unprotected not-guilty shareholders, their pious directors had bled them for years. Just one more case. The 1891-3 bank failures of Australia. Here we have one of the accused actually reading "The Book" whilst seated in the dock. And there were "pillars of the Church" in those days, too.

S. W. STALLIEV.

North Queensland.

## AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE.

SIR,—Through being on holiday, I have only just read the *Freethinker* for July 2. If too much time has not elapsed, I should be glad if you would allow space for the following brief letter of correction.

As an Esperantist, I was amused to see the example quoted by Mr. G. H. Taylor. It contained spellings that are used only for telegraphic purposes (*e.g.*, *rughajn* and *chinju*), and the omission of a preposition made nonsense of the last part of the sentence. As a scientist, Mr. Taylor will recognize this: *Ido* looks quite as difficult to an Esperantist as Esperanto does to an *Idist*. I may add that Esperanto is not so difficult to pronounce, as would appear from the example given. The Esperanto "j" is simply the English "y" in sound. Appearances are sometimes deceptive, especially when written with a purpose.

F. GATESHILL.

SIR,—My attention has been called to a letter on page 430 of your publication, in which an imaginary Esperanto text is presented with a supposed translation into *Ido*, for comparison.

I will not here criticize either text, although I am tempted to do so, but simply remark that it is possible in all languages to elaborate texts of the "Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Peppercorns" type. I could easily quote such for *Ido*, if I did not feel that such quibbling was unworthy of the cause. The essential facts are—that though *Ido* was boosted twenty-five years ago as the solution of the problem, it has steadily declined, and only a handful of adherents remain, while Esperanto has grown, and has proved itself in practice as well as in theory to be the only practical solution of the problem. Though I am perfectly ready to state my reasons for believing that Esperanto is immeasurably superior to *Ido*, one does not kick a man who is down, and the question has now ceased to have any but an academic interest. I admire the courage of those few who are left, like our friend, to lead a forlorn hope. Personally, however, I am more concerned in the practical use of Esperanto, as the one tried and proved solution of the world's language difficulties.

MONTAGU C. BUTLER, M.R.S.T.,

Secretary, British Esperanto Assoc.

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### Obituary.

ANNIE ALICE STEERS.

ON Friday, July 14 the remains of Annie Alice Steers were interred at the Becontree Cemetery, Dagenham, Essex. For some time she had been suffering from Tuberculosis, which recently took a bad turn from which she was not expected to recover. Death eventually took place on July 10, at the age of forty. Our sympathy is with the husband and four children in their grievous loss. A Secular Service was conducted at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

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### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

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

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15, Sunday, July 23, Mr. L. Ebury. "Salmon and Ball," Cambridge Road, E.2, 8.0, Thursday, July 27, Mr. Paul Goldman.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (Shorrolds Road, North End Road), 7.30, Saturday, July 22, Messrs. Barnes, Bryant and Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, July 23, Mr. C. Tuson. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Wednesday, July 26, H. C. Smith. Ramsden Road, Balham Station, 8.0, Thursday, July 20, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Aliwell Road, Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, July 28, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Regents Park) : 3.0 and 6.30.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12.0, B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, E. Bryant and C. Tuson. 6.30, A. H. Hyatt, E. C. Wood, C. Tuson, B. A. Le Maine and E. Bryant. Wednesdays, 7.30, W. P. Campbell-Everden. Thursdays, 7.30, B. A. Le Maine and C. Tuson. Fridays, E. Bryant and B. A. Le Maine.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square) : 8.0, Sunday, July 23, S. Burke—"What do We Want in Its Place?" "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Wednesday, July 26, S. Burke and F. W. Smith. "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Friday, July 28, S. Burke and F. W. Smith.

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level) : 7.30, Tuesday, July 25, Mr. J. Cecil Keast—"Incarnation."

BISHOP AUCKLAND (Market Place) : 7.0, Wednesday, July 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BOLTON N.S.S. (Blackburn Market) : 3.0 and 7.0, Messrs. Hankin and Sisson.

CRAWSHAWBOOTH : 7.30, Wednesday, July 26, Mr. J. Clayton.

DERBY (Market Square) : 7.30, Mr. H. V. Blackman, B.Sc., Chairman Mr. L. Woolley.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street) : 8.0, Friday, 21, Saturday 22, and Sunday, July 23, Mrs. Whitefield. Messrs. Buntin, Moore and White. *Freethinker* and *Free* thought literature on sale at all meetings.

HARLE SYKE : 7.45, Friday, July 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields, Platt Lane) : 7.0, Mr. F. E. Monks.

MORPETH (Market Place) : 7.0, Saturday, July 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Monday, 24, Tuesday, 25, Thursday, 27 and Friday, July 28, Wednesday, July 26, South Shields, Wouldhave Memorial.

7.0. Mr. George Whitehead will address all meetings.

NELSON (Carr Road) : 7.30, Tuesday, July 25, Mr. J. Clayton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday, July 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NOTTINGHAM (Council Square) : 7.30, Wednesday, July 26, Mr. H. V. Blackman, B.Sc., Chairman Mr. L. Woolley.

TATFIELD (The Bridge) : 7.0, Sunday, July 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Church Street) : 8.0, Mr. Alan Flanders—A Lecture.

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