

# THE FREETHINKER

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Letters to the Editor, etc.*

## Views and Opinions.

### All Sorts of Ideas.

TRAVELLING from Glasgow to London, my companion in the luncheon car turned out to be a man suffering from a not uncommon disorder. He was a parent, which by itself is a function not sufficiently uncommon to deserve special mention, nor is it usually so discharged as to warrant distinction. But, as I found after a conversation with him, he was so impressed by a new sense of his own importance that he was pleased to meet someone to whom he could impart a knowledge of the added dignity that had entered into his life. He was, I learned, engaged in controversy with a local Education Committee, the subject of the controversy being concerned with the conduct of some teachers in a school to which had been confided the education of his two boys.

Now it is astonishing what a sense of importance many people develop when they are in touch with some "Authority." Whether that contact is friendly or otherwise matters little: it is the personal contact that is important. They seem to feel that their lives have been brightened by contact with the relatively great. They brighten up much as a dull room may be brightened by a ray of sunshine, and which may give to one the impression that this particular light ray has travelled about a hundred million miles in order to make a personal call. It belongs to the same class of feeling that makes a man treasure the memory of the hand-clasp of a king as a heritage for his children, or which makes members of our aristocracy proudly chronicle the fact that their "house" dates from an ancestress who behaved herself in a way that if imitated by a housemaid and a butler would secure the instant dismissal of both—minus a character.

My fellow traveller's particular grievance against the local education authority was that some teachers who had talked to his boys about sex and about some of our cherished institutions in what he considered a very reprehensible way, had not been dealt with in a

sufficiently severe manner. The Committee had called for a report, and wrote the father to say that the incidents had been greatly exaggerated, and that they did not feel warranted in taking further steps. So the parent was—I think rather pleasantly—aggrieved. He felt he had become something of a public character, and therefore considered he was doing a public service in protesting against teachers filling the heads of his boys with "all sorts of ideas."

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### Against all Newcomers.

The objection is, I think, a very common one, although the occasions for this particular complaint are not nearly so numerous as I should like to see them. For deplorable as it may seem to many people, it is really impossible effectually to educate a boy, or a girl, without filling his or her head with "all sorts of ideas." Of course, you may restrict your academic curriculum to very few ideas, or even to one idea. You may, of course, copy the policy of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and try to do without any ideas at all, but that is not a safe game to play. The brain is a machine for the creation and reception of ideas, and if the machine is not fed it soon begins to act in a queer way. It may even look elsewhere for food. The better policy—better for those who do not like the plan of exposing the developing brain to "all sorts of ideas," is that of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims at giving a very few ideas, all of the same class, and excluding all ideas that conflict with the limited number supplied. The result is the development of a brain which whenever a vagrant idea applies for admission, sternly orders it to move on, or complains to the local authority that some very undesirable characters are wandering about the neighbourhood.

Like the Church my companion did not object to his boys getting ideas; that, he explained, was what they went to school for. It was the "all sorts of ideas" that roused his ire. He believed in ideas, one set of ideas, his own ideas. I imagine that in this matter he was at one with Lord Rothermere in his admiration for Hitler and Mussolini in making "all sorts of ideas" strictly taboo. And he sent his children to school to have their heads filled with the right ideas, and to have their heads packed so tightly with the right ideas—his own ideas—that there should be no possibility of any other ideas gaining lodgment. It would in fact, with this system of education, be better if the boys were unaware that there were "all sorts of ideas" about all sorts of subjects, in existence. If the boys wanted to taste all sorts of ideas, let them wait till they had grown up, and were their own masters. He was a most broad-minded man. He would permit his children to follow their intellectual inclinations—when it was no longer possible for him to prevent their doing so. But he did not disguise the hope that by the time his boys were old enough to decide for themselves, the training he had secured

for them would have killed the desire for "all sorts of ideas," and that they would get married, settle down, and bring up their children on the model of the excellent example he had set them. It was an ideal that presented itself to my mind as a kind of secular paraphrase of the Athanasian Creed, where the son, the father, and the grandfather are three separate persons, yet are they not three persons but one person, each saying the same things in the same way, and none of them, to use a biblical phrase, "going whoring" after "all sorts of ideas."

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#### Education versus Instruction.

I mildly asked my friend what he sent his children to school for? He replied, to be educated. I gently suggested that he was mistaking instruction for education, and I received a suspicious glance which showed that I was running a risk of being identified with those who were always seeking after "all sorts of ideas." But he was quite firm on the point that children did not go to school to have "all sorts of ideas" put into their heads. There was a sense of conviction about this that was quite evangelistic in its fervour. The prospect of his children getting hold of ideas with which he did not agree was unbearable. I fancy that if this were done, he felt that at the Day of Judgment, God Almighty would thunder at him, "You allowed your children to listen to 'all sorts of ideas'! Depart ye into everlasting fire." That was why he wanted other teachers for his children; the teachers, I suspect, wanted different parents for the children.

I tried another line, and suggested that one aim of education should be to impart a knowledge of the existence of a variety of ideas on all sorts of subjects, and that a properly trained mind would offer at least a passing hospitality to any that came its way, although they might not be pressed to stay. To that came the crushing reply, "They can find out all about them when they grow up." I dropped the point because it was quite evident that *his* parent had waited till *he* grew up—and he had never grown up.

We ceased eating, and talking, and returned to our respective compartments. In the midst of reading, my late companion soon ceased to be an individual and became a type. Quite clearly the dislike to "all sorts of ideas" expressed by my fellow-diner had no special or exclusive reference to children; it extended quite as clearly and as strongly to adults. It is because his type does not like adults being bombarded by all sorts of ideas that it wishes to breed a dislike for them in children. Children are the only ones that nature and custom have placed completely in their power, and they do their best with the material they are able to control. The pity of it is that children are naturally inclined to take an interest in "all sorts of ideas." The strange, the unusual, attracts them, from the stage of grasping after new objects to the eternal "Why?" which is so bothersome to adults. A child is nature's freshly formed note of interrogation; the earliest attempt of nature to question herself as to what is the meaning of her own existence. Nature in the young is always asking, why? and nature in her more sophisticated adult form is continually meeting it with a warning not to run after "all sorts of ideas."

The man was veritably a type. He was Hitler, and Mussolini, and Lord Rothermere, and the Mosleyites, and the Christian Church, and the Jewish Synagogue, and the Mohammedan Mosque, and the intellectual Tory, the censors of plays and books and the creators of blasphemy laws of all the ages rolled into one, and planted in an L.M. & S. railway saloon eating a three and sixpenny lunch. For the one *thing* that all the *bodies* named have in common is the desire to prevent people getting into touch with "all sorts of

ideas." That type is persistent in its efforts and consistent in its works. It sees the child as the raw material of the social state, it desires that a certain type of society shall endure for ever; and it knows that the only way by which this can be done is to stifle the taste for running after "all sorts of ideas." If this can be accomplished human society becomes a series of repetitions, as uniform as birth, but lacking the thrill of creation that comes to two persons at a child's first cry, or as repetitive as death without that efflorescence of affection which comes when we see the eyes of one we love close for ever.

If I wanted to keep things as they are, if I wished to consecrate greed and tyranny and brutality and a complete denial of the "spiritual" equality of human beings, if I wished to secure the dominancy of a caste or a class I would do my best to keep the young from hearing "all sorts of ideas." If I succeeded here, completely succeeded, I know that I should have gone a long way towards killing or weakening that curiosity concerning anything new and strange which awakens the youthful "why?" The child would not then be the father of the man, the man would be the child perpetuated, minus that spirit of enquiry, that love of adventure which is one of the marked qualities of childhood. But I should not venture to claim that I was doing anything novel. I should be doing only what the Church did for ages to the accompaniment of burning bodies and flaming books, and what Hitler has done to the accompaniment of burning books and beaten bodies, and what our Fascists would do, given the opportunity. The dread of "all sorts of ideas" is a very old feature of human society. Old also, although not so old, is the conception of new ideas as the greatest force for good in life. We shall see which will prove the stronger in the contest.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### "A Great Man's Affirmation."

"Unitarianism is a feather-bed to catch a falling Christian."—Coleridge.

"The heretics of one age are the aureoled saints of the next."—Ingersoll.

CHRISTIANS are the most modest of men. Not content with dreams of universal domination, they, like Alexander the Great, sigh for more worlds to conquer. In the Ages of Faith and of Power, they bullied the weak and murdered the strong. In modern, and more humane, times they cannot bear that any famous man or woman should profess any other opinions than those of Orthodoxy. Christian priests buried the sceptical Charles Darwin in Westminster Abbey. They consigned doubting Thomas Huxley to the dust in the sure and certain hope of a faith he thought culturally base. They claimed the Atheist, Shelley, as a Christian the moment it was discerned that he was a great poet. With equal effrontery, they declared that Bradlaugh was a Christian without being aware of it. And so on, and so forth, they made their religion a hiss and a byword, and hypocrisy a synonym for their faith.

This habit, for it is a habit, has fostered the delusion that the vast majority of famous people have been believers in the popular superstition, which is very far from being the truth. But the minions of a faith who muttered over Swinburne's grave the abracadabra of Christianity cannot be accused of scrupulous honesty. Indeed, their efforts are by no means limited to "body-snatching." In innumerable biographies they have glossed or distorted the theological opinions of what an American critic calls "the biographee." The result is that even the reading public

is quite unaware that there is a large body of opinion in existence which is by no means in complete harmony with the views mouthed by priests in so many churches, chapels, and tin-tabernacles.

Take the case of Charles Dickens, the publication of whose belated *Life of Christ* has let loose a veritable Mississippi of misrepresentation. This booklet, for it only runs to a few pages, was written for the private use of his own children, and is now hailed as "a great man's affirmation of Orthodoxy." It is nothing of the kind, as any reader of his *Child's History of England* might have anticipated. History, in the strict sense of the word, was not Dickens' strong point, but, as drowning men seize at straws, so Christians have jumped at the chance of claiming Charles Dickens as a hard-boiled representative of their own faith. Indeed, some of the journalists "out-Heroded Herod" in their intense desire to exploit the great novelist. Here is what the *Daily Mail* (London) February 7, says, or perhaps, gushes, in a leading article:—

It (the *Life of Christ*) will stand as one more evidence of his (Dickens') strong religious faith and his conviction that behind the ceaseless flux which is the material world are Eternal Things, without belief in which neither man nor nation can live happily.

What is one to say of such verbiage? Matthew Arnold got into trouble for dubbing the Holy Trinity "three Lord Shaftesburys," but here is a newspaper editor referring to the Christian syndicate as "Eternal Things," and upsetting the digestion of hundreds of thousands of readers. It almost merits the attention of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. For readers who pay money to read such rubbish can hardly be described as other than intellectual infants.

Charles Dickens was a heretic, and a few generations earlier would have been burnt at the stake for his opinions. Instead of which, the fact of his heresy was camouflaged during his lifetime, and after his death he was buried in Westminster Abbey by priests anxious to claim such a man as a believer. In politics, Dickens was as stalwart a Radical as stout old Cobbett; in matters of religion Dickens was quite outside the pale of Orthodoxy.

The facts are that Dickens was a Unitarian, and attended Little Portland Street Chapel, belonging to that small and select sect. He had sittings and subscribed to its funds. Even in this heretical fold Dickens was distinguished by being very broad-minded. By mission work he was impressed very unfavourably, as is evidenced by his writing: "So Exeter Hall holds us in mortal submission to missionaries who (Livingstone always excepted) are perfect nuisances, and leave every place worse than they found it."

When Robert Morrell, and other stalwart Free-thinkers, founded the National Sunday League, the pioneer organization for putting the sun into Sunday, Dickens was most heartily in favour of the movement for light and liberty. Nor was this a sudden impulse, for Dickens himself wrote a pamphlet, entitled *Sunday Under Three Heads*, in which he caned severely the then Bishop of London for his medieval views regarding Sunday recreation for working people. Dickens was not a passive supporter of the Sunday League, for he helped the League with money, and even gave public readings from his own works for its benefit. Dickens's heresies were "four-square to all the winds that blow." He had a very strong aversion from dogma, and described himself as "morally wide asunder from Rome," whilst of Puritanism he was an uncompromising opponent. From the early days of *The Pickwick Papers*, to the zenith of his fame,

Dickens lashes religious hypocrisy with all the zest and abandon of a Molière. His pen portraits of the Reverends Stiggins and Chadband are not compliments to the priesthood, and the figure of Samuel Pecksniff is as caustic an exposure as that of Tartuffe.

An amusing instance of the great novelist's playfulness with regard to religion was his naming a dummy volume in his own library: *Evidences of Christianity by Henry the Eighth*. Keen critics have always noticed the strong strain of heresy in Dickens's voluminous writings, and Matthew Arnold, in his delightful book *Friendship's Garland*, pictured himself taking his foreign friend, Arminius, to the House of Commons to hear the pious Sir William Harcourt "develop a system of unsectarian religion from the life of Mr. Pickwick." Dickens abandoned all attendance at places of public worship long before his death, but it is abundantly clear that his sympathies were all in favour of a mild Theism, such as found favour with Rousseau and Voltaire.

John Forster, the friend and biographer of Dickens, deliberately misled readers in his standard life of the great novelist by saying that "upon essential points he had never any sympathy as strong as with the leading doctrines of the Church of England." This is frigid and calculated camouflage, but the pious and respectable Forster had no misgivings concerning lying for the glory of God. His whitewashing process was not confined to theological matters, as may be seen in his extraordinary reticence in dealing with Dickens's domestic troubles. Fortunately, we have learned a great deal since Forster's very lopsided *Life of Dickens* first cumbered the shelves of the libraries.

The real reason why Dickens's manuscript *Life of Christ* was not published until over half a century after the author's death was owing to the fear that the issue of so heretical a book might injure his reputation, as it would have done in the virtuous days of Queen Victoria. Much water has flowed through the bridges since that time, and to-day this heretical book is hailed by hysterical journalists as "a great man's affirmation" of the truth of the Christian Religion. Nevertheless, Charles Dickens was a heretic, and, if there is truth in that Oriental Superstition, is now suffering the tortures of the damned. And Charles Dickens, be it remembered, could say, with perfect truth, like Abou-Ben-Adhem, "Write me as one who loves his fellow men."

MIMNERMUS.

## Modern Science and Religion.

"We may give Modernist philosophers credit for good intentions in retaining the name of God while sacrificing the thing; but it is very confusing to their readers."

"It is often assumed that the production of man must have been the sole or chief end of creation. This seems to me unjustifiable anthropolatry." (Dean Inge: *God and the Astronomers*. pp. 232-248.)

"An element of agnosticism, a willingness to say, 'I don't know,' is necessary in the attitude of every honest thinker. But we have no right to use scepticism as a support of superstition. To decry the value of human reason in order that one may continue to hold beliefs that will not stand the test of rational enquiry is discreditable." (Bishop Barnes: *Scientific Theory and Religion*. p. 4.)

DR. BARNES, the Bishop of Birmingham, in his lately published work, *Scientific Theory and Religion: The World described by Science and its Spiritual Interpretation*. (Cambridge University Press, 25s.), puts forth his views and conclusions upon the problems which arise from the impact of modern scientific discoveries upon religion.

It cannot be said—as it can of the majority of the clergy—that Dr. Barnes is not qualified for the task. For besides being a Doctor of Science, he is a Doctor of Divinity, a Doctor of Laws, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. The Bishop is also a Mathematician, and eight out of the twenty-two chapters in the book are concerned with Mathematics.

The book itself is of somewhat formidable dimensions, for it runs to 685 pages; but we must give the Bishop credit for the fact that there is no display of contempt or intolerance towards those who reject all religion and worship, such as we are accustomed to receive from those who have been commanded to love their enemies. In fact, the severest criticism is directed towards those holding the old-fashioned views founded upon Genesis; and who look upon Dr. Barnes as an infidel masquerading in sacerdotal vestments. Of these Fundamentalists Dr. Barnes observes: "Much of the continuing opposition to the doctrine of evolution is due to defective education. Ignorance and religious prejudice are congenial bed-fellows." (p. 459.)

On the other hand we are told: "The points of view described by the terms materialism, agnosticism, naturalism and mechanistic determinism are variations of a metaphysical standpoint which is especially common among students of science." He observes that "one often finds an assumption in the literature of religious apologetics that such a standpoint is no longer intellectually respectable." And although the Bishop thinks that fatal objections can be brought against it, he protests that "the contempt with which naturalism is sometimes treated is unfair." And further:—

The mechanical theory of the Universe or, as its principle is sometimes called, mechanistic determinism, represents a belief which has been widely held by men of science. It owes much to the brilliant success of that determination of motions of bodies comprising the solar system of which Newton laid the foundations in the *Principia*. (pp. 577-578.)

We have heard a great deal about the impact of Einstein's relativity-principle upon the Newtonian system—a system we were assured which was one of the main props of divinity—and how it has abolished the law of gravitation, but, says Dr. Barnes, "no competent student imagines that the Newtonian scheme of planetary motions is not an exceedingly accurate approximation to the truth." (p. 5.) And it is still used for all practical purposes because it is much simpler, and it is very difficult to find cases where relativity is more accurate.

We all know how joyfully the Heisenberg uncertainty—relation, which was supposed to have disposed of determinism, because we could not predict certain events connected with the atom, was received by the pulpits and the pseudo-religious journalists. The religious felt like the Irishman, after Home Rule had been declared. He was driving on the wrong side of the road, and when his attention was called to it, he replied, "I don't care. We can drive which side we like now. It's our own country." Instead of Browning's "All's love, and all's Law," it seems that Law is abolished, and all is governed by love and supernatural interference! Here, again, Dr. Barnes can see nothing to maffick about, as he points out, though the Heisenberg principle

is true for a single ultimate particle, yet our physical laws relate to immense numbers of particles for which statistical averages are invariable. Thus the question as to whether the uncertainty—relations afford an escape from determinism is answered by different physicists in opposite ways. (p. 309.)

It has been estimated that there are 30,000 million stars in our Galaxy alone, and that there might be

300,000 planetary systems, like our own, among them. Upon this Dr. Barnes remarks:—

But if planetary systems originate in actual collisions, there may be merely a few hundred of such systems in our universe. Even if the larger estimate be true, this number seems utterly disproportionate to the size of the galactic universe, *if we regard that universe as having been created with a view to the evolution of intelligent beings.*

It is certain that life and mind, as we know them in conjunction, cannot exist on any of the bright stars. The stars are vast furnaces with interior temperatures running up to millions of degrees. . . . Life thus appears to be a concomitant of what Jeans well calls "the dead ash of the universe"; and the suggestion forces itself upon us insistently that the cosmos was made for some end other than the evolution of life. Certainly, however, no such end is apparent to us.

My own feeling that the cosmos was created as a basis for the higher forms of consciousness leads me to speculate that our theory of the formation of the solar system is incorrect. (p. 402. The italics in the above are Dr. Barnes'.)

Very well then, if that is the case, Dr. Barnes cannot claim that he has the support of science, for he is not at liberty to select the facts that suit him and reject those that do not. Of the Catholic faith he observes:—

The truth that Catholicism arose from a transformation of primitive Christianity in the atmosphere of the pagan mysteries is often denied; but the facts are decisive. It is to be regretted that detailed evidence is not as full as we could wish, inasmuch as documents describing the mystery beliefs have largely perished. Their destruction was probably deliberate. Yet enough remains to show that the beliefs of Catholicism repudiated by a sound instinct at the Reformation were precisely those mystery-religion accretions which were alien from the moral and spiritual simplicity of Christ's teaching. (p. 631.)

This idea, of a pure primitive Christianity, is a myth. All the elements, including ritual, dogmas, and morality, can be traced to earlier Pagan and Jewish origins. Dr. Barnes himself cites the historian Dill, as saying: "In truth, the line between Christian and Pagan was long wavering and uncertain." It has been said that an ancient worshipper from the temple of Isis would feel quite at home during the service in a modern Roman Catholic Church. Dr. Barnes is evidently not so well informed upon this subject as he is upon science.

W. MANN.

## Applied Psychology.

*Hypnotism—The Friend of Man: An Aid to Health, Efficiency and Happiness.* By J. Louis Orton. (London: Thorsons; 5s.)

LIKE all forms of therapeutics, hypnotism has been immorally and illegally "adopted" by the supernaturalists. Every account that they cannot meet mentally is put down to the credit of God and his family and friends.

Mind, so little understood in all its opulent possibilities, is a barren theory-sowing ground for the moony-minded; but all the crops that they raise are tares. Your religionist is always a mental profligate, who sows nothing but quaker oats in the hope of raising the wind.

To attribute the misunderstood to "The Supernatural" is merely to confess that one does not understand the meaning of the word "nature"; and, at the same stroke, to add to one's stock of misunderstandings.

Hypnotism, as Mr. Orton expounds it, is merely a natural method of curing mankind of physical, mental, moral—and even “spiritual”—ills. There is no trace of superstition in this lucid and exhaustive treatise; God, and his alleged religious activities and preoccupations, are absent from this book's index; an index that, unlike the Roman “Index,” contains those names and references that will serve the student, and are here not forbidden, but encouraged.

One of the earliest known notions of the cause of disease was that an evil spirit or demon entered and possessed the body of the person affected, and there wrought various ills—a belief still prevalent among savage tribes. The mode of treatment consistent with that conception was to lure out the evil spirit by means of sacrifices and specious promises, or to eject it by means of exorcisms, or by the beating of tom-toms, or by pummelling the body of the sufferer. Until comparatively recent times the theory of demoniacal possession has been acted upon in reference to the insane.

That is a nasty one for the supernaturalists, who still insist, despite libraries of evidence to the contrary, that the savage interpretation of facts is the true one. Religion always leads to savagery. This is the lesson taught invariably and inevitably by history. It is as true to-day as it has always been true. That is the moral to be drawn from the quoted paragraph; as from the whole book. You can no more serve science and superstition under the same hat than you can run a Commune on Fascist lines.

Mr. Orton gives many instances of the danger of confusing mental and “supernatural” issues; the “supernatural” that cannot be reduced to the natural is insanity; and insanity is neither more nor less than mental dis-ease. Hitherto insanity has ruled the world almost unchecked; it is the cause of very nearly all our moral and social ills.

Mr. Orton, in a well-written, complete, and really serviceable work, has proved the inestimable value to mankind of soundly-practised hypnotism. Here is a book that neither the good alienist nor the wise psychologist can afford to leave unread. The author is to be congratulated upon a noble and largely-original contribution to our stock of practical psychology.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

### “Misfits.”

RECENTLY Sir John Reith, the General Director of the B.B.C., expressed the view that many persons are misfits, that is to say, they hold positions for which they are ill-suited. Doubtless there is much truth in this. We know well enough that possessions, privilege, patronage, nepotism and the like still form convenient avenues to appointment and promotion of some, who, if they possess the necessary fundamental ability, have not received the requisite education and training.

Of all posts requiring prolonged and comprehensive preparation it would be difficult to find one where the demand is more imperious than that of the principal of the B.B.C. Yet in consulting *Who's Who* we find that the chief antecedents which have so far passed muster are mainly of a mechanical and business kind—study at a technical college, five years apprenticeship to engineering, the management of a works (engineering no doubt) Government employment in connexion with engineering-business contracts, and the management of the British Broadcasting Company (also presumably, at least originally, an engineering post).

Under such conditions misfit is to a greater or less degree inevitable. Narrow education, especially of the more mechanical kind, is not well calculated to generate the wider and deeper mental interest and general culture, to emancipate the mind from mere unexamined tradi-

tional beliefs and customs, nor to engender the enlightened outlook and attitude that are requisite for the direction of the great institution.

Hence the many well-directed criticisms of the general procedure adopted, and a certain fear that on the whole the B.B.C. is impeding rather than promoting the more desirable mental attitude and condition among our population. Freethinkers may hold different views as to one of the more fundamental questions involved, viz., to what extent the programmes shall be on the one hand entertaining and amusing, emotional and sentimental, or on the other hand educative in the more intellectual sense. But probably all will agree that a good proportion of the matter offered on the wireless should be such as will tend to subserve the ends of progress—of personal and social betterment—instead of matter likely to support the more passive, mentally indolent attitude, and, in general, the *status quo*.

To us the specially interesting instance is the attempt “to preserve the character of the Christian Sunday,” or perhaps we should rather say “the Scottish Sabbath.” Referring to this point Professor Laski has written as follows: “I doubt whether there is, in its degree, a more remarkable example of minority control than the way in which religious organizations have been allowed to capture the one day in the week on which people are attuned, by the fact that most of them are at leisure, to listen to serious discussions of themes of secular importance. Here as elsewhere the public need counts as nothing beside Sir John Reith's decision to give the public what he thinks it ought to have.”

The practice of obtruding religion, however, goes far beyond this, beyond even the “daily service” and the “mid-week” service. The naturally well-known proclivity of the Director presumably attracts religionists, who, when talking of other subjects, drag in their pietism. We are now suffering from this in two series. In “Seven Day's Hard,” which is supposed to be an account of the week, we have already had a direct “boost” of Christianity; and in “British Institutions,” we are to have an account of the Church, not by one who is known as a competent intellectual (historian, sociologist, or the like), but by a professional religionist, who is of course directly interested in the maintenance of the institution, and probably has only an essentially limited and one-sided knowledge of his subject.

One of the more remarkable instances of incidental propaganda occurred in a talk on a “German Secondary School.” Here the speaker not only made general reference to religion, but gave us the puerile stuff about approaching the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child or being unable to enter therein. And though at the New Year we were on the late occasion mercifully spared an egregious, pious rigmarole, that of the Grand Good Night of 1932-3 was printed in the *Radio Times*; and we got on the wireless a religious service—a phenomenon which, like King Charles' head in Mr. Dick's literary efforts, persists in “butting in” the B.B.C. programmes at all conceivable and some well nigh inconceivable opportunities.

In the speech referred to, Sir John Reith proceeded to assert the prevalence of mediocrity and inferiority among our people. This is, of course, an easy and loose statement that might be thrown out by any man in the street. If referred to lack of innate ability it is, of course, useless, as that, according to biologists and psychologists, is fixed or approximately so. If it referred to the lack of trained minds well furnished with knowledge that is of course a matter of education. A more useful and encouraging idea to have promulgated would have been that education is a comparatively new thing, is only half or less developed, but is advancing in every direction except those which are for the nonce barred by governmental restrictions. The obvious corollary to this is that the B.B.C. should do whatever is fairly possible to minimize the mediocrity and inferiority that still exist.

Here we must enlarge the requisite qualifications of a director. In addition to those already given, he should know, at least generally, what is done in the schools, so that he may be guided by the actual mental condition of those who are now in and those who have passed through

the schools. This is necessary even to give them what they want. It is still more necessary to know what to superpose on that they have already received, in order to avoid elements calculated to depress instead of elevating their mentality, to inhibit interest in things that matter, and the intelligence with which problems are envisaged and confronted.

In my own view the B.B.C. will in the respects indicated fail to become really satisfactory until it is completely taken over by the State. We have already learned that in France a change from private or semi-private to really public control has resulted in the cessation of religious services that were formerly broadcast from the station or stations concerned. And though State proprietorship would not at once cure all the ills to which the institution is subject, it would bring the regime under the more constant and effective criticism of the House of Commons and, through their representatives, of the general public.

J. REEVES.

## Acid Drops.

On Sunday last Mr. Cohen was engaged in dressing down Communists because of their intolerance. So to level up we may note the speech of the Bishop of Galway (reported in the *Times* of February 12), in which he denounced Communists in Ireland, and challenged them to hold a congress in Galway. If they attempted it, he says, they will find that "whatever political divisions may exist in Ireland, there is no room for blatant Atheists." By which the Bishop means that under his directions the good Catholics of Galway will apply the usual argument of the Holy Roman Church, brute force. We do not doubt that this ignorant bigot would be able to carry out his threat. But we are of opinion that the Communists have exactly the same right to be permitted to voice their opinions as anyone else has. Freedom of opinion must exist all round, or it does not exist at all. There is no such thing as partial measures in this connexion. There may be degrees of coercion, but not of freedom. That is a fact that many people forget.

The *Daily Telegraph* reports "grave uneasiness" in the Kenya area, owing to the activities of a fanatical native religious sect. "One of the worst features of the situation" is that an adjoining tribe's blacksmiths are making arrowheads and spears for the fanatical tribe. Perhaps these blacksmiths have noted the way in which our own armament firms supply guns to all and sundry. In this case our Government is much against the making of munitions of war by private firms.

The Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury have been discussing "the growing secularization of Sunday." With so many amongst their congregations liking a Sunday morning game at golf, and the younger ones apt to bike or hike and the like on the Sabbath-day, it was realized that the subject must be approached tactfully. "I see no harm," said the Bishop of Winchester, "in a man playing a game of golf if he has been to worship, but it is another matter when a host of caddies is employed and a club with waiters has to be kept open. Recreation is harmless on a Sunday, provided it does not mean extra labour, and does not crowd out opportunities for worship."

We read episcopal pronouncements always hopefully, trusting to find, as we are often told we shall find, greater liberality and greater intelligence nowadays amongst the dignified clergy. But we reluctantly admit we are fooled by hope more often than not. Who but a Bishop, would dare to utter a diatribe against "Extra labour" at a time when the danger is not in people having to work seven days a week, but in their not finding any work to do at all.

As for the increased liberality of the clergy, it can be tested by the phrase "Recreation must not crowd out opportunities for worship." Recreation, in its many

forms, does not crowd out opportunities for worship; it offers alternatives. 70,000 people, lamented the Bishop of Portsmouth, visited the Isle of Wight on a single Sunday last Summer. 70,000 people had on that day the opportunity of attending Divine Service, and chose not to do so. They plumped for fresh air, and wholesome exercise, but the "opportunity for worship" was there all the time. The Churches had a fair field but met with precious little favour.

The faint-hearted Bishop of Portsmouth is afraid that the faith of Christendom cannot compete with the Sunday Excursion. We think he is right, but do not choose to be on the side of a belief which cannot maintain itself against such an intrinsically innocuous agency. If he were not a so-called Modernist we might respect his attitude more. Those who base their Sabbatarianism on texts in Exodus are intellectually negligible, but their honesty is often beyond dispute and their courage occasionally admirable.

Further as to Sunday Excursions. The Newcastle-Carlisle Railway was one of the first Railways in this country. We have been favoured with a fascimile of a handbill announcing one of the very first Sunday Excursions (Newcastle to Carlisle) in August, 1841; also a religious handbill issued in response to it at the same time. Our readers will enjoy the contents of the latter document:—

A Reward for Sabbath Breaking.  
People taken safely and swiftly to

HELL,  
next Lord's Day,  
by  
The Carlisle Railway  
for 7s. 6d.

It is a Pleasure Trip!

Mad Sinners! will you put a knife into your own Bowels? Ye that have Shares in this Iniquity, your profits will be a Share in **JEHOVAH'S WRATH.**

The Devil is murdering Sinners wholesale in Newcastle, and *professed* Christians are helping him!

In the Name of God,

Wm. C. Burns.

Ezek. Chap 33 verse 9.

KEEP THIS.

The Lord's Day Observance Society was in existence when the Railways commenced their "Devil's Work." They are now celebrating their 103rd Anniversary, and they sent up to God on February 8 "a cry for the Power of Pentecost on their work that they shall see even greater Triumphs in the holy Cause of the Lord's Day." Well, if the L.D.O.S. consider the work they have accomplished during the last century to be a Triumph, they are indeed thankful for small mercies, and if it please them, they have our best wishes that equal triumphs may be enjoyed by them during the next century.

And now for some *grave* news from Ireland. Robert Davis, a farmer, of Rathfryland, Co. Down, had arranged that he should have a Roman Catholic burial, but on his death a body of men and women arrived just before the funeral and took away the body. They carried it to the Ballyrone Presbyterian Cemetery, and interred it in the family burial vault. Some of the men, it is alleged, carried revolvers. It is just on the cards that Davis is now enjoying (!) the joke of his life, having discovered that God is neither a Presbyterian nor a Roman Catholic but a Total Immersionist.

A well-known personage pleads for more playing-fields for children, to enable them to be kept out of the streets where they are in deadly danger from traffic. Have none of our public men the pluck to plead for the opening of all the existing playing-fields on *Sunday*, as a means of safe-guarding the children on that day? Or is it assumed that children are in no danger from traffic on the Sabbath?

The Dumfermline Presbytery have had a meeting in which to register their approval of "The Shop (Sunday Trading Restriction) (Scotland) Bill." Practical unanimity was secured when, at the correct moment, it was emphasized, that the Presbytery was an important religious body and "the Bill was an important religious measure." Of course the Bill did not go far enough for them; too many exceptions were made, such as petrol, milk, and restaurants. But it was regarded as a victory of substance that *ice-cream* as a Sunday delicacy was doomed, not even the restaurants being allowed to sell it. The Rev. Mr. Sivewright said he had been asked, "Why trouble so much about ice-cream?" He explained, "If they stopped the sale of ice-cream on Sunday they would simply be giving their Italian friends a little rest which might do them a great deal of good." The level of the Christian ethic is always being exemplified amongst the Christian clergy, but it is surprising even to us that the competition to "touch bottom" is so very fierce amongst them.

The Rector of St. Paul's, Fleetwood, Rev. G. Forbes Wilde, is another of those Christian clerics who never waste their time over minor issues, but who can always be found to the fore when the question is one that involves a high principle, or has in it some element of moral grandeur. He sees that if kiosks and stalls are going to be dotted over the Fleetwood promenade, it will "encourage children to go on the promenade on Sunday and buy ice-cream and balloons," and thus Fleetwood will sink to the moral level of Blackpool, where "it is evident that the majority of the children have no religious moral training at all." It needs a theologian of both subtlety and discernment to invent a category in which the Sunday purchase of ice-cream and balloons can figure as "religiously immoral." Buying a balloon on Sunday has of course nothing to do with morality, but a really profound theologian will take good care, that as far as he is concerned, it will not be a "religious" moral action.

The *Times* tells us that the Mayor of Bridlington (Mr. J. Byass) threatened to resign from the Easter Attractions Committee if Sunday cycle racing on the sands was allowed. The committee then decided to omit it from their programme. A great achievement, *Byass*!

"Is there a Hell?" asks the Rev. Ralph Budden, vicar of All Saints, Brixton. Replying to modernist objections the vicar said, "Jesus Christ definitely taught about Hell." Jesus Christ was so "definite" that scarcely any two Christians to-day agree as to what He meant (if anything). Even the Rev. Ralph has a heresy of his own about it, believing that Hell has nothing to do with any sort of "physical suffering," "obviously it is mental." The word "obviously" is sublime! Apparently Jesus "definitely" thought that "worms which never die" were "mental" worms, and that Dives was "mentally" tormented in the "mental" flames, when he cried aloud for Lazarus to dip his mental finger in a mental cup of water to cool Dives's mental tongue. The vicar's is "definitely" a mental case.

A pious reader of the *Daily Mirror* says:—

May I suggest that what is required to solve the peace problem is neither further vain repetitions from the orthodox churches nor further "light" from the League of Nations, but, as a noted cleric said recently: "A fresh discovery of what Christ's gospel means in human life and society?" In plainer English, a divinely inspired interpretation of the New Testament.

On the other hand, we would suggest that people may well be sceptical concerning the efficaciousness of such a "discovery" as a solvent for the peace problem. For all former "divinely inspired interpretations of the New Testament" failed, during the past nineteen centuries, to solve that problem. Indeed, quite a number of wars were inspired by the Christian religion, and many of those that were not so inspired were worsened by it. There is no reason to suppose that any "fresh discovery" or "divinely inspired interpretation" will be any better

than the preceding ones or any more advantageous to mankind. They will only find to be true that which everyone knows, and hedge and equivocate on things about which a difference of opinion exists.

Dr. Campbell Morgan last week was in an autobiographical mood. He preached on "The Unpardonable Sin"—a bugbear, by the way, which was invented not by Satan, but by Our Lord himself. Dr. Morgan says: "After 54 years preaching I can say from experience that Satan uses this text to harass Saints rather than to destroy Sinners." As Man Friday asked, "Who made Debbil?" Dr. Morgan in the same sermon said, "if I take a text I need the whole Bible to explain it." He omits to tell us how anyone can explain the whole Bible if every separate text requires a volume of similar texts before it can be understood. It reminds us of the never-ending Snowball Prayers!

The Rev. J. G. Greenhough, the well-known Free Church minister, recently died leaving a fortune of considerably over £50,000. He was no doubt poor enough in spirit to inherit many mansions on high.

God doeth all things well. The old Christian excuse for earthquakes, that they are sent as a punishment from God is not longer usable. Still He is responsible for them, and a large number of Churches and Church schools in India have been demolished by quakes. Had only mosques and temples been destroyed, the lesson for Christians would have been palpable. But in Bengal, Darjeeling, Lebong, Bihar, Calcutta, and many other places, God has been particularly hard on the Churches which either have been destroyed or so badly damaged as to be quite unsafe. It is a very serious position for the Missionaries who have to explain God to the natives. Still, He doeth all things well.

Speaking of earthquakes, the Rev. John Bevan, M.A. says he does not know whether God is responsible for them or not. He adds, "the external world is felt to be a puzzle and must remain such. . . there seems to be no solution to the problem of evil." Mr. Grimwood of the "Regions Beyond Missionary Union," writes (in the *British Weekly*) that "all our missionaries are safe." Only a few hundred *other* people, mere Indians, are dead; but the Lord is mindful of His own. Religion is wonderfully consoling—to missionaries.

Now that the rebellious Protestant pastors have been bowled out by the Nazis, Hitler is bent on showing he can do the same with the Catholics. To begin with, he insists that compulsory sterilization shall be advertised in Catholic journals, and that the Church must on no account oppose it. Mass is made difficult for Catholics, and it looks as if the Nazis and the Church will soon be in a state of warfare. What a beautiful dilemma must Roman Catholic Germans now be in! The choice of the Hitler ideal or the Catholic ideal? The one based on intolerance, cruelty, robbery and stupid antagonism—the other, on myth, legend, lies, humbug and intolerance and cruelty, when it gets the chance. We can only extend our pity to the people mixed up in both.

Dr. L. P. Jacks is the distinguished Unitarian who recently preached in Liverpool Cathedral much to the disgust of Lord Hugh Cecil and his friends, and the sermons have now been published. One of the questions he asks and does not answer is, "who or what is this Holy Ghost, whose temple is the Universe, whose visible manifestation is the Holy Catholic Church, symbolized in Liverpool Cathedral?" We can't tell him nor can anybody else—not even a Catholic reviewer of his book, who furthermore objects to Dr. Jacks referring to the Holy Ghost as "he" in one passage, and "it" in another. Well, if you are not certain what in heaven is a Holy Ghost, "he," "it," or even "she" are all applicable. Perhaps the Holy Ghost is just so much wind, after all.

The Anglo-Catholics are aghast at the Dean of Exeter. He is actually inviting Nonconformist scholars to preach in his Cathedral during Lent, and this exhibition of a little tolerance at last among Christians is sternly rebuked. The Dean is, says a church paper, "prejudicing the definite dogmatic position of the Church of which he is a distinguished dignitary." Of course he is, but tolerance can never be tolerated by the strictly religious. It is a crime.

Miss Isabella Allan, housemaid at Bruckley Farm, Dairsie, is a brave girl. At great personal risk she released cattle from blazing courts during a fire at the Farm. At a meeting in Cupar Town Hall, she has been presented with the bronze medal of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; also a Bible from the Fife Branch of the Society. If she turns to 1 Corinthians ix. 9, she will find the following words (but not, we suspect, underlined), "Doth God take care for oxen?" Paul, as well, was one of those who held that the gift of eternal life was not for cattle. The incident of the apple was staged exclusively for the Lords and Ladies of Creation—you and me.

In the *Daily Telegraph* we read that the late Lytton Strachey considered Queen Elizabeth, in her relations with Essex, to be "a demented semi-spinster." We are not surprised that Miss Rebecca West doubts this view, which appears to have disturbed even the compositor.

Miss West writes that although Elizabeth was "a complete pagan, she nevertheless had the religious hope that if one rooted up murder and riot out of life it would develop a lovelier content." We have known a few Secularists who have entertained such a "hope" and who, curiously enough, have never dreamt that it required any adjectival clothing.

Now that slums have been declared socially objectionable, many of the clergy have discovered that slums are not in accordance with the religion of Jesus. This discovery is a rather belated one. For slums have usually been under the clergy's nose. Most cathedrals and large churches, if they have existed for a fair period, have a choice sample of slums under their sacred walls. Apparently, the clergy have been so concerned with things spiritual as not to notice the slums. They may have been interested in getting the slum-dwellers to live a "better life"; but getting better houses for slum-dwellers to live in, simply did not occur to the clergy. It was the will of God that some people should dwell in hovels and some in mansions.

A Commission on Public Morals was set up some years ago in Ireland, and its report is, so far, suppressed. Some details, however, have been published in a Catholic paper and this extract is rather interesting considering that Ireland is the Great Jewel of Roman Catholicism:—

Unnatural vice was rampant throughout the country; illegitimacy rose from 2.63 per cent of total births in 1923 to 3.23 per cent in 1932, and this was coupled with a general looseness of morals in every county in Ireland. In many ways the suppression of the Report is to be deplored, for blatant ignorance has given rise to a smug complacency, in which we innocently think that moral degeneracy is unknown in Ireland.

While congratulating a Roman Catholic paper for writing the above, we venture to enquire what exactly is the value of Roman Catholicism in Ireland or as a guardian of morals when it is the dominant religion?

Moreover, the birth-rate in Ireland has fallen from 22.5 to 18.91 in 1932. This is caused partly no doubt by a low marriage rate, perhaps due to economic conditions and partly also due to the fact that birth-control methods are reaching the Irish in spite of the strict censorship and the denunciations of the Church. One may keep some people in ignorance all the time; or one may keep all the

people in ignorance for some time; but one will never keep all the people in ignorance all the time—and the Church is beginning to find this out.

Two letters recently appeared alongside one another in a daily paper. One challenged the statement that Christianity has hitherto failed," thus:—

At the moment nothing is wanted more than goodwill and the spirit of service one towards the other. That spirit is Christianity in essence and fact, and it is because Christianity is not practised or, I had better say, "lived," that there is mistrust, jealousy and ill-feeling between man and man and nation and nation.

The second letter revealed another aspect of the Christian spirit, in this wise:—

It is easy to see why religion does not make for peace. The religious man always thinks he is right. He therefore thinks he is right in trying to convert others and in forcing them to share his views—if necessary by persecution.

Furthermore, we may add, he being so certain that he is right, is equally sure that he is justified in his mistrust, jealousy, and ill-feeling towards those whom he knows are wrong. This also is Christianity in essence and fact! And it helps to explain why Christianity cannot be relied on to bring peace on earth and good will among men.

We have often wondered where on earth (or elsewhere) the Kingdom of God might be! The Bishop of Bristol explained it all at Westminster Abbey. The worst of it is the Bishop's "solution" is like those "Crossword" Competitors Journals which give you every possible alternative and leave you, in the end, to guess it for yourself. Even then the Bishop is bound to say: "Now each of these explanations has some measure of truth, but none contains the full truth." He suggests that the Kingdom of God "is no concrete thing." We guessed as much. But it exists "where love is the ruling principle of human life." It is unfortunate that Jesus rather crabbed the Bishop's ideal by declaring emphatically "My Kingdom is not of this world." And after all *Human* love is not a bad ideal for human beings; any Kingdom of any God is a poor substitute.

In his first sermon as pastor at West Norwood, the Rev. E. W. Mills was guilty of a serious lapse into common-sense. He said that Jesus Christ was an excellent motive, in fact "Jesus was the chief among ten thousand motives. Yet it might not be easy to determine the worth and value of a motive. A good motive could not make a wrong act right." Comment would spoil so delicious a piece of unexpected candour as to the value of Christ in daily life.

## Fifty Years Ago.

### THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

JESUS CHRIST is said to have had no father. Thousands of other boys have been in the same plight. There is no miracle in that. If the founder of Christianity wished to prove his supernatural origin, he should have "gone the whole hog," and dispensed with a mother too. That would have been a real miracle. But at present his divine paternity is more than dubious. If there is a mother in the case, depend upon it there is a father somewhere. That which is born of the spirit is spirit, not flesh and blood; and the holy ghost is far too shadowy a person to be the father of a lusty boy. We feel sure that Jesus Christ was born like other men, and we decline to believe that God Almighty ever stooped to debauch an old man's wife. The whole story is a fable. There never was in this world, and there never will be, such a monstrous absurdity as a virgin mother.

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# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D.P.S.—We have no great opinion of the class of books you name, but we expect they are useful to many, and of these books, the one you name is as useful as any other with which we are acquainted.

N. MARTIN.—You are in error. The Roman Catholic believes in the use of reason just as much as any Atheist does. No man can form any conclusion whatever without using his reason. The distinction between the Roman Catholic and the Freethinker is not that one is "reasonable" and the other is non-reasonable. The difference is between sound and unsound logic. Mr. Cohen will deal with the subject in the series of articles he is commencing in our next issue.

THERE has been some slight delay in getting delivery of the bound copies of Mr. Cohen's book, *Letters to a Country Vicar*. But they will be despatched in the course of a few days from the time of writing. Probably by the date of this issue of the *Freethinker*.

A. G. WHADDY.—The Duchess of Atholl is a very bigoted, not to say a fundamentally stupid, person. The worst of it is there are so many of the same type abroad.

W. J. MEALOR.—Thanks for sending on letter. It is very interesting, and we are glad to have your Canadian friend's appreciation of the *Freethinker*.

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 25) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Empress Hall, Mealhouse Lane, Bolton at 7.0. Admission will be free, but there are some reserved seats for which a charge will be made. There will probably be many friends present from the district.

The Picton Hall was again crowded on Sunday last, to listen to Mr. Cohen on "Is Christianity Played Out?" We were informed that quite two hundred people were turned away, and unfortunately, as we learned afterwards, some of these had come from a distance. We were very sorry, but large as is the Picton Hall, its walls are solid, and will not expand under pressure. The Hall presented a fine sight, with the rows of packed seats, rising from the ground more than half-way up to the roof, and the greatest interest was shown in the lecture. Mr. Shortt, the President of the Branch, was in the chair, and was able to report to the audience the continued success of the propaganda in Liverpool. Other members were busy at the bookstall, and in the capacity of stewards, and so long as the members work as they are doing, the success of the movement in Liverpool is assured.

The Second Annual Dinner of the Branch, which took place on Saturday evening, February 17, at the Angel Hotel, was also a complete success. There was a good attendance of members and of Freethinkers from the surrounding district—one friend was present from Perth—with Mr. Cohen as the guest of the evening. There were songs, including a welcome contribution by Mr. Wingate, some fine violin playing by Mr. Maurice Faust, and speeches by the Chairman, Mr. Shortt, Dr. Carmichael, Mr. Harrison, Mr. McKelvie, Mr. Ready, Mr. Stafford, and Mr. Cohen. The evening went with just

the proper swing, and concluded with everyone feeling, as they ought to feel at the end of such an evening, that there might have been a little more.

We must again remind our readers of the Social and Dance that is to take place at the Caxton Hall, on March 3. The function is arranged by the N.S.S. Executive, and judging from previous experiences, we can promise a very enjoyable evening. Tickets are 2s. 6d. each, which includes refreshments. The tickets may be obtained either from the *Freethinker* office or from the N.S.S. General Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti. But they should be applied for at once. It is a good opportunity for introducing friends to Freethinkers and Freethought.

None too soon, a manifesto signed by 150 names well known in various walks of life protesting against the obvious dangers confronting personal liberty in this and other countries has been issued. But if the matter is to stop at that, very little good will be done. The public is not so infatuated with liberty that it is going to make any move for its preservation the moment it is warned that liberty is in danger. Whatever illusion anyone was under to the effect that the British public had any special devotion to liberty, events since 1914 ought to have shattered. So long as there is no direct interference with certain forms of enjoyment to the extent of making them prohibitive or difficult of attainment, the powers that be may do pretty much as they please; and the average member of the public is never conscious that he has lost much, because nothing is gone on which he set great store. In England you may destroy liberty in the name of freedom, but you must be careful that you destroy it in the right manner.

So the signatories of the protest need to do more than issue a manifesto, if it is to accomplish anything. An active committee needs creating which should keep the public informed of every move made by the police, by the Government, by the magistracy, by advertising pantomime artists such as Lord Rothermere or Sir Oswald Mosley, by politicians acting in the name of the British Empire, or by any legislation that is proposed which aims at, or which will result in, a cutting down of individual liberty. And even then it will be also necessary to have some paper to secure publicity. Without that the Committee would find its work difficult. If the right organization is formed, it should place its resources at the service of any movement or of any individual who was being threatened by police, or Parliament. The help should be given with absolute indifference as to what is the opinion that is being attacked. We must stand up for the opinion we believe to be bad, or our efforts to secure freedom for the opinion we believe to be good are certain to fail.

We have reached a stage when the effort to abolish freedom of thought, speech and publication is no longer effected in the old, directly oppressive way. In the press it is partly done by the news-column and the boycott. In public the suppression of freedom of thought is now proclaimed as a first principle of politics. In Russia, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Poland, freedom of thought is taboo. The ideal of the Christian Church is being realized in politics, at the time when it is being disavowed in religion. Fascism on the one hand, and Communism on the other makes no secret of the fact that their desire is to destroy the liberty of all who disagree with them. And this is giving rise to a third, rather amorphous party, which is ready to deny liberty to both, and who do not realize that we must be prepared to run risks in the interests of liberty, as risks are run in the interests of tyranny. It is freedom for all opinion that is required. The question of whether an opinion is right or wrong, "dangerous" or otherwise is quite irrelevant.

Neither will it do to depend upon the memory of the public. We must remember that we are dealing with a public, a very large section of whom derive their political education from the headlines of the "stunt" press, and their history from novels. This public forgets another and a different story to-morrow. And the press, to-day what it was told yesterday, and is ready for

catering for the public it has helped to create, has only room for sheer sensationalism. Already few remember the murders and the brutality of the early part of the Mussolini reign, and know little of the terrorism by which it is maintained. In just a year, the brutalities and indecencies of the Germans fail to excite press comment, and the public is taking it as an established thing. The German Government is so well aware of it that, after Dimitrof and his two companions were declared not guilty by a German court, they declined to set them free, evidently trusting to people in other countries forgetting all about them. Thanks to the sustained agitation that danger appears to have been averted. And the Rothermere press has given its meed of praise to the Austrian Fascists, who have first driven Socialists to revolt and then promptly shot down men, women, and children, afterwards proceeding to the usual Fascist policy of destroying all trades unions and robbing the societies of their funds.

We must make up our minds whether we are for a policy of freedom, or for one of barbarism. If for the latter, then it is not enough to deliver an occasional lecture, or issue an occasional manifesto. The message must be insistent, it must be repeated over and over again, and from different angles. Any organization that is formed will fall short in its work if it is not ready to champion anyone whose rights are infringed by police or other action, and ready to oppose measures that are frankly aimed at curtailing the liberty we still have. If that were done, the tradition of liberty in this country is still sufficiently strong to laugh out of existence the English Fascist pantomime with its semi-military organization, and the stupidities of press barons, whose general ignorance is only equalled by their impertinence.

We had got thus far when we stopped to read a letter from a correspondent who complained of the slowness of progress; of the comments on the work of reformers presented by the Vienna business, and he felt that even the fight against intolerance bred a feeling of intolerance to those against whom we are working. We can sympathize thoroughly with the feeling of disappointment, even of despair, engendered but there are other considerations. The fight for a better life, socially and intellectually, is at all times carried on by a few against the opposition and apathy of the majority. It is a fight of the present against the dead weight of the past, and the period of civilized life is but a small thing against the thousand of generations of uncivilized human existence. In this fight we are bound to use weapons that can be as easily used for wrong as for right. The same science which has almost abolished the periodic scarcity of food from the world, has also provided the keener brains that has worked, so far as it may, the reign of plenty to the undoing of humanity. The same knowledge that enables us to fight more successfully the ravages of disease, enables man to create instruments of destruction that threatens the existence of civilization itself. The piratical impulses that once manifested itself in the open robbery and ill-treatment of men and women, may to-day express itself in forms that are moralized by law and custom. Knowledge is a two-edged weapon that can be used with equal facility for good or ill.

But in spite of all this the world does move towards a better life, even though there may be many slips backward in the process. It is the slowness of progress, and the slips backward that tests the quality of the reformer. Impatience with the rate of progress and doubts of the certainty of progress are the two things against which all reformers have to fight. It is persistency that tells, presistency and faith in the ultimate triumph of truth over falsehood and of justice over injustice. It is by contrasting periods that one can measure the progress that has been made, and then it is realized that the right use of the failure of to-day is to make it serve as an incentive to achieve the success of to-morrow.

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. has arranged a course of five Sunday evening lectures in the I.L.P. Rooms, 133 Forest Lane (Forest Gate End). Commencing to-day (February 25) Mr. I. Greenhouse, the Branch Secretary,

will speak on "Religion the Enemy of Progress." Admission is free, and the lecture begins at 7.30. The success of the course is assured if the local saints will give it their support.

Mr. B. A. LeMaine will pay his first lecture visit to Stockport to-day (Sunday) and speak for the local N.S.S. Branch, and Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be in Leicester speaking for the Leicester Secular Society; details will be found in the Lecture Notices column, and if the local saints will fill the halls, the speakers can be relied upon to complete the success of the evening.

On Thursday, March 1, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will address the Cambridge and Bethnal Green Old Boys Club 4, Chance Street, London, E.1, on "What is Freethought?" The proceedings begin at 9 p.m., and we understand there will be a few seats available for non-members who would like to be present. Questions and discussion will follow the address.

From a recent letter from Mr. W. Heaford we are pleased to pass on to his many friends and admirers in the Freethought Movement, the news that although practically confined to his room he is much better in health, and the doctor gives hope of his ultimate recovery. To a Freethought enthusiast like Mr. Heaford the inability to be up and doing must be a sore trial, and we sincerely trust that the doctor's hope may be more than realized by a remarkably quick and complete recovery.

## The Organization of Opinion.

### II.

THE Press continues, with whatever limitations, to serve the interest of the parties that divide the political world between them. Social ideas are as vital a factor in national affairs as religious beliefs. And the mode through which such ideas are expressed and represented in Parliament is of moment to national welfare; so long as Parliament shall exist, as, happily, it does still, pre-eminently for governing purposes.

Since the Reform Bill of '32 our Parliamentary system has worked on the basis of two parties until recent years. The difference between them did not prevent coalition, for some time after Reform, at a particular juncture. They embodied the two counter principles of innovation and conservation. It was rather the *makers* of opinion, and agitations, and circumstances in the general world, that determined their respective attitudes and policies as occasion served. Moreover, an English member of Parliament, usually coming from the more affluent classes, as he gave his services, filled a place of considerable independence and distinction. He was a representative, not a delegate, and was so in a national sense, even if with a party interpretation. He must not press unduly the claims of local interest against what appeared to consist with the general good.

The advent of another party has altered much of this. Demand for more direct Labour representation—that is, of men who had worked in mine and factory and knew labour conditions at first hand—led to the presence of such members in the House before a Socialist Party arose towards the close of last century. Attaching itself to the Trades Union Federation on the ground that "Codlin's your friend, not Short," it has indoctrinated organized Labour to the extent that a Labour-Socialist Parliamentary Party has come into being, drawn from other strata than those which previously filled Parliament, assisted by the grant of payment of Members. It is characterized by "class" bias, is returned on a rigid programme, and disciplined to act in strict accordance with Party

councils. The Liberal Party was broken by the War and its sequence; and the new grouping has advantaged itself at their expense on the strength of being the "advanced" thing of the moment. So the "Liberals" of to-day are a minority section of the body politic.

The more far-seeing thinkers, like J. S. Mill, when extensions of the franchise were going forward, aimed to secure the just representation of minorities. They feared the effect of a chance mechanical majority. But their advice was disregarded when the system of single-member constituencies was set up in the '80's, which has since failed to give equitable results. Now, with three or more candidates contending for one seat, the one who gets just more than a third of the votes cast is returned. And, were the majority evenly scattered over the country, one party might in this way capture nearly the whole of the representation, which all but happened at the last Election. Proposals are forthcoming to remedy this grave defect in our electoral methods. But for specious reasons neither of the two larger parties wish to utilize them, but rather to squeeze out an unwelcome independent minority that stands in the way of a dog-fight between Socialists and anti-Socialists when party warfare is resumed on the end of "National" Government. Each side in the contest so set, hopes to "win" by the lure of its particular appeal. And from the extreme Left of the Socialists comes the claim to use dictatorial means afterwards to hasten their Utopia, a claim best met in the spirit of *Punch's* cartoon—Yet One More Passenger; where Sir Stafford Cripps, in a parody of *Widdcombe Fair*, begs of Roosevelt the loan of his horse, Autocracy:—

"Frank Roosevelt—Frank Roosevelt—lend me thy grey mare  
—All along, down along, out along Lee;  
For I want for to go to Dictatorship Fair.  
Wi' Bill Stalin, Harry Hitler, Jan Dollfuss,  
Ben Musso, Mus Kemal, O'Duffy,  
Old Uncle Tom Mosley an' all!"

All of which is dangerous to the higher interest of this country. There are other aspects of material concern, beyond those implied in the above crude antithesis, demanding attention. Socialist prescription, as still advanced, relates to values that are in course of transformation. Novel problems confront us, requiring for their treatment a fresh mind and orientation of thought altogether, and this can only be brought to bear on policy through opportunity for fair expression. The experiments and developments now going forward need careful watchfulness and informed criticism. The first service of a Parliament like ours is to be properly reflective of all the main currents of opinion. The second is to maintain a stable executive in keeping with its predominant character. How this can be best accomplished is a matter of experiment and reason.\* But minority right has a peculiar relation to the position of Rationalism and its influence on public affairs.

At the last N.S.S. Conference certain resolutions were adopted that are of import in this connexion: "That this Conference re-affirms its adherence to a non-political programme." "That in the opinion of this Conference the time has arrived when the N.S.S. should concentrate its efforts on the election to Parliament of members willing to promote the principles of the Secular Movement." "That . . . it is advisable that Branches of the N.S.S. should take a more active interest in the social and civic life of the Community." Now, to take part in public affairs means contact with current policies, and there is

ample room for free criticism all round here. The first article is justified from attempts of a revolutionary movement to force its economic programme on to Freethought circles. There remains, however, an opening for a defined Rationalist attitude towards vital problems. With the decline of religious beliefs, what is lacking in political combinations is a comprehensive life-doctrine animating their material aims—what it is the function of a social philosophy to adduce, continuing the Utilitarian initiative of last century. Conservatives, of course, may find support here in the Church. On the other hand, some words from a declaration published by the British Institute of Philosophy, in January, 1933, are apposite. "Philosophy . . . seeks a view of Reality with no important feature left out. When its preliminary analytic work has been done it proceeds to take over the results of the special sciences, and with this material, together with that furnished by the moral, aesthetic and religious experiences of man, endeavours to get what has fitly been called a "synoptic" view of the world, i.e., a view of all things in their "togetherness." It hopes in this way to get a glimpse of the nature of the Universe, and a true notion of the part that man plays in the whole scheme of things. "Not the least important service of Philosophy is its application to the social life of man. We may agree with Plato that in the civilized world every form of society is in danger of perishing as much by its inherent defects and vices as by external assault. Modern civilization is faced with problems of reconciliation as great as those which were unsolved by the ancient world, and the issue is in the balance. The question which must be answered is whether the prevailing social thought is competent to solve our problems. The demand for a social philosophy providing a rational and comprehensive purpose to guide the future is admittedly urgent. And it can be said with confidence that no social philosophy would prove adequate to meet the situation which did not take account of the first principles of ethics. . . ." We may add, that one of these principles is scope for the development of Individuality, and its expression through an ascending scale of satisfactions and desires.

That implies, also, correlative rights of citizenship. When our electoral methods permit of the presence in Parliament of particularized groups (now almost impossible), we might possess a representation indicated in the Conference resolution; a body of advocates who, however aligned with existing parties, would take their own course on matters which they leave untouched, in the spirit expressed above. These matters may include the complete removal of Blasphemy Laws and religious disabilities; the separation of Church and State, and dissociation of the intellectual or spiritual agencies of life from the secular or legal arm; absolute reliance on the forces of persuasion and discussion in all questions of social and political change and innovation; the removal of the religious question from the schools, and introduction of personal and civic teaching along the lines Mr. F. J. Gould has popularized; the promotion of a cultural mission (as distinct from religious evangelism) to darker and more backward peoples, bringing helpful science to their advancement, and making the extinction of disease and superstition the guiding aim of British power; and at home and abroad forwarding those illuminative factors that alone cohere with a high civilization.

Meanwhile, it behoves all Freethinkers to co-operate in local circles to assist this purpose, for their own social happiness, and their influence on the world.

\* The subject receives concrete treatment in the course of the writer's study: *Rationalist Evaluations and the True Direction of Civilization*. Heath Cranton, Ltd.

## Religion—Refined and Otherwise.

DESPITE the soothing explanations of Protestant Higher Critics who haunt the fashionable drawing rooms of comfortable believers, all Roman Catholics, the Salvation Army to a man—and a woman—the hell-fire and street corner revivalists are determined to stand loyal to the material lake of fire as the destination of all unbelievers. The mass of the people whose educational opportunities are limited by the existing inadequate standards are not likely to listen to or be impressed by the spineless higher critics, most of whose time is spent in handing gilded tea or coffee cups, or by a religion that has not something forceful or forcible about it. Mr. Stephen Leacock in his *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, presents us with an admirable contrast between a hell-fire clergyman who preaches the good old stuff of Fundamentalism with plenty of hell in it; and an episcopalian clergyman who treats the essential things and verities of the faith as if they were abstractions; hinting occasionally at the discomfort of "moral torment." But as Mr. Leacock observes, "Nobody cares a dump for moral torment!"—least of all the "successful" people who "sat under" this Episcopalian minister! They could only conceive of "torment" that had a physical grip and bite. So they flocked to listen to the invective of the Rev. Dr. Uttermust Dumfarthing, who called a spade a spade, and refused to refer to Hell as Hades; but flatly called it Hell. In the end Mr. Leacock gives an amusing account of a "merger" of the two Churches brought about by negotiations between the prominent men of each, all matters of difference in doctrine being adjusted by vote of the Trustees and Bondholders.

People who are aroused by tub-thumping evangelists to a concern about their "souls"—how much doth pure selfishness operate in the matter of "personal conversion"—want to believe that the horrors they are escaping from by belief in Jesus and submission to the will of Jehovah are of a very substantial and terrifying kind. Thus the "Lake of Fire" is a tremendous asset in swaying the ignorant, illiterate and poorly educated. "Blood and Fire" is the crude motto of Salvationism. William Booth knew what he was about. Rose water is of no use in the sort of religion which so inspires the converted navy that he feels fit to knock hell out of the big drum.

You may capture a number of superficial æsthetes by the drawing-room kind of religion which the Higher Critics promulgate—persons who have reached the stage when they can stand enraptured for half an hour before a cubist drawing, or do with a fly for lunch. But the things that attract them for religious purposes do not attract the navy, the coal-heaver, the butcher, the ironfounder, the blast furnaceman, the stoker and the pitman. These last mentioned professions are the recruiting ground of the unequivocal evangelists who are endowed with lungs of leather, and can get the news of salvation off their chests with megaphonic power.

Our dear drawing-room Christian friends are forever intent on dwelling upon the pleasant aspects of the Divine nature. They become mildly and melliflously ecstatic in contemplation of a God of Love—the spirit of beauty, goodness and truth—who wouldn't hurt a fly—who, indeed, is fearfully concerned over injury to the least of his creatures:—

Happy birds that sing and fly  
Round thine altars, oh most High!

These dualists refuse to be impressed by the facts recorded in history which attest that this most High Personality whom they worship cannot keep his universe or his creatures in order or under proper con-

trol. When confronted with that sort of evidence, they blame mankind or some unknown anti-theistic forces—presumably to be associated with the Rebels who were evicted from Paradise. But man himself, at any rate, owing to his limitations cannot be held responsible for the shark, the tiger, the cyclone, the earthquake, the deadly poisonous snakes, and horrible diseases. Ingersoll once said, in reply to a fussy feminine critic, that if he had the Government of the World he would have made good health and not disease catching.

Yes, the drawing-room Christians shut their eyes to the unpleasant aspects of nature—divine, human and inanimate. They dream of doves, humming birds, bright coloured innocent songsters all—flying around the altars of the Most High. They have no time for eagles, vultures, hawks and such like. They gather their dainty skirts about them when they pass a seedy throng at a street corner listening to a brawling coal-heaver shouting that he once lived in Hell, but has escaped from it. Such rude language! An ounce of civet, good apothecary!

But any way, there is more honesty of purpose to be found in the "Blood and Fire" system—crude as it is—than in the drawing-room brand of religion, which is all super-refined poetry, everlasting love and artistic wall-paper—the brand that finds favour with the Oxford Group, with its policy of "sharing experiences." Its comparative success is a striking commentary upon the state of mind of a peculiar type of humanity that has appeared since the Great War—filled with unbalanced, neurotic ideas; idle in mind; flitting hither and thither; sensation-hunting; easily led captive by attractively-presented sentimentalities. "Love" you may define in various ways; but love divorced from common sense and just and honest dealing is a delusion and a snare. Just because of this the Humanist's Indictment of the Christian Deity is unanswerable.

IGNOTUS.

## Drama and Dramatists.

WITH a caste of ten characters, Mr. John Howard Lawson makes a splendid play of "Success Story" in three acts. It is refreshing to come across a playwright who has an idea worthy of serious thought. Mr. Lawson has taken hold of an old theme, revived it, and made it interesting. After success in social life during the Augustan period of Roman history, it is recorded that a famous statesman was found by a friend happy and contented in ploughing a field. This attitude towards life is also found at the end of Voltaire's novel *Candide*. Both attitudes somewhat emphasize the worthlessness of money, and in this connexion it may be well to recall the remark of the Editor of this paper on the subject. It was of sufficient importance and subtlety to be recorded with other gems, and for those who file their copies of the *Freethinker* it will be found in the issue for February 1, 1920. The Editor wrote, "We have never seen that money gives sufficient compensation for one to spend one's life in getting it." Mr. Lawson's idea, amplified by plot, comedy and tragedy, is a brilliant picture of the worthlessness of money.

A Jew from the ghetto, by hard work and mastery of the tricks in the business world, together with the use of exceptional intuition, rises to power in a firm, and finds that it is as empty as the last initiatory chamber in the Mæusian mysteries. The phrase "Black Magic," appears at times, and for anyone interested in a mode of conduct, and content to accept the term, it offers speculation, valuable or otherwise. White and black magic are two metaphysical roads through life. Spinoza in a few words annihilated these two modes when he wrote that virtue was its own reward. Human beings are endowed with gifts which

are developed, and it then becomes a question of in what manner these gifts shall be used.

There is much fuss and hocus-pocus written and spoken about magic, which, if it does not disgust the student, at least succeeds in making the subject one for amusement. I am thinking now of those who are content to have no greater view of the world than that revealed through success, which, in other words, is experience.

This play is too good to disappear, and if it should be put on at any theatre available for a visit from Freethinkers, they should not miss it. The author can never be accused of calling a spade by any other name, and this enables us to enjoy the discussion of ideas with a pictorial background. All the characters are excellent, and at one point the critic expected something really great from the author. The secretary, who appeared to be one of the most thoughtful in the caste, in the last act corners the emotional hero, Sol Ginsberg. Mr. Lawson may be an American, and he may have read Whitman with half-open eyes. At the point in the play mentioned above, the secretary in a few explicit words turns the world of Sol Ginsberg back again to himself. There is a vital spark at this moment, and he is shown the simple mysterious fact of life, which is revealed to most people when the knowledge is of little or no use to them. Man himself is a creator; and a noble tribute is paid in this play to artists and poets by this disillusioned business man. The end is tragic, and some may think that it is weak, but there is the ring of enthusiasm throughout the performance which in itself is a criticism of the wrong values on which the eyes of so-called intelligent people are set.

C-DE-B.

### The Psychology of Dictatorship.

In the troublous and turbulent times through which we are passing at present, it is scarcely possible to glance at a newspaper or a periodical without encountering the word dictatorship. Everywhere people are writing about it, or discussing it; everywhere we find enthusiasts assuring us that its advent is inevitable, and that when it comes it will prove our salvation. Only by dictatorship shall we be redeemed, apparently!

Though the idea is far from being a new one—for there have been dictators of sorts in nearly all countries in the past—it has, owing to the trend of current affairs, had a meteoric rise in the esteem of popular opinion. The fact that it has been adopted as the form of government in a few countries has attracted widespread attention, and has compelled men and women in all walks of life to ask what has caused its growth, and to study it in operation.

It is difficult to get to know all the factors responsible for the rise of dictatorship in such countries as Italy, Russia, and Germany, but we know that each of these nations was faced with grave problems. There was disorder, distress, strife, and destitution on a large scale, and there appeared no means of alleviating these social ills. Crucial periods of this nature give rise to a fairly prevalent attitude of pessimism and despair, because of the mental agony which the majority are forced to suffer consequent upon their precarious form of livelihood and their inability to maintain a reasonable standard of comfort.

It can readily be perceived that people who see no prospect of a betterment of their conditions; whose minds are tortured by vague dreads which they cannot define, and who find the tide of events perhaps taking a turn of which they heartily disapprove, since it seems likely to be still further prejudicial to their interests, will with eagerness seize upon anything which promises to relieve the situation. They will be deeply influenced by displays of violent passion against that which they fear; they will be carried away with exhilaration by an aggressive and pugnacious policy of action, and will rally to support the party which offers to take swift and drastic measures, if necessary, for the

purpose of quelling the forces represented to be working for the doom of the nation.

These people naturally welcome the suggestion of a dictator. The prospect of a man invested with full power to enforce his will on the populace, has, in their eyes, a certain enchantment when viewed from the distance of their unsatisfying surroundings. They visualize order emerging out of chaos, but never stop to consider the sacrifice entailed in instituting such order. In their anxiety for a firm ruling hand they neglect to take into account the established fact that the most dangerous weapon you can thrust into the hands of any human being is absolute power. Actually they distrust, and regard as weak, men who urge them to keep a cool head, and at all costs avoid political dogmatism. They are in no mood for tolerance, and consequently hold no brief for those who plead for its cultivation; they do not think that a person who has opposing views should be allowed to express them. The main trouble is they have grown impatient—we have all done so at times, for various reasons, but happily some of us have been able to control our feelings sufficiently to prevent their sweeping us entirely off our mental balance. Their impatience, however, has led them to desire ardently that something should be accomplished with all possible speed, and when they see a likelihood of the desire being consummated, they are prepared to suspend whatever ethical principles they have; indeed they will go so far as to use mean, contemptible tactics in order to crush any persons or bodies antagonistic towards their schemes. They would justify their conduct on the ground that as the general trend of affairs was not to their liking they felt they had a legitimate grudge against society; they felt, moreover, that it was their duty to themselves, and incidentally to the nation to assert themselves and rout the insurgents. In this frame of mind a philosophy of politics which advocates force and the moulding of the multitude to the heart's desire of its chief protagonist or protagonists has an attraction for them, always provided it does not disturb any deeply-rooted prejudices or beliefs. It attracts because it rouses long pent-up emotions and opens channels for their expression. Thus many can be easily convinced by plausible propagandists that with the establishment of a dictatorship all their troubles will ultimately evaporate.

Dictatorship appeals to others because they experience a sense of pleasure in being ordered about; they are really delighted to have someone to do their thinking and planning for them. In their childhood their parents managed their affairs, and generally smoothed the path of life for them. As adults they find themselves practically incapable of ruling their own lives, and discover an escape from this irksome obligation by accepting a dictatorship. Then there are the other types who favour dictatorship because, lurking at the back of their minds, is the belief that they will thus be afforded a chance of seeing others ordered about, and perhaps of doing a little commanding themselves in the event of its being achieved. They do not see that it will make no attempt to discriminate between themselves and the multitude when it issues its orders and decrees, but labour under the impression that obedience will only be enforced upon others—obstinate persons who will not subscribe to the doctrines and politics of the dictator when he is in office. Then again the environment in which many have been compelled to live has subdued their independent spirit and their self-esteem to such an extent that they accept authority, whatever shape or form it assumes, as a matter of course. This uncritical acquiescence has been inculcated in early youth and they have never outgrown it. It is safe to assert that men and women of this calibre will wax enthusiastic over the dictatorship ideal. Conversely, if there were more independent thinking, more self-reliance, there would be proportionally less call for a dictator.

Dictatorship, in fact, embodies an attempt to carry the religious mentality into politics. That is to say, as a religion—any religion—categorically asserts that its God, its Christ, and its Holy Ghost (if any), are the only true ones, and all other brands are spurious inventions of the devil; so the political party favouring a dictator main-

tains that He must be regarded as the God of the state, and that He is truth incarnate. Dictatorship, like religion, does not tolerate the heretic. Just as religion, when it established its large-scale dictatorship with its infallible Pope of Rome, tried to exterminate the heretic, so an autocratic state tries to discourage him with banishment, lengthy terms of imprisonment, concentration camps, and by blocking every avenue to the free expression of his opinions.

Not only are religion and dictatorship equally intolerant towards opponents, but each clamours for supreme power, which is a sign of fanaticism; each desires to suppress everything in speech and writing unfavourable to it, which is sure evidence of intellectual weakness; each makes a strong appeal to the emotional side of man, and each meets the force of reason with physical force.

Government by dictatorship stands for tyranny, physical, intellectual, and moral. Under its ægis freedom of thought, speech, and publication are impossible, and man is no more than a pawn, a robot, and a slave.

TOM BLAKE.

## The Last Round-Up.

I HAVE just returned from a visit to a large London Cemetery which shall be nameless.

Graveyards admittedly do not look their best on a drab November afternoon, and the tiny colour splashes of the flowers deposited by the devout serve only to accentuate the prevailing gloom. Strange it is that we give flowers as a token of Love in exuberant Youth, and use the same token for remembrance of Death.

It is difficult to imagine anything more barbaric, unhygienic and depressing than a "civilized" burial ground. The principle, found among animals and practised in the dawn of History by savage peoples, of digging a hole in the ground and putting in it numerous things, bones, treasure, human relics, etc., and erecting a stone upon it to keep away preying beasts and carrion, still persists in a modified form in this year of Grace 1934.

Its merit is that burial is simple and cheap. Cremation, on the other hand, is unpopular, expensive and entails more trouble.

None who have seen the beautiful but simple War Cemeteries in Flanders and elsewhere can fail to be awed and impressed by their neatness and appearance after fifteen years; none would expect a civilian stone erected, say in 1918 to retain its virginal whiteness now, simply and solely because "dead and buried" means dead, buried and neglected.

The relatives move away from or ignore the grave; the Churches lose all interest after the muttering of the "Dust to Dust" phrase; the cemetery authorities are concerned solely with the upkeep of paths and grass verges. It is small wonder that the average graveyard becomes a blot on our civilization and almost indecent in its horror.

The State, in these days, tries hard to organize our Lives for us; let it concern itself a little with the organization of Death. We need properly arranged, national burial places administered not at the whim of poor or rich relations, but by a body whose duty it would be to see that the passage of a few years would not bring desolation and decay to the last resting place of the "Great Majority."

The poor withered blooms on some broken tombstone bear silent testimony to the fallacy of decorating graveyards with flowers; the blatant snobbery of many inscribing showy masonic work with Sir . . . Bart., D.S.O., K.C.B., or . . . M.A. (Cantab.) . . . is appalling, and a discredit to the system of burial now existing.

Must we retain this archaic method of disposing of the Dead?

A. F. WILLIAMS.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

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

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

#### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, S.W.4) : 7.30, Mr. Willmot (Socialist Party of Great Britain)—"Socialism and Religion."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"The New American Revolution."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4) : 8.0, Monday, February 26, Mr. A. D. McLarn—"The Historical Significance of the English Deists."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station) : 7.30, Mr. Alec Craig—"Police Courts and Justice."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Independent Labour Party Rooms, 133 Forest Lane, Forest Gate End) : 7.30, Mr. Ivor Greenhouse—"Religion, the Enemy of Progress."

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Empress Hall, Mealhouse Lane, Deansgate, Bolton) : 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen (President of N.S.S. and Editor of the *Freethinker*)—"Is Christianity Played Out?" Admission Free. Reserved seats 6d. and 1s. each.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn) : 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—A lecture.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street) : 7.0, Mr. A. C. Dutton—"Sex, Sin and Salvation."

CHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Peoples' Hall, Delamere Street, Chester) : 7.0, Mr. D. Robinson (Liverpool)—"Evolution and Christianity."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Road to Eudore."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Mr. James Hunter—"The Wonders of Radio." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Christianity and the Crisis."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0 Edward B. Powley (Oxon.), B.A. (London), F.R.Hist.S., Author of *Vicisti Galilæ?* etc.—"Charles Bradlaugh—His Career and Its Significance To-day."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester) : 7.30, Mr. W. Ll. Owen (Liverpool)—"Acts xvi. 30."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade) : 3.0, Members' Meeting.

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Social Hall) : 7.0, Thursday, March 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Has Man a Free Will?"

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus) : 7.0, Mr. B. G. Harwood—"Some Christian Origins."

SEAHAM HARBOUR : 7.0, Wednesday, February 28, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Anthropology."

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Lower Hillgate, Stockport) : 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"Christianity and Intellectual Dishonesty."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street) : 7.30, A Lecture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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