

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

— *Four.ded 1881* —

VOL. LIII.—No. 50

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1933

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>The Appeal to Fear.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	793
<i>The Boast of the Bishops.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	794
<i>The Usual Answers.—C. S. Fraser</i> - - - - -	796
<i>The Mighty Atom.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	797
<i>Bradlaugh and Humour.—Tom Blake</i> - - - - -	798
<i>The Cohen—Lunn Debate.—W. R. S. Jaecques, M.D.</i> - - - - -	802
<i>Marital Customs in Savage Lands.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - - -	804
<i>A State-wide Vote Against Prayer.—Frank Hill</i> - - - - -	805
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

The Appeal to Fear.

If we are to be guided by what is appearing in the press and by the utterances of many of our political leaders, it looks as though we shall soon be back in the 1890-1913 period with regard to the imminence of war. In that case another 1914 will certainly follow. The farce of the League of Nations is almost played out. The end of that comedy was bound to come. In 1919 we said that something more than the treaty of Versailles was needed to bring an enduring peace to the world. A peace of force can never have the endurance nor confer the benefits of the force of peace. We complained then, and we were almost alone in then complaining, that the very name of a League of Nations perpetuated one of the main conditions from which modern war derives its strength. It perpetuated the idea of a number of independent units with conflicting interests, one, or some of which, must prevail over the others. What was needed was a League of Peoples; and the name itself would have been an education. We insisted that nothing of lasting good could come from an association in which the diplomatic and political and financial gangs that were responsible for the last war, and for many previous wars, dominated; an association in which the real aim of each group was to steal a march on the rest, where all were animated by the desire to maintain the position of inferior and superior. None but fools can believe that in such circumstances the existence of an "inferior" group can avoid creating a desire to become a "superior" one whatever be the conditions that determine superiority.

All that we then prophesied has come to pass. All the fears we expressed have been realized. The question of disarmament was deliberately shelved in favour of one of proportionate armaments, a move which even if successful can only make war cheaper without making it less likely. Here in this professed desire to achieve a measure of formal agreement there was a complete lack of honesty. Each nation was

willing to surrender the arms it wanted least if other nations would surrender those it wanted most. One would abolish aeroplanes but not submarines. Another would give up submarines but not aeroplanes. The accommodating Mr. Macdonald declared that in this country we were not spending a pound save on weapons of defence—as though there can be such, particularly when there is the general maxim that attack is the best method of defence. Other nations indulge in the same species of hypocrisy. Big guns and little guns, big ships and pocket cruisers, poison-gas and poisonous propaganda—all are weapons of defence, for surely none of the nations will use them save in defence of their own honour, and none but the nation concerned may say when the rights and the honour of a nation are threatened. All such expressions are in the nature of patent foods manufactured by knaves for the nourishment of fools.

* * *

An Insane Policy.

But the mask is now off, and we are apparently pledged to a great increase of all sorts of armaments. We are strong enough to face the whole world in arms, and every other nation is to be, or will try to be in the same position. If not by itself, then by alliance with a few other nations, which only varies the terms of the proposition without altering its nature. There is no safety, we are warned, unless we have aeroplanes thick enough and, of course, deep enough to prevent rival aeroplanes breaking through. And the potential enemy will therefore aim at having enough aeroplanes to break through our impregnable wall. It is like selling a man an ink that nothing erases and an eraser that will rub out any ink that is made. Of course, if it were a matter of ink, we should see how foolish it is to spend our money in such commodities. In military affairs no one is supposed to display common-sense. And, really, if we *will* live on the level of savages it is just as well to restrict our thinking to the same level. One implies and depends upon the other.

* * *

Running Risks.

Sir John Simon said the other day that we had cut our armaments to the danger point. I have no desire to dispute the statement. If peace is to be maintained—despite the lesson of 1914—by outbuilding and out-arming some unnamed enemy—some nation must be near the danger point. Try as we will the means of waging war can never be equal all round. Let it be agreed that one nation runs risks in having fewer ships, or fewer guns, or fewer aeroplanes than some other nation or some other group of nations. Do nations run fewer risks by entering on the stupid game of each one being stronger than his neighbour? In a game where one of the players is bound to lose, does anyone ever expect both to win? Of course we run risks by not entering on this war of armaments, but are risks less certain or less deadly by playing that

game? Surely if 1914-18 proved anything at all, it proved that in this game of armaments it is now not even a game in which one side loses, it is one in which both sides lose. Did the Allies in the war win or lose? I really do not know. It is true they stopped fighting, but war is such a brutal and wholly destructive business that armies must essentially cease fighting from sheer weariness. But did the war remove even the alleged danger of the dominance of Germany over Europe? Why it has made Germany the virtual dictator of Europe; for the avowed reason for the new race in armaments is that France must guard itself against Germany, and Italy must guard itself against France, and we must guard ourselves against France and Italy, and so the game goes on. We multiply the number of danger points by every one of the new safeguards we set up. We set out to prevent an explosion by scattering more and more gunpowder around, and handing out larger supplies of matches to mischievous youngsters.

* * *

A Choice of Risks.

Of course we run risks by declining to take part in this armament competition. But do we not run risks by joining it? Let us assume, what no competent observer now claims, that Germany was wholly responsible for the last war. Germany's plea for huge armaments—at least to its own people—was that it ran grave risk of being overwhelmed if it had a small army and an insignificant navy in the midst of heavily armed neighbours. And the result of that policy was the war. It did not avoid danger, it only made its incidence the more certain. No man, no nation, can exist without danger. Life of necessity involves danger; the only way to avoid it is by being dead, and even then, if the Christian is correct, we run the danger of heaven or hell, or if the Spiritualist is right, the horrible fate of figuring at a Spiritualist seance.

Mark, it is not claimed that the building-up of huge armaments will prevent war. No one, after the experience of the last war will make that claim. The downright idiocy of guaranteeing peace by getting ready for war is now too obvious. It is merely urged that we must be prepared for war when it comes, and it is the certainty of its arrival that justifies the preparations. It is those who prophesy who make the preparations, it is those who prophesy who determine the fulfilment of their forecast.

The inevitable result of our present policy is war. The risk we run is that of war—it is not even a risk, because risk implies something short of certainty. But we are piling up the dangers of war with every large addition to our armaments, because to secure these we have to visualize some actual or potential enemy. France, Germany, Russia, Japan, even America; the precise enemy matters little, for, once that atmosphere of fear in which militarism lives is created, enemies are to be found in all sorts of places. Peoples become like a superstitious man in a reputedly ghost-haunted house, who takes every sigh of the wind, every creaking door or scrambling mouse for a visitor from another world.

Admittedly we run risks in the cultivation of militarism. Can we not summon enough courage to run risks in the interests of peace? I believe we could, and I believe we should profit greatly if the attempt were seriously made. I believe there is enough courage existent among men and women to overcome that deeply-rooted fear on which militarism thrives, and without which it could not live for a generation. For it is not courage that shrieks out for enough aeroplanes to darken the sun at mid-day, or enough battleships to sweep the seas of every potential enemy. It is not courage that leads one group of people to regard every

other group as a potential or actual enemy. It is fear, sheer, stark fear that breeds and develops this state of mind. France to-day is in greater fear of Germany, conquered though it was, than of Germany at the height of its military strength. And the appeals that are now being made for an increase of our fighting forces are an appeal to the fears of the civilian population.

* * *

Why Not Use Our Material?

Now I do not believe that the world is lacking genuine moral and intellectual courage. There are always these, and they are seen in the way in which men and women will take their lives in their hands in all kinds of enterprise. The whole power of the Christian Church was not able to prevent a stand being made for intellectual freedom and human dignity. Czardom at its greatest could not deter men and women facing Siberia and death in the passion for freedom. No Church and no Government has been ever powerful enough to destroy the idealism that found in the darkest hour some hope for the future. When a few days ago there occurred a terrible pit disaster in Derbyshire, there was no difficulty in finding volunteers ready to venture their lives in the attempt to bring relief to their fellow-workmen. Even a savage brutality of régime is not powerful enough entirely to crush opposition. The experience of everyday life is enough to prove the potential courage of man. It is not a question of the creation of courage so much as it is of its proper direction on the one hand and its exploitation in the wrong way on the other. Warfare, as I have so often pointed out, does not create courage, it does not even develop it. It does not make men, it degrades them. It makes them more brutal, less intelligent, and in the end more cowardly, afraid to face the proper kind of risk for the better end. In the sum it is a question of the right kind of environmental education. If we could secure a nation-wide campaign determined on proclaiming the risks of war versus the risks of anti-militarism, the benefits of turning qualities now expended in war and talk of war, into a genuinely anti-militaristic propaganda, if we could create a genuine League of Peoples, free from the domination of political opportunists, childish diplomatic officials, and self-seeking financial groups, and substitute the exercise of real courage for the activities of camouflaged fear, the shadow that is falling over the world might be dispersed.

We have risked and do risk so much in the cause of war; can we not run a little risk in the cause of peace?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Boast of the Bishops.

"The lie at the lips of the priest."—*Swinburne*.

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."—*Ingersoll*.

ALL Christian churches, from the Greek and Romish communions to that of the Mormons, claim divine inspiration, but one ecclesiastical body should have a double dose of that enviable commodity. That body is the so-called Church of England, "by law established," which not only claims apostolic succession, but has the tangible support of both Houses of Parliament, and is bolstered-up by "the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion." Yet there is a greater diversity of opinion in the ranks of this Anglican Church than is permitted in any other ecclesiastical body. This diversity is not confined to the common priests, but is equally discoverable among

the Archbishops and the Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God, whose exalted position should have entitled them to a larger share of that divine gift than appears to be the case.

This Parliamentary Church of England has no less than three distinct bodies of opinion, each of which is very loudly voiced by its representatives. The Anglo-Catholics, the Modernists, and the Evangelicals have little in common except an urbane contempt for each other. Bishop Gore, for example, under inspiration, finds folk-lore and savagery in the Old Testament. Bishop Barnes, similarly inspired, finds that Anglo-Catholics "have affinities with the magico-religious beliefs of a lower cultural level than those of our present civilization." Yet another section, also inspired, had its claims voiced by such priests as the late Brother Studdert-Kennedy, better known as "Woodbine Willie," whose excursions into the arid territory of theology resembled nothing so much as a "paper-chase" of a bright and breezy schoolboy. Canon Streeter, who enjoys his own share of divine inspiration, thinks the nasty dilemma can be avoided by priests assuming the part of "Mr. Facing-both-Ways," and by revising the official Prayer Book of the Anglican Church so as to permit all views of the Sacrament to run riot in its almost sacred pages. These many divergencies between prominent priests offer ordinary people much food for thought and speculation, but they are restricted to the narrow dogmatic area, whilst a much wider field of operation is just as open to outside criticism.

The ecclesiastics of this Anglican Church have been placed by Parliament in a most exalted position in the Council of the Nation, and the Bench of Bishops is a most familiar figure in the House of Lords, where the Right-reverend Fathers-in-God have had a splendid opportunity of showing the value of divine inspiration, not applied to dusty dogmas, but as applied to the government of a great country. What is the record of the bishops, and what is the precise value of "divine inspiration" as an aid to political perception?

As legislators, these heaven-blessed bishops should have been shining models to their mundane, coroneted colleagues, but as a fact they have proved themselves the hindmost of the reactionaries and the despair of all liberal-minded politicians. On scores of occasions these prelates consistently impeded all progressive forms of legislation, and throughout the past hundred years have proved themselves the veriest backwoodsmen of politics. One conception of their duties as legislators actuated their motives. They thought that they were in the House of Lords for the sole and express purpose of maintaining the rights and privileges of the Established Church, "as by law established."

Indeed, the bishops have proved themselves completely undemocratic. To the education of the people they offered a steady and pronounced opposition. And their only concern was always with their own badly-equipped and badly-staffed schools in which their own abracadabra was the prime consideration. On the question of militarism these Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God were equally reactionary. During the past century Britain has waged over a hundred wars in every part of the world. Countries have been annexed, native races subdued, but these Christian bishops have never condemned one of them. They have always shouted with the Jingo, blessed the standards of murder, christened warships, and sung "Te Deum" over the conquest of the enemy.

The same thing happened with regard to

social legislation, and in the slow process of the humanizing of our laws. These pious prelates could not be forced to see that it was wrong to hang poor people for stealing five shillingworth of goods, or for stealing a sheep. Nor could they be made to understand that the provision of seats for tired shop-assistants was not sheer vandalism. Lord Shaftesbury, in his battle on behalf of childworkers, found the Bench of Bishops frigid, and even hostile, and he broke out "of what use are the Bishops in the House of Lords?"

The record of the so-called Church of England bishops as legislators is a thoroughly bad one, and serves to show that divine inspiration is no more a guide in statesmanship than in matters of the intellect. Nor is this to be wondered at, for the peculiar method of the appointment of a Right-Reverend Father-in-God is a most ironical comment on their claims to be considered as a divine caste apart from their fellow-citizens. They are nominated by the Prime Minister, who may be a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Jew, or even a Freethinker. Disraeli, in a letter to a fellow-politician, asked him to suggest a man for a vacant bishopric, "who is not a damned fool." Nothing has happened in the interval to minimise the objections raised by the continued association of this Church of England with the national legislature. The younger generation will, first and foremost, have to consider this question, seriously, for this matter of a State Church is one of vital interest to all Democrats. Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than that of possessing a very powerful and very wealthy ecclesiastical institution in its midst like our Church of England, that saps the very springs of social activity, that promotes mental and moral confusion, and that consistently sprags the wheels of progress. For this particular sectarian body is opposed to the spirit of Liberty, which animates the progressive peoples of the civilized world. It is entirely out of touch with the times in which we live, and only exists to perpetuate ancient ignorance and half-forgotten ideals.

No ecclesiastic should be permitted the right to legislate on the ground that he possesses a divine commission and is a member of a sacred caste apart from his fellow-citizens. For many centuries people have been completely hoodwinked by this preposterous claim. During the height of the last war, Mr. Lloyd George has told us, he found the Archbishop of Canterbury present at a Cabinet meeting, and was told that he was there as a trustee of the British Museum. This was too much for the Liberal Premier, and the thing never happened again. Democrats must see to it that these Lords Spiritual are removed from Parliament, where they sit, cheek by jowl, with the Lords Temporal, whose claim usually consists in their being the idle sons of wealthy fathers. The hereditary principle has long been rejected by Democrats, and when the cry of Reform of the House of Lords is being raised it is high time that the still more impudent claims of lawn-sleeved sacerdotalists should be brought to the bar of public opinion. There has never been any inspiration, divine or otherwise, except self-interest, in the hearts of these priests. It is time that Democrats echoed the words of Oliver Cromwell: "Be gone, and make way for better men."

MIMNERMUS.

What makes all doctrines plain and clear?
About two hundred pounds a year;
And that that was proved true before
Proved false again for two hundred more.

Samuel Butler.

The Usual Answers.

II.

In the previous article under this head I dealt with the futility of that popular answer: "Look at the beauties and wonders of nature! There must be something behind it all." I shall now examine an equally popular and equally futile answer.

(2) "But we must believe in something!" Or, alternatively, "We must believe in something *higher* than ourselves."

Here again, be it noted, we are expected to give that something the name of "God." But what this answer really amounts to is this: that the speaker, having jettisoned nine-tenths of his religious beliefs, still imagines it to be his duty to cling to the remaining one-tenth. In some cases he has thrown overboard his belief in miracles or the virgin birth of Jesus. In other cases he has ceased to believe in the resurrection or the use of prayer. But to whatever degree his unbelief may have reached, he refuses, for reasons usually unknown to himself, to scrap his belief in the one thing which is the sum of all the absurdities he has already discarded.

How can this inconsistency be accounted for? Does the man really feel convinced about the existence of this "God"—this grand old garbage-heap of all superstitions and myths? After having removed every contradiction, every illogicality, every lie from his religious philosophy, does he really think that the vague supernatural residue contains any truth in it? What reasons, if any, has he for the somewhat fatuous assertion, "We must believe in something."

Like so many religious slogans, this one may mean almost anything or nothing. The background and context of it have to be analysed before any sort of sense can be extracted from it. And the background in most cases is sheer ignorance or thoughtlessness. The obvious contradictions and impossibilities of religious belief are easily, and even contemptuously, swept aside, because they clash too forcibly with the facts of experience. But the less obvious are left to float undisturbed in a fog of indifference. They have no practical application and are therefore ignored. And, except upon special occasions, they are never brought out into the arena of discussion. Hence their persistence and their immunity from the criticism of logical thought. Hence the "something" which is anything or nothing.

It is the context in which this slogan makes its appearance that determines the special purpose of its use. The "wicked Atheist" story, so persistently broadcast by priest and parson, creates an atmosphere of distaste or fear among ordinary folk, such that the great majority of them will hastily dissociate themselves from any suspicion of total disbelief. That is one reason why so many declare they *must* believe in *something*.

Then again, there is the "loyal and royal" sentiment which, in the opinion of the upper circles and those who ape them, has to be maintained at all costs—despite the snobbery and servility which are their inevitable accompaniment. The aristocracy are said to be "higher" than we are; the King and all the Royal Family are "higher" than the aristocracy; and so on till we arrive at the biggest, most aristocratic, most royal Joss of all, namely, "God." To cast aspersions upon this purely imaginary acme of loftiness would be equivalent, or almost equivalent, to a profession of Communism or Bolshevism or some equally ghastly political creed. And that would *never* do! All of which give a reason why so many declare that they must believe in something *higher* than themselves. The fact that they have not one atom of verifiable evidence in proof of

the existence of this elusive "something" does not, of course, matter in the least. They *must* believe because they simply *dare not* do otherwise.

A third context is that in which the self-importance of the speaker is at stake. Whatever other arguments may be adduced for the possibility of a life after death, undoubtedly the strongest is that which says: "If I am not immortal, then the rest of creation isn't worth a sneeze." This argument is seldom consciously admitted and, of course, never appears in the form just given. But it can easily be inferred from the attitude of the speaker, as well as from the other arguments he favours. And since the evidences for a "future" life are nil, or else hopelessly entangled in humbug, the speaker usually prefers to avoid entering upon a discussion of this particular theory and takes shelter behind the vaguer, and therefore safer, belief in "something." That this "something" is nothing more and nothing less than his own almighty importance in the scheme of things makes it all the more essential that he should withdraw it from the light of logic, and camouflage it under the conveniently vaporous term "God."

Taken at its face value, this slogan is merely a childish platitude. "We must believe in *something*!" Well, of course we must. We must believe in the evidence of our senses, combined with every possible means of verification at our command. Admittedly the evidence of our senses is not always completely reliable. But, if we were to act upon the opposite theory, namely, that such evidence is never to be believed, then we would be entirely deprived of any reason for belief in anything. We must begin somewhere—and that "somewhere" is the data which we call sense-impressions, or experience. But, even so, it should be emphasized that our beliefs are never absolute unless absolute proof of their truth is forthcoming. In other words, we must believe in everything that is capable of being proved true. And we must not believe in anything the truth of which is doubtful. In such cases our belief should vary in certainty in proportion as it is possible to prove the truth of the evidence which supports it.

Thus I believe as an absolute truth that two and two make four. Why? Because if any exception to this truth were admitted, then mathematics would be guesswork and language would be all nonsense. I also believe as an absolute truth that there is no life after death. Why? Because if "death" means the cessation, or the end, of "life," then "life after death" is a flat contradiction in terms, or language is all nonsense. I also believe that Napoleon was a man who lived upon this earth at one time. In this case my belief is not quite absolute because my evidence is not quite absolute. But it is near enough to being so for most practical purposes. Nevertheless I would not discard evidence to the contrary as impossible. Lastly, I do not believe that Jesus, as portrayed in the Bible, was a man who lived on this earth. Here again my belief is open to modification, though whether such a person did or did not live in reality is a matter of as much indifference to me as whether Napoleon really lived or not. As a problem of evidence both questions interest me. As a matter of history I find my belief in the one stronger than the other solely on account of the evidence. As a matter of fact neither concerns me at all.

So much for *belief*. As for believing in "something higher" than ourselves, the foregoing remarks apply with equal force. When I stand under a tree, I believe in something higher than myself—the tree. The religious person will object to this seeming flippancy. By "higher" he says that he means greater, more sublime, more marvellous, more all-embracing—and so on through a long list of terms which are usually

even vaguer than the word "higher." When we ask for explanations or concrete illustrations of what each of these terms means, we are brought face to face with a fog of loose thinking, which it is not easy to penetrate.

Grant that I believe in London, or Mr. Oliver Hardy, as being "greater" than Cambridge, or myself, respectively. Grant that I believe in kindness, or a beautiful sunset, as being more "sublime" than cruelty, or an east-end slum, respectively. Grant that I believe in England, or a gushing hostess, as being more "all-embracing" than Sussex, or a mysogist, respectively. Grant that I believe all these things on the evidence of my senses as verified by the corroborative witness of others, where does that elusive entity "God" come in? The religious person would have me exaggerate, in imagination, all these comparative terms, until my imagination is incapable of exaggerating them any further. And when the bursting point has been reached, that is "God"!

This, as an effort of the imagination, is, of course, very entertaining to some persons, though a trifle idiotic to others. But at best it is no more than an effort of the imagination. It proves nothing. For the imagination can just as easily exaggerate such terms in an opposite sense, and can invent a "something" bursting with infinite lowness, smallness, meanness, cruelty, ignorance and so forth. And we are once again up against the competition between the two imaginary "powers" which I referred to in my previous article, together with all the illogicalities and inconsistencies which such a theory contains.

The difficulty which the Atheist encounters, with people who give such answers as the one that has been discussed, is that these answers are a clear indication of the absence of thought. And it is remarkable to note that this absence of thought is the unfailing companion of credulity—the readiness to believe in the existence or truth of anything without bothering to verify the evidence. Yet even though discussion may not convince the God-believer of the purely imaginary nature of his mental idol, the Atheist can rest happy in the knowledge that the seed of criticism and common-sense almost invariably bears some good fruit. Unless a person is mentally defective, or a conscious self-deceiver, Truth is bound to oust his false beliefs in the long run. And for this reason even the most inconclusive discussion of religious subjects should not deter the enterprising Atheist from trying again when the opportunity presents itself.

"We must believe in something." Why, certainly! But, in the name of common-sense, don't let us believe in anything just because we were told to do so when we were babies. Let us insist on some verifiable proof of its existence and reality first.

C. S. FRASER.

The Mighty Atom.

THE break up of the atom, its reduction to electrons, and the consequent disappearance of matter as the ultimate entity, or thing-in-itself, was effusively welcomed in the beleaguered camps of the religious.

The "death of Materialism," so often prematurely announced, was now—so it was declared—an established fact. The Materialist, deprived of his Mighty Atom, must now acknowledge that he has met his Waterloo. The Church had warned him all along that he was on the wrong track, and now it was proved that the Church was right. So the pulpit, and the press, assured the public.

Let us examine this latest obituary notice of Materialism and see whether there is any more truth

in it than in the many false bulletins that have issued from the same source. Modern Materialism, like modern science, begins with the discoveries of Galileo and Newton. Galileo, it must be remembered, always claimed to be a Catholic and always submitted to the authority of the Church, even to the extent of denying the truth of the discoveries he had made. But as the Holy Inquisition stood behind the Church, we can hardly blame the poor old man for submitting. Newton, too, was also a believer, although not orthodox. He was a Unitarian. Yet these two between them dealt a deadly blow at religion; for they not only discredited the Bible, but they substituted natural laws for what, hitherto, the people had always regarded as the work of God and the spirits.

Protestants know all about how the Catholic Church fought against the new science, but few of them know that the Protestant churches were just as violent in their opposition, although, fortunately, they no longer had the power to suppress the new ideas. They declared the new science to be "Atheistic" and "substituted gravitation for providence." Luther opposed the new astronomy, and called Copernicus an old fool. Wesley declared that the new ideas "tend towards infidelity."¹ They would have none of it.

However, the exhortations and anathemas of the churches proved unavailing. The new ideas went on, conquering and to conquer. The new theory carried everything before it. Then the Protestants, seeing the futility and danger of further opposition, turned completely round and professed to find a support for religion in the materialistic system which they had so strenuously resisted.

The Deists were first in the field. It was easier for them as they had no infallible Bible to defend, and we find the poet Pope—who was a Deist—singing:—

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, let Newton be, and all was light.

Armed with the new laws discovered by Newton, the philosopher Kant, and the astronomer Laplace—each independently of the other—expounded the Nebular Hypothesis, by which they explained the origin of stars and planets by the operation of natural laws. Laplace presented a copy of his book to Napoleon, who remarked that he could see no reference to God in the work. To which Laplace replied that he had no need of the hypothesis.

We now come to the Atomic theory, upon which modern science is founded. One would think, from the pæans of joy with which the dissolution of the atom was received in religious circles, that the atom was the invention of some infidel philosophers. The atomic theory was, in fact, first expounded by the ancient Greeks in one of their wonderful anticipations of modern science, and was adopted by modern philosophers and scientists. The experimental proof of the theory, which the Greeks lacked, was provided by the successive labours of many scientists. Dalton was the first to propound a working hypothesis. Taking the weight of the atom of hydrogen—the lightest of the elements—as 1, Dalton used it as a scale to measure all the other elements by. These atomic weights range from hydrogen 1, up to uranium 238.5.

Later on Newlands propounded the Law of Octaves, by showing that there was a very marked similarity between every eighth element of the series; which Mendeléef, the Russian chemist, restated in a much improved form, and is now known as the "Periodic Law." When the elements were arranged in their natural sequence, several vacant places appeared, as if

¹ See chapter 3 of White's *Warfare of Science*.

some elements were missing, and Mendeléef predicted the discovery of these missing elements, and suggested their properties and weights; these elements have since been discovered and agree closely with his description; thus providing absolute proof of the atomic theory. The whole science of chemistry is founded upon the atomic theory, and it remains precisely where it was before the dissolution of the atom.

The Greek theory of the atom was that of a minute, indivisible, impenetrable and indestructible body, and this view was expressly adopted by Newton, Boyle, Huygens and others. In fact, these very characteristics were later on adduced as proof of the existence of a Creator. Take the following quotation for instance:—

Although in the course of ages catastrophes have taken place in the heavens, and still take place, although ancient systems dissolve and new systems are built up out of their ruins, yet the molecules of which these systems consist, the foundations of the material universe, remain unbroken and uninjured.

That sounds very materialistic, yet it is the utterance of the mathematician Clerk Maxwell, who was also a pious believer. In 1875 there was published a book entitled *The Unseen Universe*. It was published anonymously, but it is now known that it was the production of Profs. Tait and Balfour Stewart, two of the leading scientists of that time. We can well remember the outburst of joy and thankfulness with which this work was received by the religious world; the present jubilation in the religious camp quite reminds us of old times. The authors set out to prove that because atoms were exactly alike and indestructible, therefore they must have had a Creator. The atoms, they declared, bear the "stamp of the manufactured article." So you see that it was not only the stubborn Materialist who believed in the mighty atom; and it seems as though the Christians have made haste to announce the dissolution of the atom as the death of Materialism, before the Materialist can point out there is no manufacturer of indestructible atoms, and therefore there is no God.

The fact is that although the Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, were forced to give way and accept the, to them, hateful, mechanical and materialistic science of Newton (which they, quite correctly, described as a godless system, sapping the foundations of natural and revealed religion), yet they did so unwillingly. It took the Catholic Church over two hundred years to remove the work of Copernicus from the *Index Expurgatorius* of prohibited books. This accounts for the great joy expressed in religious circles, when it was announced that the new system of Relativity had overthrown the materialistic system of Newton. It was said of Berkeley, that what he was seeking, in his campaign against the phenomenal world, was "fresh air for faith," and that is what the theologians are always seeking from science, and constituted only interest in it.

If Newton could return to the scene of his labours, we can imagine his asking plaintively:—

Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But why did you kick me downstairs?

As for the Newtonian system, for all practical purposes it remains where it was. Einstein himself says that it is very difficult to find cases in which the new system is superior to the old. For instance, the *Nautical Almanac*, issued for navigators, containing astronomical information four years in advance of the period (not for years in advance, as it was rendered the last time I wrote on the subject), is still computed on the Newtonian principles.

W. MANN.

Bradlaugh and Humour.

ONE of the principal legends woven round the figure of Charles Bradlaugh, and one with which we are all fairly familiar, is that he lacked a sense of humour. Friends who only knew him slightly, or perhaps not at all in the flesh, join with foes in reiterating the assertion—though here probably we have another example of the former taking the word of the latter for granted. The new centenary volume *Champion of Liberty*, should help materially to eradicate this legend from the minds of all those who are keenly interested in this outstanding personality of the nineteenth century. For in its pages are copious extracts from his speeches and writings, many of which are practically unknown to the present generation, and some of these—particularly his earlier writings—evince a caustic strain of irony, and an acute sense of the absurd. A sense of humour is an essential ingredient in the making of all rebels worthy of the name. It enables them to view life in its true perspective, to see its problems in their correct proportions; it is the creator of the spirit of tolerance. Without humour men tend to become fanatics, and egoists. They kill or persecute each other over belief in god, religious rites, or political doctrines. Had primitive man possessed a sense of humour, religion could hardly have arisen: if only modern man was more perspicacious at perceiving the laughable side of things Fascism, National Socialism, and other peculiar creeds and cults of our day would have perished in infancy. Intolerance, dogmatism, and egotism result from an undeveloped sense of humour, and in consequence are easily wounded by laughter. So that where they cannot suppress it they grow menacingly and slink around waiting for a propitious moment to spring upon and strike those who dare to laugh at their expense.

In Bradlaugh's day intolerance and religious fanaticism were firmly entrenched; one had only to touch them on the raw to bring a storm of calumny, vilification, and menace upon one's head. All his life on account of his steadfast pursuit of truth and justice as he conceived them Bradlaugh was continually offending in this respect. So that at every step he made, bitter, rancorous, and unceasing hostility barred his path and strove to bully him into submission. Maintaining this strenuous fight, and at the same time trying to earn sufficient money to keep himself and family in reasonable comfort, prevented his sense of humour from enjoying the free rein which is its primary need. For humour requires more fortunate circumstances than dogged Bradlaugh's life if it is to become a powerful and incisive weapon. Had he not been heavily burdened with debts incurred, family worries, and other numerous responsibilities, including that of leading the small but impavid forces of Atheism and disseminating far and wide the ethos of Freethought, we might conceivably have found in his *Freethinker's Text Book*, and *Genesis*, the wit of Ingersoll or Foote or the satire of Voltaire.

Nevertheless Bradlaugh was a man who could appreciate humour and occasionally used it to good effect. Only those who have not studied his character or his writings and speeches could believe he lacked a sense of humour. Should any of these happen to cast a glance at this article we invite them to remedy the fault, and by way of inspiring them to this end we cite the testimony of a contributor to the *Reformer* for May, 1902. He (or maybe she) writes thus: "Many a time at his lectures have I laughed so much that I have felt ashamed to look around me, only to find, to my relief, that others had appreciated his humour equally as much as myself."

That amply substantiates our case. In all liberated minds like that of Bradlaugh humour is always present even though it may not appear manifest to the superficial observer.

TOM BLAKE.

If the faith of the future is to be a faith which can satisfy the most cultivated as well as the feeblest intellects, it must be founded on an unflinching respect for realities.—Leslie Stephen.

Acid Drops.

A Conference between Lord Irwin, President of the Board of Education, and representatives of the National Union of Teachers and some teachers' training organizations was recently held to consider the question of religious instruction in schools. The report of the Conference has not yet been issued, but it is reported that the agreement reached was that efficiency depended on the proper Scriptural training of teachers. If that means anything at all it means that satisfactory position depends upon teachers taking their orders from an agreement reached among the parsons of the principal denominations. And that means that the teachers must become the cats-paws of the parsons. That is a pretty position for teachers who have self-respect, or any regard for the dignity of their profession.

The other day teachers in London raised what was almost a riot outside the L.C.C. Council Chamber over the question of the abolition of the "cuts" in their wages. We beg to suggest to all teachers that if they wish to attain positions they ought to have, they need to show a little enthusiasm over something a little loftier than an increase in wages. But we know only too well the difficulty there is in getting them to rise to this level. Only a teacher here and there can be found who will publicly avow his, or her, opposition to a situation which compels them to cringe and crawl before a number of parsons or before narrow-minded sectarians on education committees. What might be one of the strongest and most influential of trades unions is content to remain silent, nay, more than silent, publicly acquiescent to, although largely privately resentful of, the dominance of a body of men whose only aim is to use the schools as a means of filling churches and chapels. Until teachers claim the independence of real men and women, they can hardly hope to arouse public sympathy on a mere matter of an increase in wages.

The Very Reverend Milo Hudson Gates is Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the largest and finest Anglican edifice in New York. Milo is however lucid, which is more than St. John the Divine ever was. This is his contribution towards the rectification of all our troubles:—

I believe that one of the reasons for certain defects, certain disastrous results in our civilization, certain things which are not admirable, is due to the fact we do not care enough about money; we do not worship money enough; we do not have a proper opinion and reverence for money.

He also says:—

Next to the Cross of Jesus Christ money is the most sacred thing in existence.

Jesus is, of course, merely dragged in because it is through Jesus that Milo earns his little bit of corn, and he does not want to appear ungrateful. What Jesus believed was in trusting to luck like the lilies; he told his disciples how Lazarus was sent to Heaven because he was lucky enough not to possess a bean and Dives to Hell because he had "a proper opinion and reverence for money"; he counselled his followers not to lay up for themselves treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt, but to lay up treasures in Heaven. Milo says he puts Jesus first, but what he really does say is "Pah! a fig for Jesus! The New Trinity is £ s. d., and as for getting through the eye of that needle, well, we'll just risk it." Milo has not earned our regard.

The Autumn Meeting of the National Academy of Sciences has recently been held in Massachusetts. We learn that the meetings covered physics, astronomy, geology, physical chemistry, biology, physiology, chemistry, pathology, palæontology, psychology, botany, anthropology, medicine and mathematics. Perhaps it is anti-feminist prejudice, still existing even in America, which accounts for the remarkable omission of Theology, the Queen of the Sciences.

Mr. W. F. Stead, an American, who became an Anglican clergyman in England, has just become converted to Roman Catholicism. This is not a remarkable event, and we only refer to it because he claims that what impressed him so much was the Church's teaching with regard to the Saints and the Souls in Purgatory. "The Saints," he said, "before I was converted, were no more to me than faint unsubstantial figures. I now have no shyness or hesitation in asking the saints to pray for me." We venture to say of those Saints who really lived, had Mr. Stead been anywhere near them, he would have found them very substantial indeed. Most of them never washed in their lives as a mark of supreme holiness, and Saints like St. Simeon can never be truthfully represented in polite society. Filth, fervour and faith were the holy marks of good saints, and we are glad that Mr. Stead has hitched his wagon on to them.

Pars. from *Punch*:—

"A fracture of a single rib in a fat parson is very easily overlooked."—*Medical Paper*.

Hence the inhuman custom of "dropping the skypilot."

"There are not many parishes that can produce a congregation of two hundred and fifty per cent."—*Parish Magazine*.

We never doubted it.

Mr. James Douglas tells us in the *Sunday Express* that he has escaped death by a hair's breadth not once but on numerous occasions. As a boy, he narrowly escaped being run over by a railway train; three times he was nearly drowned. Another time he was saved by an incredible chance. Death passed him by. The fact has made Mr. Douglas reflective:—

Death is the one fine thing which we are sure that the Father keeps in His own care and love and compassion, without laying on us the burden and responsibility. It is His affair, not ours.

From the *Daily Express*:—

Billy Powell, aged fourteen, started work last week and became the breadwinner of his family of nine. His father and elder brothers are out of work.

Billy left the pit yesterday, proudly carrying his first week's wages. An omnibus swerved to avoid a little child . . . there were screams. . . . Billy was knocked down.

Three hours later he died.

It may appear sun-clear to James Douglas that his own life is kept in the Father's own care and love and compassion. But he believes that the Lord "appoints" the time of all deaths, and that Billy's case is equally the Father's affair, not ours. So that Mr. Douglas's many miraculous escapes from death prove no more special care and love and compassion than if he had been killed by the train in boyhood. We are happy to find that logic acquits the Father from what is to us a quite unreasonable favouritism.

According to the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, a religious Revival is not coming, it is here:—

Never before has there been so many convinced committed Christian people in this land. It is a significant fact that Hitler has sent over two German ministers of religion to search out the causes and conditions governing the revival he had heard had broken out in Britain.

It will be rather a shock to the pious Hitler when he learns that the Great British Revival has got lost in transit. An even greater shock it would be if he were told that where any Revival is being staged the people appear to be still pinning their faith to a crucified Jew.

Of journalist "bunk" and pious "bunk" the following seems a good revelation. It is taken from the *Methodist Recorder*:—

. . . the brewers are purposing to spend large sums on publicity. . . . The Press is to have a large share of the amount. . . . Advertisements are to be showered on

them. But, in referring to the subject, the Directors of the Brewers Society made a maladroit comment that, in placing their advertisements, they would, of course, have respect to the editorial support they received. This was too barefaced a hint, and roused the Newspaper Society to a strong and dignified reply, repudiating the innuendo that the Press could thus be bought to support the interests of the brewing trade or any other trade.

And yet, everyone in Fleet Street knows quite well that the newspapers will never print anything that might be likely to antagonize their advertisers or prejudicially affect the sale of their wares. And yet, also, if the Churches began large scale advertising in newspapers, the proprietors would be given to understand something very similar to that mentioned by the Brewers. The *Methodist Recorder's* moral indignation is "bunk."

The football sporting writer in Saturday's *Evening Standard*, instead of indulging in the old-fashioned "Let the better team win," says :—

If First Vienna beat Arsenal I shall hate it.

Soon our newspapers will be having articles on Should one allow one's Wife to smile upon another man? by an old-fashioned Husband; I loathe all Dagos, by the Rt. Hon. Member for Wurzel Plummery; and Grovelling Justified; its Antiquity, Its Universality, Its Authority, Its Charm, by Chester Bell. Then we shall know at last that the Press is taking its lofty mission seriously.

The *Catholic Times* has been sued for libel by Mary Borden, because of the freedom of their comments on her in connexion with her recently published novel, *Mary of Nazareth*. The *Daily Telegraph* has notified this fact with too much prominence to please the Editor of this Catholic journal. He threatens the *Telegraph* that all such "attentions" will receive his "attentions" in turn. One has got to be very, very religious, exuding, in fact, piety from every pore, fully to appreciate the form that that "attention" has so far taken.

It appears that a friend of the Good Catholic Editor once knew the father of one of the staff of the *Telegraph*. He digs into ancient history and informs us that this father started his working life (we presume, to his discredit), in a mill at 2s. 6d. per week, and often lost his entire wages in "fines." Later on he gravitated to Fleet Street, and years ago (on the authority of this friend) was guilty of "foibles." One is specified. It is quite "venial" as many, many Good Catholics would be the first to admit. This then is the type of attention vouchsafed by our Good Catholic contemporary. For our part we are more than willing to dispense with our immortal soul if there is even a thousand to one chance of its manifesting itself in such an outrageous way.

Studious people like Chesterton, and Hilaire Belloc have examined prayerfully the claims of Zoroaster, the Buddha, Mrs. Eddy, Mahomet, the Orthodox Greek and the Roman Catholic Church, and have plumped for the last-named. This they believe to have ensured or helped their soul's salvation. They believe that some day the Gates of Heaven will open wide, and all the lucky speculators will be received with Hosannahs. And amongst that miscellaneous crew will be some who are "human," and very many, we are afraid who are just pious.

The following extract from *Heavenly Discourse*, by Charles Erskine Scott Wood (The Vanguard Press) is now given, apropos of very little :—

God : Well, Peter, what now?

St. Peter : I've lost a soul.

God : Was it so small?

St. Peter : The smallest soul I ever saw.

God : I don't like that soul being loose in heaven. In which hand did you have it?

God : Let me see (God looks carefully for some time.) Here it is.

St. Peter : This one—

God : No; your sight isn't as good as my all-seeing eye. Look carefully, there. Under your finger nail . . .

G.K.C. appears from the *Universe* to be much annoyed at Dean Inge. He says :—

In that broad daylight of the Brotherhood of Man . . . there appears suddenly like a black flood the figure of the Dean of St. Paul's with nothing to say but
I will not grovel to an Italian Priest.

Mr. Chesterton fixes on the word *Italian*, and accuses the Dean of "a queer outburst of Jingoism," a lack of humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism, and manners, for sneering at a priest "simply because he is an Italian."

Mr. Chesterton chooses his paper well. We doubt whether any other would print such fatuity. The same attack would equally fit Mr. Cohen, because of any of his criticisms on the Roman Church. The fact of the matter is that it is the word *grovel* that gruels and not *Italian*. but the characteristic Chestertonian word-play to delight the readers of the *Universe*, couldn't be got out of this word. Dean Inge, we surmise, "drags in the entirely irrelevant word" *Italian* because it is in Rome more particularly that the grovel is elevated to a dignified manly gesture. The exhibitions of Holy Year quite sufficiently prove the point.

Fifty Years Ago.

G. W. FOOTE IN PRISON.

IN due course I was ushered up the stone steps to a room marked "Visitors." Here again I noticed how carefully Mr. Foote is preserved from injury. A board and iron grating rendered any wish to strike him with the fist of no avail, and kept us at a distance of almost two yards.

I was gratified to find that, although slightly thinner, his general appearance was all that can be desired. The hairdresser of the establishment had taken no liberties with his locks, and the costume provided in no way deteriorated his manly, stalwart look. He told me his health was unaffected and his heart had never been cast down. He had the enemy too much in sight for that. His clear, bright eye and bell-like voice assured me that in this he was not mistaken. His only anxieties had been in regard to his young wife and my unworthy self. His physical complaints were insufficient exercise. The room in which we met was sufficiently gloomy, but he stated that his cell has not half so good a light.

Despite the bad light, Mr. Foote told me he had done a great deal of reading, having completely gone through such lengthy histories as those of Gibbon, Mosheim, and Carlyle's "Frederick the Great"; in addition to re-reading the great classics of English and French literature. Two living poets of eminence have sent him in presentation copies of their works. He gives about one hour and a half every day to his study of Italian; and is now reading a number of works on the times of Cromwell and the Commonwealth, as well as providing other material for his future lectures. Altogether it was very evident that his time is not wasted, though it is much to be regretted that he has no opportunity of expressing his thoughts in writing.

We were in the midst of a hearty laugh at my having mentioned some recent publications as though he was in the habit of regularly seeing the *Academy* and *Athenaeum* when the appearance of a gentleman in livery announced that our too brief interview must end.

Our parting salutations were made, as through different exits, I, a blasphemer whose writings had been indicted, passed out to freedom, while my friend—suffering for myself and others—returned to his dismal cell.

J. M. WHEELER.

The "Freethinker," December 9, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. NORTON.—Thanks. Shall appear. We have no knowledge whatever of the Ingersoll story, and question its truth. But where tales about Freethinkers are concerned strange standards of veracity obtain.

SIR ARTHUR HAZLERIGG.—The quotation was taken from the *Church Times* for November 24, and your quarrel lies with that journal, if with anyone. You flatter us when you say the *Freethinker* is a "rather peculiar paper." We claim, rather sorrowfully, that it is a rather peculiar paper. It stands alone among a crowd of papers in which neither editor nor contributor dares to say exactly what he believes.

N. THOMSON (Lochee).—Very pleased to hear from a new reader, and for your enthusiasm for the cause. There are plenty of Freethinkers in Dundee, and there is no reason why an active Branch of the N.S.S. should not be formed. We are sending your letter to the General Secretary, who will write you.

P.J.M.—Thanks for cuttings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen's new work *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll* will be ready on December 12. The work consists of a critical study of these two great men, it extends to 208 pages, and contains twelve plates. Apart from the purely biographical interest, the work forms a capital introduction to a study of Freethought, and we can think of no better work calculated to rouse in the "great unattached" an interest in the ideas and principles for which Bradlaugh and Ingersoll stood. Ever since the issue of our Ingersoll number of the *Freethinker* there has been an awakened interest in the greatest Freethinker America has produced, and we are sure that this fuller study will be welcome. The aroused interest in Bradlaugh, the real Bradlaugh, will answer for the other half of the volume. We suggest that our readers will be doing a good stroke of work by choosing this book as a Christmas or New Year's gift for their Christian acquaintances.

Our readers will remember that in our issue for October 8 we raised a protest against the B.B.C. censorship being applied to an address on Bradlaugh. The facts that led up to this were as follows. The Centenary Committee asked for a broadcast on Bradlaugh to be delivered by a

representative. After a fortnight's delay a reply was received that arrangements had been made for a broadcast to follow the nine o'clock "news." It transpired that, after the receipt of the letter from the Centenary Committee, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, one of their lecturers, had been requested to give a *five minutes talk* on Bradlaugh's Parliamentary career. Mr. Ratcliffe asked for more time, and was eventually given ten minutes. The address was written, and submitted for judgment. The address made no mention of Bradlaugh's Atheism, he is named as a formidable enemy of religion in his time, but listeners were informed that the warfare of Bradlaugh and Besant "belonged to their own time." Nearly the whole of the address was concerned with the Parliamentary episode—a perfectly safe thing about which to talk, and one of the incidents which actually does belong to his time and not to ours.

We have protested against the censorship of the B.B.C. ever since it was established, and have maintained that while it is disgraceful that any self-respecting publicist should voluntarily submit to a censorship, it is doubly disgraceful when the subject of the address is a man such as Charles Bradlaugh. It is an insult to the memory of one who did so much for freedom of speech, and who, we are sure, would never have countenanced it to the extent of submitting a speech of his to a number of irresponsible persons. But in the *Literary Guide* for December, there appears the following note:—

We are able to state authoritatively that the Wireless Address of Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, in commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh was not censored in any way whatever. It was delivered as originally drafted.

Presumably, the authoritative information came from Mr. Ratcliffe, and we accept the statement as true. All the same we wonder whether anyone can be misled by so transparent a device. What is the difference between a speech that is censored by having portions deleted, and one that is written so that nothing can be cut out? The only distinction in the two cases is that in the one a Committee does the censoring, in the other the writer acts as his own censor. A lecture written or delivered in fear of a censorship is censored before it is even submitted. Mr. Ratcliffe simply acted for the censors. It would be interesting to know whether Mr. Ratcliffe really believes that Bradlaugh's struggle against the influence of religion and belief in religion belonged wholly to his time, or that the Parliamentary struggle was so far the most important thing in his life that it deserved full mention, and his Freethought but passing and deprecatory notice. Or is the real explanation that Mr. Ratcliffe being one of the regular speakers for the B.B.C. knew just what the Committee desired? Mr. Ratcliffe might plead that he did his best in the circumstances. I am only concerned with the fact that his best was to bow before a principle that Bradlaugh would have been the first to repudiate, and the kindred fact that I do not care to see the principles, for which Bradlaugh stood, sacrificed for the sake of a little temporary notoriety.

The Bradlaugh Centenary Committee has just issued a verbatim report of the speeches delivered at the Bradlaugh Commemoration Meeting and Dinner on September 23 and 26. These speeches cover 128 pages, and are issued at the price of 6d., or in cloth 1s. 6d. A full advertisement appears on another page, and we feel sure that at least all of those who have purchased the Centenary Volume will secure a copy of this booklet, which makes a suitable appendix. As a memento of the appreciation of Bradlaugh from many points of view, this work is unique in the annals of British Freethought.

The Annual Dinner of the N.S.S. will be held on Saturday, February 3, 1934, in the Holborn Restaurant, London. The increased interest in the movement, following the Bradlaugh Centenary celebrations is sure to add to the numbers present on this occasion, and the comfort of all will be ensured by the new accommodation. There will be the usual pleasant features including the musical pro-

gramme, intercourse with Freethinkers from all parts of the country, and short speeches, including one from the President.

In connexion with the Annual Dinner, the Executive of the N.S.S. is obtaining information and particulars of excursions to London on the day of the Dinner, convenient for intending visitors. At present we can announce the following excursions on the L.M.S. system: From Liverpool (Lime Street), Return Fare 16s. for one day, and 10s. 6d. for a half Day; Birmingham 12s. Day Return; Leicester, Day Ticket, leaving 9.38, returning up till midnight, 11s. half-day return, 5s. 6d., return about midnight; Coventry, Day Ticket 10s. 6d. return, returning about 12.30 a.m.

Birmingham saints will be pleased to know that Mr. G. Whitehead will speak on behalf of the local N.S.S. Branch in the Bristol Street Schools to-day (December 10) at 7 p.m. Mr. Whitehead has a number of friends in Birmingham, and we hope to hear they succeeded in getting the hall filled, and so were rewarded for their efforts.

Mr. A. McLaren will be in Burnley to-day (December 10), and speaks twice in the Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley, on behalf of the East Lancashire Rationalist Association. At 2.45 the subject will be "Do We Need Religion?" and at 7 p.m., "The Drift of Things as I can see it." Mr. McLaren is a keen and well read Freethinker, and we can safely promise those present, two interesting and informative addresses.

The attention of Edinburgh readers is called to the fact that the *Freethinker*, and the publications of the Pioneer Press may be obtained at The Bookshop, West Nicholson Street, Edinburgh, where they are given a prominent show.

The Cohen-Lunn Debate.

ON November 20, I cancelled my consultations for the express purpose of attending this debate. Please let me thank both debaters. Let me thank Mr. Cohen and congratulate him, not for the debate, but for the patience, for the dignified composure, for the never failing good-temper in the attempt and insistence in trying to get a debate. For there was no debate. As he so justly said there were only talks. May I add: what talks!

Do not think I intend giving a commentary; do not think I intend saying things which I consider Mr. Cohen ought to have said. I know only too well how many things he has purposely omitted in his endeavour to stick to the very subject of the debate. But I think that I deserve being excused when I make the following remarks.

You see, I was conceived by staunch Roman Catholic parents; born and brought up in a staunch Roman Catholic country; educated by priests in Roman Catholic episcopal colleges, and in the Roman Catholic university of Louvain; I qualified at the State University of Ghent, and at a medical school in London as well. I have been in the past a Roman Catholic for a far longer period than Mr. Lunn, so that, when he says that Mr. Cohen has not passed through the phases which he himself has gone through, he certainly cannot apply this futile excuse to me.

I do not think that Mr. Lunn ever grasped for one moment that the subject of the debate was whether "science" discredits the idea of God and not whether "scientists" discredit that idea. It is really an astounding sight to watch the eagerness with which Theists wait for the half-hearted outstretched hand of a scientist, and are thankful beyond measure for the

crumbs that fall from the table. Mr. Lunn seems to pin not a small part of his faith to the condescending utterances of scientists; utterances not based upon science itself, but upon their own personal feelings. I say that for every scientist who now proclaims a belief in some sort of a deity, I am prepared to name two who proclaim no such belief. Not that it matters a scrap. Would Mr. Lunn be able to quote one single scientist with whose kind of a God he fully agrees? Hardly. Even his own example of Pasteur he misquotes; for Pasteur did not say that he had the simple faith of a Breton peasant woman, he said in fact: "Je voudrais pouvoir dire à ma mort que je possède la foi simple d'une paysanne bretonne."—"I wish that at my death I could say that I possess the simple faith of . . . etc." He had not that simple faith. When his pupils asked him whether he still believed in the existence of a God, he answered, not a straightforward and unequivocal "Yes" or "no," but: "Between my faith and my science I have put a waterproof sheet." He was frightened of the contamination of his faith by his science! And that is the Roman Catholic Pasteur quoted by Mr. Lunn himself. Beware of your own friends.

Mr. Lunn tries to belittle the theory of evolution. I might tell him that at the Roman Catholic University of Louvain every Professor, and every one of them is a Roman Catholic, accepts this theory and teaches it. As a matter of fact Prof. Debaisieux, even before the war, accepted in his lectures of Zoology, which I attended, the evolutionary step from the inorganic to the organic. That was a Roman Catholic Professor at the Roman Catholic University of Louvain!

An Atheist does not ask for reverence or respect for his opinions. An opinion which cannot stand the brunt of ridicule is not very much worth keeping. An Atheist might at the utmost ask for respect for his person. I notice that Mr. Lunn was the first in the field to use, not witty remarks, but spiteful and even hurtful digs. He exclaimed: "The fool hath said there is no God!" Mr. Cohen does not mind being called a fool. He as much as said so. But when Mr. Cohen said truths about the priests and their prototypes the savage medicine-men, about the mass and its scientifically established origin in anthropophagy and theophagy, truths accepted by any anthropologist worth his metal, truths which even the famous Church dares not deny but hastens to ascribe to the interference of the devil, then does Mr. Lunn's wrath flare up, then does he whine about an opponent being contemptible, irreverent, etc., etc. Error and superstition deserve no respect, savagery still less. The pathetic outburst of Mr. Lunn is quite in accordance with the contents of certain papal encyclicals in which it is said that the Roman Catholic Church bases her claim for tolerance upon the very principles of her opponents and of democracy, but that the Church by her own principles is not bound to extend this tolerance to her opponents. In all my dealings with Roman Catholic apologists I have always met with that attitude which might give the impression of cheek, arrogance and impudence. Believe me they do not deserve these accusations, for I know by my own past experience as a Roman Catholic that they are serenely and most innocently convinced and cocksure of the contrary. The more ignorant and primitive a savage is, the more arrogant about his beliefs he will be. Ask any missionary.

Mr. Cohen told Mr. Lunn how ignorant the latter is of the Freethought philosophy. Mr. Cohen might also have told Mr. Lunn how ignorant the latter is of science. Take his repeated statement that you had to choose between blind chance and a supernatural act of God. Whatever blind chance might mean, if these

were in fact the only alternatives, even then one would have to choose chance. Because a supernatural act of God means nothing, and after all chance can be visualized as a factor which could make certain emergencies happen however amazing they might seem. In a universe of unlimited possibilities chance would be capable of an unlimited number of different productions as long as one does not include such absurdities as making something out of nothing or raising a mountain without a valley. "Act of God" is on the same level as "soul." Because Theists cannot yet get a complete explanation of the phenomena of thought, they invoke another thinker for the human being, a soul. Again they do not explain *how* this soul thinks; they simply state that it is something else that does the thinking. To be logical they must claim a "soul thinker" for the soul; and a third "soul thinker" for the second soul thinker, and so on *ad infinitum*. And sure, if it is not for explanatory purposes they invoke acts of God and souls, for what purpose is it then? As a substitute for ignorance? But a supernatural act of God and chance are not alternatives at all. There is, in the sequence of causes and effects of the universe, the law that, given certain circumstances in which certain laws operate, unavoidable results will follow; and that is no chance at all. The circumstances themselves were unavoidable results of laws operating in certain circumstances. And so on *ad infinitum*. And let Mr. Lunn not make any mistake about that infinitum and come along with his 'Thomas Aquinas' movers and primary movers. For an infinite sequence of causes and effects is quite possible, and the only possible one. A sequence of causes and effects has no bearing whatever on the whole; because one wave rises out of another, there is no justification for saying that the ocean rises out of another. In an eternal whole there must needs be an eternal sequence of happenings. Naturally "if" the circumstances had been different, the same operating laws would have produced a different human being, say with legs where his arms are now, and arms where his legs are now. But, even then, we would have to listen just the same to the same insane prattle that a "directive mind" had piloted these changes towards that beautiful product.

The circumstances were there, the conditions were there, the laws were there, something had to be the result, and a result finally came. We are that result. And let me tell Mr. Lunn that I know a bit more about that result than he does; that we have not very much to boast about. Even about our so-called superior intellectual powers. They certainly are superior; superior to all the other intellectual powers we know of; that is why we so boast about them, because we know of nothing better. So does the savage boast about his necklace of seashells because he knows of nothing more beautiful. We fancy ourselves; in the land of the blind the one-eyed is king.

Mr. Lunn certainly does not know very much about science. If he does, then he knowingly made me misjudge him.

If the laws of nature, he exclaims, are the same as they were millions of years ago, why does not nature produce new lives now? But nature does produce new living beings all the time! Perhaps he meant: "Why is it not possible for man to produce life artificially?" May be he meant making a living cell in the laboratory. Such exclamations invariably give the secret away; the secret of one's pitiful ignorance. For if one were not ignorant one would know that the laws, "though always the same," do not continually operate in the same set of conditions and circumstances. And if Mr. Lunn thinks that a biologist ought to be capable of reproducing inside a laboratory the

conditions and circumstances which prevailed on this earth millions of years ago, if he expects the biologist to reproduce the course of millions of years of gradual change carrying all the time that most important of all factors namely heredity, then Mr. Lunn is either a simpleton if he really meant what he said and was sincere in his innocence, or a hypocrite if he was not, and knew he was enunciating absurdities. I trust and hope he is neither, if that be possible. What other possibility is left? Let Mr. Lunn recollect the few notions, which I am sure he possesses, about embryology. Within the uterus of a pregnant woman is enacted an abbreviated and somewhat curtailed recapitulation of all the stages the human animal has gone through during his long evolution. From the unicellular cell to the multicellular morula, blastula, wormlike, fishlike, amphibian-like, reptile-like, until it reaches the particular mammal condition. I have had all these stages in bottles, and still have a few left for inspection. I even had a human foetus from one of the miscarriages which came under my care, where that very small human foetus still had its tail intact. Unhappily a wrong alcohol destroyed it, and any doctor will tell you how very rare and difficult it is to get. Embryology alone is scientifically sufficient to eliminate all doubts about evolution. Science never argues any more about evolution; it accepts it as a fact. All what it argues about are the details. Roman Catholics alone hypocritically belittle evolution, hoping against hope to obtain some credibility for their absurd mysteries; they do not deny it; they cannot; they are not morally courageous enough to deny it wholesale as do all primitive ancient and modern fundamentalists. Fancy an infinite, unchangeable, immaterial, all powerful, etc., etc., deity, directing and touching up here and there during millions of years the evolution of every microbe big and small! And arriving at results such as useless and dangerous appendices, atrophied third eyes, degenerated wisdom-teeth, remnants of third eye-lids, of false ribs, of tail-bones, etc., etc., not to mention the monstrosities which I have seen being born, the crippled, the misformed, etc.! It were laughable if it were not so sad.

Mr. Lunn harps upon his miracles of Lourdes. I can assure him I know more about these miracles than he does. I have Catholic doctor friends who have sat on the medical bench; who have come back dejected and disillusioned; who have confessed that they refused to sign their testimony; but who are still too good children of the Church to make a rumour about it. What is more, Mr. Lunn ought not to invoke these alleged miracles in his argumentation; for his Church, that never hesitates to make a point of faith of things which are outside the realm of experimentation, such as virgin births, immaculate conceptions, resurrections, etc., has never yet dared to make a point of faith of one single happening at Lourdes. The Church is wise enough to know that one day these places of neurotic religious auto-suggestion will have to be given up. At least the Church herself realizes that the supernatural explanation of those happenings is not certain enough, and refrains from speaking *ex cathedra*. But why then build arguments upon them?

I repeat it. I have been in the past, and that during a long period, what Mr. Lunn is just starting to be. Although Mr. Lunn asserted having been at some time or other an Atheist, I know that he has never been that. If he had he would have written books to defend Atheism; he could not have helped himself doing that. He might have been at a certain time a bad Nonconformist, a doubter, a sceptic, an Agnostic even; but an Atheist, never. And he knows it. These Theists who proclaim so greedily: "I

have been an Atheist!" remind me of the Salvation Army recruit, young and innocent, standing in the midst of the circle and confessing publicly with a pathetic and trembling accent: "Once I was bad; once I was wicked; once I was very immoral; now I have found the light and salvation; little Jesus showed me the way . . ."

I have become an Atheist. Thomas Aquinas' arguments had no power to stop that. Not only because I could refute them; others had done that long ago. Kant did it. Cardinal Newman himself rejected them and confessed that the existence of the human conscience was the only reason why he did not become an Atheist. I became an Atheist because of study, because of science, and because I had the pluck to read the other side of the medal, and to read that other side with at least an honest intention to find out whether there was any truth in the other side and not with a characteristic preconceived resolution that at all costs some sort of argument must be invented to destroy that other side, or, if that is impossible, to minimise its effect as much as possible. And above all, because I had the moral courage to acknowledge defeat when defeat there was, and that in face of the opposition of the whole of my Roman Catholic family, the Roman Catholic surroundings in which I lived, in spite of the slander and the boycott I had to struggle against in the country of my birth, and even in England, where a Roman Catholic priest went round to my Roman Catholic patients telling them that it was their duty to go to a Roman Catholic doctor whom he mentioned by name, and not to go to a doctor who was an apostate. I had the moral courage to say and to proclaim the truth even when that truth was painful and the courage to take the step.

I can assure Mr. Lunn that he has joined a Church which I know a thousand times better than he does, and that in that Church I still count hundreds of friends who think as I do, but who dare not come out into the open. Sometimes I understand them, and I certainly always pity them.

W. R. S. JACQUES.

Marital Customs in Savage Lands.

MEN have long speculated concerning the origin of matrimonial ceremonies. Whatever their primary significance may have been, these observances are intensely interesting to the student of social science and anthropology. However lowly the race in the scale of culture; some mode of marital observance may be traced. A leading authority on the subject of human marriage, Dr. Westermarck, concludes that in those very few instances in which investigators have failed to detect the presence of nuptial rites, their failure is due to imperfect understanding or study.

The Arunta of Australia rank with the rudest of the human race, yet, among them, a simple ceremony precedes marriage. A man or woman, as the case may be, charms a member of the opposite sex with the sound produced by a bullroarer, and with a favourable response to the "music" the loved one approaches the performer and thus becomes united in wedlock.

In many marriage ceremonies elaborate precautions are taken to nullify the evil influences of demons. At one time, in Northern England, men armed with guns guarded the wedding procession to church, and a similar custom survives in several parts of Europe. In ancestor-worshipping China, we read that "it was supposed that when a new bride in her chair passed a certain place, evil spirits would approach and injure her, causing her to be ill; hence the figure of a great

magician (a Taoist priest) riding a tiger, and brandishing a sword, was painted in front." In Manchuria again, the bride is safeguarded by a couple of men who run in advance of the bridal party, each bearing a red cloth to countercharm the machinations of the demons. The sedan chair in which the bride sits is disinfected to frighten the ghosts, and various other precautions against goblins are taken.

Kindred customs prevail in India, as also in savage Africa. In Bechuanaland the bridegroom discharges an arrow into the native hut before taking possession with his newly-wedded wife.

In his *Mystic Rose*, Crawley assigns the custom of rice-scattering at weddings to the idea of giving food to the evil agents to persuade them to be propitious and depart, although with various peoples it appears to have "developed into a systematic method of securing fertility, and on the other hand, is regarded by some races as an inducement to the soul to stay." In Celebes the bridegroom's soul is supposed to incline towards flight at marriage, so he is pelted with rice to persuade his soul to remain. Apparently it is feared that his spirit would be captured by evil ghosts. Similar superstitions were common in ancient Greece and Rome.

The dread of inimical agencies at weddings seems to explain the numerous rites of lustration. In savage as in civilized communities holy water renders married couples immune from many dangers. Rice-flour water is utilized on an extensive scale in Malaya for purposes of purification. It forms "an integral part of Malay customs at birth, adolescence, marriage, sickness, death, and, in fact, at every critical period in the life of a Malay." This custom is admittedly due to the idea that deadly substances are thus destroyed, while the baleful propensities of intrusive spirits are nullified.

The custom of concealing the bride or bridegroom for some days after the wedding appears mainly due to the dread of maleficent powers. The nuptial season seems permanently charged with peril. In Aru the newly married pair are immured for four days and tended by the bride's mother. The Damaras hold a matrimonial festival for several days, and throughout this period the bride sleeps with girls, and her spouse is not allowed to see her.

Spiritual and other imaginary dangers are avoided by means of disguise. For instance, among the Moslems of Northern India, it is usual for a time before marriage for both parties to dress in soiled attire. Kaffir brides shave their heads, while in many countries brides are secluded and heavily veiled.

Instead of the revel which usually enlivens Western marriages, the lowlier races frequently observe the time as one of unrelieved silence. For the bridal pair are not permitted to speak to one another. So tongueless are the Andamanese, that the married couple preserve a stony silence for several days, and barely glance at each other. Any stranger "might suppose they had had a serious quarrel."

There is the belief that it is unlucky for a newly-mated pair to enjoy repose. After the ceremony the couple remain up through the night in New Guinea. If they are overcome with fatigue they are rudely aroused, and for four successive nights sleep is forbidden. At a Brahmin wedding in present-day India, girls watch to prevent the wedded pair from falling asleep.

Fasting is another ordeal imposed by native custom. Evil spirits are apt to invade the body with food, and a married couple will be kept for three days without a nourishment of any kind. Moreover, "the young Macusi bridegroom-elect fasts from meat for some time before marriage. Among the Thlinkets the pair are required to fast for two days, 'in order to ensure

domestic peace and happiness.' At the expiration of that time they are allowed to partake of a little food, when a second fast of two days is added, after which they are allowed to come together for the first time."

Abstinence from coition for a period after marriage is quite common with savages. Frazer and other anthropologists regard this mortifying restraint as arising from the dread that the spirits may prove resentful if deprived of the privilege of partaking of the virginal fruits of matrimony. Westermarck dissents from this view, but Frazer's opinion is entirely in accord with innumerable savage misconceptions of natural phenomena. But be the true interpretation what it may, the facts are incontestable. Marriage is not fully consummated for several days in Persia. In the Kei Islands a withered crone sleeps for a time between husband and wife. There are various cases in which adults, or children for a few nights, lie between the married pair. In South Celebes "bridesmothers" watch the couple during the hours of darkness and prevent all loving intimacy. A full week's waiting is the rule in Achin, where elderly women disallow all sleep. In Queensland the parties are kept apart for about eight weeks after marriage, but with most tribes three or four nights' separation is the more common rule. With old Israel, in ancient and modern Egypt, and indeed in the Moslem world generally, this temporary abstinence from sexual union is deemed a sacred duty.

The rite of defloration conducted by some recognized agent other than the bridegroom is a frequent preliminary to matrimony. Crawley regards this rupturing of the virginal membrane as a primitive marriage ceremony. "Tribes," he observes, "which have this rite are commonly said to practise no marriage ceremony. This statement is, of course, erroneous; to primitive thought this ceremony is a very real marriage rite. The best examples come from the Arunta, and connected tribes of Central Australia, and have been well described by Spencer and Gillen."

This rude rite, which occurs in sixteen of the aboriginal tribes of Central Australia, is venerated as truly religious. At the period of puberty the girl is dedicated to her future spouse. The prenuptial ceremony of defloration is performed by agents who vary from tribe to tribe. It is occasionally conducted by a near relative, but never by her prospective partner. The hymen, we read, "is artificially perforated, and then the assisting men have access to the girl in stated order. . . . The object of the custom is clearly to remove the danger of sexual intercourse for the husband, and perhaps also for the wife, by a ceremonial previous rehearsal of it. The danger partly coincides . . . with the apparent physical impediment to intercourse. The act is in two parts, perforation and intercourse."

Repugnant as this rite must appear to a refined European, it is customary for the father to deflower his daughter on the eve of matrimony in Celebes. Among the Todas this sacred preliminary is performed before the age of puberty, as to delay till later is to incur the deepest disgrace. In the Philippine Islands there flourish professional deflowerers of maidens, but in many instances the maidenhead is ruptured by bel-dames engaged for the purpose. In various regions the priest is chosen for this calling, for the bride's proximity to a sacred minister not only renders sexual intercourse harmless, but also serves to secure fertility.

T. F. PALMER.

They talk (but blasphemously enough) that the Holy Ghost is president of their general councils, when the truth is, the odd man is the Holy Ghost.

John Selden "Table Talk."

A State-wide Vote Against Prayer.

IN New South Wales (Australia) we have just had a sort of popular test as to the extent the belief prevails that benefits may be secured by prayer.

The Auburn Council—that is, the local governing body of that suburb of Sydney—decided to circularize all the other Councils in the State, with a view to the lot of them joining in "a day of prayer and invocation to Almighty God" for an improvement in the present depressed state of affairs.

In due course, it was reported that the replies disclosed the fact that "six councils agreed to co-operate, six decided to take no action, eleven flatly refused to co-operate, and forty-four others merely 'received' the letter"—the official way of intimating that the Auburn request had been consigned to the waste-paper basket.

Thus, the suggestion of a resort to prayer was negatived by sixty-one Councils to six.

But the result was even more gratifying than these figures in themselves would indicate. Within a radius of Auburn are many more Councils that had ample time to furnish a reply before the foregoing analysis was made. Clear, therefore, is the inference that by these the request was not deemed worthy of even formal consideration.

Then there were, too, the remarks—derisive, scornful, contemptuous—by some of the members of the rejecting Councils, reported from time to time in the Sydney daily papers.

Reference was made to these at a meeting of the Auburn Council, when it came to the show-down with which I am now dealing. The effect was greatly to perturb the Mayor of Auburn—Lamb by name, and the originator of the whole primitive, superstitious idiocy. Finally, he declared: "Councillors who have said that the motion we passed is sacrilege, hypocrisy, and blasphemy, have not the moral stimulus of a peanut, or the mentality of a sparrow." Mild terms these—"sacrilege," "hypocrisy," "blasphemy"—compared with many of the comments evoked from some of the members of the Councils before whom the matter came!

But the Mayor, in not going to the extent he might have done in repeating them, was evidently restraining himself for his effort regarding peanuts and sparrows—a most Christian outburst, in which, so far from describing those opposed to him, he would appear to have merely succeeded in describing himself.

Recently, prayer in this part of the world got a further knock-out blow from an entirely different and wholly unexpected quarter—in this instance, *The Church Standard* (Sydney). "For the Church in Australasia," and "Printed for Church Publishing Co., Ltd.," are two of the intimations that the publication bears. Consequently the presumption is that it is an official organ of an Anglican character.

In the issue I have before me are (1) a long letter by the Bishop of Wangaratta (Victoria, Australia), headed "Some Prayer Problems," and (2) a very exhaustive reply thereto by the editor.

The Bishop is sorely hurt at an article that appeared in a previous issue of the paper. The limits of your space permit of only a brief review of the controversy in which the two are fiercely engaged. "You say," writes the Bishop, "that we may pray for the healing of the sick, but it is useless to pray for rain," adding:—

Experience, so far as it goes, is our only test. There is very considerable witness to the efficacy of prayers for rain. Many years ago, a letter in *The Melbourne Argus* gave a list of the public days of prayer appointed in Victorian history, and showed that in every case rain came within a week—generally within a day or two.

To this the editor replies:—

Prayer for a change of weather has no scientific foundation whatever; and the "evidence" produced by my critic has no real evidential value, for just as many, if not more, cases could be cited when there was no apparent answer. As to the mention of the letter in *The*

Argus, which gave a list of days of prayer for rain and their close proximity to the arrival of the rain, surely the Bishop is aware that rain is never prayed for until the dry period is over the average, and therefore the rain would naturally not be long delayed—it had to come eventually.

Very devastating this—is it not?—regarding the religious traditions of the past, coming as it does, frankly and fearlessly, from the editor of a church-controlled paper!

Logic, however, entirely deserts the editor when he goes on to say: "Prayer for the healing of disease is quite scientific, even if we leave out the idea of God, for it can be regarded as auto-suggestion reinforcing the natural tendency to health."

Let us avoid the confusion that would ensue by following him in all the complexities of this contention.

Reduced to simple terms, the admission here is merely the long-established truth that more-or-less imaginary sufferers may, by a special effort of the mind, secure relief from the complaint with which they believe themselves to be burdened. This they may do, concedes the editor; regardless of "the idea of God." What, then, has prayer—in the sense of evoking a response from some supernatural power—to do with the cure that has been effected?

Rain and health are in precisely the same relation to prayer.

Whoever claimed, for example, that prayer repaired a broken leg? Yet this should be as easy—if the contention respecting miraculous intervention held good—as the giving of relief to a troubled mind, a defective heart, or—a disordered liver. Recognition of the truth here expressed illustrates all the more clearly that the editor of *The Church Standard* has only reached the half-way stage in the process of enlightenment in claiming for illness what he denies with regard to rain.

Still, it is none the less refreshing to find that we have in him a doubting—contentious and disintegrating—force, right in the heart of the church.

Significant, indeed, is this of the advance of rationalism.

All the more hopeful is the outlook when, at the same time, we have virtually an entire State, through its local governing councils, utterly repudiating the idea of a resort to prayer as a means to practical ends.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I must thank Mr. Verney for his letter, and I agree with him that the origins of Christianity should be looked for quite apart from its supernatural pretensions. It is not an easy task, but I do feel we are making headway.

As for the "originality" of the teachings of Jesus, I must confess I am not particularly impressed with this well-known argument. Most of its defenders throw overboard the speeches in John, and of those in the Synoptic Gospels, they carefully choose the "good" teachings. I have never yet come across anyone giving us the famous passage in which Jesus tells us we can't be his disciples unless we *hate* our parents, as a typical example of his "originality." May not the "originality" be due to editors or an editor rather than to a real Jesus?

H. CUTNER.

Two, at any rate, of Christ's recorded precepts have been observed with zeal by almost every Christian community. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given," and "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness."—*Mr. Gerald Gould.*

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.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. H. Preece (South London Branch N.S.S.)—"Social Cement."

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

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, December 11, Mr. Paul Goldman—"What is Freethought?"

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Waddell, B.A. v. Mr. L. Ebury—"That the World cannot get on without God."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform 1, Messrs. Collins and Bryant. Platform 2, B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Various speakers. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. George Whitehead—"Up to Date Views of Evolution."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. R. Hudson, M.P.S., F.B.O.A., F.S.M.C.—"Christianity and Morality."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, Annual Branch Meeting. Important Agenda, Election of Officers. All members should attend.

CHEAPSIDE (Womens' Guild): Tuesday, December 12, Mr. J. Clayton—"Woman and Religion."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley): Mr. A. D. McLaren (London)—2.45, "Do We Need Religion?". 7.0, "The Drift of Things as I can see it." Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley) Chairman.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mrs. M. Whitefield—"Eugenics." Mrs. M. Brown (Hon. Sec., Glasgow Women's Welfare and Advisory Clinic)—"Birth Control." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

HERTON (Assembly Rooms): 7.30, Monday, December 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Hall): 7.0, Thursday, December 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. Dora Russell—"Women are Reactionary."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, E. Egerton Stafford (Bootle)—"The Tragedy of Man."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street): 7.30, A Lecture.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 4, Drake Circus): 7.0, "The Meaning and Morals of Materialism." By a Freethinker.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Chapter Row): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Tragedy of Man."

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Hillgate, Stockport): 7.0, Mr. Jack Clayton—"This World and the Next."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.15, Mr. F. Bradford.

War, Civilization and the Churches

By CHAPMAN COHEN

Paper 2s. Cloth 3s.

Postage—Paper 2d., Cloth 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

BRADLAUGH AND TO-DAY

A Verbatim Report
of the speeches delivered at the Cen-
tenary Demonstration and Dinner on
Sept. 23rd and 26th

By Professor Laski, Chapman Cohen,
J. P. Gilmour, G. Bernard Shaw,
Lord Snell, Lord Horder, A. B. Moss,
Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., Dr. C. V.
Drysdale, Professor Gilbert Murray,
Judge Cluer, F. Verinder and
C. Bradlaugh Bonner.

128 pages

In paper 6d. by post 8d. Cloth 1s.6d. By
post 1s. 9d.

RATIONALIST EVALUATIONS AND THE TRUE DIRECTION OF CIVILIZATION

By AUSTEN VERNEY.

This work defines a Rationalist attitude to practical
Life, in terms of a cultural approach to its problems at one
with light, freedom, and sure modes of material advance.

"Mr. Verney has brought a great deal of material together,
and not infrequently he writes eloquently and pointedly. . . .
His best chapters seem to be those which deal with the
State Contra Mundum and the Economic Conundrum, and
they contain much that he wrote with evident enjoyment . . .
The emphasis of the book upon 'Reason' is thoroughly
healthy, and the author maintains his faith in knowledge
against the Cult of Unreason in all its forms."—*The Common
Room.*

Heath Granton Ltd., 6 Fleet Lane, London, E.C.4. 7s. 6d
net. Postage 6d.

AN M.A. gives lessons in English, Latin, French, German,
Shorthand, etc. Terms moderate. Reply D2, c/o.
Freethinker, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no
UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth
Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to :

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY.

The Secular Society, Ltd.

CHAIRMAN—CHAPMAN COHEN.

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to
the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the
Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human
conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not
upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this
world is the proper end of all thought and action. To pro-
mote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Edu-
cation. To promote the complete secularization of the State,
etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to
such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any
sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any
person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of
the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a
subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the
Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its
business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly
provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as
such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either
by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of
Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year,
but are eligible for re-election.

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

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of
bequest for insertion in the wills of testators :—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited,
the sum of £..... free from Legacy Duty, and I direct
that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of
the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a
good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary
should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills some-
times get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full
particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary,
R. H. ROSETTI, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS

BY

J. M. WHEELER.

Clothette 1s.

Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

READY DECEMBER 12th

Bradlaugh and Ingersoll

A critical study of two Great Reformers

By
CHAPMAN COHEN

Issued by the Secular Society Limited

208 PAGES

CLOTH

12 PLATES

2s. 6d.

By Post

2s. 9d.

For Christmas and New Years Gifts

To Christians and Freethinkers

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Opinions :—

Random Reflections and Wayside Sayings. With portrait of the Author. *Calf 5s. Cloth Gilt 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.*

Selected Heresies :—

AN ANTHOLOGY. *Cloth Gilt 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.*

Gramophone Record :—

Gold Label Edison Bell :—"The Meaning and Value of Freethought." *Price 2s. By post 2s. 9d. Foreign and Colonial orders 1s. extra.*

SURPRISE PARCELS! 2/6 5/- 7/6 10/-

*A*RE YOU WILLING TO TAKE A RISK by sending an order for a **Surprise Parcel** of books? If so, post 2/6, 5/-, 7/6, or 10/-, with the Voucher below, to Messrs. Watts & Co., Surprise Parcel Department, 5 and 6 Johnson's Court, London, E.C.4, when they will forward you a selection of books (some in new condition, some second-hand). These will be chosen from their Remainder Lists, and also from the many ex-Library books sent to Messrs. Watts for sale. Every endeavour will be made to make your Surprise Parcel a REAL BARGAIN, but you must risk receiving a book or books you already have on your shelves. You can always give away a duplicate copy, and this is the time of year for GIFTS.

Only a limited number of parcels are offered. Money will be returned if stock is exhausted.

SURPRISE PARCEL VOUCHER

(THIS VOUCHER MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER)

To be posted to C. A. WATTS & CO. LTD., Surprise Parcel Dept., 5 and 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4

Please post me one of your SURPRISE PARCELS, for which I enclose
NAME
ADDRESS
DATE.....