

# THE FREETHINKER

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

Views and Opinions.

Secularism in Ireland.

The formation of a Secular Society in Ireland has quite naturally upset the leaders of Catholic opinion there, and in Ireland the Roman Catholic Church has a very powerful voice in the control of public news. It has managed to prevent the free circulation of newspapers and publications that in this country circulate quite freely, and it exercises a powerful influence on education. While this is hard on liberal opinion in Ireland, it is not without its benefits, since it serves to prove to those who observe what the Roman Church is doing there, what it would do elsewhere if it had full power. Just now the leaders of the Church are particularly riled because the newly-formed Secular Society openly aims at freedom of opinion and promises intense opposition to clerical influence. Last week we cited from one Catholic paper a particular filthy and lying description of the aims of the Secular Society, and the backwardness of any class of people who are under the influence of the Roman Church is shown by the citations given. Another Irish Roman Catholic paper to hand, the "Standard," in its issue for January 26, is less open in its intellectual rascality, but it has all the essential marks of the Roman Catholic propagandist.

It calls upon its readers to "make no mistake," the Secular Society is making a direct attack on the Church and its teachings. To state this, the paper assumes, is necessarily to condemn it. The Society is claiming "a freedom of action on which the Church alone is fit to dictate." The proof of this is that

As there is but one God, one moral law, and one Church formed to uphold that law, so that Church claims, and claims justly, to be the sole guide and teacher of right conduct, the sole guardian of supernatural life. Man is composed of a spiritual and a material life, and the supernatural life in man

claims to dictate as to his natural life. Clearly, then, the guardian of supernatural life is alone free to pronounce as to what is right in ethics.

Now that is quite plain. The Church alone is able to say what is right in ethics, and the Church is in the right when it denies the right of others openly to proclaim teachings that are in conflict with those of the Church. Compare this plain statement of Catholic claims, where the Church feels strong enough to state them, with the fundamental dishonesty of prominent Catholic apologists in this country. Quite evidently, the concern of the Church with ethics does not interest itself in the duty of truth-speaking and fair play for opinions other than its own.

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Real Christianity.

Now I do not say that the Roman Catholic *Standard* is wrong when it takes up this attitude. On the contrary, I say it is quite right—from a Roman Catholic point of view. I do not say it is unchristian; I say it is truly, thoroughly and completely Christian. If I were a Christian I should endorse nearly all that the *Standard* says. I say "nearly all" because while I can conceive myself objecting to certain doctrines I cannot imagine myself disowning a principle which lies at the very foundation of Christian belief. There is no reasonable chance of successfully disputing the statement that the supernatural is the dominant fact in life, and also the central fact of Christianity. There is no other ground than this for whatever ethical teaching the New Testament contains. It is the fear of God, the hope of reward in heaven, the fear of punishment in hell, that is dwelt upon. The conception of ethics as a natural fact is either omitted or distinctly repudiated from the time of the New Testament, down to the last salaried professor in one of our universities harping upon a world of "ethical values" which stands above and beyond the region of science.

The talk of Jesus Christ as an ethical teacher or social reformer, or of his first followers as a body of men who were dreaming of the inauguration of a better social life, is just so much sentimental rubbish. It was invented, not so long ago, mainly by Christians who did not care to break openly with tradition, and it was taken up later by those who wished to disguise the extent of their heretical convictions by paying lip-homage to an ethical Jesus that was as much pure myth as the virgin-born character. The policy of proclaiming a heresy as the original orthodoxy is one of the oldest games in the history of Christianity. Neither is it unusual, in the course of this process of development, to find the one who tries to make religion reasonable defending a completely illogical position, while the more logical attitude



is taken up by the one who has an unshaken belief in the more unreasonable doctrines.

But, unpleasant as it is to find the Roman Catholics of Ireland acting as would the Roman Catholics of England if they had the same opportunities, there is some compensation in realising that these mediæval and primitive survivals help to keep alive a sense of what true Christianity really is. They serve the same purpose as does a museum of antiquities, or the collection of extinct animals in the South Kensington museum. They are as interesting as would be a discovery of some hidden valley where all forms of primitive animals were found alive. The biologist has for long said to us, when he pointed to some ape-like form, "There is man before he developed an erect stature, and before he acquired those physical and mental qualities which definitely placed him in a new division of the animal world." So it is of enormous importance to us who are now living to be able to have, side by side, the latest representatives of scientific thought and some of the surviving exponents of the ideas of the Stone Age. Among the many trials and troubles to which the roaming around of this type subjects us, let us count our blessings to this extent, at least. The past is being lived under our very eyes.

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#### Christianity at Work.

This is by way of a departure from the main track. The Catholic *Standard* declares the Roman Church to be the one authority on earth, established by God, that can categorically and authoritatively decide all questions of ethical teaching. It, moreover, claims the right, wherever it is able successfully to claim it, to prevent any teaching which runs contrary to this God-inspired authority. I am quite sure there are multitudes of Christians in this country who will laugh at such a preposterous claim. I am quite sure that neither Hilaire Belloc nor G. K. Chesterton, whatever they may believe as good Catholics—in this matter they must be as absurd as other Catholics—I am quite sure they would not *publicly* make any such claims. But I would very, very gently point out to these other Christians who have trodden part of the long road that leads from the Stone Age to the higher peaks of 1934, that what the Roman Church is, whenever it has the opportunity to do what it pleases, is precisely what the other Christian churches have done to the exact extent of their opportunities. Every Christian church has claimed that it has in the Bible the word of God, and that it is the sole authority on ethics, and none have been more fervent than the fine old Protestant preachers, down to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in the assertion that what they called the "filthy rags of righteousness" were of no avail to save man's soul, and that it was the salvation of one's soul which should be our chief aim in life. They also urged that the progress of Christianity ought not to be threatened or impeded by heresies and avowed disbelief. They did all this so far as they could, but, fortunately, the very divisions among Protestants prevented that unity in persecution, that intense moral earnestness in doing wrong, that has been such a marked character of the Roman Church. To follow the simile already used, if the Roman Catholic represents the lower forms of intellectual life, the Protestants and other "liberal" religionists may be taken as so many intermediate forms leading up to a higher type. I would preserve specimens of them all—in a museum.

Even now the Protestants of this country have not the courage or the decency to wipe out such survivals as

the Blasphemy laws. They still use the power of the State to enforce a certain amount of Sunday observance; they still proclaim that they must have religious instruction in all State schools, and they still demand that the ratepayers in general shall by law be compelled to contribute, through the rates, to the upkeep of church and chapel. They all use the arm of the State in their own interests, and they all do what is possible in the shape of boycott and bribery to hamper free criticism.

There are two special things that have annoyed the Roman Catholics and the Roman Catholic *Standard*. These are that the Secular Society has been giving away copies of the "Freethinker," and they pay the "Freethinker" the compliment of their most virulent hatred. The "Freethinker" is plain spoken; it cannot be bribed; it is useless to threaten it, and when necessary it takes off the gloves. The circulation of a journal of this kind may well rouse the ire of a Roman Catholic newspaper. The second ground of offence is that the Secular Society announced that a number of doctors were among its members. Worse still, one of these doctors was to deliver a lecture on "The Influence of the Church against the Progress of Medical Science." Evidently forgetting, or not caring to remember, or trusting that its readers are so ill-informed as to be ignorant of the orce common saying that "out of three doctors two are Atheists," the *Standard* professes surprise that any doctor should lecture on such a subject. It also treats its readers to a very fanciful account of how much medical science owes to the Church.

The subject is too large to be dealt with now, so I will reserve my correction of history, as it is served out to Roman Catholics until next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Heresy in Literature.

### II.

But what of the other branches of literature? What of poetry? It would, we may as well admit at the start, be a very surprising thing if all the poets throughout the ages had been Atheists. After all, the god-idea, anthropomorphic though it mainly is, is capable of being transformed into what may outwardly appear a very high and noble ideal, when, in the fiery crucible of a poet's brain, it is turned and changed from the dusty ritual of a crowd of professional priests. And many poets in the past have accordingly been Theists, though often of a type which does not satisfy the orthodox people of their time. Many, of course, as Lafcadio Hearn once admitted in a letter, use such terms as "the Hand of God" more in a metaphorical sense than literally, and we have always to remember that the poet has become so accustomed, as a rule, to thinking in metaphor, that a reader with a more literal mind must beware of taking all poems strictly at their face value.

The age of Shelley and Byron, however, was the period which first saw the liberation of poetry from the bonds of dead superstition. And it is, we would add, no accident that it was during the years immediately succeeding that there appeared the most glorious achievements in the sphere of poetry that the whole lovely sequence of English literature can offer.

*Queen Mab* is the work of Shelley where his Atheistic philosophy was most clearly expressed in verse, but we must not forget that he wrote, when at Oxford, a pamphlet on *The Necessity for Atheism*, nor that he was practically hounded out of the university in consequence.



Byron, also, was a lifelong enemy of pretence and hypocrisy, and, while there are some gibes in such works as *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* which grate rather harshly on a modern ear, yet we cannot but admire his stand against the pretenders of his day.

The principal follower of Shelley, on whom the mantle of that matchless singer descended, was undoubtedly James Thomson, who wrote under the *nom-de-plume*, "B.V." His greatest work is *The City of Dreadful Night*, which was first published in Charles Bradlaugh's paper, *The National Reformer*, in 1874. It was highly praised by many of the greatest critics of its day, including John Addington Symonds, George Eliot, W. M. Rossetti and George Saintsbury, but, because of its atmosphere of gloom, and because of the fact that it definitely rejects all pretence at religion, it has never been appreciated at its true merit.

What has been said in preceding pages on the question of the ostracism which has invariably succeeded any defiance of religious orthodoxy should make it clear why it was totally impossible that the poem should succeed. How should a poem be permitted to become popular when it contains lines like the following?

Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?  
I think myself; yet I would rather be  
My miserable self than He, than He  
Who formed such creatures to His own disgrace.

The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou  
From whom it had its being, God and Lord!  
Creator of all woe and sin! Abhorred  
Malignant and implacable! I vow.

That not for all Thy power, furl'd and unfurl'd,  
For all the temples to Thy glory built,  
Would I assume the ignominious guilt  
Of having made such men in such a world.

As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign,  
At once so wicked, foolish and insane  
As to produce men when He might refrain!

Whatever we may think of Thomson's philosophy of life, whether or not we agree with his attitude towards the nameless cruelties of the world (and it would seem from modern literature that more and more are coming round to something like his view) there can certainly be no questioning his courage. To publish such a poem at a time when the pious nothings of Tennyson were at their zenith was certainly a brave enterprise. And, further on in the poem, there comes a section which must surely express the feelings of many who are disgruntled, who have ceased to believe in the idea of God as a loving father, but who are inarticulate and helpless.

The world rolls round for ever like a mill;  
It grinds out life and death and good and ill;  
It has no purpose, mind or soul or will.

While air of Space and Time's full river flow  
The mill must ever blindly whirl unresting so;  
It may be wearing out, but who can know?

Man might know one thing were his sight less dim;  
That it whirls not to suit his petty whim,  
That it is quite indifferent to him.

So much, we might say shortly, for the argument that genius must acknowledge God. If it seems to the reader that we have dallied too long with one who is merely a minor genius, we would ask: is he merely a minor genius? No one can doubt that if *The City of Dreadful Night* had not been so pessimistic and (above all) had it not been so anti-religious, it would have been regarded as a great work—as great as, say, *In Memoriam*. The short extracts which are all we can give here should suffice to show that for sheer grandeur of utterance and

masterly construction it is indeed unsurpassed in all the literature of its age.

But Thomson was not the only one of the later Victorian poets who was definitely antagonistic to religion. Sir Hall Caine, in his interesting book *My Story*, tells many tales of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the great painter, and the greatest sonneteer, most critics would say, since Shakespeare. He was, says Caine, the complete agnostic. He did not know, nor did he much care, if there was a life beyond the grave, and when, in his last days, a clergyman came to visit him, "Rossetti saw him quite submissively. He was a fairly capable man, I remember, and when he talked in the customary way of such good souls, Rossetti listened without resistance, having no theological subtleties to baffle him with; but, after a while, the deep, slow, weary eyes of the poet, looking steadfastly at him, seemed to silence the clergyman, and he got up and went away."

And Swinburne, the greatest pure singer in all the nineteenth century. What of his religious views? One quotation should suffice. It comes from his great *Hymn to Prosperine*.

From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever gods may be.  
That no life lives for ever,  
That dead men rise up never;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

More recent poets have echoed that note. For instance, D. H. Lawrence, the fieriest genius of modern times, he of whom Mr. Humbert Wolfe has said "he has heat so definite that one might expect the very pages of his books to be faintly charred at the edges." Whatever god Lawrence believed in (and it is at least doubtful if he believed in any god at all) it was certainly not the pale and dingy deity of the modern church. He was, as Mr. Richard Aldington has well said, the typical English heretic, and he suffered persecution, the usual fate of heretics in England. But there can be no doubt that his exposure of hypocrisies and shams, particularly in sexual matters, was largely responsible for his being driven from his native land into exile abroad.

Sir William Watson, another much under-appreciated poet, has always been free from all tincture of religion. And who can say that this is not the reason for his not being Poet Laureate, as it was at one time suggested that he should be?

And one of the finest—perhaps *the* finest—of the younger generation of poets who died in the Great War, James Elroy Flecker, was as much a freethinker as man well could be.

"Do I remember tales of Galilee," he sang,  
I who have slain my faith and freed my will?  
Let me forget dead faith, dead mystery,  
Dead thoughts of things I cannot comprehend.  
Enough the light mysterious in the tree,  
Enough the faithful friendship of my friend."

And again,

I am no coward who should seek in fear  
A folklore solace or sweet Indian tales;  
I know dead men are deaf, and cannot hear  
The singing of a thousand nightingales.

Of the poets of to-day, however, it is not easy to speak. On the whole, they are very shy of theology, they rarely make use of the word "God," but if one might generalise from a few examples one would say that Henley's "I thank whatever gods may be" is the



attitude of most of them. Few are believers in the orthodox religion of our day, many probably have no religion at all, but it is a sign of the growing indifference of modern times to things religious that the religious poem, save in church papers, is becoming more and more rare.

Mr. T. S. Eliot, for example, who, in *The Criterion*, has set up a standard of criticism and of philosophic thought which would seem to accept some sort of religion (although it is at times a fairly nebulous one) in his creative work as poet has broken right away from this. Here, for example, are some typical verses from a poem called *The Hippopotamus* :

I saw the 'potamus take wing  
Ascending from the damp savannas,  
And quiring angels round him sing  
The praise of God in loud hosannas.

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean  
And him shall heavenly arms enfold,  
Among the saints he shall be seen  
Performing on a harp of gold.

He shall be washed as white as snow,  
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,  
While the True Church remains below  
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

It seems tolerably certain that Mr. Eliot's respectable public cannot really appreciate the satirical thought underlying such lines as these, nor would they agree with the dictum of Mr. Ernest Hemingway, one of the same school of poetry, who says :

The Lord is my Shepherd,  
I shall not want  
Him for long.

It is, however, in the youngest generation of all, the poets who are now between twenty and thirty years of age, that we find this disgust with the churches and all their works expressed most strongly. Mr. W. H. Auden is one of the leaders of this revolt against tradition, and here are two verses from a poem of his, entitled, simply, *Song* :

I'll attend when the parson is preaching  
I'll tell all my sins to the priest  
I'll do exactly as they ask  
I'll go to heaven at least  
After this world has had its day.

You may sit down under the pulpit  
You may go down on your knees  
But you won't believe them any more  
And they won't give you ease  
They're of this world that has had its day.

Barring the lack of punctuation, this is an authentic note, expressed in a modern idiom, which was first sounded by Mr. A. E. Houseman, in his *A Shropshire Lad*, in 1896.

Mr. Houseman had no comfortable platitudes to mumble, no talk of a heaven on high.

"Say lad," he said, "have you things to do?  
Quick, then, while your day's at prime.  
Quick, and if 'tis work for two,  
Here am I, man; now's your time.

Send me now, and I shall go;  
Call me, I shall hear you call;  
Use me, ere they lay me low  
Where a man's no use at all.

Ere the wholesome flesh decay,  
And the willing nerve be numb,  
And the lips lack breath to say,  
"No, my lad, I cannot come."

But we have lingered over-long with the poets. It will be seen, from the short quotations which are all

that we have space to give, that far from poetry being, as our religious friends claim, a sense of the immanence of God working through mankind, many of our greatest poets have been, consciously or unconsciously, Atheists or Agnostics.

JOHN ROWLAND.

(To be concluded.)

## What shall we Believe?

In the November issue of the "Modern Churchman," an article by Kenneth Henderson, M.A., discussed the "Australian Heresy Trial." Dr. Angus, a distinguished professor at the University of Sydney, is being attacked for Unitarian and other heretical opinions. The "Modern Churchman" gives some very interesting quotations from Dr. Angus's defence before the New South Wales General Assembly.

The article referred to recalls that some years ago the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia appointed a Committee to consider the re-statement of the Church's faith; and in Great Britain a Commission has been engaged on the same very difficult task for the Church of England.

Having no doubt at all as to the "very difficult" nature of the task of making a new and up-to-date "re-statement of the Church's faith" in this country, I naturally wished to know more about this "Commission."

My absence from England for the past few years probably accounted for my ignorance of this important work. All the time I was in the U.S.A. I had studied the American religious press, where one might have expected that so vital a movement in the English Church should have been noted, but no notice appeared.

Apologising for my lack of information, I wrote to the Rev. Dr. Major, the very able editor of the "Modern Churchman," and asked him to enlighten me as to the constitution and work of this Commission, and as to the progress made, if any.

Dr. Major wrote me :

"I cannot give you the information you desire, but an application to Canon Partridge, Church House, Westminster, should, I hope, secure for you the information."

Accordingly I got in touch with Canon Partridge, who is secretary of the Church Assembly Finance Board. His reply was as follows :—

"It would be well for you to write direct to the Archbishop of York to make enquiry with regard to the Commission which is endeavouring at the present time to find agreement of expression with regard to fundamental Christian doctrines."

The Archbishop of York was kind enough to write me in reply to my letter to him (I quote his letter in full):—

"Dear Sir, — The Doctrinal Commission was appointed in 1921, and hopes now to report in 1937. I am afraid I cannot tell you anything about its proceedings as these are confidential until the publication of the Report. Yours very truly,  
WILLIAM EBOR."

Of course, I make no complaint at all as to the refusal to give me information withheld from the general public. It seems, however, to an outsider, a most extraordinary fact that an inquiry into the Christian doctrines should not be open to the Christian world.

Is it possible that a Commission, however influential, however representative, could arrive at a new statement of what is orthodoxy to-day, without anybody except the



Commissioners themselves having any more information than is conveyed in the Archbishop's courteous but scarcely adequate statement?

It is unlikely that our Conservative church leaders will spring upon an astonished England a "doctrinal" report supplanting Jahweh by Hitlerite (or Mosleyite) deity. But something not less revolutionary might conceivably occur if no public opinion is consulted.

Much more probable is it that no agreement of any kind will be reached. If the Doctrinal Commission consists of average Christians there will be as many Minority Reports as there are parties represented.

The Archbishop seems a trifle pessimistic. Apparently much water will flow under the Episcopal bridge before a Report of any kind is threatened. Perhaps he hopes it will never arrive. After all, much may happen in three years.

It is all very queer. A church divinely inspired, with an Impregnable Rock, called the Holy Bible, to direct it, with daily prayers proving that its clergy and members are in constant communication with the Divine Dictator of Doctrine . . . . requires at least sixteen years to know what it believes.

"Curiouser and curiouser," as Alice would say, the Church not only possesses an infallible book, it has the inestimable advantage of a clearly (or fairly clearly) worded "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion."

Every professional teacher in the Church pulpit to-day has already sworn that *these* embody his opinions.

The clergy (and laity, too) have long been accustomed to choose what parts of Holy Scripture they will believe. They can easily say about any given passage of Scripture that the latest authority suggests a new and different reading; that interpreters disagree, and so on.

The "Preface" to the Thirty-nine Articles shuts out any similar excuse. It says that "all further search is

to be laid aside and these disputes" (as to doctrine) closed. "And no man hereafter shall either print or preach to draw the Article aside in any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof, and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense."

The conclusion of the "Preface" is an unmistakable threat of punishment ("and We will see that there shall be due Execution upon them") for those religious teachers who "affix any new sense to any any Article" (or even discuss the subject).

Well, 1937 is a long way off, and the Archbishop is not going to meet trouble three years before he need.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Whoso would be a man must be a Nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.—Emerson.

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.—Emerson.

## Present-day Priestcraft.

"We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning-star."

Emerson.

"The Creed of Christendom is gradually melting away, like a northern iceberg in southern seas."

G. W. Foote.

THE clergy are now telling their credulous congregations that the brotherhood of mankind is one of the primary elements of Christian doctrine. They ignore all their old patriotic platitudes concerning a "god of battles," and bid men and women turn their eyes towards an alleged "prince of peace." The Union Jack is now bundled behind the vestry-door, instead of being proudly included among the sacred symbols of the national religion. Jesus Christ, the clergy say, proclaimed to us "blessed are the peacemakers." The clergy themselves have, however, never earned for themselves this benediction, although the Romish Pontiff sought to impose what he termed, grandiloquently, "the truce of God," several times during the late war, unmindful of the grim fact that little could be gained by postponing a death-fight between embattled millions for a few short hours at Christmas and Easter.

Such minor palliations are of small moment compared with the blunt fact that the clergy never set themselves in opposition to militarism itself, but acted as army-chaplains at officers' pay.

Turn to the history of our own country, and recall the record of the so-called Church of England since the Reformation. Britain has waged well over a hundred wars, great and small, and her naval and military activities have extended almost over the earth and the five oceans of the world. In every instance this lick-spittle, sycophantic Church of England has been the obedient, humble, maid-of-all-work of the Government of the day, blessed the standards of murder and sung "Te Deums" for bloody victory. The Anglican prayer-book, issued with the sanction of both Houses of Parliament, assumes always that justice is on our side, and reminds innocent congregations that "there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God," which is an ironical comment on the British Army.

The late war was a perfect indictment of the pacific value of the teachings of Christianity. Whole nations, professedly Christian, were engaged for years in wholesale slaughter. Europe was a streaming slaughter-house, in which perished the flower of the manhood of one entire generation of the Christian world. The religion of Christ had proved itself the most powerless and hypocritical thing on earth. The millions who mouthed the "Lord's Prayer" and the "Beatitudes" were entirely unaffected by their repetition. When passion or self-interest was aroused, every commandment and every precept was forgotten. Nor is this all, for a few persons were actually treated as criminals for attempting to take this Christian religion seriously, as with the Quakers, the Conscientious Objectors in England, and a few Communists and Socialists in Europe and America.

So far as the ecclesiastics of the great Christian are concerned the profession of the ethics of Jesus Christ is the merest humbug and mockery. Whether they be Roman Catholic cardinals, Church of England bishops, Free Church divines, or priests of the Greek Church, the unpleasant gulf between precept and practice remains, "gross as a mountain, open palpable." As for the brotherhood of man, no one remembering the awful treatment of Jews and Free-thinkers throughout Europe for so many centuries can but see "the lie at the lips of the priests."



Why are the clergy of all denominations so very anxious to persuade everyone that present-day Priestcraft is a kind, benevolent, old grandmother, and not the greedy wolf that she is? Without elaborating the matter unduly, this change of front is disingenuous and by no means clever. Is it possible that the growth of the Socialist Movement has frightened them a little, and they are preparing for the day when the Red flag flies at Westminster. Someone ought to remind this Black Army of clergymen that it is quite within the bounds of possibility that medieval superstitions may be found incompatible with democratic efficiency, and that the people may prefer to work out their own social salvation without the help of priests and the fables of thousands of years ago.

The Christian Bible is the root-cause of so much trouble. Old Doctor Martin Luther said that it was like a nose of wax, and could be twisted into any shape. In spite of a few paragraphs in the "Gospels," this Bible itself positively reeks with bigotry and persecution. The Old Testament Hebrews were expressly ordered to kill heretics. The earliest apostles of the Christian Religion were also imbued with the spirit of persecution. In these Scriptures Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and John, "the beloved disciple," said, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him god-speed." Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the infant Christian Church the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and the subsequent history of Christianity after its accession to power justifies the historian in regarding bigotry and persecution as of the very essence of that religion. While Christianity survives the recrudescence of religious persecution is not only possible but highly probable. To say that an Oriental Superstition which threatened eternal hell-fire for unbelief is opposed to persecution on earth is but to gloss plain facts. The revival of Jew-baiting on the Continent is a case in point. It is a menace of a dying creed to those who are of a different faith. The clergy hate Democrats as much as they dislike Jews, for they recognize only too well that the genius of Liberty is enkindled at the altar of Humanity, which was standing before any other was built, and will endure when every other has crumbled into dust.

When the authority of the Christian priests was supreme, these pious humanitarians burned their opponents alive at the stake, and, in gentler mood, used the thumb-screws and the rack to enforce "a gospel of love." But there was another bar besides that of obsequious and subservient Law Courts, namely Public Opinion, with the people for jury and the verdict of the jury not to be mistaken. In time, the conscience of the race rebelled at such exhibitions of Christian charity. In the light of history, the present-day hypocritical pretensions of the clergy are nauseating. They have an aroma like that of a crowded cabin of a small Channel steamer on a rough day.

MIMNERMUS.

#### LISPING IN NUMBERS.

The gold fish thwimmeth in the bowl  
The robins thit upon the tree  
What maketh them thit so eathily?  
Who sticketh the fur upon their breasths?  
God! God! He done it!

Jack London.

## Acid Drops.

The Archbishop of York has recently been talking about unemployment. In the course of his address he gave the world the information that Christianity does not offer itself as an alternative to any political or economic theory." We congratulate the Archbishop on his discovery, a tolerably obvious one, since, as a matter of fact, Christianity has always allied itself with anything—theory or practice—on the single condition that the thing supported in turn supports Christianity. But the Archbishop is, from a strictly orthodox point of view, too modest. Surely the advice to turn one cheek when the other is smitten, to take no thought for the morrow, to lay not up treasures on earth, to believe that God will feed and clothe men as he clothes the lily of the field and feeds the birds of the air, to render obedience to the powers that be, for the powers that be are ordained of God, surely this teaching does contain an alternative political and economic theory to that taught in any school of sociology or economics in the world. But the Archbishop's statement is safe, it is an assurance to those who wish to keep things as they are that Christianity is not really calculated to do them any harm. And for the other class, there is the historic teaching of the Christian Church to find in "spiritual consolation," and an assurance of another world a compensation for the comforts they are denied in this one.

For a third class, those who feel that Christianity, if it is to be worth anything, ought to have some kind of policy to put before people, there is, of course, "a Christian solution." Well what is this solution? We are only told that it must "express the Christian principles of freedom and fellowship which will of necessity secure a greater redistribution of power and of wealth." This is vague enough to have been spoken by the Prime Minister. We have not the slightest idea what it means, for few people object to a better distribution of wealth and power, provided their own wealth and their own power are not materially lessened. And it is like the archiepiscopal impertinence to talk of the *Christian* principles of freedom and fellowship. Freedom the Christian religion never encouraged, and fellowship, in terms of Christian belief and practice, never meant much more than a fellowship of believers. Anything more, it meant was due to the force of the better elements of human nature, which proved too strong for even the Church to curb absolutely.

The *Methodist Recorder* seems to dislike Prof. Leuba's new book *God or Man?* It objects to Leuba's understanding the doctrine of total depravity as meaning "that there is nothing good in human nature—a position that every theologian in every century would repudiate." That humane, civilized man should repudiate Christianity's vile aspersions on human nature is reasonable enough but history is not obliterated because some of us have outgrown some historical vilenesses.

Every Episcopal clergyman, be he Bishop Barnes, Dean Inge or the most thoughtless curate has subscribed to the following definition as part of the creed he is paid to preach:—

Man . . . is of his own nature inclined to evil so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated. (Article ix. of the *Articles of Religion*.)

The *Recorder* reviewer may individually feel the same disgust as the *Freethinker*, at these degraded views of human nature. But he has no right to talk nonsense about what authoritative orthodox theology teaches.

Mr. J. D. Beresford, once a great novelist, now writes for the *Daily Mail*. His latest witticism is a queer mixture of illogicality and piety called "I Believe that Faith Would Have Cured Me." It seems funny that a man



who knows exactly how to be cured persists in suffering. He says he could not cure himself now "because the wish to be cured has left me." He mentions Lourdes. Even at Lourdes Mr. Beresford would be regarded as optimistic. He believes "that in some circumstances it might be possible to regrow a lost limb." Strange that Mr. Beresford has not enough faith in folly to follow his faith. Mr. Beresford says that while "I do not for one instant deny" belief in "direct Divine influence" . . . "I affirm that such influence is used only when the sufferer is in the right condition to respond to it."

These qualifications "in some circumstances," and "the right condition," are probably the vital elements. Good air, good climate, good diet, the right hygienic, medical or surgical treatment and a good constitution have been known to survive even a visit to Lourdes and to cure a person even if he repeated the Coué formula. Mr. Beresford does not assert that any soldier who lost a leg during the war ever got even a wooden one merely by "Divine influence." He only says "it might be possible," and only then "in some circumstances." What a great consolation is this "Faith" to be sure!

One of God's self appraised representatives recently told a pious gathering that "the effect of prayer can never be estimated or calculated." Hence the evidence of answers to prayer. It is only in the spheres of the invaluable, the unreachable, and the unintelligible that religion can rest with absolute security.

The Anti-noise League, we notice, has been protesting against the use of electric horns on pedal cycles. The protest may be justified. But it rather reminds one of the old saw about straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. For the League seems never to have protested against such noisy nuisances as Salvation Army bands and the prolonged ringing of church bells. We have to assume that the members of the League are lucky enough to live where these unnecessary noises and nuisances are never in evidence. Or it may be that piety is considered a good and sufficient justification for any and every noisy nuisance "to the Glory of God."

The action of the Dean of Liverpool in allowing a Unitarian to preach in his Cathedral is still being criticized, and we are glad to note that an anglo-Catholic at least has the courage to say that he "cannot call anyone a brother who denies, whether explicitly or implicitly, that Christ is God," nor can he "greet as a fellow-Churchman one who is either a rationalist or a dissenter at heart." In the old days merely saying a man was not a brother was far too mild. The rack, the stake or boiling oil was reserved for anybody who denied that "Christ was God." But we are glad we have civilized Christians somewhat, and they can get their intolerance off their chest by refusing to call somebody a "brother." We have an idea that the unwanted "brother" will get over it.

The income of "ten main missionary societies," in 1932, is given as £1,659,021. If to this vast sum of impudent wastefulness we add the incomes of Catholic and Free Church Missionary Societies, the total becomes startling.

A guide to Rome issued by a Tourist Agency explains for the benefit of ignorant customers the mystery of the vast number of duplicate "Relics of the True Cross." It says that a piece of ordinary wood becomes a genuine Relic of the Cross by the mere contact of the two together. An admirable explanation of a miracle, incidentally fitting nicely into the religious idea of reproduction without sex.

There are a number of people who have got it into their heads that if those who have no religious belief, will use religious terms they will be able to bring

Christians over to their point of view. An American paper contains a programme by a Professor Davies, who thinks he will be able to reconcile religion and science. His plan consists of six paragraphs, each one beginning "Reverent science," and stating a non-religious creed. The plan is very simple, and very childish. Why it should be a "reverent" science which thus eliminates religion, we quite fail to see. And we certainly do not think that religious folk are such fools as to be trapped into subscribing to an anti-religious creed merely because it is called "reverent." Of course, we have with us a hybrid kind of a thing that is called "reverent agnosticism," but that can only be taken as a glorious joke by anyone with a sense of humour. If these people really wish to end the reign of religion they should make their object quite plain. As it is they usually end by becoming a burden and a nuisance to their friends and a source of amusement to their enemies.

Of Lord Rothermere, it is said by Mr. A. G. Gardiner (in *John Bull*) that:—

Whatever influence he ever had was due to the fact that he could set the biggest combination of newspapers in the country chanting the same slogans and the same gibberish. But this influence is sadly on the wane. The *Daily Mail* is no longer the big noise in Fleet Street. It has been outstripped by at least two morning newspapers.

It is an open question, we presume, whether this country is any the better off for having, instead of one, three "big noises" chanting slogans and gibberish?

Our British advertising experts will not, we hope, overlook the compliment paid to their craft by the missionary societies. These societies have been making desperate efforts to rake in money enough to square their debts. Although they firmly believe in prayer, they appear to have a much firmer belief in advertising as a powerful means of separating pious fools from their money. That advertising is more potent than prayer is the biggest compliment advertising would receive from Christian organizations. Whether it will be appreciated in the Celestial regions is, of course, rather doubtful.

Methodists are still worried, naturally, over the fact as stated by Rev. E. G. Braham, that "The youth of our Churches, the Seniors in our Sunday Schools, are leaving us in thousands." Mr. Braham may be right in thinking that these Seniors will never leave the Church if the Church "increases the number of its Catechumen classes for its youth." We doubt, however, if a betting man would give big odds on "Catechumen," if "Tug-boat Annie," or "The Silly Symphony" happen to be running in the same field.

We thought Canada was almost the last hope of Fundamentalism, but certainly some parts of Australia run it very close. From the reports of several sermons delivered in Sydney, a few weeks ago, one would never suspect that the Bible had ever been attacked as a Divine Inspiration or that even Christians were anxiously wondering which part of it could really be God's Word. Bishop Kirkby said it was "God's Handiwork," Canon Hilliard said it was "the world's greatest book," the Rev. Dr. D. C. Hughes said "the permanence of its life was a sure witness of its Divine origin," while Mr. H. M. Arrow-smith said a return to the Scriptures would bring peace in turmoil, confidence in perplexity, poise in embarrassment, optimism in discouragement, faith in adversity and hope in distress!

Thus—in Sydney—the Bible is back again in its old place, God's Precious Word for Mankind and its disintegration by Christian critics and others showing it to be the work of unknown authors and editors, the product of an unknown period, packed full of mistakes in science, history and philo-



sophy, is coolly put aside as untrue or of no consequence. Mr. Hughes actually claimed that though "modernism discarded most of it as untrue, archæologists were proving true what the critics refused to believe." We can hardly believe that even in Sydney many people can be found gulled by the "old, old story." But the fact that so many priests and pastors can be found preaching a point of view on the Bible, long ago given up by intelligent Christians, proves the necessity of the Freethought attack, an attack to be pressed home with the full weight of our case.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc's devastating attack on the "enemy" has begun. Instead of dealing with an enemy that really matters, he falls on a fellow Christian and almost rends him limb from limb. The "brother in Christ" is Mr. E. E. Kellett, who has written one of those entertaining works on religions, specially for children. He had the temerity to deal with Christianity (in which he whole-heartedly believes), but it is not the brand associated with Mr. Belloc. It is all "the old Protestant German guesswork," and Mr. Belloc devotes columns of words to show "how it is done," and then why it should not be done; and in particular, is quite angry that Mr. Kellett did not devote far more space to the doctrine of the "Real Presence." Probably Mr. Kellett thought, like many other Christians nowadays, that this particular doctrine was sheer bunk, and tried gently to steer clear of any discussion about it. Anyhow, says Mr. Belloc, "secular history is often badly warped, but it never gets as badly warped as this." We think it most unkind that fellow Christians should not love each other more.

We are pleased to put on record that all over Italy on the Feast of St. Anthony Abbot, animals are blessed by priests. Horses, cows, pigs, etc., get a thorough cleansing, put on their best clothes and are delighted with the ceremony. They go away quite pleased with themselves. There was a time when the Church tried animals for witchcraft or being possessed of the devil, and burnt them alive. We wonder what has made the change? We find that in our list of animals blessed we have omitted asses. They also were present.

The Rev. R. Pierce-Butler in a letter to a religious weekly, vigorously denies that "Fascism is necessarily a danger to the Christian religion"—one of the statements made by its editor. He is chaplain to a branch himself and records how his services are attended by Anglican and Roman Catholics, and how he never hears or sees anything whatever among them against religion. It is always good to know where we are; and we know now that Fascists are, in general, good Christians. *Verbum sap.*

Bishop McNulty has discovered why 30,000,000 people in this country are unhappy—or are making it unhappy, we are not quite clear which. A good Catholic, because he is a Catholic, is a very happy person. 30,000,000 people in England are not Catholics. Therefore, they are very unhappy. The reason for this awful state of affairs is that 400 odd years ago, England gave Roman Catholicism the sack. It was a happy country before, with not a care in the world; but the blight of the Reformation blasted peace and beauty out of it, and good old "Merrie England" was dead. The way to get it back is to become Catholic again and bring joy into the hearts of the Pope and his priests. The Roman Catholic Church has had some very able men in its ranks, and we wonder what they would have said of this bilge. All the churches seem in the same plight—a dearth of intelligent men. But even intelligence cannot save an incredible creed, and a thousand Bishop McNulty's only add to the gaiety of nations.

The following statements by two public men seem to be connected in some way. The Lord Mayor of London says: "The old faith of our fathers is only sleeping." Sir Ernest Benn remarks: "There do not exist two million

human beings who can think." Perhaps the connexion is that Sir Ernest's statement offers a little ray of hope to the Lord Mayor, that "the old faith of our fathers" may come back into favour. That is never an impossibility while there are millions of unthinking people.

A religious writer, discussing "freedom," declares that "we are free to make life what we will." Curiously enough, this particular writer belongs to a sect that is always itching to interfere with what other people wish to do with their lives—especially when they wish to exercise the right to be free to choose how they will employ their Sunday leisure.

Dealing with a book called *A Quaker Journal (1804-42)* by William Lucas, a Quaker brewer, a *News-Chronicle* reviewer explained that it reveals "a vanished world of strange characters and strange pieties." The reviewer added: "And we cannot regret its disappearance when we read of the harsh conditions which were then imposed on the young by their industrious elders." Quite so. It seems a pity, however, to stop there. It might well have been added that harsh treatment of the young is quite understandable in the light of the fact that the "elders" were inspired by Holy Writ. Moreover, the harsh treatment and the misery that resulted from it seems inevitable, since the Christian Bible conveys an untrue conception of the nature of the human animal, adolescent or adult. And when we know that this false conception is being implanted in youthful minds in the nation's schools, we are justified in demanding that the Bible—that mischievous repository of ancient ignorance and misunderstanding—should be removed from the schools.

If levity in church is discouraged under the Brawling Act, it finds a place in such exalted circles as the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury. The Rev. R. M. Hay, of Oxford, when asked by a friend to advise him on a form of service for the reconciliation to the Anglican Church of a Catholic made a reply, that the only service he could find began with a prayer asking God to "graciously receive this Thy sheep saved from the jaws of the wolf." According to the newspaper report this remark was received with laughter. Let brotherly love continue in the society where superstition is doled out—it is comical for one set to laugh at another for both are tarred with the same brush.

## Fifty Years Ago.

### WHO ARE THE BLASPHEMERS?

THE real blasphemers are those who believe in God and blacken his character; who credit him with less knowledge than a child, and less intelligence than an idiot; who makes him quibble, deceive, and lie, who represent him as indecent, cruel, and revengeful; who give him the heart of a savage and the brain of a fool. These are the blasphemers. When the priest steps between husband and wife, with the name of God on his lips, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God he resists education and science, he blasphemes. When in the name of God, he opposes freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he robs, tortures, and kills those who differ from him, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he opposes the equal rights of all, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he preaches content to the poor and oppressed, flatters the rich and powerful, and makes religious tyranny the handmaiden of political privilege, he blasphemes. And when he takes the Bible in his hand, and says it was written by the inspiration of God, he blasphemes almost beyond forgiveness. Who are the blasphemers? Not we who preach freedom and progress for all men; but those who try to bind the world with chains of dogma, and to burden it, in God's name, with all the foul superstitions of his ignorant past.

*The "Freethinker," February 10, 1884.*



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A. Horgan, £1; Mrs. A. Lee; £1.

R. B. KERR.—Next week.

D. FISHER.—Your letter, and the practice of which you complain is one more enforcement of the truth that if Freethinkers desire justice they must demand, not beg it.

S.M.—It is not wise in the present juncture to dilate too much on certain aspects of the matter. These can be handled later.

F. LAWS.—Bradlaugh's republicanism was not based upon the character of the person who occupied the throne, but upon the institution of an hereditary monarchy. The character of Victoria, and of the House of Brunswick merely illustrated the danger to which the institution exposed a people. There is nothing intolerant in declining to take part in a ceremony in which one does not believe, and we never set out to please anyone. That way lies demoralization.

A. FLANDERS.—To be of any use the notice ought to have reached us in time for the last issue.

L. HAMPTON.—Mr. Cohen expects to be able to commence the promised series of articles before the end of this month. He would have commenced with this issue, but other things demanded attention, as you will see.

JACK BARTON AND OTHERS.—Kindly note all outstanding orders for *Selections from Ingersoll* have not been despatched. Please report any cases of non-delivery.

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.

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.

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

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."

## Sugar Plums.

On Saturday, March 3, a Social, Dance, and Musical evening, will be held in the Caxton Hall, Victoria Street, S.W.1. The tickets, including refreshments, will be 2s. 6d. each. This function offers a capital opportunity to Freethinkers for introducing their friends, and we hope that many will take advantage of it. Past experience warrants our prophesying a very enjoyable evening.

We print elsewhere an account of the Society's Annual Dinner. Everything passed off well, and the attendance, if it did not set up a new record in point of numbers, did, at least maintain the record achieved. The speeches were uniformly good, and the entertainment was of the usual first-class order. Unfortunately a number were prevented from being present through illness, and for some the wretched weather must also have acted as a deterrent.

But those who did attend were unanimous in their expressions of satisfaction. We were, however, very pleased to see our old friend Mr. A. B. Moss present, and in spite of his years, he is as interested as ever in the movement.

On Sunday last Mr. Cohen paid a visit to Leicester and lectured to a "full house." Mr. Sydney Gimson occupied the chair, and we were very pleased to see him again in that position. Uncertain health, has prevented his attendance as regularly as he would have wished, but a Freethought meeting in Leicester with a Gimson being absent seems to lack something. Unfortunately Mr. Cohen had to return to London the same evening, so the questions had to be cut short. But on his next visit this will not occur.

Next Sunday (February 18), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, at 7.0, on "Is Christianity Played Out?" There will be a limited number of reserved seats at 1s. each.

On Saturday, February 17, the Liverpool Branch has arranged a dinner for Branch members and friends, to take place at the Angel Hotel, Dale Street. The success of the dinner last year has led to its repetition on a larger scale. There will be the usual programme of music, songs and speeches, and Mr. Cohen will be present. The tickets are 6s. each, and application must be made, not later than Thursday, February 15, to the Secretary of the Branch, Mr. S. R. Ready, 29 Sycamore Road, Waterloo, Liverpool. We hope that Liverpool Freethinkers, and those living near Liverpool, will do what they can to make the dinner a great success. The new Chester Branch should be well represented.

A book has been issued by the National Association of Broadcasters in America, the title of which is *Broadcasting in the United States*, in which the B.B.C. denial of free speech and its system of censorship is very sharply criticized. The book asserts that under the British system broadcasting becomes either, "an instrument of Government propaganda or an utterly colourless and wasteful means of mass communication." The criticism is authoritative enough to force the B.B.C. to make some reply, and it does so on lines that anyone who knows the policy of the B.B.C. would have anticipated.

The reply takes two forms. On the question of narrowing the subjects of discussion it recites a number of different subjects it has discussed. On the question of censorship it says that:—

There is a form of supervision (but this is concerned with ensuring fair-play by the elimination of personal prejudice and offence or misrepresentation of opposed points of view in talks put forward as impartial. . . . Censorship other than as a purely formal safeguard of good taste and as a means to a better presentment does not exist.

Was ever a lamer defence offered than this? It might have been put forward, with equal truth, by the Roman Catholic Church at its greatest, and by Hitler and Co., to-day. And it would have been equally true in either case. The B.B.C. must indeed think that the critical public can be easily fooled if it imagines it is to be taken in by such childish evasions as these.

Consider. The B.B.C. has arranged for a number of talks on "advanced" subjects. But is there any better plan to silence unwelcome agitation than by permitting a little talk about them to go on, under guise of open discussion. It gives a half loaf in order to avoid the demand for a whole one. In politics it is called a policy of dishing the whigs. In business it is used as a means of granting a little advance in wages so that the demand for a larger advance may be stifled. The B.B.C. arranges for a talk on this or that subject, but it takes the pre-



caution of seeing that what is to be said passes its censorship. Even the debates are a miserable fake. Could anyone imagine a more miserable device than a debate on which each side submits what it has to say to a censorship committee to make sure that nothing will be said that will show, in the opinion of the Committee, misrepresentation, or prejudice or offence to good taste. That is all that a censorship, at any time, and in any part of the world has ever claimed to do. Is any one stupid enough to imagine that a censorship has ever said, "This statement does not offend good taste, or truth, it is something that ought to be said, but we will not permit it to be said?" Really, the B.B.C. must have a very poor idea of the mentality of the public.

Some people have been simple enough to claim that because certain papers submitted to the B.B.C. by its speakers have not been cut in any way, therefore, the said papers were not censored. As we have said before, this only means that they who write for a censorship committee write with a view to submitting only what they know the committee will accept. They do their own censoring, the nature of which is determined by their knowledge of what the Committee will pass. If anyone doubts this very obvious conclusion, we advise them to get into friendly touch with some of the B.B.C. regular speakers, or to enquire of any acquaintances they have who know these speakers. He will find such expressions as "that would not be permitted," or "it would be struck out" quite common. The only censorship that any right-minded man should tolerate is that dictated by his own sense of what it is proper to say, and the kind of audience he is addressing. But the impertinence of a Committee of irresponsible persons deciding what is in "good taste," what is "personal prejudice," or "misrepresentation," etc., is monstrous—it is only one degree less absurd than the idle pretence that because a man has written a paper, knowing that the committee will not pass this or that, and on his own account has eliminated the "this" or "that," therefore his paper has not been censored. And a "debate" which is conducted on these lines is something, we confess, with which our capacity for sarcasm or satire is quite unable to deal.

The humbug of the whole thing is demonstrated by putting two passages in juxtaposition that are widely separated in the reply of the B.B.C. No. 1:—

A man should be an expert to be given access to the microphone. . . . Not only an expert, but a personality.

No. 2:—

Speakers are asked for their manuscript in advance to enable speakers to secure from experienced officials the best advice on the method of presenting what they have to say.

For downright impertinence and humbug this beats everything we have ever read. Only known experts and personalities are to come before the microphone. This explains why, although Freethought has often been criticized, no avowed representative Freethinker has ever been permitted to reply. And having got its experts and its personalities, the B.B.C. then demands the manuscript of what is to be said so that these same officials may advise the experts and personalities as to the best way of presenting their case? Talk about a Papal Conclave, it is quite colourless at the side of the B.B.C. But it could distort the truth a little more artistically.

Elsewhere in this issue we print a letter from Mr. Don Fisher, a son of our old friend Mr. Greevz Fisher, protesting against the scope given to religious advocates in ordinary papers, and the small notice taken of anything that runs contrary to religion. In this case the letter was published in *The Independent*—the *Socialist Times*. We advise other Freethinkers to follow Mr. Fisher's example. Freethinkers are too ready to sit quietly under religious autocratic methods.

To-day (February 11) Mrs. Janet Chance will lecture in the Transport Hall, Liverpool, at 7.0, on "Realism, a Way of Life." This is the first visit of Mrs. Chance to the Branch, and we strongly advise all members and friends to make a point of being present.

In accordance with the vote of the N.S.S. Branches, the Annual Conference this year will be held in Bolton. Lancashire contains a number of active centres of Freethought, and with the steady growth of the National Secular Society there is every promise of a successful Conference. Branch Secretaries should get to work and make sure that their Branches are well represented.

A Social evening has been arranged for the benefit of the members of the National Secular Society and their friends in the Durham area. It is to be held on Saturday, February 10, in the Assembly Rooms, Hylton Road, Sunderland (adjoining Millfield Station) and will commence at 6 o'clock. The programme for the evening is a varied one, whist, dancing, games and entertainments. Mr. J. T. Brighton will give a short address. Tickets including light refreshments are to be had at 9d. each, prior to the evening from the branch secretaries in the area, or from Mr. Allan Flanders, 8 Station Road, Penshaw. They will also be on sale at the door. We hope that as many friends of Freethought as possible will come along to meet each other.

Birmingham saints desiring an enjoyable evening should attend the Mecca Cafe, Waterloo Street, on Saturday, February 17, where the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will hold a Whist Drive at 7 p.m., there will be a number of prizes, and admission is one shilling. We are pleased to note that Miss Marsh addressed a large audience in the Bristol Street School last Sunday evening.

We are asked to announce that Mr. J. P. Gilmour will lecture in the Phoenix Theatre, Burnley, to-day (February 11) at 2.45, on "Charles Bradlaugh," and in the evening, at 7.0, on "The Not-living, The Living, and the Ever Living."

## The Oldest Religion.

WHICH is the oldest religion? Some would say the Egyptian. Others the Babylonian or Indian. In a recently published book, entitled *The God of the Witches* (Published by Sampson Low), these historical religions are put aside, and it is claimed that the oldest religion is Witchcraft, and that it has descended from an enormously remote past, before civilization began, when man was a hunter and lived in caves.

Most people would be ready to object that Witchcraft was not a religion at all, but merely a superstition connected with ugly old women, that its only practices were a parody of the rites and ritual of Christianity, and that the only deity it recognized was the Devil. But this book gives an entirely new view of the matter.

The author of the book is Dr. Margaret Murray (Doctor of Literature), who is Assistant-Professor of Egyptology at the University of London. She has excavated with Professor Petrie in Egypt. She is also an authority on Ancient Egypt, upon which she has written several scholarly works. Miss Murray is also an anthropologist, and it is through anthropology that she has arrived at the new and revolutionary views she puts forth in this book. To give her own words:—

The attitude of all writers towards the post-Christian era in Europe, especially towards the Middle Ages, has been that of the ecclesiastic, the historian, the artist, the scholar, or the economist. Hitherto the anthropologist has confined himself to the pre-Christian periods or to the modern savage. Yet medieval Europe offers to the student of mankind one of the finest fields of research. In this volume I have followed one line of anthropological enquiry, the survival of an indigenous European cult and the interaction between it and the exotic re-



ligion which finally overwhelmed it. I have traced the worship of the Horned God onwards through the centuries from the Palæolithic prototypes, and I have shown that the survival of the cult was due to the survival of the races who adored that God, for this belief could not have held its own against the invasion of other peoples and religions unless a stratum of the population were strong enough to keep it alive. (M. A. Murray: *The God of the Witches*. Introduction, p. 2).

We find, in the caves inhabited by Palæolithic man, also upon inscribed bones of the same period, sketches of a dancing man clothed in the skin, and wearing the horns, sometimes of a stag, sometimes of a goat. This, Dr. Murray claims, is the earliest representation of the God of the Witches; and the forerunner of the horned gods of antiquity. Horned gods, she observes, "were common in Mesopotamia, both in Babylon and Assyria . . . during many centuries. The position of a deity in the Babylonian pantheon was shown by the number of horns worn. The great gods and goddesses had seven horns, which is the reason that the divine Lamb in the Book of Revelations was said to have seven horns . . . the horns were a sign of divinity." (p. 15.)

The little two-horned god Enkidu was the most popular of the gods, and is found in all parts of Babylonia, at all periods of her history, says Dr. Murray, and "answers to the usual description of the Christian devil in having horns, hoofs and a tail. But in the eyes of the early Babylonians he was far from being a devil, and his image . . . was worn as a charm against all evil and ill-luck." (p. 16.)

Many of the Egyptian gods were horned, notably Amon, who became the supreme god, and Khnum the creator god. The crown of Osiris was furnished with two horizontal horns. Isis was also a horned goddess. In the Ægean the horned god flourished. "The Minotaur of Crete. He was in human form with a bull's head and horns, and was worshipped with sacred dances and human sacrifices." In Greece there were many horned gods. The best known to the modern world is Pan, and there is no doubt that his long narrow face, pointed beard, small horns, and goats legs, served as the model for the Christian Devil.

The comparative study of religions has proved that there is nothing new in Christianity. Nothing was "revealed" that was not known before, if we except some absurd, unworkable and immoral teachings, such as loving your enemies and hating your relatives. When the Pagans pointed out this want of originality in the new religion, the Christians did not deny it, it was useless to do that when practically the same rites and ritual were being performed in the temples of Isis, Mithra, and other heathen divinities, at that very time. Neither did they deny the existence or power of the Pagan Gods. They declared that they were not Gods but Devils; and as for the resemblance between the heathen and the Christian religion, they declared that the Devil knowing of the coming of Jesus Christ beforehand, had invented a parody of the new faith to discredit it when it arrived. As Dr. Murray points out, St. Paul, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, declares, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils." The author of the Book of Revelation is equally definite when he calls the magnificent altar of Zeus at Pergamos "the throne of Satan," "I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." (II. 13.) How many of the crowds who gaze upon the beautiful statues of the Greek Gods in the British Museum

know that they were the abomination of the early Christians, who smashed them at every opportunity, and then posed as martyrs when they were punished for their vandalism. The statues, many of them broken and defaced by these fanatics, are but a fraction of what we might have had but for Christianity.

Dr. Murray very truly observes that "No religion dies out with the dramatic suddenness claimed by the upholders of the Complete—Conversion theory." At the most it is only driven underground; and we must remember that early Christianity was introduced into Britain by foreigners. Augustine was an Italian, and Italians and other aliens held all the high offices and concentrated their efforts on the ruler "and through them forced their exotic religion on a stubborn and unwilling people." And further, "Our chief knowledge of the horned god in the British Isles comes from ecclesiastical and judicial records. As these were made exclusively by Christians, generally priests, the religious bias is always very marked. The worshippers were very illiterate and have left no records of their beliefs except a few survivals here and there." And again:—

There is no doubt that the records are incomplete and that if all the instances of renunciation of Christianity had been as carefully recorded as the conversions, it would be seen that the rulers of Western Europe were not Christian except in name for many centuries after the arrival of the missionaries. Until the Norman Conquest the Christianity of England was the very thinnest veneer over an underlying Paganism; the previous centuries of Christian archbishops and bishops had not succeeded in doing more than wrest an outward conformity from the rulers and chiefs, while the people and many of the so-called Christian priests remained in unabated heathenism.

That the worshippers regarded the so-called "Devil" as truly God is clearly seen in the evidence even when recorded by their fanatical enemies. In more than one case it is remarked that the witch "refused to call him the Devil," and in many instances the accused explicitly called him God. (M. A. Murray: *The God of the Witches*. p. 24.)

King Edgar, in the tenth century, "found that the Old Religion was more common than the official faith and he urges that 'every Christian should zealously accustom his children to Christianity.'" Right through to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the fight against the Old Religion raged, and multitudes of those who were executed, generally by fire, for witchcraft shows how firmly the old faith was rooted.

W. MANN.

## The National Secular Society.

### ANNUAL DINNER.

ONCE again—to be precise, for the thirty-seventh time—members of the National Secular Society and friends met together in one of its most enjoyable annual functions. Memories of stirring past times, the days of Bradlaugh and Foote, were revived by some of the older Secularists as they met at the Holborn Restaurant, where so many of the earlier Dinners had taken place. It was, indeed, a packed assembly. There was no falling off either in interest or enthusiasm. The provinces were well represented, extra train facilities making it possible to come to London for the day, travelling back by a midnight train. Visitors were present from Bournemouth, Birmingham, Plymouth, Cardiff, Preston, Worcester, Burnley, Liverpool, King's Lynn, Sheffield, Southsea, and elsewhere.



Among those present, were such old friends of the movement as Mr. and Mrs. Side, with members of the family, the Messrs. Fincken and members of their family, Miss Kough, Dr. Griffin, Mr. and Mrs. C. Quinton, senr., Mr. and Mrs. Quinton, jnr., Messrs. W. J. W. Easterbrook, H. Silvester, G. Whitehead, Mr. and Mrs. Lazarnick, Mr. and Mrs. Ash, Mr. and Mrs. Hornibrook, Mr. V. Neuberger, Lord Snell, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. W. H. Deakin, Mr. A. G. Lye, and Mr. L. M. W. Easterbrook. Letters and telegrams were received from Dr. Arthur Lynch, Mr. G. F. McCluskey, Rear-Admiral Beadnell, expressing regret at not being able to be present, and a telegram was sent by the Bradford Branch wishing the Dinner success.

The reception-room was crowded, everybody wanting to get a word with the President and then with old friends. There is no better occasion for members to meet than the Annual Dinner—one likes to talk over old times, to discuss present problems and to see how the younger generation is shaping for the struggle. The strength of a movement lies not only in numbers but in its enthusiasm, and sometimes some of the stalwarts who have borne the brunt of the battle in the past look wistfully at those who follow wondering whether they realize the magnitude of the problems facing reformers against reaction, and how those problems will be met in the future.

The Annual Dinner is a good test, and the fact that it is so splendidly supported augurs well for the future. Everybody knows that the N.S.S. is a fighting organization of Freethinkers, and never in its history has what it stands for been more needed than now. This was the dominant note of all the speakers. Behind their jokes and laughter, one could see how serious they felt was the present position in world-politics when dictatorships were openly advocated, and freedom of expression in thought and speech, not merely derided, but positively suppressed.

The dinner itself was excellent, and thoroughly enjoyed. Everything went without a hitch, and when it was over the guests settled down to hear the Chairman's Address. He can generally be relied upon to touch the right note at almost any meeting and his speech, alternating between grave and gay, was listened to with the keenest attention. After referring to the unavoidable absence of some old friends and supporters, he was glad, he said, to state the present attendance at the Dinner, if not a record, was nearly a record, and he was pleased to welcome new friends. It was customary on this occasion to look at the events of the past year, and 1933 was for us chiefly memorable for two centenary celebrations, Ingersoll's and Bradlaugh's. Ingersoll was the greatest Freethinker America had produced. His wonderful wit and eloquence, combining simplicity of speech with profundity of thought, appealed to everybody without distinction of race or colour, creed or nationality. No one had done more for Freethought than Colonel Ingersoll and, Mr. Cohen added, how happy he was that his tribute to the great American, led to something like a revival of interest in Ingersoll's writings both here and in America.

Then there was the event which touched the N.S.S. more intimately, the Centenary of Charles Bradlaugh, its founder and first President. The Bradlaugh Centenary Committee succeeded last year in getting the general press all over the country to devote considerable space both to Bradlaugh and Freethought.

There were two things to remember—the real Bradlaugh—the man who put his rare and invincible energy and persistence in the fight for justice and the rights of man, and, next, that the fight is still going on. Bradlaugh prophesied that the final struggle would be between Roman Catholicism and Freethought, and

at one time most of us were inclined to accept this. He was not quite so sure now for intolerance is in these days put forward as a first principle in political life. The testing time may come in the near future, but he felt certain Freethought would not shrink, any more than Carlile, Bradlaugh and Foote did, from the struggle. Tyranny is always full of fear. It is afraid of trusting the mind of man. It may crush, but it will never stop the irresistible development of humanity.

The Chairman's speech was loudly applauded, and he called upon Lord Snell to propose the toast of "The National Secular Society." Lord Snell declared he was proud to do so. The work of the N.S.S. was to teach the use of reason and to destroy superstition. He urged that in our fight we should be fully equipped; for such an organization as the Roman Catholic Church would abate nothing whatever of its claims, but lie in wait and try to take us at a disadvantage.

Lord Snell pointed out that it was by no means certain that what had happened in Germany and Italy would not happen in England. We had to be prepared to love and to fight for liberty—it could never be propagated by its mere name. Our work was not yet done, and though the policy of the N.S.S. was said to be negative, there were some abuses far too positive.

Lord Snell, referring to Ingersoll, said he never was privileged to see him, but had the great pleasure of meeting his widow and daughter at their old home in America. He said he knew of no place more worthy of his admiration. Finally, he hoped that the future of the N.S.S. would be worthy of its past, and that it would retain its ancient spirit. The toast was then loudly acclaimed.

Dr. Carmichael, in seconding the toast, said that one of the most irritating things in medical practice was when a patient declined to live up to his doctor's prognosis, and in the case of the N.S.S. and the spiritual doctors who proffered their advice, there was the same phenomenon. They had solemnly and unanimously decided that the case was a serious one, and the patient beyond hope of recovery. But the patient refused to die. The National Secular Society might die from violence, it would never die from disease or constitutional weakness. The National Secular Society was as hearty and as strong as ever. We had heard a deal of the inspiration that came from the great Freethinkers who had lived and worked for the great Cause, but the work was needed to-day as much as ever, and there were the same sources of inspiration as ever. He felt that the Society would never lack neither inspiration nor wise guidance while Mr. Cohen was at its head.

Mr. B. A. Le Maine, followed with a neat little speech, in which he paid whole-hearted tribute to the work of the N.S.S.—a work which admitted women in absolute equality, and which also knew no distinction of race, colour or creed. He pointed out how the N.S.S. kept a level head all through the late war, and he referred to the way in which urgent reforms, such as Divorce Reform, were prevented by Roman Catholicism, and what we could expect if this creed held dominant sway in affairs. He was delighted to support the toast.

Mr. A. D. McLaren was then called upon to propose the toast of "Freethought at Home and Abroad," and in a short and powerful speech gave a concise account of what was happening in many parts of the world. He showed how Germany and Italy felt the heavy hand of intolerance, and he touched upon political affairs elsewhere. He also pointed out how the Roman Catholic Church was organizing a campaign in this country. As for Spain, the late general



election showed what a powerful hold the clerical parties had in the more backward parts of the country and on the women. The International Freethought Congress was to be held there on May 21, next, and arrangements were arranged to unveil a statue to Ferrer. He hoped Mr. Cohen would be able to represent the N.S.S. there as delegate. The toast was heartily supported.

Mrs. Janet Chance followed with a delightfully humorous comparison between the Loch Ness Monster and the "monster" from Mt. Sinai. It was surprising the number of parallels she discovered in the comparison. She found most people had not the foggiest notion of what Atheism was, and what it stood for, and instanced some of her difficulties in attempting to prevent her own daughter from receiving religious instruction in school.

Finally, Mr. George Bedborough gave one of his characteristic speeches full of humorous anecdotes—though underlying it was the serious note of concern for the future. He paid a fine tribute to both the *Freethinker* and the *American Truth Seeker*, and their respective editors, and he concluded with saying how pleased he was to see so many young people present.

All the speeches were loudly acclaimed, and it was evident that the audience appreciated their "infinite variety," and good humour. The excellent concert, organized by Mr. Royle, proved also a great success. Dinner audiences love a good laugh, and Mr. Jack Barker's excellent stories and songs were just in the right vein. Miss Edith Price and Miss Emmie Joyce sang delightfully, and Mr. Raymond Newell's fine voice was heard at its best in two operatic excerpts from *Monsieur Beaucaire* and the *Three Musketeers*. As for the Western Brothers (Kenneth and George) they were a host in themselves, including the famous *Old School Tie*. The concert, in fact, was a huge success. The Chairman brought the evening's proceedings to a close with a few well chosen words, the audience joining in the final singing of *Auld Lang Syne*; and those who were privileged to be present will long remember a fine evening.

H. CUTNER.

### An Atheist Objects.

A Letter to the Editor of "The Independent."

SIR,—I am irritated, so irritated by the policy you are adopting in this paper that I am unable to sit quiet, but seize the pen in the hope that you will read and act to prevent repetition of the weekly dose of annoyance from the religious aspect that this paper has become. I am a son of the late Greevz Fisher. My father was from early days a consistent individualist and was contemporaneous with and of the school of thought of the late J. H. Levy (editor of the *Individualist*), Wordsworth Donisthorpe (after whom I take my first two names), Auberon Herbert, etc., etc. My father was an Atheist, and I have found no reason either in his method of life or death or in my experience to find it necessary to abate from the Atheistic outlook. I should be prepared to argue that no satisfactory individualist can be found among the ranks of the minds over-shadowed by the terrors and prohibitions that are inseparable from a religious outlook.

I believe that the attitude of interference so evident and almost universal to-day can be traced to approval of such impertinence through the ages by the religious powers.

Now what do I find? That your owners do not send out tracts on religion. No, sir, the paper itself is a tract with nauseating mush spewed all over the pages. (I cannot write in any other language, so much do you annoy me.)

... Another measure of your blind bias in this matter is to be found in the paragraph "Religion by Radio." If any subject ought to be banned for distribution in this

way it is religious matter. If this is not to be banned, why not give a chance to reply to, say, the brilliant Editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the Secular Society, Ltd., Mr. Chapman Cohen. But though it is manifestly unfair to have Jew, Priest, Archbishop and lesser gods pumping out their appalling nonsense day by day and week by week, still I can get away to Radio Paris and be sure that I shall be clear of this abominable tainted transmission.

In your last issue you have "On the Proper Treatment of Bygones," your pars devoted to "An Inaccurate Appeal," "Religion by Radio," and also "Logic or—," and three more pages of this uninteresting, biased, unnecessary, irritating twaddle in 22 pages of literary matter; that is, from 15 to 20 per cent of the matter that we buy had to do with affairs connected with Jewish history and disturbances of 2,000 years ago. It would be bad enough, but when you compare the space with that devoted to the matters for which I and all Individualists buy your paper, that is, articles on mischievous political and Socialistic government action, the reason for the annoyance I have here expressed becomes obvious.

In your last, you have, say, 14 pages, including the columns on "Where the Money Goes" and "Quotas, Tariffs and Subsidies," and these latter are far and away the most important, though possibly not the most interesting to me. So that with 14 which I can read with care, I get foisted on me the absurdities of The Very Rev. this and the Ultra Reverend and Right Reverend that and the other, to say nothing of the Venerables. So far I have seen no mention of assistance for the position of opposition to governmental insistence on vaccination, though the apathy of the general public to this compulsory operation and the medico's acquiescence in the principle of it are bringing nearer every day to the extension of compulsion in such matters even to sterilization. Surely you can to mutual benefit point the dangers in these matters by the illimitable extension, if the principle of such interference is granted, at the expense of the religious balderdash.

I find I am getting less emphatic and more diffuse, so will say no more now than to reiterate with all the emphasis that in me lies that if you do not abate this unseemly tosh you will lose a reader, and I venture to say eventually have to cease publication or come to occupy the position and importance due to a paper that could well be called the London Church Magazine or the Parochial Pulpit.—I am, Yours etc.,

DON FISHER.

From "The Independent."

### Correspondence.

#### AGAINST THE LEAGUE.

*La Verité Oblige.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I read, with interest, the letter from "Medicus" in the *Freethinker* of January 28. I also remembered his previous article on the same subject; and mentally unified the two. So far as the attitude of "Medicus" towards Freedom—Equal Freedom, I hope—is concerned; I am in cordial concordance. This sympathy will serve to emphasize my objections against his proposed new League for "promoting the conscious desire for Freedom."

Such a League would only do—could only do—what the N.S.S. already does, or tries to do. There is no other organization extant—religious or non-religious, political or non-political, which stands for Freedom—Equal Freedom—as does the N.S.S. Our Society—so far—is based on something far bigger and broader than any merely "anti-religious attitude."

Further, there are other sectionalizing advocates within the Freethought Movement. Should "Medicus's" proposal take concrete shape; other sections would feel justified, at once, in forming Leagues to further their particular proposals. That tendency to split, can only



play into the hands of the enemy. Let us foster increased Unity in our ranks—not Dispersion or Dissipation.

In another place, journalistically (about which, more anon—if the Editor permits) a well-known Freethought writer seeks to make the British Freethought Movement, Socialist; and the Labour Movement, Atheist. One of his sentences is; "By pooling forces, Socialism will gain a philosophy, and Freethought a practical appeal." Incidentally, the S.P.G.B. already runs such a "pool"; but I doubt the efficacy of the "practical appeal." This writer-in-another-place, injures his case by some unworthy gibes about, "Veterans of the Freethought Movement" being "apparently content to celebrate one another's seventieth birthdays, and expose the mistakes of the Pentateuch, etc."

A third tendency towards disruption has been expressed, several times, in "our" *Freethinker* columns. Their proposals are vague; but they appear to desire to make the N.S.S. MERELY a God-killing anti-religious—society. They object against "Equal" Freedom. They are against "usefulness," as the test for morality. They disapprove of "Happiness" as the proper aim of Humankind. I am more than a wee bit afraid of folk who reject Equality in Freedom, Usefulness in Morality, and Happiness for Humankind.

And there are others!

Some may question my right to criticize. I founded a Rational Atheist Philosophy in Secularism, at the end of 1891. I became a Social Democrat—in principle—at the end of '92; and I have supported the Labour Party idea, politically, since the end of 1893. I had quite a lot to do with the "Freethought Socialist League." I have some experience. As a result of that experience, I strongly deprecate the attempted forming of any sectional leagues. With equal emphasis, I would oppose any attempt to spoil the grandeur, or limit the scope, of our Philosophy, in the two first paragraphs of our Principles. It expresses us; and we are It.

ATHOS ZENO.

#### THE CODEx SINAITICUS.

SIR,—Your attitude to the purchase of the *Codex Sinaiticus* must surely perplex some of your readers. The condonation, expressed, viz., that the Government would not have spent the money in any more useful manner, I venture to describe as weak, and uncharacteristic. In the issue of the 21st inst., you have permitted to appear an article in which the writer begins by rhapsodizing over the manuscript, and devotes the remainder of his article to the proof that the *Codex* solves none of the problems of textual criticism. In the same issue you state that the Bible is nothing but myth and legend, whilst every issue contains derision of the facts recorded in the Bible. Your contributor refers to the "loving care" bestowed by the writer of the "beautiful calligraphy," and compares the manuscript with great works of art of other kinds. I question the value of the *Codex* as a great work of art. My little son, aged, 8, forms the letters representing his mother-tongue with "loving care" when he feels so inclined, and the result will compare favourably with the Greek of the *Codex*.

I have recently used the transaction of this purchase as the spearhead of a maiden effort at Freethought propaganda in the form of several letters which have appeared in our local newspaper *The Eastern Daily Press*. These letters aroused considerable interest and opposition. Turning to the *Freethinker* I feel like a schoolboy who, playing his hardest for his team, finds that his housemaster is backing the other side for a win.

The extravagant price of the *Codex*, and the assistance from the Government, are due, of course, to the fact that the manuscript deals with Holy Scriptures, and not to competition for possession by bibliophiles. Perhaps your attitude is dictated by a fear of an accusation of vandalism towards an ancient writing. At all events, one feels the need for an explanation.

H. H. WINTER.

#### Obituary.

JAMES BENJAMIN HOLLMAN.

WE regret to report the death of James Benjamin Hollman, of 19 Charnwood Avenue, Merton Park, which took place on February 1, at the age of fifty-two years. Although not a member of the N.S.S. he had pronounced Freethought principles. The remains were cremated at West Norwood Crematorium, on Monday, February 5, where, before a gathering of relatives and friends, a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

##### LONDON.

###### OUTDOOR.

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

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.

###### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury (North London Branch N.S.S.)—"Hate."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W. C.1): 11.0, Gerald Heard—"Ethics and Guidance."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, February 12, Mr. P. Goldman will speak on Freud's "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Mr. R. S. Pollard—"The Oxford Group Movement."

##### COUNTRY.

###### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Mecca Cafe, Waterloo Street): 7.0, Saturday, February 17. Social. There will be many prizes, in addition to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, there will be Mystery and Novelty Prizes. Admission 1s. Light Refreshments at Popular Prices.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"Religion and Sex."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.45, Rev. W. Brown—"The Christian Revelation."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley): 2.45, Lantern lecture—"Charles Bradlaugh—Fights for Freedom." 7.0, Mr. J. P. Gilmour (Chairman, Rationalist Press Association)—"The Not-living, The Living and the Ever-living." Chairman—Mr. Jack Clayton (Burnley).

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. D. N. Mackay (League of Nations)—"The Private Manufacture of Armaments and Munitions." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe—"The Story of my Life."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mrs. Janet Chance (London)—"Realism—A Way of Life."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Angel Hotel, Dale Street, Liverpool): 7.0, Saturday, February 17, Merseyside Freethinkers' Second Annual Dinner. Reception 6.30. Tickets 6s. each. Must be obtained by February 15. Evening Dress Optional.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, Mr. C. McKelvie (Liverpool)—"Rebels of History."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, A Freethinker on—"Jesus—Man, God or Myth."

SUNDERLAND (Assembly Rooms, Millfield, Sunderland): 6.0 to 11.0, Saturday, February 10, A Social. Tickets 9d. each. Co-operative Rooms, Green Street, 7.15, Sunday, February 11, Mr. A. Planders. A Lecture.



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