

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

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

Views and Opinions.

*The Persistence of the Primitive.*

I SAID last week that it is the savage who is the parent of all genuinely religious ideas. They may be re-dressed—they are re-dressed—to suit modern tastes, but their essential character remains unchanged. The man who with fiercely ineffective rhetoric resents the idea of a man-like God will be found praying to a God in terms that are—unless God be manlike—either sarcastic or intensely stupid. The Christian advocate who talks at large of evolution as God's method of creation uses language and puts forth ideas which have no significance whatever if we eliminate the early Christian conception of a deity who is a compound of a jobbing carpenter and a district visitor of uncertain temper. The clerical critic who in books and critical articles will admit the imaginative character of much of the New Testament, and even stress the belief that the whole story is the creation of pious zeal centring round a unique personality, is found in his sermons referring to what "Our Lord" said or did, as though he were citing from the attested evidence of a legal commission. As commonly happens confusion of thought issues in contradiction in speech. Marry a pure savage to a civilized mate and the progeny is almost certain to be unlovely—unless one half the parentage ceases to influence the rearing of the child.

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*Rain Making.*

South Africa has been suffering from drought. Cattle, sheep and crops are threatened with destruction, and men face ruin. Black and white are involved in what may be a common evil. The native who is a disbeliever in the white man's God will have been performing his ancient incantations in order to bring rain to the parched earth, and the white man—far, far above such exhibitions of ignorance—will have none of it. At least, not in that form. So the white man, through the instrumentality of the Government,

has decreed a day of humiliation and prayer, and the *Rand Daily Mail*, at the request of the Department of External Affairs, publishes the following:—

The Prime Minister desires to remind the public that Wednesday next has been appointed as a day of humiliation and prayer, and seeing that the chastising hand of the Lord is upon us, he would like to see the people on that day appeal to the Almighty with the greatest possible unanimity, and take part in the services which will be held by the various Church denominations.

To the Christian mind the distinction between this and the rain-making conjurations of the black man is very clear. It is true that neither the black nor the white man ever tries his magic until the drought has existed some time, and, therefore, it must be nearer the end in any case. It is true also that both profess some degree of humiliation in the process, but the cardinal distinction remains that the one is appealing to a mere idol, and the other is appealing to the true God, who was incarnated in our Lord and Saviour. Moreover, the God of the black man has not denied rain out of sheer carelessness, or pure cussedness, but the white man's God has withheld the rain to chastize those who worship him, and so, when the white man looks round and sees the dying lambs and calves, and notes the parched ground that may mean starvation to thousands, and must mean privation to many, he can say, "It is for my good," even though he may whisper, "But, O Lord, do not benefit me over-much."

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*Devil Dodgers.*

Africa is to the anthropologist and the historian the most interesting of all continents, and it provides a further illustration of my general thesis in the matter of witchcraft. It may be due to a suddenly quickened interest in the need for purging Africa of this terrible curse; it may be due to the need for extending mining interests, and the power of the witch-doctor may have been used to prevent the native seeing the use of giving up his life in the open and spending part of it underground in the mines; but whatever be the cause there has lately been much in our own press of the curse that witchcraft is to the native races. Even General Higgins, of the Salvation Army, has been moved to write a lengthy letter to the *Times*, announcing that he is prepared to send out his agents to help stamp out this terrible curse of witchcraft—with, of course, the hint that if he does so more money must come into his coffers.

When it comes to dealing with witchcraft I doubt whether any better representative person could be sent for this purpose than the head of the Salvation Army. For its preaching is saturated with teaching concerning the devil and his agents. Every Salvationist—careless of the fact that the statement amounts to little short of an impeachment of the good taste of the

Devil—represents Satan as struggling to acquire his soul. Of course it might be said that this slander is applied also to God Almighty, who is also represented as anxious to acquire the same article. And there must certainly be something radically wrong about a universe in which two of the principal personages in it spend so much time in struggling for so little. But the Salvationist has not merely *his* teaching. He can take with him the New Testament in which Jesus is found fighting—not the devil and the agents of the black medicine-man, but the devil of the white one. The General can also call to his aid the practice and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the records of those Christian saints who have met and fought the devil, and the witch-doctors, who in the Roman Church and in the English Churches cure diseases, pray for rain, or for victory in battle, and receive good, solid money in order to get souls out of the clutches of the Devil. And if some of the blacks think that, having enough devils of their own, there is no need to go out of their way to exchange one set of them for another set, General Higgins may well point out the superiority of the white man's spirits inasmuch as they have helped him to get hold of most of the earth and to place the white man in power over the black one. It is quite likely that the black man will be impudent enough to recognize the likeness between his own witch-doctors and those of the Christian; it is not likely that the white men will either see or admit the close relationship between the two.

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#### Lying for the Glory of God.

I am not quite sure whether the next case I have is a good illustration of the persistence of the primitive, but it may be taken as one of the prevalence of the quite early Christian practice of lying for the greater glory of God. Eppleton is a parish in Durham, its vicar is the Rev. G. Salisbury, but I am not sure whether he is the editor of the Parish Magazine or not. If he is not, then I apologize in advance for associating him with a particularly robust kind of a liar. In the issue of the magazine for October, I find the following:—

We were sitting in the office of a manufacturer, a French Jew, one day during our work in the East End of London. Whilst we were talking a Mr. Chapman Cohen entered and was introduced to us as the Editor of the *Freethinker*. To our surprise, and not a little to our disgust, we discovered that the *Freethinker*, and through it, largely the forces of Atheism in this country, was financed by the manufacturer, a foreigner and a Jew. That other Jews were with him and behind him we have no doubt whatever. Immigrants to our country, making their fortunes out of our people, they used their money to take away the religion of our people. We mention this in view of the fact that the Secular Society is attempting some such work in our parish.

Now, to clear away any misapprehension, I wish to say once for all, that if any Jew in this country wishes to send along a thousand in order to help advertise the *Freethinker*, I will accept it at once and the receipt of the cheque, with the purpose to which it is to be devoted will be publicly acknowledged. The same applies to any members of the Church of England, from the Archbishops downward, to all Nonconformist, to other odds and ends of religionists, and to any foreigner, "Frenchman, Turk or Prussian." Only one stipulation is made. The cheque must not have attached to it the condition that the *Freethinker* is to be diverted from its present purposes.

But, curiously enough, although I have met many kinds of Jews, Russian, Polish, English, even Irish, I have never, to my recollection, known a French Jew

in this country. I have known orthodox Jews with superstitions as degrading as those of a Roman Catholic or a Hottentot, and also Jews of a ferociously Atheistic turn of mind, but I have never known a French Jew, certainly I have never known a Jewish manufacturer at once wealthy enough and generous enough to keep the *Freethinker* in being. I would very much like to know who this Jew is, where he lives, and for how long I have known him.

I regretfully admit that the *Freethinker* is only kept in being by its friends. Indeed my accountant, who has kept the books of the *Freethinker* for over thirty years, says it is the most wonderful business he has ever known. It has never made anything but a deficit in the whole of its history, and still goes along as cheerfully as ever. It is also true that during the time I have been editor I have raised more money for the paper and for the movement that has ever been raised in a similar period. But there was really nothing secret about it. The money was asked for publicly, it was acknowledged publicly, and the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is under the control of known trustees. The names of the donors have appeared in these columns, and I am sure that these will be considerably surprised to learn of the existence of this wealthy Jew, who maintains not only the *Freethinker*, but the Freethought Movement. Of course, it may be that this particular French Jew told the Vicar that he would like to subsidise the *Freethinker*. My great trouble is that I do not know the Vicar, I do not know the generous Jew. I would like to meet that Jew. I do not particularly wish to meet the Vicar.

It is sheer ingratitude for the Vicar to protest against a "foreigner and a Jew" coming to this country to "take away the religion of our people." Because, after all, the Vicar would never hold the living he does hold if it had not been for the agents of "a foreigner and a Jew" coming to this country to take away the religion of the people. The parallel is very close, for this same "foreigner and Jew" is believed by many to have got into serious trouble through the bigotry and falsehoods of the Vicar in the country in which he resided. But I do hope our Vicar will let us know where this very generous French Jew resides. Even if he be dead he may have left descendants, and perhaps they may be as generous as their father to this paper and the cause it represents. May I hope that some of the members of this Vicar's Church will press him to disclose the whereabouts of this French Jew, and also to recall more definitely where and when I had the doubtful pleasure of the Vicar's acquaintance, if only for a few moments?

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#### An Interesting Study.

Some of my friends have expressed surprise that I can keep on year after year with my work and appear to find it fresh and interesting. But where could I find anything so absorbing? All my life I have been interested in strange and curious things. I have been interested above all in anthropology and in psychology, particularly in morbid and pathological psychology. And where could I find choicer specimens of mental aberrations than in connexion with religion? Where could I find finer examples of the persistence of the primitive than in the field of religion? I could not find them in science or art or even in politics. For, in any of these, modern and more civilized considerations exert some influence. But in religion one finds that tendency to weave fairy tales which in the child is mere activity of the imagination, but which in the adult becomes moral perversion; one finds that persistence of primitive mental traits and of savage cus-

toms such as one cannot so easily find elsewhere. Even my forgotten acquaintance, the Vicar, carries one back to a more primitive age, when Christians openly and boldly taught the virtue of lying if it were done in the interests of religion. I am pleased I have met the Vicar—in the pages of a parish magazine. His kind is not so common as it once was: the more valuable the specimen when it is found. I shall certainly add this Vicar to my collection.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Are Priests Perjurers?

"The authority of priests and ministers is certainly declining."—Dean Inge.

"Not mine your mystic creed; not mine in prayer  
And worship, at the ensanguined cross to kneel."

W'm. Watson.

The most important form of religion in this country is the State Church, which is called the Church of England. This religious body is in a very peculiar position, for it has been manufactured by Parliament, and from time to time has been under the hands of its creator for alterations and repairs. The creator is a hybrid and cynical association known as the House of Commons, having no religion in particular, and looking upon the priestly theology which it patronizes as would a special constable, whose duty it is to cajole or frighten people from attending too much to the affairs of life by promising them rewards or punishments when they are no longer alive.

In the ranks of its twenty thousands of priests there are a number who pretend that this so-called Church of England represents a religion independent of the House of Commons. Most clergymen are notoriously ignorant of the culture of their own sorry profession, but this ignorance is quite unpardonable when they see from time to time the ritual, government and doctrines of their own Church being declared by Acts of Parliament, framed by Freethinkers, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Jews, Unitarians, and the other religions or non-religions professed by the six hundred members of this Legislative Assembly.

It appears also that these priests are many of them notorious perjurers. They subscribe most solemnly to the "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion," sanctioned by the King "by God's ordinance, according to our just title, Defender of the Faith and supreme governor of the Church within these our dominions." But in actual practice they openly defy these ordinances, which are declared to be "the true doctrine of the Church of England, agreeable to God's Word."

These articles make the most curious reading in the twentieth century. They include the quaint belief that "Adam" and "Eve" were the original parents of the whole human race, white, black, and yellow, and that they ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which the human race is doomed to death and post-mortem punishment. These articles also teach that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost. These articles also condemn Romish Church doctrines concerning pardons, worshipping, and adoration, as well as of images and invocation of saints, as a vain invention. These articles also teach that the Authorized Version of the Christian Bible is the real word of God, and that the King of England is the head of the Christian Church.

To these egregious Articles of Faith, among a variety of others, every Church of England priest

subscribes. And we know that great numbers of them do not believe in them, or even observe them, that they are taking money by false pretences. Their main reason for remaining in this Parliamentary Church of England are "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power"; as a former cheerful canon of St. Paul's Cathedral wittily puts it. And, mark you, the right to appoint priests to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it was so much coal or quack medicine. Hence there are some curious conclusions. Parliament makes a special religion, and the landlords outside appoint its professors, or barter the appointment to the man with the most money. And, further, in spite of the Thirty-nine Articles, and the most solemn subscription, the confessional is now an institution in hundreds of State Churches. The furniture, ceremonies, and doctrines taught in these churches of the Establishment are not to be distinguished from those of Rome.

Elsewhere one knows what a particular Church stands for. You say this obeys implicitly the Pope of Rome and the College of Cardinals. Another is faithful to the Westminster Confession. Yet another yields homage to some Eastern Patriarchs. Even the Latter-Day Saints pay attention to their Mormon elders. But ask what this Parliamentary Church of England stands for, and who can tell you? One priest points to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, while another laughs in his dainty lawn-sleeves at the simplicity of laymen.

This Parliamentary Church of England pretends, hypocritically, to be the national religion, although only a small percentage of the population attends its services. But, because it is a creature of Parliament, this mockery concerns us all. For the legal theory of this country makes us all parties to the constitution of this particular Church. If it were in the United States of America, or the Malay Federated States, or any other of the British Colonies, where no such thing as a State Church exists, we need not care a solitary pin what humbug went on in a particular church, for it would be none of our affair except in the widest of international senses. But the legislation of the House of Parliament is an entirely different matter. It makes us all, as it were, partners in this so-called Church of England, and compels us to be privy to its chicanery and dishonesty.

This is not too strong an expression. This official Anglican religion is practically using the dogmatic system of the pre-scientific world. It is using modes of thought and language that belong to the Middle Ages and not to the twentieth century. This makes it impossible for a large number of good and thoughtful people to attend the services of a State Church that continues to talk as if nothing had happened for four centuries. The priests themselves are suspected of trimming and prevarication, and of something very near intellectual dishonesty. They have got to realize, however, that these traditional doctrines, hammered out as they were by priests of half-forgotten centuries, cannot be made current coin in the intellectual world of to-day. The young people, in whose hands the fate of this country lies, will have to take these things into consideration. They certainly have their work cut out for them, for the simple reason that Priestcraft is a vested interest entrenched behind money-bags accumulated throughout the centuries.

MIMNERMUS.

Praise is well, blame is well; but affection is the final and most precious reward that any man can win.

Mark Twain.

## The Quakers and Their Cult.

GEORGE FOX, the founder of the Society of Friends, was born in 1624 and died in 1691. He lived in a turbulent time which witnessed the Civil War in England, the execution of Charles I., and the events of the Commonwealth; while it was also an age of bitter religious strife.

Fox and his disciples were very positive that Catholics, Episcopalians and Puritans were all in error. They contended, as William Pollard tells us, that "The great Central Truth of Christianity—the Real Presence of the spirit of Christ in the hearts of His followers—had come to be almost ignored. The free spiritual Republic that Christ had instituted had been largely supplanted by the despotism and tyranny of a human priesthood." So, for the sacerdotal doctrines of official bodies, Fox substituted an inward light conferred by Omnipotence on all men, and asserted that real religion is primarily a matter of personal awareness and experience. Spiritual insight provided the only basis for a correct understanding of the Scriptures. The ordinances of baptism and the eucharist, as these were observed by common Christians, were rejected. Fox declared that genuine baptism is of a spiritual nature and not that of water. Also, the real communion is purely spiritual and has no relation with a mere breaking of bread or the consumption of wine, but in that ceaseless communication with Christ "through the Holy Spirit and through the obedience of faith by which the believer is nourished and strengthened."

Ritual and an ordained priesthood were completely abandoned. The Friends remained silent in their meeting houses until inspired to speak by the influence of the spirit. Moreover, women equally with men were entitled to preach when moved by God. Nevertheless a solemn silence was deemed the ideal basis of public devotion. They branded warfare as utterly antagonistic to true religion, and their opposition to this mode of legalized murder has persisted ever since.

The refusal of the early Quakers to take the oath, pay tithes, or respect laws they thought wrong aroused much orthodox indignation. Their opposition to the taking of oaths they based on the express command of Christ "swear not at all," as well as the exhortation of James the Apostle: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

Some of the more truculent Quakers, as the Friends were derisively termed, disturbed the services held in the orthodox conventicles. These edifices they scorned as "steeple houses." This, with their other acts of aggressive nonconformity, brought them into trouble, not only with a hostile populace, but also with the authorities. During the reign of Charles II., more than 13,000 suffered imprisonment, while 350 died in gaol or succumbed to injuries inflicted by mob violence when their meeting houses were stormed.

While persecution raged, the Quakers met with many exciting experiences. They were frequently sentenced for Sabbath-breaking in journeying to their meetings on the Lord's Day, and they were incarcerated for speaking in market places and at street corners, and for their refusal to pay tithes or to swear an oath. About 200 were transported to the Indies as slaves and it was only with the downfall of the Stuart dynasty and the Revolution of 1688, with the succeeding Act of Toleration in 1689 that they were allowed to establish their Society and develop their discipline

and doctrine. A statute of 1696 granted them the right to affirm and greatly extended their liberty.

The movement soon spread to Scotland and Ireland, and in 1656 two female Friends landed in the American Colonies where they were maltreated, arrested, and deported to Barbadoes. A little later, three members of the Society were publicly executed in Boston. Yet despite clerical intolerance and the violence of the rabble the Quaker missionaries remained undaunted, converts were gained, and Fox himself preached in America in 1671.

Throughout the eighteenth century the Friends prospered. Still debarred from participating in public life, they devoted their days to philanthropy and commercial enterprise. Somewhat exclusive in manner, a part result of persecution, their early zeal lessened, and their numbers declined. Their antagonism to slavery, however, became pronounced. In 1727 they censured the slave trade and it is claimed that so early as 1688 Pennsylvanian Quakers published a protest against the traffic. Under the leadership of an American Quaker, John Woolman, the Friends eagerly embraced the cause of emancipation, and it is said that by 1780 the Society had freed itself "from the reproach of slave-owning, and in 1783, it sent up the first petition to the House of Commons for the abolition of slavery."

In other departments the Quakers were in the vanguard of progress and enlightenment. In common with the Freethinkers of the period they advocated the reform of the vicious and insanitary prisons, the humanization of a savage penal code, and wide improvement in the administration of the lunacy laws.

The Deism so pronounced among cultured Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries invaded the Quaker ranks, and in 1827, Elias Hicks, an able and enlightened Friend, expressed very advanced views. For he denied the truth of the miraculous conception, the divinity and atonement of Christ, as well as the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible. As a result, the American Society was split. Nearly one half the Friends accepted the new teachings and were henceforth known as Hicksite Friends. These sceptical doctrines proved very repugnant to the strictly orthodox, who, alike in England and abroad, were seriously alarmed by the schism. Education was further encouraged within the Society, and the more rigid customs were relaxed, but this in its turn offended the more conservative section, so the orthodox themselves became divided, and the new sect of Wilburites arose, deriving its name from John Wilbur, its begetter.

Although certain peculiarities of Quaker speech and observance have been abandoned, the Friends retain much of their strictness and solemnity. Any form of frivolity is frowned upon, and even harmless enjoyment finds little favour. They have severely censured "balls, gaming places, horse-races and play-houses, those nurseries of debauchery and wickedness, the burden and grief of the sober part of other societies, as well as of our own." Moreover, it is stated that: "The Printed Epistle of the yearly meeting of 1854 contains a warning against indulging in music, especially what goes by the name of 'sacred music,' and denounces musical exhibitions, such as oratorios, as essentially 'a profanation.'"

Distinguished yet by their sober attire and dignity of mien, the Quakers tend more and more to merge with the average intellectual sections of society. The shameful social ostracism and inane ridicule to which they were long subjected have now passed away. The rationalization of the legal code, the admission of Friends to Parliament—John Bright and Lord Lister were Quakers—and the opening of the Universities to men of all shades of religious belief have all served to

break the barriers which long divided the Friends from the general community. Their former aversion to music and the drama has greatly diminished, art is more highly appreciated, and even Quakeresses are not always unacquainted with the masterpieces of modern fiction.

Possibly had the Quaker attitude towards war been adopted by a larger proportion of the European public the World War might have been avoided. Protest and passive resistance on the part of Freethinkers and Quakers having proved unavailing, Friends of all shades of doctrine united in forming the American Friends' Service Committee for purposes of alleviation and reconstruction in a war-shattered world. In co-operation with British Quakers this association assisted in the repair of the devastated regions in Serbia, Poland and Northern France. Hospitals were established in France and Russia as well as orphanages and schools for the children of military victims in Poland, Serbia and Syria.

T. F. PALMER.

## Two Tributes.

MISS MATILDA BETHAM-EDWARDS, an English novelist and writer on French life, who was born in 1836 and died in 1919, pays a fine tribute to Charles Bradlaugh in her book, *Reminiscences of M. Betham-Edwards*. Here is the significant excerpt:—

Another striking figure of this period . . . also a victim of nineteenth century intolerance, was Charles Bradlaugh. What an irony runs through the career of this epoch-making man! So much we may surely say of one who, single-handed against society, the Church, and the law, obtained for English law-makers liberty of conscience! The immense moral victory was perhaps Bradlaugh's most coveted reward; such a character could not set great store by popularity or worldly fortune. And perhaps he inwardly chuckled at a reaction—surely the strangest witnessed in our own or any time!—but yesterday a scape-goat, a hugbear, a reprobate, on the morrow not only a man and a brother, but a positive exemplar and shining light. How deep-seated was universal prejudice against Bradlaugh, the following story will show. The very last people in the world to be repelled by anyone's religious or anti-religious opinions were surely George Eliot and George Henry Lewes! Yet I well remember that when describing an evening at the Hall of Science, the latter observed laughingly, "I verily believe, Polly," thus he usually called his companion, "that our friend has a sneaking fondness for Mr. Bradlaugh!" The speech, good naturedness itself, evidently implied tacit cause for astonishment, the notion that such sympathy was hardly credible, hardly admissible in a well-regulated mind.

At one time Bradlaugh's hand seemed against every man, and every man's hand against Bradlaugh, a position in itself calling for pity, if not commendation. It was the hero of later days one felt glad to have seen, the pale, buffeted, hustled, but unconquerable figure, ex-errand boy, trooper, coal retailer, and lawyer's clerk, arraigning that awful body, the House of Commons, arraigning traditional England, in his own person embodiment of all that has made England's greatness, the passion for spiritual as well as political freedom!

Another opinion of Bradlaugh worth recalling comes from the pen of William J. Linton, a wood-engraver and author (b. 1812, d. 1897). It is to be found in his book, *Recollections*:—

Bradlaugh was sturdy and conscientious, meaning all he said, and never afraid to say what he meant. I had little sympathy with his irreligious opinions, nor do I know that there was more than occasional agreement between us on political grounds. But I had never any reason to do other than respect him. I

take it that sheer want of the imaginative faculty was at the base of his theory of disbelief. It was not in his nature to believe, certainly not in the supernatural. But it was in his nature to take an active part in what lay around him, and so stoutly contend against whatever he thought wrong in theory or practice; and he was true to his nature, whether as iconoclast or reformer. There seemed an indication of something else in his affection for the companion of his early days, James Thomson, the poet of the "City of Dreadful Night," and in Thomson's affection for him. Certainly it should be said that this indefatigable iconoclast was a kindly-natured man, as one may be even if a born fighter. And he was a man who made the best of himself; to whom I would say, self-culture, if only to train him for the fight (and who shall dare even so to narrow his motives?) was felt as a duty.

C. MCKELVIE.

## Bradlaugh on the Wireless.

[The following broadcast was sent out from the Midland Regional Station on September 29 in the course of the usual weekly talk. We had so much to say of the character of the London broadcast, that we have extra pleasure in publishing this one. It does attempt to give a view of the whole man, quite free from the insulting, and quite untrue, statement that Bradlaugh is now generally out of date. The speech is reprinted with the permission of the B.B.C. and the speaker.]

I WANT to-night to say a word about the Centenary of the birth of Charles Bradlaugh, who, in his time, was a great Midland figure. It's difficult to-day to imagine what a dominating rôle he played in popular movements in the Seventies and Eighties of last Century. He was bitterly hated and attacked by his enemies, but few men have enjoyed the same measure of confidence and friendship he inspired among his followers. People could—and did—violently oppose the man and his views—nobody could ignore him. Bradlaugh was, in a very real sense, a pioneer of modern thought, tolerance, and human liberty.

This remarkable man was born at Hoxton, London, on September 26, 1833. Between the age of six and eleven the boy received such education as his parents, who were working people, could afford to give him. He was, like so many famous men before and since, almost entirely self-taught. It can truly be said of him that at no stage of his career did he cease to study, to read, and to think. Quite early in his mental life he discovered the writings of William Cobbett and the leaders of the Chartist Movement. From this source we can follow the evolution of his political ideas and principles.

Bradlaugh's working life was one long struggle with poverty and debt. He began on the lowest rung of the ladder, for at the age of twelve we read of him as an errand boy in a Solicitor's office. He was at that time deeply and conscientiously religious, and for a time acted as a Sunday School teacher at St. Peter's Church, Hackney. It was there that he first came into conflict with the Church. He began to feel doubts about the religious dogma he was asked to teach. In the tolerant atmosphere of to-day—a heritage we owe largely to the influence of Charles Bradlaugh—it's difficult for us to imagine the harshness with which he was treated by his spiritual teacher and his own parents. It's true, nevertheless, that the boy was given three days "to change his opinions or lose his situation." True to his own nature, Bradlaugh resisted this attempt at coercion, and voluntarily gave up his work and left home.

Many months of hardship followed, during which he developed his freethought and radical views, but gave no sign of submission to clerical or parental authority. I've no time to-night—deeply as I'm tempted—to trace

his life in detail—to show how he was in turn soldier, solicitor's clerk, Freethought lecturer, radical politician, Editor of the *National Reformer*, and finally, Member of Parliament for Northampton.

Bradlaugh's connexions with the Midlands had begun before he was the candidate at Northampton, and in the 'Sixties and 'Seventies he often lectured in Birmingham, Stourbridge, Walsall and other Midland towns.

The people of Northampton elected him as one of their Members in April, 1880; he had been unsuccessful on two previous occasions. On May 3, 1880, he presented himself at the House of Commons, and claimed the right to *affirm* instead of swearing the customary oath upon the Bible. A Select Committee was appointed to consider his claim, and afterwards reported against it. Thus opened a struggle with the House of Commons, which lasted for six years, and involved Bradlaugh in eight legal actions in the Courts.

The Parliament of 1880, dominated as it was by contemporary theological and political prejudice, was incapable of understanding, much less granting, the right of private judgment demanded by Bradlaugh. Standing almost alone—at no time did he receive effective support from the Political Party to which he belonged—he determined to fight for the establishment of the right he claimed.

He began the struggle in the prime of manhood, but when victory came six years later, he was an old and broken man. He lived to enter the House as Member for Northampton in January, 1886, and in August, 1888, he persuaded Parliament to pass a General Affirmation Bill. The triumph of Bradlaugh in this matter was complete. Then, two years later, this great champion of liberty lay on his death-bed, and when the news reached the House of Commons, a motion was proposed and carried to remove from the Journals of the House the Resolutions of exclusion against Charles Bradlaugh. He was unconscious when the messenger came to him with this news. A few hours later he passed away. This man was, indeed, one of the creators of modern times. We do well to honour his memory and his work at this time.

### Reconciliation with Eternity.

WHEN Antæus touched the earth his strength was renewed. Power comes through strange channels; wisdom, which is power harnessed, does not appear in the spring of an ordinary man's life. Power with wisdom is a sword and a scabbard.

When unbridled imagination is recognized for what it really is, a will o' the wisp, it may be made to work towards man's wholeness, but it needs happy moments for such skill. Carlyle, when he heard that a woman acquaintance had accepted the world, burst forth with one of his characteristic remarks, "By gad, she will have to," but on the other hand, Gorki, a forerunner of a better world than this we know of, wrote that he did not come into the world to comply with it.

This is the preamble to what may be called a confession written in humility and sanctified by the truth as far as a mere student can discern the plumage of that fabled bird. It is not written in the shadow of any wing of any soothing creed.

A friend of mine, who is a giver at a time when the world is overrun with clever people who are simply takers, stated that on the three questions, greatest in relation to any other, he knew nothing. These three subjects were Death, Immortality and the Meaning of Existence. It is a common story that I have to tell, and if I could obtain the clarity of the sunshine through the wet leaves and boughs of autumn trees, those who have noticed this phenomenon will understand what I mean.

At the age of six I lost my mother, who left my father

with five boys. In common with millions of others, from the age of six upwards, these brothers, parents, relatives have appeared in some kaleidoscope and disappeared. All that is left of them resides now in my memory. There is the sweetness of one, the manliness of another, the sympathy and kindness of another, and each can be summoned from the dead at any moment that the healthy mind chooses to call them forth.

Obeying the injunction in the wisdom of Ecclesiastics to wear out the door-steps of good men, I have, as far back as I was able to think independently, followed out that fine precept. The hardest task-masters have taken me in hand, but of that I need not discourse at length in this article. What they had to give was pure gold; they were not practical men, but in the world of encumbrances they burnt their fingers when taking up the homely teapot; they were deceived by what I have termed the "takers"; men would listen to them and spin a column of obtuse material from their conversation. Being clever, and therefore incapable of creative thought, they were, in a manner, a mean kind of Autolytus. One of my mentors in particular I remember, capable of mental dynamite in every phrase, yet at the same time out of sheer goodness of heart he was a distracted shepherd of the flotsam and jetsam of the intellectual world in which he moved. In remembering him I recollect the ease with which he moved in all planes of thought; he could with a master touch explain the mystery of the Holy Grail in such a manner that it would find acceptance by one such as myself, who believes in one world at a time. With one shot he could blow to smithereens all the pretensions of occultism.

There is reconciliation to oneself, which is difficult; more difficult still is the reconciliation to eternity as far as the mind is capable of comprehending the meaning of the word. There comes at a time in one's life a withdrawing into oneself. The simile for this is that of the tortoise retiring into its shell. That is only the external action; the internal one is of more significance. Shakespeare, or all those who went to make up the works under his name, knew the shades and nuances of human existence, which is the same now as it was 900 years or more B.C. So much there is that need not be known; so many colours has truth; so frail and faulty is human nature that the steadfastness of a tree has not yet come entirely within its purview.

The truths of Freethought are disinterested, and this is the only qualification that can be accepted. On the purely empirical aspect of the wisdom of treating ninetenths of the world as children, there can now be no doubt that it was some gigantic effort of insanity. The scorpions of history when they had their chance, took good care to maim and mangle some of the finest flowers of intellect. For those maligners of the human race there is no excuse. The world for all time has been an inn. They thought that by making the occupants as uncomfortable as possible with fear and threats of hell, and very real discomfort in their daily lives, that they were doing good work. We in the present moment are paying for those grievous errors.

In a playful or cynical mood the few who are condemned to thinking seriously on any subject may imagine man to be a midge dancing in a sunbeam, but the manly deduction from this may also be that he can at least dance gracefully. There is a trick in time; scientists and philosophers have gnawed this stone of contention, but there is an element of doubt which still remains. The wheels of time turn remorselessly, bringing sunshine and shadow. Life is a fact to king, prince, worker and clown. It came to the holder without request or demand. To argue design is to flee to the sanctuary of ignorance; an acceptance of life with its multiplicity of uncertainties is heroic. An acceptance of life with the prize in some remote future of which no one knows is illusion. It may be faith, and for such as prefer to trust in their faith, one may stand aside and allow full rein to the individual choice, provided that that choice is not enforced with the rack, the stake or social ostracism. But acceptance of life on the terms I have indicated is what I have been trying to make clear as a reconciliation with eternity.

## Acid Drops.

Thus the well-known writer, "Ben Adhem," in his weekly article in the *Liverpool Weekly Post* :—

Very few people believe in Christianity nowadays, though we all pretend to acquiesce in it because it is custom and convention. But very few people really believe in it.

So that all the pulpit and press utterances on the blessings of Religion can be compared to the cackling of an old hen over a nest of china eggs. Is it really as bad as that?

Let us cut the cackle and come to the 'osses. The point of view of English "gentility" is given by a correspondent (who signs himself "De Mortuis Nihil Nisi Verum") in the *Horse and Hound*. He is so representative of a numerous class that it calls for some attention :—

During the last few days one has read a great deal about the centenary of Charles Bradlaugh's birth, but to those who remember him perhaps it would be kinder to leave him in oblivion. There is no reason why a man should not be an Atheist if he must think that way, but to parade the fact in a Christian country is eminently bad taste. To many of us Christianity is a great blessing, and surely if you are in the minority, and do not believe in it, the best plan is to keep silent. On being elected a Member of Parliament Mr. Bradlaugh refused to conform to the ordinary routine following election to the House of Commons, and though he advertised himself extensively, and caused a great deal of trouble, I have yet to learn that he did any good or was of any service to his country. No doubt many Freethinkers are elected to the House of Commons, but they conform to the usual regulations, and take their seats without any fuss or trouble.

There is little that is true about this, despite the writer's pen-name, but it can be conceded that it would please the writer, and the numerous class he represents, if the name of Bradlaugh were left in oblivion. For there would be other things buried at the same time; and, amongst them, would be the record of those who, masquerading as gentlemen in this green and pleasant land, pursued with malignity one of the most straightforward, fair-minded, restrained, incorruptible figures in the history of reform in this country. This class (whom "De Mortuis . . ." represents so well), emphasized that those who, lacking knowledge and judgment, substitute for them taste, form, and blind conformity, are capable of slander and every mean device that shuffling and insincerity suggest. Simply because the "agitators" are different from those who being in Society are therefore in God's pattern, they become *ipse facto*, inferior, ill-mannered, worthless.

Mr. Gardiner, in his article in *John Bull* of September 30, gives a conversation he had with John Morley, when he (Morley) was Secretary for India. "What Parliament needs is a great, independent critical voice that has no axe to grind." A Cobden?" I said. "No," he replied. "A Bradlaugh, fearless, independent, disinterested—the greatest private Member of my time." *We have yet to learn that he did any good or was of any service to his country*, say the gentlemen who specialize in huntin' and the shades of socks and ties.

Although we do not think that the greatest good Bradlaugh did was in Parliamentary work, we do think that the huge amount of work he did do, during the time he was allowed to be in the House, was vital, thorough and splendid. We know as well that a testimony such as Morley's is about the only way to impress people of the "De Mortuis" type so we give it. This type, which, whenever it happens to be in the majority—and only then believes in the minority keeping silent, is the type that systematically referred to Gladstone during his lifetime as the Grand Old Humbug. They will thus not have any difficulty in putting Morley's testimony aside, coming as it does from one of the same distasteful political kidney.

Faithful to type as well is Lady Snowden for she considers it deplorable taste and bad form to give non-Church-Going and Catholic subscribers to the B.B.C., something to suit them on Sundays, during the hours when the other Churches and Chapels are satisfying their customers.

Another true to type is A.A.B., who writes now and again in the *Evening Standard*. Every line this person, for instance, writes about Asquith (who was a gentleman and not a gentleman of sorts), is steeped in malice, simply because he can never forgive that Statesman for getting the reigning monarch to agree to create sufficient peers (if necessary) to carry the Parliament Act. It is Beaconsfield, the insincere fawning, "wangling" Beaconsfield who is admittedly his *beau-ideal*. Taste and generosity of treatment are to such as A.A.B., what the mathematical world know as "variables."

Another organ of respectability, the *Saturday Review*, allows one of its contributors, Mr. J. Wentworth Day, to display his quality over the (to him) unsatisfactory finish of the Tshekedi business. Mr. Thomas is referred to as "the aitchless enunciator of after-dinner inanities," and, coupling him with Mr. Macdonald, he continues :—

But this after all is no more than we reasonably expect from two men, who, reared in an atmosphere of street-corner strife, trades-union chicanery and orange-box oratory, have by the most amazing feats of political gymnastics, placed themselves in the key positions of a Conservative Government.

A monkey cannot ride a racehorse to victory—and until the Conservative horse sheds its simian jockeys we must expect it to pull and bore. The price of their jockeyship is the price of our shame.

It would appear that we have got back to the 'osses, but we have duly noted in the process, for our correction and reproof, what is considered permissible and within the decencies of controversy, by such a "cultured" journal as the *Saturday Review*.

Beyond all doubt, declares a pious writer, there is a "new thrust of the spirit" in our times. Its evidence is the recovery of the practice and habit of prayer; men and women are praying expectantly whose prayers previously were formal. For our part, we are willing to believe that some Christians have again begun to think that something can be got out of God by praying. The notion is not a particularly intelligent one. If "Our Heavenly Father" really intends Christians to be happy, he will give them all that is essential to that end, without their needing to pray for it. If they pray for anything that, in the opinion of their God, is not necessary for their happiness, they will not get it. Hence, whatever they pray for, they are merely wasting their own and God's time. The only thing that can be said about prayer is that it is auto-suggestion-soothing-syrup which brings peace to infantile minds.

The Rev. S. M. Wickham said at a meeting of the Guild of St. Raphael, the other day, that at the hospital in which he served, in Winwick, Lanes., "all the worst types of the mentally afflicted were drafted in." They had 2,856 patients, 435 nurses, and 8 specialist mental doctors. They also had their own church, and at least 1,000 of the above mental cases went to worship and sang eucharist there every Sunday. We are not at all surprised at the good attendance and the fervid prayers drafted to Christ by the "worst types of the mentally afflicted." Some of the prayers and some of the hymns require these particular types, for it is difficult to imagine any really sane person could possibly believe either waited to heaven or Jesus, could possibly have any effect of any kind. What a picture of religion such meetings as this one at the Guild of St. Raphael shows!

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel is, alas, in spite of its despairing cry to heaven, having a very rough time. Money is urgently required to carry on the good work. In fact it is quite impossible, in this age

of scepticism about miracles, to get the beautiful message of Christ over without money. In 1931, the Society's income fell by £12,000, and in 1932, "the Society had an accumulated deficit of £30,495." We are also told that in spite of the heavy drop in income in 1931, everything "would have been well if the income for 1932 had equalled that for 1931." The S.P.G. seems quite puzzled why people are not pouring money into its coffers considering "the whole world is calling for increased help," and the help the S.P.G. would cheerfully give for a few extra thousands of pounds is to point to heaven and say Jesus will look after you. This seems to be all the help anybody ever got from the S.P.G. or is ever likely to get. We are glad that at last even madly religious people are beginning to see the utter futility, from the heavenly point of view, of such bodies as the S.P.G. No income at all will mean its utter extinction, and nobody would be any the worse.

From *Punch* we learn that an Australian Church Notice reads:—

The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon has been indefinitely postponed on account of the visit of the Archbishop.

The *Church Times* with its rabid Anglo-Catholicism following the Roman variety as close as possible, has a leader advocating celibacy for its priests. The terrible picture drawn by Dr. H. C. Lea in *Sacerdotal Celibacy* seems to be no warning whatever. A "secular priest as well as a monk may be called to live unmarried," is put not only with pride but as a duty. It is extraordinary how the religious mind still looks upon marriage as essentially "unclean," or something unfit for a "holy" man or woman. "The need for a large increase of unmarried priests is one of the main necessities of the times," we are told. "The Church if it had them, instead of struggling to hold the fort, might advance in triumph to the attack." Celibacy in its priests will never save the Church. Reason has, in this age of scientific discovery doomed it for ever.

Someone tells the *Daily Mirror* that:—

A sign of the times is the new humility of science confronted with the prevailing condition of humanity. The old feud between material and spiritual truth is not so marked. Religion and science now realize that they are different aspects of human aspiration.

We haven't noted this "new humility" of science. Science still believes that its methods of investigation, observation, experiment, and reasoning provide the best means of arriving at truth about the world in which man lives. Again, science and religion are not "different aspects of human aspiration." They reveal different kinds of thinking—the first modern and the second primitive. They certainly exhibit different aspects of human nature. The one aspect is of man as self-reliant and independent; the other aspect is of man as diffident, mistrustful of his own powers, and relying on presumed supernatural aid for help and guidance.

A writer reminds the world that, "The Romans could make almost everything perfectly, and engineers and architects and manufacturers have had to go back to Rome more than once since Europe emerged from the mist of the Middle Ages." The reference here is to pagan Rome. About the only thing that Catholic Rome has given to Europe is—mist. It is this mist, which Europe endeavoured to dissipate at the time of the Renaissance, that persons like Messrs. Chesterton and Belloc want us to "go back" to. To borrow light from pagan Rome is an eminently sensible thing to do. To borrow intellectual fog from the Roman that gave the world the "Dark Ages" is the limit of stupidity.

Another *Punch* punch:—

"POPE CITES DANGERS FACING THE WORLD; NAMES 8 CARDINALS."—*N.Y. Paper*.

We can't believe he meant to be so unkind.

One thing we are sure of is that the gentleman who enquires, in a daily paper, whether there is any particular reason why public baths close at 9 a.m. on Sunday mornings, will not get the right answer to his query. The reply he will not get is that, the Christian Churches object to everything that interferes with the parson's Sunday opportunity for plying his wares. The fact is that anything which interferes with the parson's Sunday trade is unmistakably "against the will of God." Hence, there is a sound ecclesiastical reason why public baths should be closed at 9 a.m. on Sunday mornings, and why libraries, museums, art galleries, and theatres should be closed all day on Sundays.

A correspondent asks for more information about St. Antony's Guide Stamps. The following is official:—

#### THE ORIGIN OF ST. ANTONY GUIDE STAMPS.

The pious custom of asking St. Antony's help for the protection of letters is based on a tradition that goes back as far as 1720.

In that year a Spanish merchant set out for Peru, leaving his wife and family behind him. Although his wife wrote him several letters after his arrival there, she received no reply from him. The long silence alarmed her, and she determined to have recourse to St. Antony, to whom she had a tender devotion. Accordingly she wrote another letter to her husband, and went straightway and placed it in the hands of the statue of the saint in the Franciscan Church in Oviedo. She confidently asked him at the same time to see that it reached Peru safely. To her great surprise, when she returned shortly afterwards, she found a letter from her husband in the Saint's hand along with some gold pieces.

This letter may still be seen at Oviedo, is dated from Lima, Peru, and mentions that the wife's letter was delivered at Lima by a Franciscan Father. From this remarkable incident there grew up the laudable custom of sealing letters with St. Antony Guide Stamps.

One hundred stamps, one shilling. Very cheap! particularly as there is a prospect of a "bonus" now and again.

All knowledge is of some worth, said Herbert Spencer. From the *Worlds News* we learn:—

At a Cincinnati Bible crusade the Old and New Testaments were read from beginning to end without interruption by relays of readers. It took 16 hours 40 minutes to read the Bible's 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,173 verses, 773,764 words and 3,566,480 letters.

We make the number of letters, 3,566,493, but let that pass!

## Fifty Years Ago.

### THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

WHERE are the names of the illustrious to-day whose work is the helping of man? One name truly in the list is that of one who has deserved well of the public. It is that of Professor Flower, and we shall find him preaching to the assembled clergymen most unpleasant truths. Statesmen? Where are the Gladstones, Northcotes, Chamberlains, Brights, Salisburys? Scientific men? Where are the Huxleys, Tyndals, Darwins, Posters, Geikies, Hookers? Poets? Where are Swinburne, Browning, Tennyson, Morris? Literary men? Where are Arnold, Black, Ruskin, Stephen, Morley? Artists of any kind? Leighton, Millais, Irving, Sullivan? Not there. And yet this Church pretends it is the all in all to humanity, and that in its work all men rejoice. If this were even partly true we should have at the meetings of the Church Congress the representative men of all callings in place of the miserable handful of nonentities seen at Reading.

That I am not exaggerating the claims of the Church, and therefore the disgrace that falls on her dishonourable head, when she fails to bring together men of note at her Congress, is shown by the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury in St. Mary's Church. "There is no function or routine of life or thought which it is not the duty of the Church to occupy."

The "*Freethinker*," October 21, 1883.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. F. TURNER, B. L. BOWERS, P. J. MORSE and others.—Thanks for useful cuttings.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Thanks for correction, which has been noted. We note also your endorsement of what we had to say about the B.B.C. Broadcast. We cannot see how any reasonable person could disagree with it. It is not much use growing angry with the censorship of Hitler, when our own governors go just as far as they dare in the same direction.

E. PAYNE AND OTHERS.—We do not think that any useful purpose would be served by publishing the many letters we have received, many from those who knew Bradlaugh, concerning the toast of the King that was impudently thrust on the Centenary Banquet by Colonel Wedgwood. They are all on one line, and voice indignation at the occurrence. If Colonel Wedgwood wishes to vindicate or explain his action, that is another matter. But we have said what we had to say, and we knew that in such a connexion we were voicing the general opinion of the Freethought Party in this country.

T. OWEN.—Thanks for praise of the Bradlaugh Number. In spite of the very large number printed, we are bound to reserve the few copies we have left for special purposes. For ordinary trade purposes the issue has to be considered out of print. It would be rather too expensive to reprint the number, although it would possibly sell for some months yet.

R. R. HILL (Sydney).—Article received, and will be used at an early date.

J. LATHAM (Johannesburg).—Will use. Thank you.

S. G. BATH.—A well deserved snub, but it takes a lot to check the impudence of the Salvation Army.

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

The Liverpool Branch opened its winter lecturing season on Sunday last with a fine meeting in the Picton Hall. The Picton Hall is a splendid building for a large gathering, and every seat was occupied when Mr. Cohen stepped on the platform to deliver his lecture on "Charles Bradlaugh." For an hour and forty minutes the audience remained without the least sign of impatience, and the cheering when the lecturer resumed his seat was prolonged and hearty. We are informed that over 300 people were turned away, unable to gain admittance. Mr.

Short, the President of the Branch occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal for support for the weekly meetings, which we hope will meet with a good response.

There was a great demand for the Bradlaugh issue of the *Freethinker*, but only a limited number were available. A great quantity of literature was sold, which should also bring good results.

The lecturer to-day (October 22) will be Dr. Carmichael. He will speak on "The Black Death." The lecture will be illustrated by lantern slides. The meeting will be held in the Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, and we advise those who wish to get in to be at the hall early.

The weather in Manchester and district was vile on October 16, and that prevented the Stockport Town Hall, a large and handsome building, from being crowded out for the Bradlaugh Celebration. But there was a good audience, and the speeches left nothing to be desired. The Mayor occupied the chair, and paid a very handsome and well expressed tribute to Bradlaugh. Colonel J. Estrange Malone and Mr. Phillip Oliver gave two excellent speeches, to which no exception could be taken. Mr. Cohen brought the proceedings to a close with a speech which sent everyone into the wet in a good humour.

There was no mistaking the success of the debate between Mr. Cohen and the Rev. Mr. McQueen, in the Berkeley Hall, Glasgow, which was crowded long before the commencement, and as many were outside the hall as there were inside. The pressure on the doors was such that the police had to be sent for in order to induce the crowd to disperse. And the advertising of the debate had been on the small side—which, as it happened, was all for the best.

Mr. James Maxton, M.P., presided, and, as was expected, did so in a quite admirable manner. His introduction of the two speakers, and his response to the vote of thanks at the end of the debate were marked with his usual wit and pointedness. A man with a great and deserved influence over an audience.

Mr. McQueen was quite pleasant in manner, but he had the usual failing with Christian clergymen—want of adequate acquaintance with the Freethought case. But the discussion was on both sides conducted with good humour, and was listened to with keen attention by the audience. The only complaint made during the evening was from Mr. Cohen, who had to reprove listeners for wasting his time in applause. People who applaud during a debate mean well, but they often waste valuable time.

We must counsel those who wish to secure a copy of the practically complete works of Ingersoll in one volume for six shillings to send their order at once. This contains the twelve volumes of the Dresden edition costing about eight pounds. When this stock is disposed of it may not be possible to secure more copies. The volume extends to nearly 1,000 pages, and is beyond question the greatest book-bargain ever offered to Freethinkers.

Illustrations continue to occur of the truth of what we have said about the attempt to bury the real Bradlaugh by picturing him as quite a good character, but—. For example, on October 11, the late Dean of Durham, published in the *Times* a letter which makes the manoeuvre just a little too obvious. Dr. Welldon says that he respected and esteemed Bradlaugh very much. He was an entirely honest controversialist—"at least in politics"; if "he exposed himself at times to the charge of unfairness in his treatment of religion, the reason lay not so much in his intention as in his ignorance, for theology was to him a sealed book." "He fought the battle of freedom with courage, and in the end with success." But "a strange fate seems to have fallen upon all the organized agencies of his life." Mrs. Besant proved herself

"a renegade to his principles." "The *National Reformer* is dead." It has not been easy to discover "the Halls of Science, which were the frequent scenes of his oratorical addresses," and "so far as my knowledge of Manchester and other cities is extent the advocates of Bradlaughian Atheism, when they come to lecture there, have, in recent lectures attracted little notice from the Press." "The mind of his fellow countrymen . . . has moved slowly but surely away from his wholly negative position." What a fine illustration of what we foresaw would happen, and which we have been fighting ever since the press campaign forced the public to notice the centenary. But we fancy we have done something to prevent the second funeral of Bradlaugh.

Consider the Dean. The reason of Bradlaugh's unconscionable unfairness in religion is because he was ignorant of theology. If that were true then his ignorance must have been shared by the clergy of his time, for the theology he attacked was the theology they defended. If the Dean means that the theology he attacked is now nearly dead, one would like to be told of another man who did more to kill it than did Bradlaugh. The *Reformer* is dead, but is that very uncommon with a paper that is created by one man, and which largely lives on the personality of its founder. And the *Freethinker* is very much alive. We very humbly call Dr. Welldon's attention to the fact, and it has probably the widest circulation that any Free-thought paper has ever had. How many Halls of Science were there ever in England? Never more than three or four. But Secular Halls still exist, and the meetings are now carried on in far finer and larger halls than were possible to Freethought lectures—except when Bradlaugh himself was speaking—all over the country. Audiences also are larger and the sale of literature greater. If Dr. Welldon had been present at the huge meeting at Manchester, recently addressed by the President of the N.S.S., we hardly think he would have decided that Bradlaugh's work was dead—at least he would not have done so where the possibility of an immediate reply existed.

It is true that little notice is taken of Freethought meetings in the press. But, bless the man, he is unfair, "not so much in his intention as in his ignorance." He does not remember that even in Bradlaugh's time, his lectures on Freethought were very seldom noticed in the press. His political lectures received more attention, but there was not so much danger in doing it, just as it is safe to praise Bradlaugh the politician now. That pleases some and offends nobody. How many press notices appeared of Foote's lectures? How many appear of Mr. Cohen's, in spite of large meetings held in central halls? Again, Dr. Welldon sins not "in intention but in ignorance," or he would know that editors do not shut out reports of secular meetings because they, personally, will not have them, but because when they are printed so many of the Christian clergy and so many lay Christians write protesting against Free-thinking views being given to the public. Dr. Welldon can hardly be so oblivious to what is going on around him as to assert that anti-Christian opinions are weaker than they were. Indeed, we fancy that he has himself called attention to their prevalence. If that be so, how can Bradlaugh's work be considered a failure? But we suppose something must be done to distract attention from the real Bradlaugh, and the playing of the able parliamentarian, and the well-meaning but mistaken man are as good cards as any.

On Sunday next Mr. Cohen will pay a special visit to Hull. He will speak in the Royal Institution, Albert Street, Hull, in the afternoon at 2.45. His subject will be "Charles Bradlaugh."

A debate has been arranged between Mr. Arnold Lunn and Mr. Cohen, to take place in the Conway Hall, on November 21. The subject for discussion is "That Science discredits the idea of God." Tickets for the discussion are sixpence and one shilling each, and can be obtained at the *Freethinker* Office. We advise early purchase. Judging by the way tickets are being sold, the Conway Hall will not be nearly large enough for the occasion.

## Iconoclast.

*Champion of Liberty: Charles Bradlaugh Centenary Volume.* (C. A. Watts & Co., and the Pioneer Press: 2s. 6d. net.)

No one who is attracted towards the life-history of one of the noblest pioneers and greatest men that ever lived can neglect this book.

It is a work boiled down—on the whole with skill and success—from a couple of hundred books and pamphlets. To the student of its times it is quite indispensable. In these pages there is presented a panorama of the life and times of Charles Bradlaugh, probably the most outstanding—certainly the boldest—figure in the stormy social and political life of England during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Born of humble parentage in Hackney, in 1833, Bradlaugh, by sheer force of personality, won to a dominant place in the sociological, theological, and political life of his country.

He was sixteen when his first pamphlet was issued, and he had started his career as an orator—in the open-air—even before that; at the age of fifty-seven he died in the service of his country; worn out and slain by his struggles with authority; dead but unvanquished. Bradlaugh's motto was "Thorough," and in his whole life he never falsified the word or its implications.

This book is an admirable account, by half a dozen authorities, of the many-faceted activities of this heroic and honest man; execrated by the bigoted, the brutalized, the pious, the ignorant, there was always a minority ready and eager to honour, to serve, to applaud him in his hours of private sorrow, of temporary public defeat and humiliation. This minority always saw him arise victorious in the end; this was at once their justification and their reward; and it was all that they asked.

Happy is the pioneer with such a following. In this respect, at least, was Charles Bradlaugh fortunate. Fortunate, too, is the worker who is happy in his friends; and the subject of this memoir was assuredly not herein lacking. Annie Besant, the greatest woman-propagandist of her century, was his intimate colleague; a great poet, James Thomson (B.V.), was with him on his paper; on his staff, as occasional contributors, were scores of writers who were, in their degrees, experts in the various branches of reform whereof they wrote. This catalogue of names is far too long to be given here; even in part. But it is noteworthy that the *National Reformer* "raised" more than one writer who was afterwards himself—in some cases, herself—to play a conspicuous editorial part. Such were G. H. Reddalls, Harriet Law, Annie Besant, G. W. Foote, W. Stewart Ross ("Saladin"), John M. Robertson, Charles Watts, and—if I may include a celebrated and too-little-remembered sub-editor—Joseph Mazzini Wheeler.

With certain of these there were to occur dissensions later-on; but this is not the place to write on that theme.

This book proves conclusively, and in an exceedingly interesting way, how forceful was Bradlaugh as an orator. The most varying-minded auditors were impressed by his power of public utterance, the pungency of his eloquence; such varying critics were George Meredith, G. B. Shaw, G. W. Foote, T. P. O'Connor, Professor John Stuart Blackie, John M. Robertson. As a debater his skill and prowess were unquestioned. In these matters, as may be gathered from this absorbing book, all the testimony goes one way.

Bradlaugh was the most catholic—using that word, of course, with a small c—of all the reform-leaders of

his time. He was an Atheist, a Republican, a Radical, a Land-Reformer, a Divorce-Reformer, a Malthusian; always on the side of the working-classes, the more intelligent of whom adored him, he was the great advocate of self-reliance, as against any form of Socialism, which, rightly or wrongly, he rigorously opposed. This is neither the time nor the place to direct Bradlaugh's political views; but no serious critic has dared to question either his sincerity or his determination in putting his case. He was utterly and unswervingly honest; and, so rare a virtue is honesty in politicians, that this book is almost unique in presenting a portrait of a man who, entering parliament, remained entirely uncorrupted. I can imagine no higher praise to accord to any public man than that. It is, as I have already said, almost—though not quite—an unique record.

Like all reformers who devote their lives, gifts and services to the poor and the dispossessed, Bradlaugh was among the best-hated men of his time. The rich and powerful, almost without exception, from the throne downwards, united in execrating, vilifying, slandering and decrying the man whose crime was that he insisted upon his right to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and ignorant by enlightening the darkness wherein the "upper classes" wished them to remain for the sake of maintaining the supremacy of their alleged aristocracy.

All this is told fully both by pen and cartoon in this work; especially telling is a sympathetic little tail-piece from *Punch*, by Harry Furniss. It is called "Exit!" and it gives perfectly a back-view of the tired hero, prematurely aged and broken past mending by his gargantuan efforts for human freedom.

That "Iconoclast," to use his early nom-de-guerre, gained the friendship of such contemporaries as T. P. O'Connor, Henry Labouchere, Moncure D. Conway and Thomas Burt, amongst innumerable others, is a completely efficient reply to his detractors. In this book will be found his contemporaries' judgments upon him. Collectively they form an exhaustive and final vindication of his life-works. These criticisms are essential not merely to an understanding of Bradlaugh himself, but to a collective grasp of the political and social trends-and-touches of the nineteenth century.

As a Malthusian, Bradlaugh, and with him Annie Besant in her heroic period, only escaped prison because of a legal flaw in the indictment. That he actually courted confinement in an English prison, with all the physical discomforts and moral obloquies entailed by it, on behalf of the poor, to whom he insisted that it was only right to impart certain sex-knowledge, is an unanswerable reply to those of his critics and calumniators who charge him with self-seeking and fame-hunting. The full tale of epic heroism is given in this book, with an account of the colossal legal struggles wherein he was engaged; wherefrom he emerged victoriously; and so broken that his victories cost him his life.

In addition to his immense editorial labours, Bradlaugh ran his own publishing house; he and Annie Besant were proprietors of The Freethought Publishing Company, in its day the most important enterprise of its kind. The number of his own pamphlets is about one hundred; there are ten or a dozen books to his account; and there must be at least forty printed debates, many of them issued in pamphlet-form. There is a good, though not exhaustive, bibliography at the end of this history. This needs revision.

Bradlaugh was unquestionably the greatest lay-lawyer of his time; and throughout his life he gave free legal advice to the poor and the worried.

There are one or two errors in this book that might well be corrected in a future edition. Bradlaugh's first pamphlet is dated 1849; and not 1850, as is wrongly stated. His first book began to appear, in penny numbers, in 1857. This I have proved conclusively in the *Freethinker* for July 21, 1929. The editor of *Champion of Liberty* gives the date wrongly as 1858. Bradlaugh's editorship of the *Investigator* began in November, not March, 1858.

The part played by Bradlaugh in public life can best be estimated by the number of references, caricatures and cartoons referring to him. I myself counted sixty or so in a single year's issues—in the 'eighties—of the conservative and scurrilous "comic" paper, *Moonshine*. Press-references ran into tens of thousands; it is by these cuttings that a public man's hold of the popular imagination may be gauged. By this gauge Bradlaugh shares with Gladstone the doubtful honour of being the most lampooned public man of his time.

One omission that I find in this book is to me a regrettable one. The most intimate and psychologically-accurate picture that I have seen was that issued by G. W. Foote in 1891, just after Bradlaugh's death. This pamphlet, revised from *Freethinker* articles, was called "Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh." There is, of course, as there had to be, a quotation from Foote; but this particular pamphlet has been ignored.

Bradlaugh's work for the liberation of India, and for the secularization of Sunday, were among his contributions to that human welfare whereunto his whole "through" life was dedicated. He was tremendous physically, mentally and morally. Foote, always a fine phrase-maker, calls him "a Colossus of Manhood." The description could not be bettered. It is entirely true; and, in an impression, no more is demanded.

The sectional writers of *Champion of Liberty* are Mr. Chapman Cohen, Dr. C. V. Drysdale, Mr. W. Ivor Jennings, and Sir John Hammerton; Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner has compiled the bibliography; Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, Bradlaugh's grandson, has given valuable aid; and the whole volume has been edited by Mr. J. P. Gilmour.

The book contains fourteen text pictures, mainly cartoons; thirteen plates, whereof eight are portraits; and an exquisite and unforgettable photogravure frontispiece-portrait by Walter Sickert. Including the introductory-leaves the book holds three hundred and sixty large pages; and the price is half-a-crown for a well-clad, cloth-bound production.

As prices go, in these days, the book would be "reasonable" at twelve-and-sixpence. For a fifth of that sum the fortunate reader may acquire an adequate and well-penned account of the greatest hero, humanist and reformer of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

## On the Origins of Christianity.

(Concluded from page 675.)

THE second part of Mr. Whittaker's book dealt first with the *Acts*, and then with the Pauline Epistles, according to the advanced criticism of the famous Dutch critic, W. C. Van Manen. Readers of the article on Paul in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* will have had already a good idea of the drastic, almost annihilating views on the great Apostle of the Gentiles given there by Van Manen. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century critics were nearly unanimous in accepting the traditional view of Paul, the one-time fanatical and persecuting Jew, Saul, who, after being

specially favoured with a vision of Jesus, became his greatest missionary and apostle, journeying here, there and everywhere, carrying the priceless message of the Gospel, and writing the thirteen epistles in the New Testament which bear his name and an extra one, so to speak, which brings the number up to fourteen, and which does not bear his name. Even Robert Taylor, convinced as he was that Jesus was purely mythical, believed in the Paul of tradition, so hard is it to eradicate fully the fictions circulated so assiduously by the Church.

Early last century, however, the famous German critics began to investigate Biblical problems with a greater thoroughness than had hitherto prevailed, and the famous Tübingen school arose. Briefly it came to the conclusion that only four of the Epistles of Paul were really genuine—though it admitted interpolations even in these—namely, Romans, Corinthians and Galatians. The others were, bluntly speaking, forgeries. Paul, of course, was a real personage, and his vigorous style and personality were unmistakably present in the four epistles. Although the Tübingen school found it extremely difficult to reconcile *Acts* with the Epistles, the Paul of one being most unlike the Paul of the other, the difficulty was surmounted by putting up a case for the Jewish Christians of Peter constantly at loggerheads with the Gentile Christians of Paul, and bringing in a redactor or redactors, who, for the sake of the Church, glossed over the enmity in what are called "tendency" writings. W. R. Cassels, the author of *Supernatural Religion*, and Edwin Hatch, the orthodox, but brilliant scholar, whose works are some of the most notable contributions to the history of Christianity, both agreed here with the Tübingen school.

It was the Dutch Professor, Van Manen, who refused, as soon as he commenced to investigate the problem for himself, to accept any conclusion not based on what he considered the facts of the case. For example, Paul proclaims himself a Jew. Yet as Mr. Whittaker, following Van Manen, points out:—

In spite of Paul positively assuring us that he is a born Israelite, the writer (of Romans) comes forward constantly in the character of a Greek. He speaks Greek and thinks in Greek. His consciousness of being a Greek and not a Jew is betrayed by expressions . . . He nowhere gives any sign of having consulted the Hebrew text of the Old Testament . . . This is certainly not what we should expect from the former pupil of Gamaliel . . . Of acquaintance with Hebrew there is not a trace.

A footnote quotes the learned Jewish writer, Mr. C. G. Montefiore, who, in a study of the Pauline Epistles—which he believed to be written by Paul—yet felt bound to say: "Either this man Paul was never a Rabbinic Jew at all, or he has quite forgotten what Rabbinic Judaism was and is." Van Manen's reasons against the authenticity of the four "genuine" epistles, and for placing them in the second century, are very carefully summarized by Mr. Whittaker, and in this he has done Freethought a very great service. We have in his book arguments against an epistle-writing Paul, which help the myth theory of Robertson, Drews and other believers in the non-historicity of Jesus, and drives another nail in the coffin of Christianity. One by one the old impregnable positions of this religion manned by an impressive array of great minds have been sapped. One by one they are being given up. By cutting at the very roots of so-called church history, a history surrounded by events which never took place except in the minds of ascetics and monks, and ignorant "Fathers," the whole superstructure of fraud and credulity and superstition is bound in the end to fall.

Nearly all the semi-orthodox defenders of a real

Jesus, as well as those timid Freethinkers who are also sure of his existence, point to Paul as one of their greatest "standbys." Paul believed in a genuine Jesus, how could he possibly believe in and write about a myth, they cry? They forget—conveniently—Van Manen and his arguments. But it will well repay the reader to study what the Dutch Professor has to say, and in particular in the light of the latest Biblical criticisms and discoveries touched upon by Mr. Whittaker in his prologue and epilogue.

For myself, I should like to summarize him as he has summarized Van Manen, but space forbids. It is a fascinating story—this criticism of the legends which were invented around a possibly real Paul, a missionary fired with the zeal of a new religion of some kind—though what it actually was seems also lost "in the mists of antiquity." Certain it is, through men like him and Peter the beginnings of Christianity must have taken place, and even if Paul and Peter had radically different views on the question, there can be no doubt that at some time after their deaths, their followers made determined attempts to reconcile the difference and fuse the whole into what became afterwards the Catholic religion.

Yet the solution to the problem of Paul does not solve the question, what are the origins of Christianity? It only shows us that there were writers deeply religious and imbued with a mystical gnosticism, who addressed certain communities able to understand their mysticism, who eventually called themselves Christians. How did they arise? Were they just the descendants of Jewish Messianic sects, sects with "mysteries," or with a Saviour of some sort, crucified or not? And is the New Testament, a sort of repository of redacted writings, the finished product of edited and re-edited sayings, letters, journey-accounts and what not? The literature in existence, which has come from scholars in an attempt to solve the historical and textual difficulties of the Christian religion is immense. I wonder what later and possibly better equipped writers will say when they survey this mass of misdirected effort, when they can say here and here only is the truth.

H. CUTNER.

### This Tithe.

"What the age feels, thinks and feels, what it needs and will have, it gives expression to, and this is the material of modern literature."—Heine.

THE Anglican clergy were the only class who with their usual subtlety avoided economy cuts. But it does not now appear they are going to get away with it quite so comfortably as usual. Owing to the acute agricultural depression, many farmers are faced with bankruptcy and are quite unable to meet the claims for tithe. What at first was merely casual and isolated has now developed into a well-organized anti-tithe movement. The numerous distraints for arrears, and the tragicomic scenes that have occurred accompanied by violence when an attempt has been made to sell by auction, have roused so much interest that the London daily press now finds it good copy. This is all to the good, for the very last thing the church wants is the searchlight turned on the sources of its income. The public, who, unless some of it happened to be tithe-payers, were hardly aware there was such a thing as tithe existing, are now taking a keen interest and following events closely.

Tithe is largely the property of the resident vicar or rector. It rests with him if distraint is made or not, and the merciless way in which the law is being used to recover it is bringing the parson into bad odour. Many churchwardens, sidesmen, etc., are farmers, and these are resigning their offices. Congregations are also falling off. In many instances some who have been loyal churchpeople for years are glad of this excuse to break away and spend Sundays motoring or in other ways. It is not likely they will ever return to church.

It is a consummation devoutly to be desired that all this agitation should lead to disestablishment and disendowment. The church is divided against itself and riven with schisms, and is in no strong united position to withstand an attack. Unfortunately farmers have a superstitious reverence for the church. Nothing but the sternest necessity would ever have made them protest against or refuse tithe payments. There is a lurking belief in their minds that tithe is the sacred property of the church. And they run as much risk in interfering with it as Uzzah did in touching the sacred ark of the covenant. The official policy of the National Farmers' Union calls for some alteration in the present law. But the Queen Anne's Bounty is adamant and will not yield. The danger is that with this reactionary Government, tithe, which amounts to about £3,000,000 per annum, will be met out of the exchequer.

The hostility of the workers to the introduction of machinery in the beginning of the nineteenth century and the general social conditions were faithfully recorded and preserved in fiction in Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley*. Now the ferment of the tithe agitation has inspired another remarkably good piece of work which ought to be of special interest to Freethinkers by its attacks on the clergy and its downright fearless rationalism. The authoress is a lady interested in farming, resident in Suffolk. Her name is Doreen Wallace, the title of the book published by Benn being *The Portion of the Levites*. The price is 7s. 6d., rather a lot for a novel, but as there are 320 closely printed pages the price is not too high. The shrewd caustic cynicism implied in the expressive title is characteristic of its tone throughout. The "portion" is tithe and the Levites, of course, are the clergy. The style is terse and direct, the dialogue is brisk, the country characters talk naturally, and do not weary us by being garrulous and giving expression to a surfeit of wise remarks. Laura Campbell, fresh from Oxford, with thoroughly modern ideas on marriage, education, etc., takes up duties in a small country village. Very soon the reader understands that the chief concern of Laura and her colleagues is not so much education as matrimony. Laura is successful and marries a prosperous farmer of the squire class. The probationary period of married life, the readjustment and getting used to one another's ways, are dissected, analysed and submitted to the reader.

Laura does not find her husband much of an intellectual companion. He is the typical English gentleman farmer, a churchwarden who holds a number of public offices because he is expected to. Most of his time is taken up with cattle and crops and markets. Then comes trouble, heavy losses, incidental to agriculture, which bring him to the very edge of bankruptcy. This is where the novelist is true to life. The woman is practical and resourceful. The poor husband breaks down under the strain. Faced with ruin a claim comes in for tithe. It is then they have to struggle and deprive themselves in order to give for the support of the shiftless, incompetent, idle noodle whose sexual morals are suspect, cannot keep the simplest parish accounts and puts all the duties on to his parishioners. Those who dwell in the country know how true and just this description is. On some of his occasional visits to the Hardings, Laura (Mrs. Harding) has him to herself and does not spare him. The Rev. Mallory makes a very poor show when he tries to exalt his high mass practices, and his belief in the real presence. "Well I canna say I care for your cannibal faith. Nothing to go to church for I mean. I can eat my god at home, corn and meat and milk—every meal a communion." The Rev. Mallory looked dazed, "communion with what?" To this Mrs. Harding replies, "with the force outside ourselves, the force that causes things to grow, and to be harvested for the growth of other things, and so on *ad infinitum*. This myth of flesh-eating and blood-drinking is just the nature-worship of all religions. Every few years a new god is eaten, because while man yearns for gods he is dominated by the desire for food." The interview ends with the deadly hit. "It seems to me that to be Catholic like you, one has to be either extraordinarily simple-minded or intellectually dishonest."

M. BARNARD.

## The Anatomy of Intolerance.

*Any persecutor to any victim.*

LET US reason together : perchance we may reach  
Some logical basis for freedom of speech;  
For we both feel a call; we have talents designed  
To persuade, and instruct, and enlighten mankind—  
Yet the primary fact we must face all along  
Is that I'm in the right and that you're in the wrong.

Now the voice of right reason, secure in its clarity,  
Can never be silenced by stripes and barbarity;  
Yet power, when employed without conscience or ruth,  
May hinder the spreading of wisdom and truth—  
Hence, since I'm in the right, it is easy to see  
That, when *you* are in power, you must tolerate *me*.

Yet a ruler, however paternal and mild,  
When he sees his poor people by sophists beguiled,  
May be forced to invoke the law's uttermost terror  
To discourage the teaching of damnable error—  
Hence, since you're in the wrong, it is patently true  
That, when *I* am in power, I must persecute *you*.

Then how rash to compare this paternal correction  
(By justice inspired and dispensed with affection)  
To the brutal suppression of freedom of speech  
If *your* turn came to rule, and *my* turn came to preach—  
And how lucky it is, in this crucial hour,  
That I find myself both in the right and in power.

MACFLECKNOE.

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of "The New Statesman and Nation.")

## Correspondence.

### METHODIST MEMBERSHIP.

SIR,—I have just had my attention drawn to your leading article entitled, "That Religious Revival," in your issue of October 15. Will you permit me to correct one part of that article. Unfortunately, in my *News-Chronicle* article the two words, "and abroad" were somehow left out. I corrected the error in the next issue of the *News-Chronicle*, but evidently the writer of your article did not see it. You make me say, "since 1910 the Methodist Churches have lost 184,253 members." That is, of course, not true, and the next sentence to it (printed in thick type in my article) showed that it was a mere error of transcription, for that sentence read, "For the last quarter of a century Methodism in Great Britain has made no progress at all." That is the position. The figures for the last twenty-five years are level. I am sure you will insert this so that your readers may get a correct view. The correction of that error alters none of the conclusions of my article, but, needless to say, I do not accept your interpretation of them.

JAMES MACKAY (Rev.)

St. George's Methodist Church, Boscombe.

### A PLEA FOR FAIRNESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although interested in the brewing trade, I am willing at all times to discuss any reasonable criticism of it, but I must protest against the attacks of G.F.G. in "Powder and Shot," in your issue of the 8th inst.

In an article a little over two columns in length (including a long extract from the *Manchester Guardian*, which has nothing at all to do with this subject) I find

there are nine reference to "Brewers" and to "Beer," not one of which has the backing of any authority, and which, moreover, has no foundation in fact.

They would appear to be the production of the brain of G.F.G., who, at a guess, must be one of those rabid teetotallers, whose statements should be dropped into the W.P.B. rather than soil the columns of the *Freethinker*.

R. H. YELDHAM.

### MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.

THE Manchester Branch has experienced crowded meetings from time to time, particularly when Mr. Cohen has been the speaker, but so far as the writer is aware it has never been necessary to refuse admission. This was however the position on Sunday, when the Branch held their first meeting in the new room—the Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester. Every seat was occupied, many were standing, but though the audience was packed like sardines they listened with extreme interest to a lecture by Dr. Carmichael on "The Black Death." Dr. Carmichael is a deservedly popular lecturer—avoiding all trace of dogmatism, he nevertheless gets home his points in a quiet way that admits of no dispute. All who have heard him will admit that while he does not "overload" his audience and avoids the sin of repetition, yet his message sinks home. On Sunday he was no exception—his picture of a ghastly phrase in the history of Europe—as he described it "a nightmare of horror," which was illustrated by lantern slides, was most illuminating (in a double sense), and at the conclusion there was no need for him to stress his point that so far as the "Black Death" was concerned the action of the (Roman) Church was a chapter of ignorance and cruelty so horrible as to be scarcely believable. In a convincing manner he drew the parallel between the middle ages and the present time and showed clearly that the advances made had been the result of science and knowledge and owed nothing to God.

Many questions were asked and satisfactorily dealt with—there was a good sale of literature, and the result was a happy augury for the success of future meetings.

On Sunday October 15 Mr. G. Whitehead lectured on "Marxian, and other Interpretations of History," in the same room at 7.30.—W.C.

### Obituary.

MR. J. G. B. WHITE.

ON Monday, October 9, the remains of the late Mr. J. G. B. White, aged 78, of Stanley, County of Durham, were laid to rest at Stanley Cemetery, after a somewhat prolonged decline of vitality. Deceased was at one time an ardent member of Stanley (and also of Newcastle) Branch of N.S.S., which he joined over forty-three years ago. His genial disposition and generous encouragement in various ways greatly endeared him to the younger members of the movement. Over a year ago, believing his end was near, he requested Mr. Brighton to read a Secular burial address, which wish was feelingly carried out, and attentively listened to by a large number of mourners and friends, Chester-le-Street and Newcastle Branches both being represented. The latter Branch will miss his generous help.—J.G.B.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Force and Moral Authority."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4) : 8.0, Monday, October 23, Mr. J. Ratcliffe—"Christianity and Woman."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station) : 7.30, Sidney R. Elliott (Editor *Reynolds's*)—"The Nation's Newspapers."

#### OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (The Grove, Hammersmith) : 7.45, Mr. L. Ebury—The Sermon on the Mount." *Freethinkers on Sale.*

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, October 22, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, October 23, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Aliwell Road, Clapham Junction) : 8.0, Friday, October 20, Mrs. E. Grout. Brockwell Park, 3.30, Sunday, October 22, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12.0, Sunday, B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Le Maine and Wood. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. Collins and others. Friday, 7.30, Messrs Bryant and Le Maine.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. All members are invited to attend a gathering at Mr. Collingham's house, 93a Bristol Street, on Sunday evening, October 22, at 7 p.m.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street) : 7.0, Mrs. J. M. Shaw—"History of Spiritualism." Members please attend.

CHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Peoples' Hall, Delamere Street) : 7.0, E. Egerton Stafford (Liverpool)—"Atheism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Kingdom of God on Earth."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sanchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Mr. Andrew Kent, M.A., Ph.D., F.C.S.—"The Scientific Foundations of Belief."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Dramatic Performance by the Secular Players of "Maria Magdalena," followed by the "Castaway." Silver Collection.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Dr. C. H. Ross Carmichael—"The Black Death." Lantern Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street) : 7.30, Mr. W. H. Owen (Liverpool)—"The Future of an Illusion."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 5) : 7.0, Mr. A. E. Knowles—"Christian Revivals."

SEAHAM HARBOUR BRANCH N.S.S., 7.30, Wednesday, October 25, Discussion. Members only.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street) : 7.0, Mr. T. Holliday.

#### OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level opposite the Market) : 7.30, Friday, October 20, Mr. J. T. Byrne—"The Futility of Prayers." The Level, 3.30, Sunday, October 22, Mr. J. T. Byrne—"How Children are 'Doped' with the Bible."

# NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN.  
 General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

62 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified. The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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