

# THE FREETHINKER

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

Views and Opinions.

Medical Science and the Church.

I DEALT last week with the report of a lecture by a Dr. Stafford Johnson, which address received the hearty endorsement of the *Catholic Standard*. The lecture was a reply to another lecture—heard by neither Dr. Johnson nor the *Standard*—announced by the Secular Society in Dublin, and dealing with the influence of the Church on the progress of medical science. Dr. Johnson's reply was in the best style of the Roman Catholic apologist, that is, when his statements are not wholly false, they contain that half-truth which is more deceptive than a full-blown lie. With his audience a man like Dr. Johnson is quite safe. He knows that the practice of lying in defence of the Church is one of the most ancient practices of the Christian faith. He knows also that the readers of the *Standard* would never read those papers which contain an exposure of his falsities, and that even though the nature of his apology may be seen through by some, the majority will be safe, and there is always the chance that some ill-informed person may be misled by his statements.

Some indication of Dr. Johnson's mentality may be found in his defence of the action of the Church with regard to science. He says:—

While science keeps within its rightful limits the Church finds no reason to interfere. . . . God who is the author of the Church is also the author of science, and there can be no conflict between them . . . (but) when science—and medical science in particular—moves beyond its proper limits, she condemns . . . this state of affairs exists to-day and is widely recognized in the Church's condemnation of the practices of birth control, sterilization of the defective and therapeutic abortion . . . the Church is not limiting human liberty, she is defending it. In particular she is defending the liberty and right to live of the child, or the mentally defective who are helpless to defend themselves.

The defence is complete, and so convincing. The Church never interferes with science, when it keeps

within its legitimate limits. She interfered with Bruno, and Galileo, and scores of others, only in order to keep science within its legitimate limits. In opposing birth control she defends the rights of the child—who does not exist—to live, although she does sanction this inferential child murder in the case of celibate monks and nuns. The Church will also defend the right of the carriers of deadly diseases to give us as large a contribution to the population as they care to give. It at least means a much larger number of customers for the Church. The scientist is interfering with (religious) big business, and the Church properly reminds him that he must stop.

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Hospitals and the Church.

So much for the kindly attitude of the Church towards science. Now for Dr. Johnson's proof of the help that the Church has given to medical science. The Church established hospitals in the twelfth century. Granted; but hospitals may mean anything. They may mean mere shelters for the sick, or they may mean places where medical science, which depends upon medical research, is permitted. Dr. Johnson is content to be satisfied with the term alone. But he does not say what became of the schools of medicine of the Old Roman and Greek world, why they died out, and why it was only in the twelfth century that the Church established a "hospital." He is satisfied that they for whom he writes will take it that the hospital sanctioned by the Church was such as we mean when we use the term—that is unless the reader—who is not likely readily to be found among Roman Catholic readers, remembers that it was the God-appointed task of the Church to see that science did not overstep its legitimate limits.

Nor does he acquaint his readers with the fact that the temples of *Æsculapius* and *Hygiea* were both schools of medicine and hospitals to which the sick came for attendance. Had he mentioned them it might have been necessary to explain why they were closed by the Christians. Perhaps it was because medical science exceeded its proper limits.

So we are left to try and find out for ourselves just what kind of help the Church gave. Well, it might have helped considerably in the direction of promoting sanitation and cleanliness. And here some might remember that ancient Rome had a very elaborate sanitary system, and above all the use of the bath was universal, and within the reach of the poorest. But the Roman bath completely disappeared, and not until 1840 was the first public bath opened in this country. So completely had the Roman bath died out among Christians, that when it was reintroduced from the non-Christian East, it became known as the *Turkish bath*, and is known as such to-day. And the sanitation of the cities of Christendom was such that it was periodically swept by pestilences which found a

ready hold in the filthy conditions of the population, from the highest to the lowest; and to prevent which the Church could find nothing better than prayers, religious processions, and the worship of relics of saints, who in their own lives had often exhibited the special mark of sanctity by their own filthy habits. It is no great exaggeration to say that for centuries saintliness and cleanliness were contradictory terms.

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#### A Heavenly Pharmacopœia.

I must run over the ground very rapidly, because I can only spare this week's space for the subject. The Church might have helped medical science by contributing to medical knowledge. How did it do this? Well to begin with it had a possible basis of work in the medical science of antiquity, particularly of Greece, where it had been laid down by the medical philosophers that all disease was of natural origin and had to be treated by natural methods. But the Church kept medical science within its proper limits by insisting on the Biblical and New Testament teaching that all disease was of supernatural origin. It held that disease was of supernatural origin, and must be removed by supernatural means. The Church established its own pharmacopœia. It had not merely its own corps of spiritual doctors in the priesthood, but its corps of immortal ones in the persons of the saints. St. Gall cured tumours, St. Valentine cured epilepsy, St. Christopher cured diseases of the throat, St. Eutropius cured dropsy, St. Ovid cured deafness, St. Gervaise cured rheumatism, St. Appollonius cured caries, St. Vitus cured chorea, and so forth. The touch of a sacred relic was enough to banish many diseases, and to-day Roman Catholic periodicals, which circulate in Roman Catholic centres, contain many cures that are still effected by this army of spiritual medicos. In 1517 Pope Leo X issued a ticket stamped with a cross, which any person might have—if he paid for it—and which bore the inscription, "He who kisses it is preserved for seven days from falling sickness, apoplexy and sudden death." Nothing half so certain had ever been offered by a medical scientist. And there were in addition, the countless shrines, and sacred remnants of saints which helped to fill out the medicine chest of the Church. Naturally, "big business" felt it necessary to keep medical science within its proper limits. It would have been a reflection of the efficacy of the saints to have done otherwise. And if the Church charged for its remedies, well, do not doctors do the same? There can be no denial of the truth that the medical work of the Church must have advanced ordinary medical science very considerably.

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#### Economizing Truth.

It is known that Pope Boniface VIII. issued a Bull, which was generally taken as forbidding dissection, and which held up the progress of medical science for at least 200 years. But Dr. Johnson is not to be misled; so he explains that this Bull did not prohibit dissection, it was directed against certain practices which had grown up during the Crusade. Oh, truth-loving Dr. Johnson, whose love of accuracy has not yet blinded him to the fact that the most convincing kind of a lie is the one that contains a modicum of truth. The opposition to dissection did not begin with the Bull of Pope Boniface. It began with the early Christians, and was based on the belief in a physical resurrection. It helped in no small measure to the closing of the medical schools of Alexandria and of Greece. It was due to the belief that the body was the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that led the Christian Father, Tertullian, to call the Pagan anatomist, Herophilus, a butcher, it led

Augustine to denounce all anatomists, and at a time when the care of the sick was a practical monopoly of the monks the Council of Le Mans forbade them to study surgery. When, therefore, whatever may have been the motive of Pope Boniface in issuing the Bull, those who followed it took it as a papal condemnation of surgery, they were acting in line with Christian teaching, and encouraging the traffic of the Church in the sale of its pious cures. It was this that held back a knowledge of anatomy and physiology for so long, and so hindered the progress of medical science that the Father of modern surgery, Vesalius, complained bitterly of the difficulty he had in securing subjects for dissection. Indeed, it is suspected that the pilgrimage that Vesalius made to Jerusalem and from the consequences of which he died, was in the nature of a penal pilgrimage forced upon him by his spiritual masters. They were trying to keep him from straying outside his proper limits as a scientific investigator.

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#### Christianity in Action.

The Church thus laid medical science under a deep obligation by its laying stress upon the real nature of disease in demonic possession, by its collection of spiritual cures and furnishing the names of those dwellers in heaven to whom application had to be made for the cure of all complaints from corns to consumption. It also helped in another way by seeing that the work of the doctor was supervised by the priest. The generally helpful nature of the atmosphere created may be shown by a few passages from Johannes Nohl's recent work on the Black Plague, taken from contemporary chronicles. In an anonymous primer of the period we find that it

was the first duty of the physician on entering the house to ask the relations of the patient if he had confessed and received the Holy Sacrament. For this he had the following locution. The soul is more worthy than the body, therefore its salvation goeth before all things. The patient must, in the name of God, be induced to seek the salvation of his soul, and if he has not yet done so he must do it at once or promise to do so, for most frequently sickness is the consequence of our sins. Thus the enlightened physician was obliged to play a double role in accordance with the prevailing opinions of the time. Indeed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he had to unite the clerical profession with medical science so as to escape the envy and persecution of the clergy. It did not suit the church that men enlightened by the knowledge of science should enjoy the intimacy of princes and the great men of the country. The priests pushed and crowded round the sick beds and endeavoured to prove the efficiency of their appeals to the saints, their intercessions and relics, their consecrated candles, endowments, vows and other pious means. If a patient attained a good cure it was attributed to the intercession of the saints, the vows and the prayers of the priests. If the cure was a failure, the physician was rendered responsible for the death of the patient and the lack of trust in God and the saints were stated to be the cause of death, which was regarded as a punishment of God, for which the relations had to do penance by an excess of masses for the repose of his soul.

These were times when the Church was able to prevent medical men trespassing beyond their legitimate limits, and they were the times when death and disease took a terrible toll of the populations. The Church was, and is, the god-given repositories of the truth, and if the Church is no longer able to keep science within the limits decreed by God, it is because we are flouting its god-given authority.

I must now leave my readers to picture the extent

to which the Church helped medical science, and I have had to content myself with the very briefest of sketches. But if some *accredited representative* of the Church cares to take up the defence of Dr. Stafford Johnson—whose patients may God help!—and the *Catholic Standard*, these columns are at his, or her, disposal.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Bunk of Bethlehem.

"There's nothing either good or ill  
But thinking makes it so."—*Shakespeare.*

"Who loveth not his brother at his side,  
How can he love a dim dream deified?"

*James Thomson.*

The small but fierce tribe of Christian Evidence exponents have found a new ally in Mr. Filson Young, journalist and novelist, who has published an article in the *Radio Times* (January 26), dealing with, among other matters, Christianity as a standard of ethics. Mr. Young, however, wears his rue with a difference. Like that very placid dachshund which Mark Twain saw in the procession of a sportman who was taking it out to hunt wild elephants, he lacks bitterness. He also lacks other things—the ability to murder the English language, and the power of talking very loudly in the open air.

Nevertheless, I find myself in a rebellious humour. For there is an irritating air of dilettantism in Mr. Young's propaganda, and a decided note of patronage. There is also an echo of the Oxford University manner, which has been described jocosely as the attitude of Omnipotence addressing a bug. It will, probably, be grateful to the sentimentalists who still cling to the name of Christian, but I imagine it will irritate rather than satisfy other readers of more virile intelligence.

Mr. Young suggests that Christianity is the only agency capable of saving civilization, and if the standards of that religion were brought to bear on the problems of life, they would be solved. He further adds that the aim of civilization itself is the establishment of "a Kingdom of God" upon earth. Like Bret Harte's "heathen Chinese," Mr. Young is very "childlike and bland," in refreshing contrast to most persons who conceive it their mission in life to defend Christianity with the modesty and suavity of American gangsters. As becomes a journalist, Mr. Young is not only up-to-date, but up to the minute, for he instances the St. Pancras' Council Housing Scheme as an example of the Christian rule in practice in this country.

The latest defender of the faith is not only extensively mistaken in his apologia, but he is very unfortunate in quoting this municipal housing scheme in support of the faith delivered to the saints. The houses in question were not built as a result of prayer, but with the ratepayers' money. There is not even a suggestion of Christian charity, for if the unfortunate ratepayer cannot pay his due he is sent to prison by a Christian judge. The trouble with Mr. Young is that he has mistaken a menu for a banquet, and expects other people to admire his imaginative ardour. He is an excellent novelist, but he should not permit his dreams to impinge upon his ordinary existence. The Christian Superstition is two thousand years old, and throughout that very lengthy period slums and bad housing conditions for the poor have been an integral part of nearly all towns, and even villages, in the Christian world. This neglect of the claims of ordinary humanity lasted throughout the entire Ages of Faith, and now, when

religion is on the wane, and believers are in the minority, a simple piece of secularism such as the provision of decent accommodation for human beings is quoted as a proof of the triumph of a religion which let people live like pigs, whilst its priests chanted the glories of the golden streets up above the bright blue sky.

The Christian menu, so admired by Mr. Young, has no correspondence with the meal that follows, and the price charged is far too high. A bird in the hand is worth a whole aviary in the bush. A most slender chance of strolling through golden streets in the skies does not compensate for mental slavery and degradation here. An honest man with a sense of human dignity would hesitate to juggle with his intellect, and accept a creed because it appeals to his purely selfish hopes and fears. Living by faith is an easy and comfortable profession, as the clergy so well know. Living on faith, however, is a very precarious business. The prophet Elijah is said to have subsisted on food brought him by inspired ravens, and forty thousand clergy to-day in this country alone subsist on the offerings of the credulous. The starving people of Europe ask their God to give them their daily bread, and the answer is that they continue to starve. People live like swine and all the gods of the Pantheon lie "beside their nectar," and do nothing. If there were no other indictment of religion, the awful sufferings of helpless women and little children would condemn it everlastingly.

The aim of civilization is to establish a kingdom of God on earth, says the sentimental Mr. Young, "Aye, there's the rub!" as Shakespeare puts it. The priests pose as the representatives of their gods, and they are the only showmen who never lift the curtain. The clergy are the sole exponents of the unseen oracle, and the establishment of a Kingdom of God is but Priestcraft in practice. Mr. Young's misty idealism has very little association with the creeds of the great historic Christian Churches, and would be frowned upon by the Roman Pontiff, the Greek Patriarch, and the Archbishop of Canterbury alike. Mr. Young's moonshine represents the Christian Religion "on the downgrade." The older theologians of the ages of faith were definite; the modern defenders of religion are so indefinite as to be mawkish. As knowledge increases, the gods become of less and less importance. With each increase of our knowledge of Nature the sphere of the alleged "supernatural" is lessened. Presently people will find that deities and devils are but the reflections of man's imagination and but symbols of his ignorance. Mr. Young has shown us how religion can develop, "till by broad spreading it disperse to nought."

When the Sultan of Zanzibar sent a second-hand tramp steamer to sink the British Fleet, a hearty laugh rang through the civilized world. Mr. Young's acting the part of Saint George attacking the dragon of Freethought is equally joyous and exhilarating. The latest defender of the faith prattles so prettily of the "golden rule," whilst the tens of thousands of clergy recline on bags of a more material gold. Christians are not all so imaginative as Mr. Young. They regard the "Beatitudes" and the "Golden Rule" just as a poor Irish Romanist listens to the recital of a dead language by his priest. It is simply part of the abracadabra of his religion. Christians are simple folk at heart. They worship a deity who never existed, and pay tens of thousands of clergy to act as his interpreters. There is a considerable difference between the ordinary believer who only believes the old, old story because it was taught to him as a child, and the journalist, who turns Christian for half an hour, and seeks reasons for keeping up the

popular superstition. Christians are surrounded by the waters of Freethought, and stand a bad chance of drowning. And the matter will not be unduly prolonged because a popular novelist essays the part of Mrs. Partington, the courageous woman who sought to sweep back the Atlantic Ocean with a mop. The people of this country pay the clergy over half of a million pounds weekly to fight an imaginary devil, who never existed. What has any pre-Christian "Golden Rule" to do with such an impudent piece of charlatanism?

MIMNERMUS.

## The Story of the Matriarchal System.

It is now a well-established truth that savage races still survive who never associate sexual intercourse with the conception of children. Babies, with these primitive peoples, are begotten by the influences of spirits. This ignorance of the processes of reproduction was apparently at one time universal. Consequently, in later stages of human society, when knowledge was further advanced, the paternity of offspring remained ambiguous, and the children were regarded as the property of the mother. Thus, in all likelihood, arose the custom, once ubiquitous, and still prevailing in various savage communities, of tracing the family through the female line alone. This rule, familiar to modern anthropologists as the matriarchate, led to many curious results which exercised considerable influence on religion.

This system of mother-kin is strikingly illustrated in Assam, where the Khasis an agricultural tribe, preserve this ancient custom. Speaking from first-hand knowledge of these people, Major Gurdon, in his work, *The Khasis*, states that: "Not only is the mother the head and source, and only bond of union, of the family: in the most primitive part of the hills, the Synteng country, she is the only owner of real property, and through her alone is inheritance transmitted. The father has no kinship with the children, who belong to their mother's clan; what he earns goes to his own matriarchal stock, and at his death his bones are deposited in the cromlech of his mother's kin. In the veneration of ancestors, which is the foundation of the tribal piety, the primal ancestress and her brother are the only persons regarded."

In the Pelew Islands a similar system prevails. Kubary, who long resided with the natives, describes in his *Die Religion der Pelauer* the system there prevalent. The family or clan derives its descent from a female who is called the common mother, and adores a goddess rather than a god. The superior standing of a female divinity above the gods of later growth is explained by the exalted position of women in social life. Indeed, the Pelew Islanders provide the closest approach to gynocracy, or petticoat government existing in any region of the globe. For with them the influence of mother-kin is strengthened by the circumstance that, the raising of crops upon which the entire community depends for food is the work of the women. Labour on the land is considered a highly honourable calling never to be despised. It is said that: "The richest woman in the village looks with pride on her taro patch, and although she has female followers enough to allow her merely to superintend the work without taking part in it, she nevertheless prefers to lay aside her apron and betake herself to the deep mire, clad in a small apron that hardly covers her nakedness."

Female ascendancy in the Pelew Islands is supported by religious superstition. Sagacious women

are venerated as the spouses of gods whose oracles they interpret to the people. When one of these sapient women is confined, the child is given divine parentage, and its hair remains unshorn as a sign of its superhuman origin. The Islanders believe that no common man would dare to tamper with the virtue of a god's human partner, for the jealous divinity would assuredly punish the sinner with a mortal illness and painful death.

Men also masquerade as the mouthpieces of the gods, and cleverly mimic the appearance and habits attributed by the people to the divinity. These inspired personages are much admired, and their judgments are received with the profoundest respect. Naturally, these prophets accumulate wealth in consequence of their sacred calling. In some districts the soothsayer is a spiritual potentate who ranks above the chiefs themselves.

A widespread misconception has arisen in connexion with mother-kin and the passing of property through the female line. For it has been supposed that women once ruled over societies where the matriarchate prevailed. Now, the man even in the most rudimentary cultures was ever physically and usually mentally superior to the woman. As Frazer points out: "The practice of mother-kin prevails most extensively amongst the lowest savages, with whom woman, instead of being the ruler of man, is always his drudge and often little better than his slave. Indeed, so far is the system from implying any social superiority of women that it probably took its rise from what we should regard as their deepest degradation, to wit, from a state of society in which the relations of the sexes were so loose and vague that the children could not be fathered on any particular man."

Truly, with the advance of civilization and the cultivation of the soil with its associated accumulation of real and personal estate in those societies where mother-right is still preserved, this naturally serves to sustain the importance and dignity of the female sex. Queens became common, but this high status of woman has never made man her social inferior. Even where the matriarchate was most firmly established the reins of government have almost invariably been held by men. Although women of marked ability have been successful rulers both in ancient and modern times, we must allow that "such exceptions are rare, and their effects transitory; they do not affect the truth of the general rule that human society has been governed in the past and, human nature remaining the same, is likely to be governed in the future, mainly by masculine force and masculine intelligence."

In ancient Egypt mother-kin persisted down to the period of the Roman conquest of the country. The archaic custom was traditionally traced to the time of the benign goddess Isis who avenged the murder of her brother and husband Osiris and reigned in Egypt as his successor. The position of woman in the land of the Nile was greatly superior to that in Christendom until quite recent decades. At least, in theory, the Queen was accorded higher honour than the King, and Diodorus Siculus asserts that there existed a clause in the marriage contract under which the husband consented to obey his wife in all things. But the liability for the maintenance of aged parents fell upon the daughters of the family.

A very remarkable consequence of the system of mother-kin was the marital union of full brothers and sisters. Several scribes assumed that this, to us, incestuous relationship, was introduced into Egypt by the Greek monarchs who ruled there after the death of Alexander the Great. As a matter of fact the custom was adopted by the Macedonian Kings from the native Egyptians and served to conciliate the

people to their alien rulers. The learned Orientalist, Prof. Maspero, states that the Egyptians thought a "marriage between brother and sister the best of marriages, and it acquired an ineffable degree of sanctity when the brother and sister who contracted it were themselves born of a brother and sister, who had in their turn also sprung from a union of the same sort."

This custom was not confined to divinities or even those of royal blood. It was general throughout the entire community. "The evidence of legal documents" notes Frazer, "including marriage contracts, tends to prove that such unions were the rule, not the exception, in ancient Egypt, and that they continued to form the majority of marriages long after the Romans had obtained a firm footing in the country."

In the light of these astounding facts it seems difficult to credit Westermarck's explanation of the horror of incest, so widespread throughout the world. This repugnance he ascribes to a sexual coldness and indifference generated through the constant companionship of children in their tender years within the family circle. Again, what becomes of the popular belief that the marriage of near kin leads to speedy deterioration of the stock? For in Egypt, down to Roman rulership, the custom of brother and sister marriage appears to have been practically universal, and yet the Egyptians sustained a high cultural and racial standard for thousands of years.

Obviously, the economic factor tended to promote these family marriages, as the brothers thus obtained their share of the family estate which otherwise would have been enjoyed by the strangers who wedded their sisters. Originally in Egypt, as in the *Beena* system of present-day Ceylon, the daughter of the marriage inherited the family property, and when she became a wife her spouse resided with her while her portionless brothers were driven to seek fame and fortune elsewhere. In course of time, especially among a shrewd community, such as the dwellers of Old Nile, a system so irksome would break down. Men would decline to abandon their birthplace and childhood's home for the advantage of an interloper. Why should a brother not marry his sister himself, remain in the ancestral dwelling and participate in the amenities of the family property? This theory, at least, is accepted by modern scholars and scientists, and quite rationally explains the genesis and persistence of the custom.

T. F. PALMER.

## The Organization of Opinion.

### I.

To speak of organizing opinion might in a sense imply a contradiction in terms. Opinion is personal, divergent—many men, many minds; how then is so tenuous an entity to be organized? Yet we are in a world where, beyond the preferences or prejudices that enter into personal views, already there are large tracts of ideation or beliefs—religious and social—organized in the form of faiths, churches, institutions, with defined, if contradictory formulas, dogmas, scriptures, to support their claim to acceptance or submission. In the field of social order we have traditional loyalties embodied in the State—the domain of Law, demanding allegiance with resources of force behind it. In the sphere of speculation, doctrines like Socialism—originally a revolt against *Laissez-faire* and its corollaries—gather to their support parties with programmes of action and disciplined supporters, like an army pledged to give them effect. Then, where the course of affairs is still affected by agitation, the forces of innovation are met by those of conservation. Beyond particular things it is out to pro-

tect, this attitude is typified in the apology of a famous army chief to his colleagues on retiring: "Well, gentlemen, we have seen many changes in the Services during my period of command, and I can honestly say that none of those changes was made until it could no longer be resisted!"

Things to be resisted alter with time and circumstance. There is the power exercised through history by theocratic institutions like the Roman Church with its avowed possession of absolute truth, its claim to obedience in the realm of faith (or what is really cosmic speculation); and to use the secular arm to enforce this claim against objectors and sceptics *now*—if it had the chance. And though theological terrorism has weakened or temporarily lost its grip on the weapon of proscription, debased imitations have sprung up during post-war disruptions. That explosion of violence on a wholesale scale has incited to further violence as a short way to resolving, through various contradictory nostrums, the national difficulties it has bequeathed. A usurping camarilla occupy the seat of power and impose their will upon all and sundry under the pretext of providing means of salvation or regeneration. So we get a crude doctrine of the state like Fascism; a dubious theory of racial purity and cohesion, as Nazism; a dogmatic, economic evangel—Bolshevik Marxism; in each case gaining an ascendancy over the amorphous mass through armed and disciplined support, and maintaining it by every variety of terrorism and brutality. The barbaric instincts, lurking beneath the veneer of civilization, can be evoked or played upon by aggressive egoism at a time of stress and hardship, when people may be induced to sell their birthright for a mess of dubious pottage—if they ever had a birthright they valued.

This intangible thing, opinion, tends to materialize into a formidable instrument for good or ill, advance or regress, freedom or repression. Ideas may enter the air, by personal initiative, and win attention, possibly, from their intrinsic merit or value. But in the struggle of rival interests and passions there are impelling motives for distinct schools of thought to form corporations in defence and support of some particular attitude, cause, or advocacy. Even when expression is assumed to be unfettered, obstacles arise to the open presentation of new or heretical ideas through certain channels. This applies particularly to the propagation of rational as opposed to non-rational beliefs in the sphere of religious interests; and has a special connexion with the status of the Press to-day.

When sceptical inquiry first began to question traditional beliefs early in last century, the "Protestant Dissenters" had their own grievances against the Establishment, if enjoying wider toleration than in previous times. So the movement for religious equality went forward coincidentally with that for emancipation from old restrictions on free discussion and Press censorship; though these Dissenters had little truck or sympathy with their more heretical brethren. Steadily, however, press, platform, pulpit and Debating forum reached to wide and vigorous functioning. But as regards the Press, a new malady began to afflict it as the century closed. It came under the influence of commercialism—particularly the periodical and newspaper press. A band of business hustlers discovered in a partly educated, if under-cultivated public, a fresh field of exploitation. This was to offer it literary pabulum of sorts in the shape of snippet journals which did not tax its brains unduly, with attractive prize competitions, and newspapers that made an excitement of the presentation of news and events. To make these papers pay a good dividend to their shareholders, to

obtain revenue from advertisements—the chief source of income, every artifice must be utilized to secure “the widest circulation.” The way in which news is dished up to make them “interesting” is inimical to a clear understanding of the course of affairs. This goes by sequence, the effect of to-day’s become the causes of to-morrow’s happenings. To open one of the dailies over the morning meal is to get a series of shocks and explosions as the norm of things; “astounding” this, “amazing” that, “sensational” the other. A recent representative declaration thereon may be paraphrased thus: What is the aim of a newspaper? Exclusive news—scoops. That is what brains, energy, and money are freely spent to provide. Lately the *Daily Blazer* has surpassed its record in this respect. Now we invite our readers’ attention to next Sunday’s edition of the *Blazer*, when we present for their benefit, the first instalment of the personal life-story of that notorious long-firm merchant and blackmailer, X, whose crimes have just been rewarded with penal servitude. This delightful story is the best scoop of all . . .

Then still further to attract customers we get the gift-coupon. Speaking of this feature at the Institute of Journalists’ Conference, in August, the President said: “Money which should be spent in the better management, and production of a paper, in improving the conditions under which the journalist worked, was now being literally thrown away. He was not opposed to any legitimate form of enterprise, but was there anyone there who would admit that a free distribution of washing machines, pyjamas, pillow-cases, silk stockings, fountain pens, and even more elaborate gifts such as gold wristlet watches, to capture any and everybody was consonant with the traditions of British journalism? They had given up selling newspapers; they gave away mangles and asked people to accept the paper as a favour. . . . These attempts to increase circulation were all the more to be regretted as there never was a time when it was more necessary to concentrate upon the legitimate aspects of their business.”

In consequence of these tactics newspapers have largely lost the position of influence they have tacitly occupied hitherto as serious organs of opinion. A few journals still maintain the finer British tradition in all these respects. The flashlight productions offer their comments or events, and put forward sporadic views of policy—usually the *ipse dixit* of their leading proprietor; and they exert an indirect or questionable influence through the way in which news is treated. The singular thing about these mundane concerns is anxiety to keep on good terms with the religious world. They shy at anything like the suggestion of Freethought. They admit readily the protests of Roman Catholics over any alleged misrepresentation, but it is difficult for Freethinkers to get a similar hearing. Maybe they regard such folk as too insignificant a minority for consideration. That remains a matter for themselves to put right by some form of concerted action directed to secure this hearing. It is one of the ironies of circumstance that while Freedom of the Press is mainly due to the past work of Freethinkers they should find themselves excluded from its full benefits by subsequent developments. We shall meet with others as we proceed.\*

Freethought propaganda must therefore rely on its own sustained effort, its special journals and lecturing mission, in and out of doors. It has also a peculiar relation to political organization and action.

AUSTIN VERNEY.

\* The subject of Broadcasting has become an important matter in the dissemination of ideas and opinion, but it calls for separate examination.

## Acid Drops.

Our congratulations to the Johannesburg Labour Party. At its Annual Conference held on December 31, two resolutions were proposed by the Afrikaner-speaking section. One was:—

That the Labour Party recognized God as the Divine Ruler.

The other:—

That the Labour Party recognize the hand of God in the destiny of nations.

The resolutions were both rejected, and the Labour Party, has, therefore, rejected God as an honorary associate of the Labour Movement in South Africa.

The rejection of the resolution led to the resignation of forty-one members, including the Vice-Chairman of the Party. The latter explained to an interviewer of the *Johannesburg Star*, that:—

The Afrikaner-speaking workers are still attached to their church and their traditions. They are accustomed to see mural decorations of their houses. . . . So we set about to get divine guidance officially recognized by the Party.

In other words, an election dodge calculated to win over the more ignorant, and to induce the more intelligent to sink their opinions in order to catch votes. Well, that policy is quite common in the political world, and we have very many examples of it in operation in this country. All the same we congratulate the majority of the Labour Party in Johannesburg in having enough intellectual decency to organize that so flagrant a breach of intellectual honesty and fair-play did not—in the long run—pay. And we hope that even the religious section will ultimately come to the same conclusion. A man who will sell his own personal convictions for the sake of catching votes, must be expected to sell those with whom he is working when personal profit is promised by his doing so.

A correspondent of the *British Weekly* confesses that he, during his long life, listened to 6,240 sermons, but says that not a single sermon ever produced any effect on his life or conduct. But a writer in *The Torch* doubts this. For, says he, “A man who has attended preaching services for sixty years cannot be what he would have been had he not been present on those occasions.” With this we cordially agree. Merely to have stood this sixty years of preaching must have involved a coarsening of one’s intellectual powers—that is, unless some strong counter irritant was taken of a more intellectually stimulating character. If the man who passed through this terrible experience failed to resent the matter of sermons, his mental fibre must have undergone a progressive deterioration; if he did not, a constant irritation, fatal to a completely healthy mental life. We agree with the religious critic. No man can listen to sermons for sixty years without being affected by them—we believe for the worse.

The Gilbert and Sullivan operas are as great favourites with the present generation as they were with the generation that saw their birth. But Gilbert would have had to look to his laurels if he had entered into open competition with our political leaders. As a matter of fact some of his most famous effects were produced by presenting a few analogues of our political and social theories. And what capital use he could have made of the efforts of the Government to promote disarmament! Actually at great length the Government’s latest “disarmament” proposal is the suggestion that Germany shall be permitted to rearm up to the level of the other powers. That is what is understood by disarmament! Everyone is to have an equal armament, but so that it may not cost too much they must all agree not to go beyond a certain level. Everyone will be disarmed when everyone is equally armed. There can be no war when we all have a fight armed with the same kind and

quantity and quality of weapons. And the House of Commons takes itself so seriously that it can discuss the proposition with a perfectly straight face!

The Very Reverend John Power, of Our Lady of the Rosary, Birmingham, advertises that "Mothers, widows, married women and the sorrowing should write him, and he will place their 'intentions' on the 'miraculous shrine' of St. Anne at the Tuesday Mass. It is, of course, expected that a donation will accompany each 'intention.' The Patroness of the shrine is the 'Mother of the Mother of God.' We do not see why another patroness should not be found in the grandmother of the mother of God, and then there are the uncles and cousins and aunts to fall back on for a kind of grand rally. We suppose that if we were to talk of St. Anne as the grandmother of God, it would be considered blasphemy.

A boy was remanded at a Juvenile Court so that he might decide which religion he would like to adopt. The boy is fourteen years of age. He is at present a Roman Catholic, but states he would like to change his religion. Perhaps it is the spirit of the pure experimentalist working, and Roman Catholicism not being strong enough to keep him out of the hands of the police, he wishes to try what some form of Protestantism will do. But we are quite sure that this little humbug has the makings of a first-rate travelling evangelist in him. With proper coaching, addresses telling how he found that the mother of God, plus God's grandmother, plus the rest of the heavenly family not being able to keep him on the straight path, he would tell how he joined the true faith and so blossomed into the saint that he since became. That boy is of the stuff of which great evangelists are made.

Ex-bishop Dean J. E. C. Welldon bids fair to rival Chesterton's cheap clowning. In *Everyman* he says (or "is tempted to say") "Life would be nothing if it were everything." He asks, "Will Science and Religion Ever Agree?" As he thinks "Science is less materialistic than it was fifty years ago," it ought to be easy to calculate in how many years from now science will accept the Mosaic account of creation, or the Apostles' Creed—or Dean Welldon's beliefs, whatever they may happen to be: the mere fact that a highly-paid ecclesiastic is employed to teach certain doctrines does not nowadays imply that he believes all or any of them.

Dean Welldon is kind enough to say that "Atheism has been exemplified" (note the past tense) "in some noble characters," but it "yet loses" (note the present tense) "or never attains the supreme dignity of the spiritual life." We could point to some fine examples of the supreme dignity of some spiritual lives, past and present, on thrones, in churches and in high office! The Dean himself admits "the cruelties which have been wrought by all religions" in the name of Orthodoxy or Spirituality. He sees no hope apparently except in survival after death—"a solace unspeakable." The orthodox belief in Hell may be "unspeakable," but it is a poor sort of solace!

Lenten Lectures at St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street, include Dr. Herbert Gray, on "Marriage," followed by one to men only by the Bishop of London entitled, "The Only Way."

The Rev. Albert Belden, in a recent sermon reported in the *British Weekly*, refers to "the first missionary expedition," when Jesus sent out the apostles "in racing kit." Mr. Belden does not give us the name of the winner! "Judas Iscariot probably a more thoughtful type of social reformer," fell out at the first obstacle. Mr. Belden misquotes a famous text to make it fit a very undeserved eulogy of what Christian love means. He says that "St. John in his Epistle asserts: 'By this we know that we have passed from death to life because we love.'" What St. John said was, "because we love the

Brethren." Even Hitler loves his fellow gangsters. To love the Christian brethren is what men mean by "Christian love."

We deal in "Views and Opinions" with the special plea of Dr. Stafford Johnson, an Irish Roman Catholic doctor, in which he sets forth the services of the Church to medical science. The lecture was delivered as part of an attack on the newly formed Secular Society in Dublin. This Society has had some difficulty in finding a meeting place, and the conditions under which it has to work is indicated by the fact that it has had to limit its meetings to its own members, or to those who are specially invited to be present. Moreover, the conditions are such that in Ireland the propaganda of Freethought, thanks to the tyranny of the Roman Catholic priesthood, has to be conducted much on the lines that Freethought, Socialist and Communist and other forms of propaganda has to be conducted in Germany. The rule of the priest in Ireland is not quite so ruthless as that of Hitler in Germany, but it falls within the same general category.

One has to remember this in order to appreciate the following from Dr. Stafford Johnson:—

To-day has seen the unmasking of a society formed to spread in this Catholic country the poison of modern paganism. Let these people come out into the open, let them declare themselves and their opinions with honesty and moderation.

That, too, is exactly what Hitler says. He says, if there are any who do not agree with me, let them say so openly—it will make it easier work for us. Dr. Stafford Johnson would make it easier for his priests and gun-men to deal with the members of the Secular Society of Ireland. A man a little more intelligent, and one decidedly more honest than is Dr. Johnson in this matter, would say that if people cannot come into the open with their opinions the fault lies with those bullies who make it impossible for them to do so. The shame, whatever there be, lies not with the men who are afraid to express themselves openly, but with those who make honesty of speech dangerous. Dr. Stafford Johnson is not ashamed of the Church that is ready to hound men down, close their places of meeting, rob them of the means of getting a livelihood, and even "beat them up" in various ways, he is wroth only with those who will not place their heads within striking distance. Naturally, the Catholic *Standard* thinks highly of Dr. Johnson. What honest men will think of him is quite another matter.

Miss Doris Manners-Sutton, in a book of adventures entitled *Black God*, tells us that she once met a cannibal who was a graduate of Brussels University, and dressed in European clothes, and still proud of being a cannibal. We have met hundreds of educated Europeans who keep up the old savage custom of "eating their God," and are equally unashamed.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has lost his velvet cap of episcopal purple, and is much concerned about it. Probably he thinks his chance of "muddling through into Heaven" has gone down a couple of points.

The Bishop of Carlisle is concerned with the inadequacy of Religious Education in England. Speaking at Carlisle he called attention to the fact that Religious Instruction by which he presumably meant instruction in the religion of this country by God and Law Established "fell lamentably short of what they had under Secular instruction, whether in scope, efficiency and seriousness."

If the Bishop is prepared to forego State help in this direction—and there were passages in his speech which seemed to indicate that the provision of this instruction was the Church's business—he is working on lines to which no one can take reasonable exception. There are, however, difficulties inherent in religious instruction

which make it difficult to imagine—even if sufficient funds were forthcoming—that in efficiency they could even compete favourably with secular learning. For it is the business of the Modern Theology, to which the Bishop of Carlisle adheres to, in one way and another, decry the reliance on reason, and to make out that the more important things in life come by faith or intuition or some form of transcendentalism. Should this be the case, secular instruction will always show its superiority, for by scientific method an exactitude can be reached unattainable by those who try their wings in vacuo.

The Bishop spoke slightly of “the emotion and enthusiasm which could be engendered for a time at least, by missions of various kinds, sporadic efforts which lasted for comparatively brief periods.” People were rejecting the faith once delivered to the saints, and it was the Church’s business to repair that process by showing them “what that faith was in its modern development.”

The theological brains are, in short, now in steep, so that the Revelation of God to Man may be kept up to date. Generally this is managed by throwing out ballast from the theological balloon. But whatever happens, Reason will follow religious pleadings, and if they don’t satisfy its requirements more and more ballast will inevitably have to be thrown out.

Dr. W. E. Orchard, Rome’s most recent spectacular convert, has been writing about the Bible. It need hardly be said that, in his opinion, the only people who really understand it are Roman Catholics. Even the Jews who wrote and preserved the Hebrew Old Testament don’t understand their part of the Grand Old Book. Dr. Orchard is really “kidding himself,” if he imagines that they “are finding it more and more impossible to stand by the Old Testament and reject the New.” Torture, murder, massacre, imprisonment, have all failed to make the Jews accept the New Testament. They are indeed a living witness that it is *not* true—that Jesus was *not* their promised “Messiah.” Dr. Orchard does not like the Jews to fall into “bitter Atheism” rather than accept the hotch-potch of credulous myth, legend and lies which are the bases of his own stupid creed, but it is a fact that when the Jew sees “light” on the Old Testament, he very gratefully prefers Atheism to the Christianity of any brand. Why do converts to Rome nearly always proceed to write drivel trying to defend their change of opinion?

The North Pole has been captured by the Roman Catholic Church—at least there are two Bishops of the North Pole now. One is Mgr. Turquetil, and the other is Mgr. Fallaize, both of whom have been “converting” a few unlucky Esquimaux. We suggest the Protestants sending out two Bishops to capture the South Pole in the same way. It ought to be a glorious chance for the Bishop of London, and if there are no Esquimaux to convert or bless there, a few seals or bears ought to be requisitioned. In any case we beg the English Church to get to the South Pole first.

Another puzzled enquirer has been effectively “disposed of” by a pious Catholic editor. His answer is: “The Pope is surrounded by ‘Pomp and Circumstance’ because he is the Vicar of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords to whom all possible honour and reverence is due.” The “honour and reverence” really mean unmitigated grovelling in front of another man, and there is actually no difference between the kind of thing which goes on before the Pope than there is before a savage witch-doctor and his most undeveloped dupes.

High hopes were held in some religious quarters here that the 6,000 Protestant pastors in Germany would successfully defy Hitler and the Nazis. They were bluntly told, however, that the State would withdraw its financial support, and they are now thoroughly docile supporters of the Nazi regime. This means, we are told, “that religious liberty is dead in the German Republic.” But is not *all* liberty dead in Germany?

Besides, what is meant by “religious” liberty? Is it not a fact that, while it had the power, the Church—any Church—suppressed opposition, religious or otherwise? Religious liberty, forsooth!

What liberty is there once the Church gets its fangs into anything? The *Daily Mail’s* headline, “Roman Catholic M.P. talks out Divorce Bill,” tells the story of “liberty” in seven words. That such a thing is possible in 1934 in Protestant England—that a Roman Catholic Member of Parliament can dispose so easily of one of the finest bills ever put before it makes one realize the “liberty” one can expect from religion. Again we ask, what is “religious” liberty?

In a popular newspaper a writer declares in favour of a “mental spring-cleaning.” He enquires: “Do any of us turn out our thought-chambers and destroy those junk sentiments and obsessions which clutter up our minds and crowd out more valuable ideas? No!” We commend this bright and seasonable thought to the adherents of the Christian Churches. They may perhaps care to know that Freethought literature is an excellent cleanser and disinfectant for religion-soaked “thought-chambers.” For removing junk sentiments and obsessions implanted by a religious upbringing it has no equal. Moreover, its effects are not merely of a negative character, for it not only furnishes more valuable ideas, but also makes the thought-chamber more receptive to those ideas.

The Rev. Wilfred Hanman explains that “Jesus did not come into a prayerless world, nor exercise his ministry in a prayerless country. On the contrary, he lived and taught in a land that was steeped and soaked in prayer.” We should prefer to say that Jesus did not come into a superstitionless world, but into one that was steeped and soaked in superstition. What his followers did was merely to exchange their old superstition for his new one. With its belief in angels and devils, and miracles, and its stupid reliance on supernatural aid, the exchange was not any advantage. On the contrary, it was a return to a distinctly lower level of thought than that which existed amongst the educated classes, and it took a thousand years for the world to overcome some of the worst influences of the gospel of Christianity.

## Fifty Years Ago.

### MR. BRADLAUGH AND THE HOUSE.

THE noisy opposition of such curs as Healy, Churchill, and O'Donnell must have vastly amused Mr. Bradlaugh after he had legally secured his position by taking the oath. We wonder they did not seek to exclude Mr. Labouchere from his seat when he declared that to him the oath was merely “superstitious trash, as bad as that of any mumbo-jumbo among African savages.” This was going farther than Mr. Bradlaugh, who only declared that to use the name of God was to him unmeaning. To be consistent the bigots should proceed to disqualify Mr. Bradlaugh’s bold colleague as well as himself, and disfranchise Northampton altogether. Of course, such members of “the best club in London” as the scion of the well-pensioned house of Marlborough, would much like to blackball any member they find objectionable, but they can only venture upon this in the case of one against whom are arrayed all the forces of bigotry and misrepresentation. They know that in excluding a duly-elected member they are in opposition to the very first principle of the constitution, which is that the possessors of the franchise shall elect whomsoever they please to serve them in the people’s House of Commons. It is because this principle of supreme importance has been flagrantly violated in the person of Mr. Bradlaugh that every elector in the kingdom should make it a test question. Will the next Parliament accord Northampton her rights, or like the present, by overriding the choice of a constituency, merit no better designation than that of a rump Parliament?

*The “Freethinker,” February 17, 1884.*



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. POWELL.—We fully appreciate what you say, and try to get into the paper articles that will meet the needs of all sorts of readers, both the one who is advanced in Free-thought, and those who are making their first essay in the field. Thanks for saying what you have said.

W. REPTON.—Your desire is flattering to ourselves, and the matter indicated is very important, but we have enough on hand already without branching out in new directions, and there are other journals that deal with the subject you name. Glad you enjoyed the Annual Dinner so much. The pleasure seems to have been very general.

D.P.S.—We think you have the right point of view, but it is best for us not to interfere in the matter, at least, at present.

D.P.S.—You are right. We do not like such terms as "Religious impulse," or "religious instinct." They are, more or less, mere brain-deadening phrases which save people the task of trying to do some exact thinking. An impulse in the direction of thinking in terms of religion, is better, because it does not imply the existence of a religious faculty. Words and phrases should never be permitted to do duty for thinking.

H. HAZEL.—The price of *The God of the Witches* is 8s. 6d. Your order has been despatched. Thanks.

TO ADVERTISING THE "FREETHINKER."—Dr. W. L. English, £1 7s.

A. MITCHELL.—We cannot put our meaning fully in a small paragraph. But we may summarize by saying that a democracy carries within it the seeds of its own reformation inasmuch as it can appeal to the only source of help—the general community. An autocracy, on the other hand has no source to "tap" for reforming power, and so carries within it the seeds of its own decay. The only possible good, is when an autocrat is wise enough to plan for his own supersession. But these cases are very, very rare. Personal power has an intoxicating influence.

ATHOS ZENO writes to correct a misprint in his letter last week. He did not claim to have "founded" but to have "found" a Rational Atheist Philosophy in 1891.

*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.*

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

For life with all it yields of joy and woe—  
Is just our chance of the prize of learning love.

Browning.

## Sugar Plums.

We hope Freethinkers and their friends are making a special note of the Social, Dance and Musical evening to be held on Saturday, March 3, in the Caxton Hall, Victoria Street, S.W.1. The tickets, including refreshments, are 2s. 6d. each, and we anticipate a thoroughly enjoyable evening—judging by past experience. The Social offers a capital opportunity for Freethinkers to meet each other and to introduce their friends.

To-day (February 18) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, at 7.0. Admission will be free. Reserved seats one shilling each. On Saturday, Mr. Cohen will be the guest of the Liverpool Branch at their Annual Dinner, which will take place at the Angel Hotel, Dale Street.

On Sunday next (February 25) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Empress Hall, Mealhouse Lane, Deansgate, Bolton, at 7 p.m. It is some time since Mr. Cohen lectured in Bolton, and a good audience is anticipated. Admission will be free, but there are reserved seats at 1s. each.

Mr. Cohen's new work, *Letters to a Country Vicar*, will be published on February 21. The letters are a reply to some letters received from a Vicar, and we think will prove a very useful piece of propaganda, eminently suitable for handing to a Christian friend, and containing plenty of ammunition for Freethinkers. The work extends to about 100 pages, and will be published at 1s. in stiff paper covers, or 2s. strongly bound in cloth.

Just as we were going to press with the last issue of the *Freethinker*, we received a letter from Dr. C. L. D'Avoine, Secretary of the Bombay Rationalist Press Association, an account of a prosecution that had been set on foot against him for publishing certain passages in the monthly journal *Reason*. The Association of which *Reason* is the official organ, was founded in 1930, under the title of "The Anti-Priestcraft Association." In 1931 its name was changed to that of "The Rationalist Association of India." The following account, taken from the *Times* of India, for January 19, gives an account of the initial stages of the prosecution. Dr. D'Avoine is a well known medical practitioner:—

A charge of insulting or attempting to insult with deliberate and malicious intention the religious feelings of Catholics and Muslims was framed against Dr. C. L. D'Avoine, a well-known medical practitioner and editor and publisher of *Reason*, the organ of the Rationalist Association of India, by Sir Hornuzdyar Dastur, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, on Thursday. The charge was in connexion with the publication of two articles appearing in the issue of *Reason* of September last.

Mr. C. M. Hastley, officiating Public Prosecutor, said the Anti-Priestcraft Association was formed in Bombay in March, 1930, and in 1931 the name of the association was changed to that of Rationalist Association of India. The object of the association was to combat all religious and social beliefs and customs that could not stand the test of reason, and to endeavour to create a scientific and tolerant mentality among the masses of this country. *Reason* was an organ of the association, published monthly, at the Empire Automobile Building, Queen's Road. According to what appeared in the magazine, the membership of the association was increasing daily.

There were about 262 members in the association, continued counsel. Five hundred copies of the magazine were printed monthly, and they were circulated among the members and libraries. *Reason* was one of the means of carrying out the objects of the association.

The articles relating to the charge appeared on pages 3 and 7, continued the public prosecutor. One appeared under the heading "Notes and Happenings" and the other under the heading "Religion and Morality." The first article was a direct hit at Christians, and the second article was not only a hit at Catholicism, but also against Islam.

The Magistrate, referring to the second article, remarked: "It says about Muslims but nothing about

Islam." He added that he could not see how a Muslim could get offended. The same might be said about Parsis also.

Mr. Eastley said any Muslim reading the article would take very strong exception to the statement that he was more particular about washing his fingers and toes and assuming the correct posture than committing an offence. It was a writing which would outrage the Muslim feelings.

Inspector Lyon, of the C.I.D., in his evidence said he investigated the case. He went to the Kamat Printing Press, where the magazine was printed, and seized six copies of *Reason* of August, 1933, five copies of August, 1932, two copies of September last and one proof copy (pages 1 to 25), of September last. He later saw Dr. Coelho at the Empire Automobile Building and took sixteen copies of the magazine of the September issue. Mr. D. R. D. Wadia kept the accounts of the association. Witness learnt that Dr. D'Avoine wrote the editorial notes and articles.

Continuing, the police officer said he objected to the two articles in question. As a Catholic reading the articles, he would consider that his religious feelings had been outraged.

After the examination of two more witnesses, the Magistrate framed a charge against Dr. D'Avoine.

Further hearing was postponed till January 31.

The following are the two passages on which the Government of Bombay bases its action:—

The Holy Year is in full swing, and every stunt calculated to raise the emotion and piety of the faithful is being done to make it a success. During the last Lenten festivals, according to *Le Journal*, of Paris, a perfect debauché of religiosity was witnessed in Rome. The ascent of the Holy Staircase by the Pope on his knees, and the adoration of the Holy Relics when he reached the top was one of those impressive stunts which doubtless edified the superstitious Italians who always crave for these shows. The next stunt, we are told, will be the exposition of the so-called Holy Coat without seams, which is reserved in the Cathedral of Treves, at which it is expected that millions of spectators will be present.

Catholicism, for instance, actually teaches that devotion to ceremonial observances and orthodoxy are immeasurably superior to "good works." Catholicism holds that moral offences are trifling matters compared with any deviation from the faith taught by the Church. The average Catholic would attach more importance to not eating meat on a Friday or not attending Mass on a Sunday, than to moral obligations of a serious nature. We see this also with the average Mussulman who is very particular about washing his fingers and toes before saying his prayers, about assuming the correct posture and position, while he would commit the most grievous offence the moment after he has said his prayers.

Dr. D'Avoine writes us that chief objection was taken against the word "stunt," applied to Roman Catholic practices, and adds, "I was not surprised at this arrest, as I knew that for some time some influential Jesuits here, aided by some Catholic bigots, have been trying to get the Government to suppress *Reason*, and to prosecute me. At last they succeeded in finding somebody in the Home Department of the Government of Bombay, who listened sympathetically to their complaint. . . . If the prosecution succeed in convicting me, then good-bye to free discussion of religious topics in India, as under the new section (framed in 1927) they can bring anybody who criticizes religion and priests within its scope."

This is the most impudent prosecution for the offence of criticizing religion that we have heard of for some time—outside parts of Canada, where the Roman Church is powerful to do almost anything. It is obvious that the prosecution cannot safely plead that such criticism cannot be permitted because it may inflame the passions of followers of the native religions. It is manifestly a prosecution, engineered by Roman Catholics, who cannot stand their religious mummeries being called "stunts." The reference to "the average Mussulman" is included only because to have taken action solely to protect Roman Catholics from criticism. It is quite certain that no action could be taken under our own blasphemy laws, for the passages selected for indictment no matter when or where they were written or spoken. It is a matter on

which a question might reasonably be asked in Parliament. It is to be noted that it was not thought necessary to call Mohammedans as to whether *their* feelings had been outraged. It was enough for a policeman to say that his feelings as a Roman Catholic would be outraged by reading the passages of which complaint was made. And all the time everyone knows that the statements made are absolutely true. Moral obligations carry far less weight with the average Roman Catholic than would the neglect to attend Mass or eating forbidden food on Friday. It is not decency of behaviour that can save a man; the Catholic is even more insistent on this point than is any other variety of Christian believer. We have many readers in India, and we hope they will keep us informed of any side issues that arise out of this prosecution.

London speakers will be busy in the provinces to-day (February 18). Mr. A. D. McLaren lectures in the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow. It will be his first visit to the land of his forefathers, and our friends in the North are expecting a "full house." Mr. L. Ebury pays his first visit to Bradford, and will speak in the Jowett Hall, Chapel Street, Leeds Road, Bradford, and Mr. G. Bedborough will be in Birmingham in the Bristol Street Schools. Time and subjects will be found in the Lecture Notices column, and we hope to hear of successful meetings in every case.

The West Ham Branch is making an attempt to "rope in" some of the unattached Freethinkers in its parish. To that end it has issued a very well-phrased circular letter, which we hope will receive the response it deserves. There may in the near future be urgent need for a new stand to be made for freedom of thought and speech, and it is well for us to be prepared. It is too late to be sorry after the event. The new autocracy is definitely against all that such an organization as the N.S.S. stands for. The name and address of the West Ham Secretary is Mr. Ivor Greenhouse, 9 Stapleford Avenue, Ilford, Essex.

Freethinkers are beginning to realize the importance and necessity of a strong organization, and from time to time new Branches of the N.S.S. are formed in different parts. An effort is now to be made to form a Branch of the Society in Sheffield, and will those who are ready to co-operate please communicate with Mr. G. L. Greaves, 31 Sherrington Road, Sheffield.

We have a "free" press, but it is kept carefully under control. The public is not prevented getting the news, but care must be taken as to the news it gets. Mrs. Grundy, the advertisers, and the newspaper "bosses" between them see that these things are accomplished. In this respect the American press actually seems to have greater liberty than does our own. We have noticed it before with regard to Freethought news, and we have had it recalled to our mind by the treatment of Mr. Campbell's booklet, *The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus*, published with a preface by J. M. Robertson, by the Pioneer Press, at 2s. In America quite a number of good notices—not necessarily favourable, but good, nevertheless, have appeared, the latest of which, strongly commendatory, appears in *Opinion*. Of course, notices of even the publications of the Pioneer Press might be gained—via the advertisement manager. Still, we have existed hitherto without buying press notices, and we expect we shall continue to exist without assistance from the same quarter.

No one can have talked to the more enthusiastic Methodists and listened to stories of miracles without perceiving that they require no other passport to a statement than that it accords with their wishes and their general conception of God's dealings; nay, they regard as a symptom of man's scepticism an inquiry into the evidence for a story which they think unquestionably tends to the glory of God, and in retelling such stories, new particulars, further tending to his glory, are "borne in" upon their minds.—*George Eliot "Essays."*

## Heresy in Literature.

(Concluded from page 84.)

### III.

BUT before we leave the realm of poetry altogether, one author must be named, who is, strictly speaking, not a poet at all. Mr. Llewelyn Powys, whose *The Pathetic Fallacy* is a study of the history of Christianity, is one of the most unusual writers of to-day. His works are, as we have said, not poetry, but can only be described as prose poems on a heroic scale.

"Some compensating explanation has to be sought for the swift passing of the generations. Not even a Pharaoh, a Cæsar or a Tamburlaine can reconcile himself to an existence inconsequent and empty of meaning. The egoism of the species is involved. Let the lives of pismires, of pygargs be without significance, but not those of cardinal man."

Let us now consider the most popular of all the literary forms of to-day—the novel. What have the novelists to say of these things? And here, more than ever, the commercial aspect of the situation has to be taken into consideration. In the past, for a novelist to condemn the religious faith of his day was tantamount to committing economic suicide. And so Dickens and Scott, Thackeray and Trollope were strictly orthodox, to all outward appearance. That George Eliot was a heretic, we know. As to the others—well, who can tell?

When we come to more recent times, however, there is a very different state of affairs. Thomas Hardy's poems show a pessimism second only to that of James Thomson himself, and his novels are the same. The very fact that *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* were condemned by the clergy of their day is enough to show the change. The idea of a malignant, implacable fate, which it were useless to defy and hopeless to combat, is, some critics feel, dragged in rather too obtrusively in some of Hardy's novels, but it cannot be denied that his philosophy is definitely anti-Christian, and nowadays few try to deny it. Which shows, it might be added, how much reliance one can place on the fact of a man's being buried in Westminster Abbey.

And the other later Victorians. What of them? Let us consider them shortly. Oscar Wilde. He was certainly no religious maniac, whatever else his faults, and in *De Profundis* he expressed a wish that some person would found a sect for those people who *could* not believe in religion. One feels inclined to ask if he had never heard of the National Secular Society, but in Wilde's day, whatever anyone "in Society" felt, he could not join associations which were definitely anti-religious in their objects.

Robert Louis Stevenson was a Christian—of a sort. But he was so totally unorthodox that his father practically cast him out for that very reason.

Mr. H. G. Wells has already found mention, when the historians were being considered. But, such a mighty figure does he make in the literature of the past forty years, that he must be considered here again. Mr. Wells' religious beliefs seem to have been always in a more or less fluid state from the date of publication of his *Anticipations* (1900) down to the present day. He certainly has no belief in personal immortality for men. "The experiment is finished, the test-tube is empty, its contents poured down the sink." That was the expressive way in which he once expressed his idea of death. And as to a belief in God it is difficult to determine. The tribal Jehovah of old Israel, in common with the Allah of the Mohammedan, Wells certainly has no belief in, but what someone once described as a "limited liability deity" seems to be his general idea.

Mr. Eden Phillpotts is the most distinguished follower in the school of Hardy. But a novel which he once wrote, and which, naturally, is not well known, says much more. *The Joy of Youth* is rarely mentioned in any list of Mr. Phillpotts' works, and yet into it he has preached the sane, unemotional ideal of rationalism, as opposed to the muddiness of supernaturalism in art.

"They say the Greek spirit is dead, and that it is affectation to try and revive it. But how can eternal principles die? How can a creative afflatus founded on the logic of pure reason die? The new energy I recognize; but it does not destroy the old. Chaos cannot kill cosmos, any more than the supernatural can smudge out rationalism. . . . The Greek spirit lives, because it was built on the sure rock of human reason, and—be there gods or be there none—reason is responsible for the enduring things in philosophy and art and science."

Quotation could go on for ever, but what we have quoted should be sufficient to show that Mr. Phillpotts is one of the noblest apostles of reason writing to-day.

Arnold Bennett, too, was a member of the Rationalist Press Association for many years, and he once said that he could never admit Mr. G. K. Chesterton as his mental equal, because a young man (this was written in 1910 or thereabouts) who could accept the Catholic dogma in the way in which Mr. Chesterton had, must necessarily be mentally inferior.

And where are the authors on the other side? John Galsworthy was certainly no Christian. No one who reads his work with care can have any doubt about that. And with John Galsworthy we seem to have exhausted the older literary names of the last thirty or forty years, unless we turn to the ever-present Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton. But what are two against so many?

And with the rather younger men, things are worse. Who is the most brilliant young novelist of to-day? Ninety-nine critics out of a hundred would say Mr. Aldous Huxley, and he is not a Christian. *Brave New World* proves that effectively enough, if there were any doubt about it.

The defenders of orthodoxy who compile symposia for the Sunday press usually fall back on Miss Ursula Bloom, Mrs. Leonora Eyles, and suchlike purveyors of the definitely commercial novel. No artists grace their ranks. And we suspect that it has been the same in the past, that it is the Marie Corellis, the Hall Caines and the Mrs. Henry Woods who have written the orthodox religiosities of their time, and the H. G. Wells's, the George Moores, the D. H. Lawrences who have shocked by their heterodoxy.

Outside history, poetry and the novel, all of which we have now considered in their turn, what remains? Only the drama. And here the tale is the same. Mr. Bernard Shaw is beyond all doubt the greatest British dramatist of to-day. And Mr. Shaw has always been an Atheist. Galsworthy and Mr. Phillpotts are two others, but they have already been dealt with on previous pages.

The conclusion, therefore, of our enquiry must be faced. Far from the ideas of the religious factions being correct, they are utterly and entirely wrong. Whenever authors have been free to write as they liked, they have been more against religion than for it. But, wherever possible, they have been crushed into silence. Can one doubt, for example, that James Thomson's immortal poem would have been banned from publication in all but the anti-religious press? Can one doubt that the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association have provided platforms for numbers of authors who, otherwise, would never have had a chance?

And the support of religion has been, with one or two insignificant exceptions, in inverse proportion to their talent as artists. The greatest of them all have almost always been against religion, presumably because the small ideas of the priests have been too puny to contain the minds of the masters.

The minor artist, with little hope of making a living by his art, can, by hitching himself to some rich and powerful religion, make ends meet and contrive to snatch a meagre existence from his pen. But the masters scorn such things. With their penetrating insight, they can pierce the veils of superstition, and face what lies beyond. By the mightiness of their art they can see things that ordinary men would never discover. And when we, too, are vouchsafed a glimpse of these mysteries (and they are real mysteries, not the mummeries and flim-flams enacted in churches) we should be duly grateful.

But let us never forget that if the churches had their way many of the masters would never have spoken in that clear, unfaltering tongue, many of the immortal voices would never have been heard.

Let us make sure that there shall never again be such a risk, that the spirit which cast Shelley forth from the University of Oxford for an Atheistic pamphlet, and harassed Gibbon all his days, shall not have influence on literature again, and shall not spoil the lives of great artists in the days ahead.

JOHN ROWLAND.

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### The Rome-ward Trend.

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THE Holy Year proclaimed by the Pope some time time back, did not lack wide publication in Protestant England. Many of the daily newspapers gave it huge headlines and heavy type. They were astute enough to realize that Anglo-Catholics are growing in numbers, and indeed the Rome-ward trend of the mystically-minded, superstitious and credulous may very soon become a trek. It is not only the Anglican Church that has been showing signs of sympathy and co-operation with the Papacy. There are many Nonconformists who affect to believe that Rome has "broadened" and is prepared to concur in a revised statement of the faith. Dr. Orchard was the bell-weather of the Congregationalists; and every now and then one reads of a prominent layman who has forsaken the unseaworthy ship of Protestantism for the solid walls of Rome.

Of course such occurrences do not take place without causing divisions and dissensions. There are still large numbers of people even in the Anglican Church who view with profound misgivings the success of the persistent propaganda of the Vatican, which is ever careful to send forth its deliverances at the psychological moment. The Pope's Proclamation of a Holy Year was well-timed. It came when the majority of Christian believers were bathing in the bemusing bathos of Bethlehem; and supping on the sloppy doggerel of sentimentalism, over which they shed their maudlin tears.

To get its message home to the minds of the many-headed, Rome has only to employ sentimentality and menaces. With these possessing greater knowledge it uses other expedients—flattery and misrepresentation of Materialism. Supernatural wranglers make a great deal of the distinction to be drawn between opinions and convictions. Their special objects of hatred are those who decline to accept statements of alleged facts which cannot stand the test of a square with ascertained truth. The conjectural deity of the Christians depends upon the blind and un-

reasoning acceptance of traditionalism. Uncomfortable questions put by enquiring and doubting minds are always conveniently ignored. As a corollary, one finds that rationalistic teaching is regularly subjected to a campaign of silence and boycott.

But the progress of Freethought is not to be measured by vociferous publications which proclaim that the only hope of humanity rests on belief in the supernatural. After all, Christian believers are cramped, hampered, cabined and confined by the limited conceptions of time and space and matter which are permitted to them. But even so Rome has the most effective means (as compared with Protestantism) with which to gull wavering and unthinking human beings, and to bring home to them conviction of sin. The Protestant is all too tolerant and easy-going with regard to opinions. Rome insists upon declared conviction of the validity of her tenets and confession of the feeling of personal need of embracing them. But when you have so declared and confessed you will find her very easy in the matter of practices which Protestants generally denounce, *e.g.*, indulging in sports and picnics on Sunday afternoons. Rome does not preach fanatical teetotalism as the Protestants do. So it becomes not so difficult after all for many people who desire a reasonably jolly time on Earth *plus* assurance of Heaven in the hereafter to take refuge in a benevolently paternal Catholicism. Individual effort is minimised by Rome for her loyal adherents are assured that everything concerning their destiny will be carefully attended to and their personal salvation definitely assured. Rome proudly claims to be the only earthly depository of *certitude*. So what more is to be said—or what more can anybody want? How happy are the intellectually indolent with their Rosaries!

IGNORUS.

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### Drop It.

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"Then God thought and thought and thought, till He thought, I'll make a man!"—*From a religious article in the Daily Press.*

Yes, God made Man we know;  
But that's all done with, so  
Why start raking up old scores?  
Why start opening up old sores?  
Why can't we let it go?

Man's just a piece of fun,  
Quite thoughtlessly begun,  
Then why should critics start to thunder  
If Man turns out to be a blunder?  
He's not the only one.

To say God ne'er withdrew it  
Might prove indifference to it.  
But stating that, in making Man,  
God "thought and thought" ere He began,  
Implies He *meant* to do it.

It really is a shame  
The way we throw the blame.  
And just because we know the Lord  
Accepts it all without a word  
We think He's easy game.

But cease to pick the bone,  
And let the Lord alone,  
And then, if He has time for it,  
He *may* commence to think a bit—  
And possibly atone.

TWINKLE.

## Correspondence.

### A LEAGUE OF FREEDOM.

SIR,—I cannot wholly blame Athos Zeno for having somewhat misunderstood the intention behind my suggestion to form a League of Freedom, because, after having made the two communications to the *Freethinker* which form the subject of discussion, the thought passed through my own mind that they might be taken the wrong way. Let me therefore make my position clearer.

To commence with, I must admit that I am not acquainted with the phrase "sectional league" in so far as it may bear a technical meaning; but I must assume it to convey the idea of a league which is a section of a larger movement, split off, yet retaining some ascribable connexion with the parent body. Such was not my notion of the proposed League of Freedom. That anyone should suppose me to have conceived the League as a section of the Freethought Movement I ascribe to the fact that I am a member of that Movement myself, and published my communications in its official organ, the *Freethinker*. Actually, I first sent a communication, of the kind referred to, for publication in the *Manchester Guardian*, but without success, and turned to the *Freethinker* simply because I knew that there would be, among its readers, a considerable body of sympathy with any ideas in furtherance of freedom. Thus, not having harboured any thought of splitting the Freethought Movement, I cannot be accused of promoting a "tendency to disruption."

With the contention that the Freethought Movement is "based on something far bigger and broader than any merely anti-religious attitude," I entirely agree; but we should not forget that the part is necessarily contained within the whole, and that this whole, no matter how big, cannot ignore the part. Thus, all who join the Freethought Movement must accept, if not quite all the parts, at least the most important of them. And I put it to Athos Zeno that anti-religion is an indispensable part of our structure. While it remains so it will keep us separated, in the fight for freedom in general, from all who range themselves on the side of religion. Moreover that is just as it should be, for, once the Freethought Movement loses its strictly secular character it loses its individuality. But it is because I saw an urgent need for the joining together of all the forces of freedom that I threw out the suggestion of a league composed of men of all shades of opinion in religion and politics, but of one mind as regards living and letting live.

If it is implied in the tone of Athos Zeno's letter that the Freethought Movement stands alone in the love of freedom, I really think he is going too far. If such were the case, then admittedly a League of Freedom would be redundant; but I feel justified in saying that there are not thousands but tens of thousands of people in this country who would vehemently oppose all forms of despotism, yet would not identify themselves in the least with anti-religion. But all continue to fight under sectarian banners, and, in the event of a mass attack by the forces of despotism, would perish, one by one, in their splendid isolation.

MEDICUS.

[Mr. C. V. Lewis writes pointing out the same correction as does Medicus. Mr. Lewis endorses the idea of an independent League working for general freedom.—ED.]

### CHILDREN AND PARENTS.

SIR,—In your issue of February 4, you discuss polygamy, which no sensible person now advocates. You do not, however, discuss the question of free motherhood, which is the doctrine that really interests sex reformers, and is advocated by men like Shaw, Wells, and Russell.

You say: "It is the family around which the whole question centres," but you ignore the fact that the present form of the family is entirely failing to deliver the goods. With the one exception of Canada, there is no English-speaking country in the world which is now producing enough babies to replace its existing popula-

tion. In an over-crowded country like England that is a happy state of affairs, although even here the birthrate will ultimately have to rise again, otherwise the population will disappear. When, however, we see a country like Australia, almost as large as Europe, with a population the same as that of Portugal, producing far too few babies even to replace its present population, then it is obvious that the present system is breaking down.

To-day there are several flourishing societies which advocate sex reform, and their main idea is that motherhood should be made a paid profession, supported by the State. Healthy and intelligent women should be paid for producing an adequate supply of children, and should be free to select the fathers, provided that these can pass a medical examination.

Some people imagine that it is a special advantage for a child to be brought up by both parents, but there is not the slightest statistical foundation for such a belief. A large proportion of the greatest men that ever lived have been brought up from early childhood by only one parent, or none at all. Among our recent Prime Ministers, Balfour, Lloyd George, and MacDonald were brought up from early childhood by only one parent.

R. B. KERR.

### RELIGION IN POLITICS.

SIR,—The wrecking of a Divorce Bill, designed to give relief to the wretched partners of criminals, lunatics and dipsomaniacs, by an Irish Roman Catholic M.P. named O'Donovan, who acted, doubtless, on the orders of the Vatican, throws a sinister light on the influence of the Papal gang in English legislation.

One wonders how soon it will be before England is altogether governed by the Vatican, as the wretched and priest-ridden Irish Papal State is at present?

J. M. AHERNE.

### A STRANGE SECT.

SIR,—I greatly appreciate Mr. Palmer's interesting, succinct and well-told story of the Mormons. If his summary is a little more favourable than that of most writers, he is more accurate and more just than the orthodox historians.

The precious "volume" Mr. Palmer mentions was a series of metal plates, apparently of gold, "the thickness of ordinary tin," and "bound together by rings," and accompanied by the magic "Urim and Thummim," aids to reading and translating the "Revelation" to Joseph Smith. I have seen the original affidavits as sworn to by a number of contemporaries who "actually saw and handled" these golden plates . . . which miraculously disappeared when Joseph Smith had finished translating them into English.

Mr. Palmer gives the population of Utah as "210,000 in 1892, seventy-five per cent of whom were Mormons." The census of 1930 gives the population as 507,847. Readers will remember the recent shout of joy in America, when the vote of the State of Utah against prohibition decided the fate of what Hoover called "that noble experiment." That vote proves that Mormon domination in Utah is a thing of the past. The Mormon vote has always been in favour of prohibition (and incidentally against birth control and the science of Evolution).

In Salt Lake City (population 150,000) the Mormons are in a decided majority. The Mormon Temple and Tabernacle are very fine buildings in a fine clean modern-looking city. Its golden statue of the Seagull on a tall pedestal rivals London's Nelson Column. It celebrates the deliverance of a Mormon harvest from a plague of locusts.

One curious tenet of these "Saints" is that no marriage (even a Mormon one) will be recognized in Heaven unless and until it has been "solemnized" in the Mormon Temple. Marriages of dead Mormons can be "spiritually" contracted after the death of a Mormon!

The Tabernacle is open to the public for worship, con-

certs, and lectures (on approved topics). The "Temple" itself is *tabu* to all but approved devotees: there are thousands of Mormons, many in Salt Lake City itself, who have never been allowed to enter this sacred "Holy of Holies."

I agree with Mr. Palmer in classing Mormonism as on the same level as Roman Catholicism and other religions. May I add that I have often experienced a kindly disposition, courtesy and helpfulness to a stranger who was known only to these Mormons as an Atheist. But that was not in Salt Lake City.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## Obituary.

ROBERT LEWINS.

WE again regret to record a painful loss to members of the Newcastle Branch of the National Secular Society, by the death of Robert Lewins, on January 30, aged seventy-five years, of Delaval Gardens, Benwell, Newcastle. Deceased, a compositor, was well known and respected in the printing trade, in Newcastle, being for many years what is known in the trade as "father of the Chapel."

Joining the Newcastle Secular Society about forty-two years ago, he soon became a useful worker, though of a quiet unobtrusive manner. He could until his recent illness following a stroke about a year ago, always be depended on to take a share in any work to be done, and was Branch President for several years.

Being conscious almost to the last, he knew the end was near, and told the present writer that his convictions were unshaken, and expressed a desire for a Secular burial, which request was duly carried out at Elswick Cemetery, on February 2, by Mr. A. Flanders reading a Secular address to a large number of relatives and friends. Mrs. Lewins and family will have the sympathy of many readers of the *Freethinker*.

## RELIGION AND MORALS.

Madame de Maintenon believed firmly in Louis the Fourteenth's sanctity, and the miracles attributed to him. Queen Mary, his wife, whom she had visited constantly in her affliction, made her a present of certain relics which she had cherished with the greatest piety: an old purse which he had always carried in his pocket; a book which he read constantly: one of his many rosaries: a piece of linen soaked in his blood, and a tuft of his hair. The rush after similar relics by all the Court was so great, that the Queen was despoiled of nearly all. A curious mixture of vice and piety, revolting cynicism and child-like credulity, this age of Louis the Fourteenth. To him and all his Court God was no symbol, but a very real and active personage; an all-mighty potentate of the same nature as Louis himself; but immeasurably more egoistic and despotic. Not that they thought much about him, so long as youth, health, and the taste for pleasure lasted. But when old age and its infirmities attacked them, they turned to him in abject terror, trembled at the thought of eternal fire, sent for their Confessor, and received the Sacraments.

To die without these passports to heaven would have been the worst catastrophe. The greatest sinner among them, dying of his vices in premature old age would shriek out for these sacraments, and having received them, die like a saint. One might break all the commandments during one's life provided one reconciled oneself to the Almighty on one's deathbed. Even Madame de Maintenon, with all her solid reason, never doubted the sanctification of the Marechal d'Albret, turned pious in his old age, because he repented of debaucheries no longer possible: and she believed firmly in the miracles of Louis, after his tardy conversion.

Extract from "Madame de Maintenon"  
by Maud Cruttwell.

[This extract has further point inasmuch as the modern authoress in the preface to this biography, permits herself a

reference to the "savage brutality of democracy": Yet she writes of an age when aristocracy reigned absolutely unchecked: when the dungeon and torture chamber still flourished: when breaking on the wheel and the execution by tearing asunder by horse (Damiens) were still legal. Certain aristocratic characters in the book, as she describes, committed crimes to make the hair stand on end. Moreover the authoress can still talk of the "refining influence of Courts" at the same time quoting de Maintenon's own view of the Court in which she lived. After describing it as "the abode of veritable demons," Maintenon continues: "We see here nothing but assassinations, envy, rage, treason, insatiable avarice and baseness; posing under the name of grandeur." This to say nothing of the mad career of Du Barry: and the matter of the heirs of Louis, all, there is reason to believe, poisoned by the Duc d'Orleans.]

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

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

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, Rev. H. M. Brook, B.Sc.—"On Christianity."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor J. C. Flugel, D.Sc.—"International Language Psychologically Considered."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, February 19, Mr. F. A. Marshall—"The Church and Elementary Education in English History."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Mr. R. Johnson v. Mr. G. Cores—"That Freedom is an Abstraction."

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. George Bedborough—"The Failure of Faith."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Bakers' Hall, 36 Cloughton Road, Birkenhead): 8.0, Monday, February 19, Mr. E. Cottle—"Why I am not a Christian."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Jowett Hall, Chapel Street, Leeds Road, Bradford): 7.30, Mr. L. Bury (London)—"The Need for To-day, God or Freethought." Reserved Seats 1s. and 6d. each.

CHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Peoples' Hall, Delamere Street, Chester): 7.0, Mr. F. Edwin Monks (Manchester)—"Humanity's Gain from Unbelief."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Influence of Sex on Christianity."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren, N.S.S. (London)—"Does Civilization Need a Religion?" *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (In the D. and F. Rooms): 7.30, Saturday, February 17, A Social.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Prof. J. Lavrin (Nottingham University)—"Russia and the Crisis of Civilization."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen (President of N.S.S. and Editor of the *Freethinker*)—"Is Christianity Played Out?" Admission Free. Reserved Seats 1s. each.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, Mr. J. Wingate (Perth)—"The Church with a Thousand Faces."

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Hall): 7.0, Thursday, February 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, A Lady Freethinker on "Paganism in Christian Festivals."

SUNDERLAND: 7.30, Sunday, February 18, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND DISCUSSION CIRCLE: 7.30, Tuesday, February 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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