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Views and Opinions.

Splitting Hairs.

"GIVE me time and I will pay my debts." I think it was Emerson who said this, or something like this. At any rate, it is good enough for a jumping-off point, and one must commence somewhere. My object is, in this article, and in those that follow, to pay a debt to some of my readers. Some time ago, when reviewing a very interesting and able book by Mrs. Janet Chance on *Intellectual Crime*, I called attention, following the author's lead, to the abuse of words in controversy, from which even the author was not quite exempt. There followed a letter from Mrs. Chance, and from others, asking questions. I promised to deal with these questions as soon as I had time. But what with the things I *had* to do, and the things I intended doing, it was not easy for me to look forward to a clear run of several issues of this paper, and I kept putting off the task. Meanwhile, not merely was the original purpose unfulfilled, but other questions cropped up. So I began to think that unless I set about redeeming some of the I.O.U.'s I had been distributing, some one might apply for the appointment of an Official Receiver, and that, however it might end, would certainly leave behind doubts as to my ultimate solvency.

These articles will consist mainly of a discussion of meanings, and that to some people is a very fatiguing and wearisome—even a needless—process. Like the old lady who thought there was no need to define a pig because everyone would know a pig if he saw one, there are many who say—at least in effect—"We all know what we mean when we use certain words, so what is the use of spending time in giving us a number of finicking definitions, or in splitting hairs?" But I do not agree that we are all agreed as to the exact meaning of words; neither do I agree with the implied uselessness of splitting hairs. If I could agree with either or both of these statements, I should feel that there was little work left for me to do. And if these complaints were justified we might find our-

selves very near the social millenium, while progress would be a very easy sum in arithmetical progression. On the contrary, I believe that the correct understanding of the meaning of words, and the reception of them in an identical sense, is one of our greatest intellectual and social needs.

* * *

Words, just Words!

After all, splitting hairs is a rather delicate operation. Almost any kind of chopper may be used to split a block of wood, but to cut a hair requires a very keen instrument and a rather delicate touch. One may learn to carve a joint in a very short time, but it takes years of practice to develop the skilful touch which enables one to cut a delicate nerve without killing the patient. The finer the hair, whether it be an actual hair, or a dialectical one that we are cutting, the keener must the instrument be that we are using, and the better trained the operator. In these fine operations, it will not do to have a "near enough," it is exactness that is essential. A battleship looks like a great thing in which one might think a "near enough" would do, but how much of its efficiency depends upon tools that can work to a thousandth part of an inch? Generally speaking, the more important the work we are doing, the more time and labour we must spend on what, to the gross mind, is splitting hairs.

Much the same sort of reply may be made to those who complain that one is quarrelling over words. Well, but what else should we quarrel about other than words? Words should stand for thoughts, and thoughts should stand for things; but, if our words were an exact representation of our thoughts, and if those who heard, understood them in the exact sense that we do, how many of our quarrels would be left? But neither of those things happen. Our words come to us with significances and implications that belong to past frames of thought. Much of the language of poetry—the smile of the sunshine, or of the sea, the anger of the tempest, the roar of the wind, the attraction of the moon to the earth, the loves of the plants, etc.—carry us back to a time when man could do no other than, as statements of literal fact, endow nature at large with his own feelings, and express its actions in terms of his own impulses. With thoughts that reach forward into the distant future, man strives to express them in a language that is saturated with the thoughts of the past. He is like one striving to produce a modern newspaper with a printing press of the time of Caxton. Is it any wonder that words are so often used in one sense and understood in another?

* * *

Phrase Slavery

There is a like difficulty on the part of listener and reader. But to this is added the burden of custom and education. We each have our own private meaning of words as well as that used in public inter-

course; but the two meanings do not coincide. Consider such a word as that beloved of the politician, "Patriotism." What does it mean? The dictionary, and most people, will define it as love of country. What does that mean? To one very numerous class, it means shouting "God Save the King," or "Long Live the Republic," or some other semi-magical formula, each repeated in much the same temper as a medieval necromancer muttered the word Abracadabra, or the modern bishop repeats, "For Jesus Christ's Sake, Amen." To another, it stands for an intelligent appreciation of the conditions of general welfare and an endeavour towards realization. And there are numerous stages in between. Or take that blessed word "religion," on which we shall expatiate later. Here there is a perfect cloud of meanings, not the least dangerous of which is its use by the man who claims to be religious, mainly because he is still mentally cringing before the taboos and dangers of the primitive and medieval legal and social penalties attaching to the repudiation of all religion. He is not striving for clarity of meaning, but for ease of living. He feels he must keep in touch with the crowd because he believes that with the crowd lies safety. Or, the word "God." Professor Jeans believes in a God; so does a Salvation Army preacher, and therefore each claims kinship with the other—or, rather one claims kinship, and the other unwillingly submits to the relationship. But one says that God stands for a symbol—although of what he is a symbol "God only knows," while the other thinks of "God" as an elderly gentleman who is angry and benevolent by turns, damning a philosopher for his doubt, and crowning a fool for his folly. We must "split hairs," and we must quarrel about words, because they are the fundamental conditions of sane and profitable thinking.

* * *

A Refuge for the Mentally Lazy.

Generally, but not universally, the objection to splitting hairs, and to discuss the meanings and implication of words, is part of a dislike to exact and careful thinking. Lazy people, and those who are anxious to gain a reputation for being wise and well-informed without the toil of becoming either, hate exact thinking as the devil is said to hate holy water. They like to discuss important questions, assisted by nothing more and nothing better than a few hastily acquired phrases, or such information as they can gather from a superficial newspaper article. They are the tramps of the intellectual world, content to wander along so long as they can beg a crust or a copper, or secure a casual "doss" in an institution they meet by the way. Such people make the most tremendous assumptions without the least conception of what they are doing, and under the impression that they are sticking to plain common-sense. They are those upon whom live politicians and parsons. They love a slogan, because it provides them with a ready-made substitute for the arduous work of doing their own thinking. And to be just to all, one must add that they can be found in the ranks of all parties and sects. But they are always the tools of those who know how to use them. They are the products and the expression of mass-thinking. Catchwords are made for them, and they bite at them with the avidity of a hungry fish. The Christian expresses this type of mind by the name of Jesus, the non-Christian may be found invoking the name of "Evolution" with all the unction of the old lady clinging to her "Mesopotamia." When an election occurs, the first search of party leaders is for "Slogans." When the great war began a whole new department was created for no other purpose than to provide the public with

words and phrases that would serve as substitutes for thinking. In this way, the real issues of the war were hidden, the German became the synonym for an enemy to civilization, just as at some other time it was the Russian, or the Turk, or the Frenchman, or the Boer; just as to-morrow it may be the Japanese, or some other people with whom we may be having a quarrel.

It is quite certain that if we had been in the habit of "splitting hairs," or if we had all felt it necessary to be more curious as to the meaning of words, concerned with their right use, the world would be a very different world from what it is. Our leaders, political and otherwise, would have to be more careful and more precise in what they say. They would not so easily manage to disguise their meanings, or the absence of any meaning. Persons would not be able to perpetuate their rule by using words in one sense to-day and in another sense to-morrow. In other words, we should be more of an educated people instead of being merely an instructed one.

And not the least benefit of a well-filled mind would be the ability to really be the Captain of one's own Soul, a capacity that is so sadly lacking to-day. There is a world of sustenance in a well-stored mind that can hardly be exhausted, and which has a tremendous capacity for reproduction. It is the best insurance against disaster and a certain guard against boredom.

Certainly we cannot afford to desist from splitting hairs, or to stop quarrelling over words. Language is not merely necessary to civilization, it is the prime condition of its existence. Without it we should have no adequate method of conveying ideas, one to another, and from generation to generation. Without language general ideas would be impossible. It is the chief thing that marks the human from the animal world. It is the greatest tool we have, and to imagine that we can get along safely without improving this tool and training ourselves to greater proficiency in its use, is to prove that folly still plays a great part in the determination of human affairs.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Lure of Lucretius

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Shakespeare.*

"To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
That is the top of sovereignty."—*Keats.*

Few books help us to understand the magnitude of the struggle between reason and unreason more than the Atheistic work, *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things), written by Lucretius, the most powerful of the old Roman poets. So profound and far-reaching was his influence that our own Elizabeth Barrett Browning, no mean judge, was impelled to say that the great poet had "denied divinely the divine." Nor was this a mere compliment from one poet to another. Across the gulf of twenty centuries, across the far deeper abyss of an older civilization and a dead language, it is possible to recognize Lucretius as a brave soldier in the Army of Human Liberation.

His personality is one of the most extraordinary and one of the vaguest in the whole realm of the world's literature. He comes before us in his work very distinctly; he is, as it were, always present, but the details of his life are shadowy and much misunderstood. Yet, in some ways, this old-world Free-thinker comes far closer to our modern sympathies than so many others of those far-off times in which he lived. He was so much more than a mere writer, for he bound men by something stronger than a chain of roses, the thrill of the dance, or the sparkle of Fal-

ninan wine. It is not only his sonorous dignity of language that cause men to read his book two millenniums after his death. It is not merely his Secularistic philosophy that causes men to turn to him from so many other writers. It was not to Virgil, with his tears of mortal fortune, or Horace, who sings so well of wine, woman, and song, but to this austere iconoclast that men have turned in the last resort to which they are so often pushed "with close-lipped patience for their only friend."

The name of Lucretius is immortalized by his *De Rerum Natura*, which remains the finest didactic poem in any language. In this truly wonderful poem, he reads for whole pages together like a modern poet. We may gain some notion of the general effect of this masterpiece if we conceive Tennyson to have devoted his rare genius to versifying Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*, or Swinburne to have subordinated his splendid talents to the poetic presentation of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

The central idea which lies at the heart of Lucretius's great poem is that the universe is ruled by natural laws, and that man is free to work out his own destiny without supernatural guidance. He denied the doctrine of a future life and its ethical usefulness. He declared the hereafter to be a fable and a dream. Moreover, and this is so astonishing, he anticipated so many of the scientific ideas of the nineteenth century. Writing, be it remembered, about half a century before the alleged birth of the mythical Christ, Lucretius perceived the truth of evolution, the indestructibility of matter, the survival of the fittest, the origin of language, and the progress of society. To us these things are comparatively but modern tidings. Twenty long centuries ago they dawned on the prophetic mind of the great Latin poet, "dreaming on things to come."

Lucretius was a Freethinker as well as a singer. He is man's champion against the malevolent machinations of Priestcraft which oppressed mankind in pre-Christian days. According to him, the great curse of human nature is religion, which priests use to fool and degrade mankind, and to feather their own nests. Now and again his cheek flushes with anger, as when he records, in lines of imperishable beauty, the terrible guilt prompted by religion against the most sacred ties of humanity. No poet has presented us with a picture more finished than that of the sacrifice of Iphigenia to the "gods," a story "too deep for tears." We see the helpless maiden trembling by the altar without power and speech, the murderous priest, the sorrowing father, the strongmen powerless, and the awful end. Lucretius concludes his account with lines that make us feel his heart throb with indignation as we read:—

"Learn thou then
To what damned deeds religion urges men."

Twenty centuries later, Gladstone, in the finest speech of his long career, quoted these lines, in the original Latin, to a hushed and expectant House of Commons. The occasion was the debate on the "Oaths Bill," in which Charles Bradlaugh was the central figure; the champion of the rights of Freethinkers to take their part in the government of this country.

A most marked characteristic of Lucretius was his passionate ardour for truth. His pathos and tenderness in contemplating the riddle of life have already been noted. His was a tenderness which felt sympathy with animals as well as humanity. His allusions to children are always beautiful and touching. His love of science, his austerity of character, the magnificence of his genius, rank him among the really great poets, who, like stars, shine for ever in the fir-

manent of art. The pomp and majesty of ancient Rome has long faded "like snow upon the desert's face," but the great poet's words of wisdom remain a most precious literary legacy, because he saw life steadily and saw it whole.

The waters of thought slip slowly away, and it is not a little amazing to realize that the ideas of the great Roman poet should still have sufficient vitality to interest the readers of our own generation. Writing of death as being dreamless rest, he penned such words as these—not to be read at the distance of twenty centuries without appreciation:—

"Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy sweet wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And though thy heart make quiet comfort go.
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious stone
Thou hoarest for thine own, men say, and lo!
All thou desired is gone. But never say
All the desire as well hath passed away."

It is this perfectly sane view of things which has preserved Lucretius's verses through the ages. When we reflect on the present condition of priest-ridden Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, when we think of the struggle of reason and religion, written in blood and fire throughout the centuries, we feel it but just to acknowledge that this old-world Freethinker, twenty centuries ago, upheld the banner of Free-thought against all the gods of the Pantheon. Lucretius also helps us to understand the magnitude of the battle between reason and religion. In his days, each, as it were, armed with simple weapons, fought together on most unequal terms. Now, Freethought, armed with far more formidable weapons, marches to battle in the confident hope of ultimate victory.

A world-epoch is dying, but a new one is being born; a new page of history is being written. There comes a dawn which will presently be daylight, a daylight long foreshadowed by this Atheistic poet, whose splendid genius was as free as an eagle above the clouds with outstretched wings. The roll-call of famous Freethinkers is a lengthy one, but few names are more illustrious than that of Lucretius, who, in an age of tyranny and superstition, raised his voice for pure truth and knowledge, and risked his life in the process. We Freethinkers do well to salute the memory wholeheartedly of:—

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast-forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph."

MIMNERMUS.

A Sleeping Clergyman

*Being an Open Letter to the Author of the Play of
that name.*

DEAR MR. BRIDIE,—I gather from the explanatory note, printed at the beginning of the theatre programme, that your play "A Sleeping Clergyman" has induced many members of your audience to write you personally on the subject of its title. This scarcely surprises me. What does surprise me, however, is that the majority of your correspondents appear to have been puzzled as to the meaning of it.

Whether, without that introductory note, I should have been equally puzzled, I cannot now say. I think not. But I fancy that I should not have interpreted "His Reverence" in the way that you seem to wish your public to interpret him. Indeed, it is just because I find this character to be so perfectly self-explanatory, and because your explanation

of him seems so inconsistent with his part in the play, that I venture to address this note of interrogation to you.

For those who would not understand my subsequent comments without having first witnessed the performance, I will briefly outline the part taken by the Sleeping Clergyman.

The play consists of two main acts, each preceded by a short scene in which appears what you call the "chorus." The only characters in this "chorus" are two old doctors, Messrs. Coutts and Cooper, and the Sleeping Clergyman. The former merely refer to certain incidents of the past which serve as an introduction to the events which go to form the bulk of the drama. During these two short scenes, His Reverence simply sits fast asleep in a club chair, occasionally interrupting with loud snores the remarks of the two doctors. That is all.

The absolute impassivity of this character, as well as the fact that he is a representative of religion, makes it perfectly clear to me whom he is intended to represent. But in your explanatory note you say, "The Clergyman represents compartmental religion and symbolizes Dr. Coutts' and Dr. Cooper's conception of Providence."

Now, I am not at all clear what you mean by "compartmental religion," unless it is the kind of religion meant by those who say that religion should be a man's private affair, and should not be intruded into his public activities or utterances. Such people, it is true, believe it possible to keep their religion in a sort of private mental pigeon-hole, and they fondly imagine that they can go through life without letting the contents of that pigeon-hole interfere in any way with their other thoughts and actions—or, at least, without interfering with the thoughts and actions of other persons. But, unfortunately, experience proves this to be an illusion.

Sir Isaac Newton and Sir Oliver Lodge are often cited as well-known examples of this sort of "compartmental religion." It is pointed out that their religious beliefs had no material influence upon their scientific investigations. But since we are unable to say how much further their scientific theories might have led them in the absence of any religious preoccupations, the truth of the foregoing is open to question. Even were it true, it would only show that science has no need of religion. It would not prove that the religious views held by these men were so "compartmental" as to have had no outside influence at all. On the contrary, it is obvious that, even if they had no worse effects, their religious beliefs served to encourage the public in thinking that Religion and Science were not antagonistic, and they helped the clergy to perpetuate the lie that human progress and welfare is not hindered by religious preconceptions.

Apart from cases of this sort, most people are brought up to believe that Religion and Morality are one and the same thing. The whole of their social and moral conduct, therefore, is permeated by ideas of a religious nature. And although some may succeed in leaving the words "God" and "religion" out of their discussions, the judgments which they form and the actions which they base upon these judgments are inevitably biased by their religious views. And these views, as is notorious, are usually dogmatic and incapable of modification in the light of reason and necessity. So even if they are passive in expression, they are active in obstruction. "Compartmental religion" in any intelligible sense is, therefore, an illusion. There is no such thing. And a *sleeping* clergyman can never be the symbol of religion of any sort.

My impression that "His Reverence" cannot have been meant to represent Religion, whether compartmental or otherwise, is backed up by your additional words, "and symbolizes Dr. Coutts' and Dr. Cooper's conception of Providence." For these words contradict the preceding ones. Providence is not Religion; nor can Religion be Providence. Which of the two, then, does the clergyman represent? Obviously the latter. But as everyone knows, "Providence" is a euphemism for "God." What was it, I wonder, that prevented you from using the less euphemistic and less ambiguous term? And why say that he symbolized the conceptions of the two doctors rather than your own? The doctors were, after all, creatures of *your* imagination.

The answers to these questions are hinted at in the rest of your explanatory note. For you go out of your way to add that "There is no dogma in this Play." And by the word "dogma" we are led to suppose that you mean *religious* teaching. But if this is so, why give your play the title of "The Sleeping Clergyman"? Indeed, why introduce a *parson* at all? A stuffed cat in front of the fire would have done just as well. For, as an essential part of the play the character is superfluous—except (and this is the point) as indicating a conception of the utter uselessness of the God-idea. As such, the Sleeping Clergyman is the very *raison d'être* of the play. And if that is not dogma, what is it?

Lastly, you say "The Clergyman is *not* intended to caricature the attitude of the Church to Science." And that is, of course, quite plain to anyone who knows the facts. For the attitude of any Church, as a Church, to Science is one of persistent and active opposition, whenever and wherever opposition is possible. When opposition is impracticable or inadvisable, then obstruction takes its place. And when that again proves useless or absurd, the Church blandly claims the honour of having originated or encouraged the ideas which it had hitherto so strenuously fought against. So what I said earlier in respect of Religion applies equally to the attitude of the Churches towards Science. Neither can be symbolized by a *sleeping* clergyman.

This analysis of your prefatory note in the theatre programme has led me to the conclusion that the Sleeping Clergyman is nothing more and nothing less than your own symbol for God. And the main object of your play seems to have been to show the utterly fatuous nature of a belief in such a thing. As a mere playgoer I am compelled to admiration for the method which you have adopted in presenting these ideas. As a rationalist and humanist, however, I cannot but regret that you deemed it necessary to print an explanation which only confuses the issues.

Why excuse yourself in the eyes of the irrational and superstitious? Why bend the knee to a section of the public whose susceptibilities are such that, when the boot is on the other leg, they do not hesitate to express themselves openly and offensively? Your play is a first-class entertainment; and as such is bound to succeed anyhow. Furthermore, it is sane sense; and as such needs no excusing. If you allow fear of hurting other people's feelings to govern your creative impulses, you will not write another play worth producing. Believe me, the great majority of people nowadays do not wish to be humbugged or pampered. They will welcome another rational play from your pen as much as "The Sleeping Clergyman"—and no Author's Note explaining either its title or its purpose should be necessary.

C. S. FRASER.

* Swan's Milk

"BUT," you will probably protest, as Llewelyn Powys is reported to have done, "Swans don't give milk!"

And the moral of *that* is, as the Duchess said to Alice, that this is a very extraordinary novel.

Indeed, it is debatable whether it is a novel at all, because, to begin with, there is really no story, and it is full of the conversations of living and dead celebrities. It is, officially, the fictional biography of "Dexter Foothood" his education—Radley, Oxford, Cambridge—his friendships, his amours; and Llewelyn Powys writes of it that "the moral energy latent in its shameless pages is enormous," and it is, as such, to be regarded as a book "of the greatest cultural value."

The jacket depicts a young man, wearing what may or may not be a green carnation in his button-hole, leaning against a pedestal from which the bust of Arnold Bennett is tumbling, and holding in his right hand the bust of Oscar Wilde; piled up behind the bust of Arnold Bennett are the busts of Hardy, Meredith, Aldous Huxley, Shaw. The busts of two young women simpler down below.

"Dexter Foothood" was an impassioned admirer and champion of Oscar Wilde, and Wilde seems to have returned the compliment to the young man. He had, said Wilde, "the eyes of a poet," and "Your hair is charming and I like the curve of its curl. I am sure it is shot with wonderful lights," and "I am afraid you are going to be a poet. How tragic! How terribly tragic! In the waters of Helicon there is death, the only death worth dying." "This correspondence," we are told, "was one of the greatest excitements of Dexter's youth." He sent the young man two of his plays, then published anonymously, "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "The Ideal Husband," inscribing one of them "In recognition." He wrote of them to "Dexter," that they were written when he was playing "with that tiger Life." Wilde's son Cyril, known as Cyril Hollander, was at Radley with "Dexter"; he was killed in the War. Thirteen years or so after Oscar Wilde's death "Dexter Foothood" wrote an article about him, in which he introduced practically the whole text of his idol's letters to him. The article was published simultaneously in the *New Statesman*, the *Mercure de France*, and the *American Forum*, "but the *New Statesman* thought it more prudent to omit the introductory paragraph, which pleaded with restrained indignation for a repeal of the law by which Wilde's 'sin' is made a crime." Dexter wanted to get a manifesto protesting against the law signed by eminent writers, artists, and scientists, but it came to nothing, though in 1909 Bernard Shaw wrote to him that he could quite understand Edward Carpenter's propaganda efforts in this connexion, but he observed, "How frightfully disagreeable—how abominable, in fact," was this sexual aberration to the normal.

Dexter was sent down from Oxford for "blasphemy," with four others, and on the suggestion and introduction of his uncle, Canon Foothood, went up to St. John's, Cambridge, in 1902. "At Cambridge there was much more 'give' in every direction, more inclusiveness, more informality. . . . Whether Cambridge was not only more heterogeneous but also more heterosexual than Oxford it is difficult to decide. Dexter used to say that at Cambridge, with her less abstract and visionary traditions, homosexuality was less talked about, less of a cult and more of

a practice; that it was more as it was at a public school, and had far less sophistication and self-consciousness about it."

But on the question of drink the comparison between the two universities is clearer. "Nothing more surprised Dexter and myself," writes Mr. Marlow, "than the comparative temperance of Cambridge habits. . . . Invited to luncheon by the President of the Cambridge Union Society, Dexter was given only water to drink. He returned in consternation, disgust and collapse. . . . It is true that that water-drinking luncheon was exceptional, but it was symptomatic. It could be given. Ralph Straus, as an undergraduate, drank water, though he has now given up that curious habit."

For some time Dexter developed a homosexual pose, because it was expected of him, but at heart he was always the "chivalrous amorist" of women. His championship of Wilde had something to do with the branding of him as a homosexual—that and his appearance, "his remarkable green and russet hair, worn æsthetically long even in his later Radley days, and his bright delicate complexion." Even "so exact an observer as Somerset Maugham, on his first meeting with Dexter at Cambridge, thought that he painted his face and dyed his hair." But he was always "an imitation queen, a bogus fairy." Mr. Marlow instances as "a sure sign of his normal inclination the fact that he was always very interested in women's hair. When the prevailing fashion of feminine hair-dressing seemed to him distressingly unæsthetic "it was only the very young girls he attended to; girls young enough to wear their hair down their backs."

He became a lecturer and went to America, and "it was always on Shakespeare that he lectured" best; in 1911 he began to feel that his "sensually spasmodic" way of life could not go on; he determined to love and marry, and he did, disastrously, and "it was the most defeating event of his life." Later came his second marriage and "fulfilment"; she died, and in time he found his last love "born the day before his first marriage in the spring of 1912," by which time he was himself middle-aged, but his green and russet head, apparently, still unbowed, and his spirit still romantically ascendant. He had known this young girl—last love of his years before, loved and parted from her—"forever," but, the imaginary Dexter writes his biographer, "We seem to have come together again by a sort of inevitability. I'm inclined to think that everyone ought to part forever before settling down for good." His biographer observes, "Perhaps Theodore Powys said the last word about Dexter Foothood, when he called him a good domestic man."

The book has wit, charm, erudition, and classically good prose; it is both amusing and stimulating, and pleasantly free of euphemisms; in manner it is reminiscent of Gertrude Stein's biographical-autobiography, though it has none of the *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* quality of writing which, oddly enough, characterises that book, to my mind. Where Miss Stein gossips, Mr. Marlow—or perhaps one should say Mr. Foothood, but there is supposed to be some family relationship between the Foothoods and the Marlows—observes, and that shrewdly. It is essentially a book for the socially, morally, and intellectually emancipated; the others will find it, I imagine, wanting as a novel, and valueless as biography. The title, one gathers, is intended to convey the exoticism and strangeness of Dexter's appearance and the peculiarity of his nature, for he had "an almost mythical appearance," and he was so vague at times that mishearing what kind of milk his host's ferrets were fed on was quite content to believe that it was swan's

* *Swan's Milk*, by Louis Marlow (Faber & Faber) 7s. 6d. net.

milk. So—to revert to the Stein-cum-Anita-Loos manner—Willie Powys wrote a verse about it, which, says Mr. Marlow, should find a place in any Powys anthology:—

“Oh, how do you do,
And how's your swan?
I suppose you milk him off and on.”

So that is how the book came to be called *Swan's Milk*. Than which, those who read it will probably agree, there could be no better title for so strange a work.

ETHEL MANNIN.

Acid Drops

We find cause for wonder at the mentality of Coroners, and the petty magistrates generally. The latest one we add to our collection is the Wallasey (Cheshire) Coroner. A man had been to the pictures and had seen a film in which a man turns on the gas in a closed room, and then sits down to die. The following day the man who saw the film killed himself in a similar manner. So said this Solomon of the law:—

I cannot understand a censor with any common sense at all allowing a picture where a man gasses himself in front of an audience.

Of course, the whole situation was summed-up in the Coroner's first three words, “I cannot understand.” All the rest was mere illustrative material. But if pictures were passed in accordance with the Coroner's confessed lack of understanding, then we should exclude from the stage all representations of men being shot, stabbed, poisoned, drowned or jumping from a height. Rabid birth-controllers would ban all pictures of babies, teetotallers would have no drinking, vegetarians would have no eating of meat, in fact the stage, pictorial and other, would become as stupid as some of our administrators of justice, who confess with unconscious frankness: “I do not understand.” We suggest that when the Wallasey coroner dies some one ought to put on his tombstone, “Here lies the man who did not understand.”

Lord Dawson of Penn, a firm believer in artificial contraception, has puzzled a number of people by the Bill which he recently presented to the House of Lords. He is opposed to the open sale of contraceptives, and the reasons he gave for wishing to see the sale of these more strictly regulated seemed rather contradictory. To the plain man it would appear that the sale of contraceptives is either right or wrong, if the former, then the sale should be open and free from restrictions. There should be freedom here as elsewhere, and Lord Dawson's Bill definitely attacks this freedom. We do not like to draw the conclusion that has been drawn by some, that it is a question of a medical trade union.

There is no mistaking the fact that a number of Bills that have recently been before both Houses of Parliament are of such a character as definitely to restrict the freedom of the individual, and we do not wish to see this backward step taken with regard to birth-control. The right to advocate the use of contraceptives was definitely won in this country by Bradlaugh and Besant sixty years ago. And with the right of advocacy must go the right of sale. It is, in practice, for individuals to decide, and neither Lord Dawson, nor the Pope, nor the Bishop of London should be aided by legislation in the game of restricting individual liberty. And if, as Lord Dawson admits, birth-control has come to stay, why place a number of restrictions in the way of its practice?

Lord Dawson might take a lesson from the character of some of the supporters of the Bill. When the Bishop of London said he would like to build a bonfire of all contraceptives and dance round it, the mover of the Bill might well have asked permission to withdraw it. For there was per-

sonified in the Bishop the incarnation of that suggestion of indecency which Lord Dawson complains now often accompanies the display of birth-control appliances. There may be good grounds for Lord Dawson's complaint, but this unpleasant atmosphere has been created by the very means that Lord Dawson will perpetuate by his measure. To make a traffic illicit is with absolute certainty to drive it into undesirable hands. Nothing has done more to “foul” the fact of sex than the attitude of the Christian clergy. And the one sure thing is that restrictions on the sale of contraceptives would be to enlist in the trade exactly the type of man and woman that would be best kept out of it. Lord Dawson should bethink himself that it was precisely the fact that discussion on birth-control was considered “indecent” that led to the Bradlaugh-Besant prosecution. Publicity has helped to do away with much of this taint, and publicity would help to do away with it in other directions. It is astonishing how few are the risks that people are prepared to take where liberty is at stake. If Lord Dawson has any doubt as to the character of his supporters, and the reason for their support, let him busy himself with a campaign for Birth-Control clinics for the poor. He will soon have all doubts removed.

For cast-iron stupidity, real or assumed, commend us to James Douglas. In the *Daily Express* for February 24, this philosopher of the foolish writes that W. S. Gilbert “put the Englishman's preference for being English into a *Characteristically English poem*” (the italics are ours):—

For he might have been a Rooshian,
A Frenchman, Turk or Proosian,
Or perhaps I-ta-li-an.
But in spite of all temptations,
To belong to other nations,
He remains an Englishman.

The *Express* office boy might have corrected this. Gilbert is not showing the Englishman's preference for being English, he is satirizing the foolishness of any one boasting of the country in which he happens to be born. And he says in a few lines what it would have taken George Bernard Shaw at least twenty pages to express. After Gilbert had done with the subject there was no more for anyone to say—except Mr. Douglas, whose native dullness prevented his knowing what it was all about.

When God in Paradise devised the snake it was cast for a very important rôle in the tragedy of Creation. From the only account extant of the performance, it played the part assigned to it without a hitch, but, for some reason difficult to fathom, it roused the Divine displeasure. Curses both loud and deep were launched at it, and it had to suffer the loss of its erect posture and ingratiating voice, and crawl upon its belly thenceforward, and so becoming an object of loathing to equally sinful mankind. Mankind, however, now looks like getting its own back upon the creature that fascinated and deceived our first parents. The Department of Overseas Trade is exhibiting at the Imperial Institute, reptile skins of all sorts, and demonstrating that for both durability and ornamentation they represent a clothing material of the very first order. So everything is to come right in the long run, which, of course, is to be expected, God being in his heaven.

There is at least one religious sect in England which does not use the weapons of “fear” as a method of keeping their flocks together. We note that at Gloucester Road, N.W., there is a Buddhist Church with a membership of 500, nearly all British, and that to-day Buddhism has nearly 6,000 adherents to this country, when a few years ago, it was, in an organized sense, practically unknown. We know this much, that it has been managed without promising its adherents either brimstone or treacle. Buddhism, you see, is a heathen system, and falls very far short of the lofty ethic exemplified in the Christian dogma of future rewards and punishments. But then real Buddhism is not religion at all. It is an Atheistic system.

A novel view of the Bible is that it was written primarily as a Guide to Beauty and Health. It is suggested that "In my Flesh shall I see God," meant "that one should so nourish and use one's body, maintaining it in so good and beautiful a condition that there, in the body itself, we should see God." And, of course, "Prepare to meet thy God" would be equivalent to the modern injunction "Get your hair cut." Professor J. Alexander Findlay exposes this new heresy. "This," he says, "I regard as a thoroughly dishonest way of treating Scripture." But even the professor has to admit that "the first text is wrongly translated in the Authorized Version." He ought therefore not wholly to rule out so charmingly suggestive theory of interpretation.

Rather personal was Rev. D. J. Hiley the other day, when speaking at the Archway Road Baptist Church, Highgate. Referring to the abominable old (Christian) days when people were hanged for a great variety of offences, Mr. Hiley added, "If you go and look at that list of capital offences I would not mind saying that almost everyone of you here to-day would have been hanged." Mr. Hiley has a sense of humour not always appreciated by his fellow-ministers. He doesn't like malcontents in his congregation. "If I ever had a wailer in my church at Muswell Hill," he told his friends, "I very soon spotted him and got him transferred to Archway Road Church."

It is amusing to see how frequently the modern journalist, directly he tries to find out some cause for the world's economic muddle, blames everybody for their lack of faith in Jesus. Only believe and everything will come right, he cries. Here is Mr. James Douglas, putting the same kind of twaddle in big type in one of his recent articles—as if nobody had ever made the same fatuous remarks before, and as if they have any meaning whatever:—

Unfortunately, Christendom has betrayed Christ. Its loss of faith in his teaching has produced a loss of faith in itself. Even the Agnostics admit that the collapse of our old order is caused by the lack of confidence throughout the whole structure. Confidence is only the worldly name for faith. Without faith in God and in the spiritual values of life . . .

and so on. These people never by any chance tell you how "faith" in Jesus is going to inspire "confidence"; or how going about as Jesus did, would have the slightest effect in giving employment to millions of unlucky people.

What earthly use is Jesus as an example in the art of "doing good" when the essence of his method was the working of miracles? What would be the use of telling people that if they are poor in spirit, "their's is the kingdom of heaven"; or that if they mourn, "they shall be comforted"; or if they are pure in heart, "they shall see God." Millions of the unemployed would rather see regular work than God; they have no use at all for the "kingdom of heaven," and the promise that if they mourn they shall be comforted, leaves them stark cold. Whether there is a way or not out of the ghastly muddle the world is in just now, it is evident that any appeal to Jesus or to faith to do it, is the last word in hopeless futility. And Mr. Douglas knows this as well as we do.

"In Jesus," said Dr. J. D. Jones, in a sermon at Bournemouth, "we have revealed to us what Sonship really means." Most of us had already formed an impression that sonship consisted mainly in being born. This is too simple for a theologian. Dr. Jones says, "Sonship is the Faith that overcomes the world—Faith in Jesus." Jesus, of course, believed in Himself and was therefore somebody's son. But does everybody have to believe in himself, or believe in Jesus Christ in order to become his parent's son? And what relation is a man to his mother if he believes in Mohammed or Hitler? And what is a woman who believes in Jesus: is she also someone's son?

The Rev. J. Allen Morris, a Bolton Congregational Minister has a regular fortnightly Sunday Cinema Service. He gets crowded audiences—we mean congregations. There is no Entertainment Tax to pay, but he claims that "the spiritual temperature of the Church is raised," and "we have often bewailed the disappearance of the worshipping family from our Chapels—the Picture Service is bringing them back." Back to what, Mr. Morris? Back to religion?

The cause of true religion does not always run smoothly. It sometimes gets a kick in the back from one within the Christian sheep-pen. Here's a reader of a Nonconformist paper who objects to "Retreats." He is at a loss to understand the growing affection for them in Methodism. If certain officials need more money, he says, they summon a "Retreat"; if local preachers want to talk together they have a "Retreat." Why not, he asks, drop this aping of the ritualist? His own idea of a "Retreat" is "to get away from other people, and not gather in a crowd of several hundreds mostly for the purpose of raising money or boosting some new scheme." Quite so! Apparently this indignant Methodist fails to appreciate that parsons are excellent showmen, and that therefore they are always introducing new wheezes for boosting new schemes and for parting the pious from their cash. This ought not to be deplored, but accepted as proof that parsons are really "divinely inspired."

Commenting on the fact that discussion or criticism of religious belief causes "ill-temper" among believers, a reader of a daily paper remarks:—

I have always found that believers, instead of trying to convince others by gentleness and sympathy, hate others who cannot believe. That, in itself, is an argument against the truth of a belief. If it were true it would prompt kindness of heart—not rudeness.

This reader innocently imagines that "true" religious beliefs must inevitably induce kindness of heart, love and gentleness. If such were the case, how very different the history of the Christian era would be! But since Christian history reveals so much of wrangling, persecution, banishment and butchery, ought we not to conclude that none of the beliefs of Christians is "true"? However, the real reason why religionists hate and persecute or ill-treat the person who doubts or criticizes their beliefs is that religionists believe their beliefs are divinely inspired truth. Therefore, both the critic and his doubts are regarded as "wicked" And it is regarded as an act of true piety to suppress what is "wicked," or against God and religion. Ardent belief is the obverse, and intolerance is the reverse of all Christian coinage—for ever and ever. Amen.

A pious reporter declares that the "Rev. Leslie C. Fogg grows upon his people at Greenwich." And one is left wondering whether the misfortune is to be credited to Father Thames, the English climate, or merely Christian theology. It is evidently a case for prayer, repentance and supplication.

The Rev. Russell Maltby asks: "Are we not a little disquieted to find that the Christian gospel has lost something of its contagious, its infectious quality?" We are! Just as contagious and infectious diseases have been arrested and kept under by the application of a modern knowledge, so, too, that contagious and infectious superstition called Christianity is also being robbed of its dangerous quality by the dissemination of modern knowledge, and Freethought criticism and ideas. That is "disquieting" only to those who live by and on a contagious and infectious superstition.

It is always amusing to read Christian allusions to prayer in these prosaic days. The *Methodist Times* has an article on "Prayer and God's Action." It admits that "we live in an ordered universe and existence would be a nightmare otherwise." The *Methodist Times* does not "feel wise enough to dogmatize on what God

can or cannot do in the handling of His Universe." God, it would seem, has been waiting for years to do quite a lot of good things, but, alas, "He must wait for our co-operation." For instance, "Even praying for rain may be a legitimate reference of human need to God, and a desire to discover the best means to co-operate in coping with emergency." Why, of course, man builds dams, aqueducts, reservoirs, etc., and when God sees man "co-operating" with Him, God does what man previously prayed for in vain.

The Rev. Leyton Richards, M.A., reviews in the *Christian World*, Dr. Abrahams' indictment of *The Church Militant in War-Time*, a book already noticed in these columns. Mr. Richards candidly admits that, "if war should ever come again, it will be largely because the statesmen rely upon the parsons to bless the war, and so maintain the *moral* (blessed word) both of the troops and of the civilian population." Mr. Richards must have been reading our Editor's *War, Civilization and the Churches*. Mr. Cohen said of the War-Years, "The Churches . . . have been in a position had they possessed the wisdom or the inclination, to have made this war an impossibility." We congratulate Mr. Richards on his present enlightenment.

Dean Inge seems suddenly to have awakened to the fact that "there is a strange fashion among men of letters to declare themselves Roman Catholics." It surely is obvious that they either have come to believe in Roman Catholicism, or they must think it to be the "correct thing" to say they do. In any case, Dean Inge must surely see that, believing in the Church of England kind of Christianity is only a little less credulous than believing in the Church of Rome brand. Why shy at the flying house of Loretto, and accept Jesus flying to heaven? Why disbelieve in the miracles of Lourdes and accept those of "Our Saviour"? Why question the efficacy of saintly relics and believe that blindness can be cured by a mixture of dust and the saliva of Christ? What is the difference between the solemn nonsense of a service at St. Paul's and the similar nonsense, at St. Peter's? After all, is there such a big difference between the preachers of different brands of the same Christianity?

The Rev. H. N. Bate, M.A., Dean of York, admits, in a recent sermon, that "in the Bible humour has very little obvious or intended place . . . humour, in the strict sense, does not belong there." But could anything have been more obvious? Had the Bible writers been possessed of even a spark of humour, they could never have perpetrated the solemn drivel which we are asked to believe on pain of eternal damnation. The Dean of York wonders whether humour had any place in the life of the ancient Jews and Christians? We should say, as human beings, yes—perhaps as much as it has in ours. It is unthinkable to believe that any of the ancient races went about with the long faces Puritans and Protestant preachers would have us always assume. It was Christianity, the real, religion of Jesus, that came near to extinguishing laughter among men. Thank heaven, most of our great humorists have been able to laugh at religion. And even the average layman can't keep a straight face when he reads some of the stories in the Bible. Is it not a fact that most married women start laughing when asked about the Virgin Birth?

More extracts from the notebooks of the late Samuel Butler have just been published, and they again emphasize his bitter hostility to the Church. One pious reviewer says "he was definitely and truculently anti-Christian," and also that, "he writes of our Lord in a way that suggests sheer unintelligence." It is good to know that at least this side of Butler's genius is recognized and openly admitted, as there is nothing which Christians attempt to hide so much as a great man's heterodoxy.

Outside the Cathedral at Thurles in Ireland, 1,000 men of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, singing "Faith of our Fathers," and other hymns, consigned to the flames a huge quantity of "bad" books. They were mostly of a Communistic and irreligious character. In this kind of thing, Roman Catholics have nothing to learn from Hitler; both clearly show what happens to freedom of expression if and when they have power. The one thing neither can destroy, however, is *ideas*.

Considering how much the Irish have been under the thumb of the Church, it is surprising to find Cardinal McRory objecting to the way in which "Irish people, for political reasons, resort to physical violence, waylaying defenceless men at night, savagely beating or even murdering them." If this is the case, how can he justify Roman Catholicism which has completely captured the whole of Irish education and particularly its ethical and moral teaching? Why are not Irishmen tolerant of religious and political differences of opinion if the Church is divinely inspired? Or is it, perhaps, because it is, that these murderous outrages take place? Cardinal McRory can't have it both ways.

We note that a writer in one of our most Christian journals points out that the complete suppression of free speech in Germany and Italy is "essentially anti-Christian." This almost takes our breath away, for if history has proved anything whatever, it is that Christianity—that is, real Christianity—suppressed free speech with a ferocity almost unparalleled in any other religion. The very essence of Christianity is unbounded and unreasoning intolerance. The writer referred to, in the very paragraph in which he claims that the suppression of free speech is "anti-Christian," actually gives a case which illustrates our point. The Vatican has put on the Index, Herr Rosenberg's book, *Mythology of the Twentieth Century*, and he notes this with satisfaction. Whether the book in question deserves any attention is another matter, but to give its suppression as a proof of "Christian free-speech" shows clearly enough that Christians mean by free speech something quite different from what the words really mean. Perhaps they mean "free speech" in a Pickwickian sense.

A tale of two cities! "Every Christian has two cities, Goshen and Paradise," according to the Rev. Dr. James Black. "Goshen," he tells us, "is the Wigan of America." Paradise is not the Widnes of Erewton, nor the Garden of Eden, it is, says Dr. Black, "the poet's Greece or the City of God." The oddest thing about it is that "the more the Christians live in Heaven, the finer people are they on earth." What a pity all Christians do not emigrate to Paradise immediately.

Fifty Years Ago

A RETURN TO FREEDOM.

TWELVE months ago I was pressingly invited to stay at her Majesty's Holloway Hotel, and although I strove to decline the hospitable invitation I was obliged to take a seat in the carriage sent to convey me there. I was courteously received by the manager; a solid if not spacious apartment was provided for me, liveried attendants administered to my needs, and an elaborate bill of fare apprised me of the extensive and varied choice of viands which the establishment afforded. These arrangements were very admirable, but they had one great drawback—they prevented me from doing my work; and I soon discovered how true are the words of the American gentleman who said "Doing nothing's the hardest job I know, if you keep at it." Alas! I had to keep at it for a whole year. During that dreary period I could neither speak nor write to my friends in every part of Great Britain. Yet I find they have never once forgotten me through all the weary weeks, and I am glad to know that the silent eloquence of my sealed lips and arrested hands has been more powerful than any possible utterance of my tongue or pen.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. LONG.—Will publish as soon as possible, but we are overburdened with copy. Thanks.

A. E. WILLIAMS.—Copies sent. Regret unavoidable delay.

C. EMSON.—Mr. Cohen has been rather unwell, and some things have had to wait. In any case, as he has no private secretary, those who write him must wait until he has an opportunity to answer.

S.B.S.—Medical diplomas and degrees are issued by the Examining Boards appointed for that purpose. No official of the Church of England, as such, has anything to do with it. We daresay they would like to have a finger in the pie, but they have not.

J. M. KENNELLY.—Thanks for cutting. It is not a question of our desiring to visit Australia, but entirely one of inability to spare the time for the journey.

J. BARTON.—We agree with you in your estimate of Ingersoll. You will see our opinion fully stated in *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*. Don't be too pessimistic. The world moves slowly, but it moves.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will, this year, be held at Bolton. This is about as central as one could have it, and we hope that in addition to as large a number of individual members as possible, every Branch will be represented. There is likely to be some important business for consideration, and what is done should be discussed and understood by as large a body of members as possible. Resolutions for the Agenda may be sent in by individual members as well as by Branches.

There was a crowded hall at Bolton on Sunday last at Mr. Cohen's lecture. The tone of the meeting, and the interest displayed in the subject augurs well for the Society's Conference, which will take place there on Whit-Sunday. Mr. Sissons, who is indefatigable in his efforts to propagate Freethought in Bolton, took the chair, and had worked very hard to make the meeting a success. It must have been specially gratifying to find his efforts so well repaid.

All member's subscription to the N.S.S. fell due on January 1. The financial year of the National Secular Society closes on March 31. We take this opportunity of reminding all who have not yet forwarded their subscription for 1934 of this fact. We also remind them that there is need for making their subscription this year as large as they possibly can.

Some of our readers may have noticed recently in the papers an account of a boy of seven who created much amazement by his ability to work out twelve-figure multiplication tables in his head, as showing marked

ability in other directions. The boy attends an elementary school, and the father, Mr. G. Beeson, writes us:—

As the father of the child who recently caused much amazement by his ability to work out twelve-figure multiplication tables in his head, I would like to state that—due to my demands—he has had no religious instruction in school. Perhaps his freedom from religion has contributed not a little to his mental superiority. This superiority extends from figures to words, and he has topped every class in which he has sat.

We congratulate Mr. Beeson on his brilliant child. But we would warn him to expect trouble later. For we have it on very high religious authority that a child who is not brought up with definite religious teaching is likely to come to a very terrible end—sooner or later. But we will join with the boy's parents in hoping for the best.

Propos of our "Views and Opinions" on "All Sorts of Ideas," one of our correspondents writes:—

The worst feature in connexion with your articles is that they set one thinking. You state a general Freethought principle, and its application, in particular, to education. It has set me wondering, not how it would work out in practice, but how it has worked out in practice. Cannot you persuade some Freethinker educationalist who has experimented on these lines to reveal his methods and the practical results thereof?

With the greatest pleasure in the world. If any of our readers who are educationalists, and we have many, cares to give his views on the subject we shall be very pleased to publish them. The right education of the young is of all things one of the most important.

Mr. Cohen commences this week with the series of articles he promised on the meaning and value of the terms used in Freethought controversy. He will write at least eight articles—perhaps more, but whether they will appear consecutively will depend upon whether space is required for other things. But as clear thinking and definite speech are two sides of the same thing, the series should be of some service. And the need of today is clear thinking, although the preferences of many appears to be in favour of muddled thought and indefinite speech. It is on such things that Fascism and all sorts of religion live.

Our readers will be interested to learn that the African Broadcasting Co. put "over the air" a very appreciative, even flattering notice of Mr. Cohen's *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*. The address was by Professor Drenman. We take it that the African Broadcasting Co. does not announce as one of its objects that of preserving Christianity. At any rate, if it does it has a greater sense of fairness than has our own B.B.C.

A Dunedin (N.Z.) reader informs us that the local broadcasting station recently broadcast Mr. Cohen's gramophone record, "The Meaning and Value of Freethought." This is enough to make Sir John Reith request the Government to send out a battleship to blast that station off the face of the earth.

The Necessity of Atheism is the challenging title of a work extending to over 300 pages, by Dr. D. M. Brooks, and published by the Freethought Press Association, New York. We are not aware of the published price, but we expect it is in the neighbourhood of two dollars. But whatever the price Dr. Brooks has written a very comprehensive and a very useful work. It is a survey of the whole field of Religion, and modern thought, simply written, but with a degree of exactitude which is often missing from works that are intended for the general public. Commencing with the general evolution of religious beliefs, Dr. Brooks examines the claims of the great religions, the assumption of the existence of deity, the historic influence of Christianity on the progress of science, with the positive testimony that science offers against religious beliefs in general. He asks, with justice, that his reader bear in mind the immense

waste of energy used in fighting religion, with the many absurdities and false beliefs with which religion has prevented scientific and social progress, and then to consider how much more advanced the world might be, and how much happier human society would be to-day had religion never existed.

Dr. Brooks has read very widely and with discriminating judgment. He lays no claim to original investigation, or to pioneer work; but the quotations which are plentiful in his pages are evidence of a discerning mind, and will serve as a useful guide to books for such as are not so widely read as himself. The outstanding quality of the *Necessity of Atheism* is simplicity combined with thoroughness. There is no difficulty in understanding what he says because there is no hesitation in saying it. We do not know whether this is Dr. Brooks' first essay in Freethought propaganda, but if it is we hope it will not be the last. It is a work that cannot but do good.

At the Workers Circle, 5 Arundel Gardens, off Kensington Park Road, to-day, Mr. B. A. Le Maine will give a Freethought Address to members and friends of the Circle at 7.30 p.m. The speaker is well known in that district, and as non-members may attend, it should be quite safe to predict a full house and an interesting address.

The Arabian Prophet and his Cult.

IN the seventh century of the Christian Era, there arose a religion destined to perform an imposing, if transient part in the world's affairs. Not only were Islam's early successes far superior to those of the early Christian Church, but the Arabian faith captured all the most sacred sites of Christendom, including the Holy Sepulchre itself.

The founder of this remarkable cult was born in Arabia, and was unquestionably a very capable man. If tradition is trustworthy, Mohammed bore a striking resemblance to the Christ of the religious painters. Moderately tall, his figure, though spare, was handsome. Strongly built, with ample shoulders, he was pale-complexioned for an Arab. With a shapely neck, his head adorned with curly locks of raven hue, which reached to his shoulders and with bearded face, the Prophet's appearance was pre-eminently picturesque.

Mohammed's youth was passed in tending sheep and camels in the vicinity of Mecca when, at the early age of twenty-five, he became the trusted supervisor of the commercial enterprises of a wealthy widow named Khadija. This was the real beginning of his wonderful career, for he soon espoused Khadija, a woman much his senior, and his union with this able and influential lady proved the mainspring of his outstanding success. Khadija was firmly persuaded of the truth of her husband's claim as the appointed prophet of God.

That Mohammed was epileptic seems certain, and it was long customary for him and his devoted wife to retire to a cave near Mecca, where they spent their days in meditation and prayer. In this secluded cavern Mohammed's epileptic seizures were accompanied with ecstasies and visions which gravely alarmed his companion. Later, after communing in the cave alone, he assured Khadija that the angel Gabriel had conveyed to him the earliest of those divine messages which were afterwards incorporated in the Koran. Khadija now became convinced that the aberrations of her epileptic husband were of supernatural origin, emanating from the deity himself. Mohammed now proclaimed the oneness of God, denounced the infanticide then so common in Arabia

and reprobated homicide and idol-worship. To Christian and Jew alike, Mohammed at this time offered a friendly hand, yet, after five years' zealous propaganda, the new evangel could boast barely fifty adherents.

The worldly-wise of Mecca smiled at the vapourings of one whom they regarded as more or less mad, or perhaps more knave than fool. Still, as the Prophet persisted in his preaching and continued to make converts they began to take a more serious interest in his activities. Again, they began to fear for the sacred reputation of their city, which the spread of the new evangel might endanger. The priestly order was up in arms against the daring innovator who derided the ancient deities as idols and hinted that their venerated ancestors were little better than simpletons.

Fierce and bloody resentment ultimately drove Mohammed and his disciples from Mecca, and to this famed Hejira or flight to Medina in 622 A.D. is traceable not merely the date from which the Moslem world computes its era, but also the time that marks the turning-point in Mohammed's career. Medina proved a real city of refuge, and there the Prophet matured his plan of campaign which overthrew Mecca and then led to his conquest of Arabia.

The sweet reasonableness of Mohammed's maiden evangel was now replaced by more drastic methods. Death was made the penalty of idolatry and unbelievers might be persecuted. It remains, however, an open question whether Mohammed, like Cromwell, was not constrained to bow to the zealous fanatics by whom he was environed. Ten years after the Hejira the Moslem faith had been embraced by countless thousands. There are indications that the Prophet in his later years returned to the more philosophical attitude of his youth. Of his sincerity there can be little doubt. He retained a stately dignity in the days of his greatest triumphs. Regal splendour never attracted him, and he appears to have placed his monotheistic faith above all worldly considerations.

From prehistoric times the nomads of Arabia appear to have combined the worship of the dead with various animistic observances. Both Jews and Christians had striven to convert the desert-dwellers and the ancient religion of Arabia was already forsaken by the more thoughtful tribesmen. In these circumstances the Moslem cult was proclaimed concerning the unity of God and the divine inspiration of his messenger Mohammed. The Prophet asserted that the great Creator governs the world with compassion and love. To God alone are the devotions of the people due, and he only is man's deliverer in days of adversity. However distasteful life's troubles may prove there must be no repining over Allah's inscrutable decrees. All we hold most precious must repose in God's keeping in trust and love. Curiously enough the fatalism (kismet) so long associated with the Moslem faith formed no part of the Prophet's teaching.

In company with Christianity and Buddhism, Mohammedanism was compelled to compromise with the religion of the races it converted, and remnants of earlier cults linger in the later faith. The ancient Kaaba, the Holy Shrine of Mecca, still retains its sanctity; and green, the sacred colour of the Arabs is the special hue of the faithful, while Mecca continues the sacred city.

Mohammed was driven in self-defence to draw the sword against his enemies and his successes were so great that the continued spread of his doctrines ultimately depended on military conquest. Creeds that exist on sufferance ever advocate tolerance, at least for themselves. But once secure in the seats of the mighty all religions incline to persecute. With, or without the Prophet's approval, the humanitarian

tendencies of the early evangel were replaced by a cult based on ceremonial law. Fasts and festivals were restored. Pilgrimages to Mecca found greater acceptance. Holy wars in which the martyr's crown was the heavenly reward of those who died in battle were acclaimed as pleasing to Allah. Usury was reprobated as a heinous sin. Total abstinence was enjoined on all true believers, but many of the more enlightened such as the immortal poet Omar drank and enjoyed the juice of the grape. Polygamy was the privilege of the well-to-do, but there was little or no prostitution. And when the Prophet died in 632 the whole of Arabia acknowledged his spiritual and temporal authority.

Mohammed left no son to succeed him, and for nearly a quarter of a century after his decease Arabia was ruled by several able Caliphs. Then internal trouble appeared with massacre and war and contending sects, the Sunnites and Shiites, constantly met in bloody conflict. Other sectaries of Islam are the Sufis, Wahabis and Dervishes, all at enmity with one another.

Socrates, Christ and Mohammed alike wrote nothing. The writing which now constitute the Koran were compiled at a later time. The entire Moslem gospel is confined to its pages, and it also serves as the basis of orthodox Moslem jurisprudence and government. But with the adoption of the religion by alien races the Koran soon proved inadequate as a guide in political and social life. Further, the strict teaching of Mohammed soon fell into abeyance. Atonement and intercession were alike anathema to the Prophet, and every Moslem was required to ensure his own salvation. But older customs proved victorious and Mohammed's sepulchre and the tombs of Moslem saints became places of pilgrimage, where prayers and oblations were offered to assuage the anger or obtain the mercy of the all-powerful Allah.

Khalid, the "Sword of Allah," was the leading commander under the Prophet's successor Abu Beki, and he greatly extended Islam's domains. The Persians were routed in battle after battle, while the Roman legions led by Heraclius in Syria suffered serious reverses. By 642 Persia was in the hands of the Moslem invader, and earlier, in 638, the Caliph Omar had built Basra in the Euphrates Valley, while Damascus, Antioch and Jerusalem had all been captured from the Christians, and the whole of Syria was soon under Moslem sway. Egypt was conquered in 641, and when Omar perished by an assassin's hand in 644, the rule of the Arabs reached to the Levant and the Nile in the West and to the furthest frontiers of Persia in the East. Apart from military achievement the new faith was widely promulgated and more than 1,000 mosques erected. Omar proved a practical secular ruler, and he instituted a divan or exchequer by means of which the spoils of the triumphant Moslems were apportioned to the conquering armies. Omar was the first Caliph designated "Commander of the Faithful," and he it was who contrived the chronological scheme which dates from the Hejira.

During the seventh and eighth centuries Islamic dominion was extended over the Oxus, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Northern Africa was completely subjugated, and Europe itself was invaded. Under Walid I. the whole of Spain became Moslem, and with the subsequent invasion of Southern and Central France the banner of the Crescent appeared likely to supplant the Christian cross in Western Europe. Then the tide suddenly turned. The epoch-making disaster which overthrew the Moors at the Battle of Tours in 732 forced them to retreat beyond the Pyrenees. But their settlement in Spain was long

secure, and for centuries they there developed a splendid civilization and culture far superior to any that has since existed in the Iberian Peninsula. Yet, with the passing of the years, in consequence of internal dissensions and the unremitting struggle of the dispossessed Spaniards to reclaim their lost territory, the Arabs and Moors in Spain were steadily driven southwards until, towards the close of the fifteenth century in 1492, the last Moorish citadel capitulated, and with the fall of Granada the survivors in this protracted struggle were murdered, sold into slavery or driven across the sea. Thus ended a brilliant period in the history of civilization, which left an indelible mark on the mental and cultural development of later Christian Europe.

T. F. PALMER.

Sidetracking the Supernatural.

WHEN an eminent person confesses to a belief in the supernatural, he is certain to be given a good press, especially if he be a scientist, and his admission is used to bolster up religion. When Jeans wrote in one of his popular books, "God said: 'Let there be light and there was light,'" was the most truthful description of creation, it was blazoned forth as an admission of the truth of Genesis. The theories of Eddington and Jeans about the universe, that it is not illimitable, that it is running down, and losing energy, is used to help belief in a first cause. If the universe is running down like a clock, obviously the first cause consisted in the winding-up of the machine. Of course these theories are merely the personal opinions of scientists, and not the proven facts of science.

But the tenuous belief of the eminent scientist or philosopher bears no relation to that of the popular religion, any more than the beliefs of Dean Inge to that of a fundamentalist. To the fundamentalist, God is a real tangible person; to Dean Inge, he is a shadowy, mystical figure, that can hardly be defined. The root of their two beliefs is essentially the same. But while Dean Inge has pruned his belief until it has some appearance of reality, the fundamentalist, still holds his views in all their original crudities.

It is often forgotten that the more logical beliefs can only exist in a country where superstitions are still held by the majority. The enlightened Theist laughs at the crude stupidities of the average Christian, but he is unwilling to give up his own beliefs. We see this in cases where people have outgrown Christianity intellectually, yet are influenced by it emotionally.

H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw are two examples. They do not believe the usual Christian dogmas, but have a sentimental regard for the morality and "beauty" of Christian teachings. Some one said of Dean Inge that he believed in Christianity but did not like it; it might be said of Shaw and Wells that they like Christianity but do not believe in it.

While Mr. Wells would not dream of organizing a social community on other than scientific lines, or Mr. Shaw invoke his "life-force" to solve our modern problems, the fundamentalist can and does try to model his life on his particular kind of nonsense. That brings us to the difference between the modern and ancient attitude to religion. Religion to-day is not so much combated as ignored. The chief complaint of the parsons is not hostility but indifference. It will be noticed that religious people derive from their religion all the emotions other people get from art. In fact "religion" is a few scientific ideas combined with certain emotions. These, although expressed in a peculiar idiom, are essentially the same; but the secu-

lar arts and sciences have travelled so far in front of the religious, that religion is being put more and more into the background. We have gone far from the day when no important venture was begun without a good omen.

A good deal of religious "unbelief" is really a change of doctrine. The Spiritualist Churches gain their converts from the Christian. They could not gain these if they did not already believe in the supernatural. The trappings have been altered; but essentially the belief is the same. The rise and growth of Christianity was not wonderful. It has been equalled by other religions. Take the rise of Mohammedanism. Where the Arabs conquered, they brought the gift of a new faith. The sword is a wonderful aid to missionary work. The pagans converted to Christianity had just as strong a belief in the other world as the Christians. Many causes went to making Christianity pre-eminent; chiefly the decline in the Roman Empire of the ancient love of liberty, the ambitions of the Cæsars, and a fading of the spirit of intellectual curiosity amongst the degenerate Romans. There was nothing wonderful about it. Every religion is the crystallization of the inchoate ideas and emotions of a primitive community, into a fixed belief. Christianity could not have arisen during the rise of an empire. But once the mind of Rome ceased to advance, Christianity started to spread. When the Arab Empire had been consolidated, the arts and sciences flourished, and modified the original Mohammedan religion. The exact reverse took place in the rise of Christianity. It spread over an ancient empire, and lowered the moral and intellectual standards. The Pagan laws and customs were in many ways higher than the new Christian ones, although modern life is denounced as being Pagan by bishops.

Which brings us to religion to-day. A little while ago, the newspapers were full of the complaints of an American missionary, who is reported to have said that all religions should combine to fight Materialism and Atheism. No doubt most good Christians thought it a trifle exaggerated. But it does state plainly the choice before modern people. Bradlaugh said the last fight would be between Catholicism and Secularism; between Rome or Reason. What we are witnessing is something more than the dethroning of a few vested interests. It is a crisis in Evolution. It means a complete break with the past. It will mark a turning point in history. If Freethought succeeds, and the outlook is not too hopeful, it will begin a new era in human affairs. That is, if it succeeds, but of that we cannot be certain.

IDRIS ABRAHAM.

The One Thing Needful.

A LADY, opening a Church Sale of Work the other day, referred to critics who say the Church is always wanting money and artlessly retorted upon them that she would like to see *them* do without money for a bit, and see how they would like it! She did not refer to the critics who say we can do without the Church, and in a properly organized society without money of any kind!

Here is a very remarkable fact for all Freethinkers to ponder carefully. None of the religions of the world has tenets of belief to fit in with a state of society in which there is no private ownership—none—neither Judaism, Islamism, nor Christianity. None of the great religions glimpses on the economic side a higher relationship among human beings than that which allows of cut-throat competition, causing the impoverishment and misery of millions. "The poor ye

have always with you." Money is far more powerful than God.

Now, Freethinking humanists do conceive of a finer and higher state of human existence than that. They want to put a period to the inhumanity of man. If that inhumanity makes countless thousands mourn, why not try an altruistic *humanity* which shall make countless thousands rejoice? Confessedly, though Christianity has had 2,000 years' trial, we have still millions of very poor people in the world, and they constitute the great and most pressing problem for all publicists. Creeds of various kinds have been tried and tried again and again; but they cannot eradicate the animal savagery and selfishness of a minority of powerful wealthy men who exploit the ignorant majority and keep it in ignorance. Let us try something else. Let us feed and nourish and nurse what is best and finest and most ideal in man without reference to supernaturalistic terrorism; show him by actual demonstration that it actually is more blessed to give than to receive; that constant getting and never giving is the surest cause by which the finest human faculties are atrophied. Man, carefully and consistently instructed on these lines, will respond to the humanistic appeal, and once he is emancipated from the thralldom of fear will realize that the divine is chimerical, superstitious and mythical. He will have become a realist with ideals for the here and now—not for the there and then. Whatever may come after this brief life, if *it* be well and unselfishly lived, there is no cause for concern, despite all the lurid and unhealthy visions conjured up by the diseased imaginations of supernaturalists.

There is no blinking the signs of the times. The Church is losing support in many respects. The Church of Scotland sees its congregations—and what is worse, its contributors—fading away. The Commission of Assembly of that Church met in Edinburgh, on August 9, 1933, and the following decreases were reported: Congregational contributions, £4,400; Donations and Legacies, £5,791; Maintenance of Ministry Fund, £2,372.

The economic depression and indifferentism will not fully serve to explain away these significant decreases. The Church is being found out. Avowed Freethinkers in Scotland may be few in number; the unavowed must constitute a very considerable number. Again and again have bitter letters appeared in the Scotch Press denouncing the ministers for their constant and anxious concern about their own salaries while so many skilled workers are on the dole; and the wages of so many employed workers are so inadequate. The unemployed, it has been pointed out, are better provided for than millions who are in employment, and working hard at that. An unemployed roadman in Scotland has been drawing 37s. 3d. of transitional benefit a week; while Scotch ploughmen have lately been engaged at £20 for the half year or 18s. a week; and for the unemployed farm hand there is no dole. His conditions were even worse before the war! Humanism progresses.

And the Scot looks across the Border and contemplates with disgust the minions of the Church of England, whose wealth is so great that its head cleric draws a salary of £15,000 a year, distraining on the effects of farmers, who can scarcely make ends meet, and many of whom are on the verge of bankruptcy through low prices!

And then, parsons like the Rev. A. Fleming, of St. Columba's, London, can rail at the workers for their craving for cakes and circuses instead of longing for the bread of life. Well they may *crave*, but they'll *carve* devilish little!

The impudent and inhuman greed and insolence of clericalism are becoming intolerable. But it can still count on society ladies to open its Sales of Work.

IGNOTUS.

Correspondence.

THE EMERGING LIFE-BY-GIVING-LIFE.

SIR,—Your article on "Bethlehem," and other articles on the idea of an Onlooking God, undoubtedly have a truth. The truth is that there is no Onlooking God, up in an imaginary heaven, as pictured by Aristotle, and also by Aquinas, who followed Aristotle's ideas.

The Christian idea was of that "Father in Heaven," who sent His "Son," in B.C. 4 as men now calculate. Personally, I do not think a man Jesus lived at all, as the story of his "life" is from Isaiah vii. 14 (Septuagint Version as to a "virgin"); xxxv. 5, 6 (miracles); 53 (death and resurrection); and Psalms ii. and xxii: Zech. ix. 9, and so forth.

The "sayings" of Jesus are from *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and other books; pre-Christian. But, though there be no Onlooking God; and no man Jesus; we have got to explain EVOLUTION, which we men did not weave, over millions of years. Will you explain evolution without an Eternal Life, the One Mind-Energy,

Who wove the stars,
Dreamed in seeds,
Wakes in selves.

Before the picture of such evolution, as opened up to us now, we stand amazed! We discern One Life, Who is Love, and so lives by giving life; and as

Exhausted in creation,
Emergent in evolution,
Expressed in our aspiration!

Who selected and wove so much of Oxygen and far less of Nitrogen, and all 92 elements, which compose the earth (and sun)? Then, all living things have cells; and most know not that they have cells!

Till the microscope came, men knew not that their bodies were composed of cells, and that germ-cells existed! The cell has a nucleus, and a cell-wall; and Golgi bodies, and sap, and linin, and chromatin! The nucleus has chromosomes which divide *longitudinally* (extra-ordinary is that), and so make two cells of one! The male germ-cell enters the female, and drops off its own tail, and convey to the child (yet to be born) the colour of its father's hair and eyes! My son has such from me!

This life-giving process has gone on and on for say 500,000,000 years. Bacteria (each of one cell), in the soil, change nitrates from dead leaves into nitrates; and such act as food for the plants again! The Bacteria know not how useful they are thus to plants,—and to MAN!

Our food comes from their wonderful act, for us to live! Who arranged that? Is it not time, then, that we recognized not an Onlooking God, who sent a son from a heaven above, but (giving up the picture—*theology*) let us stand in awe of the process of evolution UPWARD, by the Push-Up of One Infinite Life, the One Mind-energy; Whose energy is woven in all stars ("matter"=grades of energy, electrons and protons of it), and Whose Love-Verve now emerges in all loving hearts!

GILBERT T. SADLER,
M.A. (Oxon.); B.A., LL.B. (Lond.)

SHELLEY AND DICKENS.

SIR,—Why does Minnermus, in common with so many writers in the *Freethinker*, persist in stating that Shelley was an Atheist, as though his position remained unaltered through life? The youthful essay must be equated with the later ones on religion, singularly ignored by your contributors. Has Minnermus read the section on Shelley in the late J. M. Robertson's *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*? I heard

Mr. Robertson call Shelley a Neo-Unitarian, a quite justifiable verdict, taking his writings as a whole.

Why, too, does he persist in saying that Dickens was a Unitarian? As I have pointed out in my *Dickens and Religion* (Watts & Co., 2s.) favourably reviewed in your columns, there is not a hint anywhere that Dickens's attendance—only for two years—at a Unitarian Chapel was due to any disbelief in the Trinity. There is plenty of evidence that he never challenged the doctrine. He simply quarrelled with the clergy about the question of creeds being taught to children. This does not necessarily imply disbelief. Many Socialists do not want their children taught Socialism, and Freethinkers do not hand them the *Freethinker* or tracts on Birth-Control. Dickens simply regarded such teaching as premature.

I do not know how Minnermus manages to find heterodoxy in a book he has not read. I shall be much surprised if the Unitarians are not the most disappointed when they read the life of Christ. The true reason for its suppression is not that given. The reason for its publication, against the express wish of Dickens, is not creditable to those concerned. It is the bait of cash again. I agree that Dickens sympathized with the National Sunday League, but can Minnermus give his authorities for (1) subscriptions and (2) the public readings on its behalf?

I should like to believe that Shelley was an Atheist throughout, and Dickens a Unitarian, but I want evidence. We should belabour a religious writer who suggested a Freethinker was a Christian because, for a few years, as a young man, he went to the temples of orthodoxy, and we must not be accused of the same trick.

W. KENT.

FREEDOM.

SIR,—The second letter of "Medicus" serves to show that there is not really much in dispute between us. I quite understood that he had no desire to form a sectional League. My argument is that the formation of such a "League" inevitably has a tendency to split or weaken our main body. That is why I referred to the other two such tendencies. There was no desire to "sectionalize," or to split-off, among those who formed the Freethought Socialist League. At the same time, had that League met with the success with which it did not meet, the certain result would have been to injure and weaken the N.S.S. I recognize that—now.

As to the N.S.S. and "the Love of Liberty": I know well that there are other people or other organizations that believe in liberty. Still, I was not indulging in hyperbole when I wrote that, "no other organization extant . . . stands for Freedom—Equal Freedom—as does the N.S.S."

Within my knowledge, no body of people hold the same clear-cut, unequivocal, statement for "the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech." I still consider I was justified in that claim.

ATHOS ZENO.

RELIGION IN POLITICS.

SIR,—Mr. J. M. Aherne asks how soon will it be before the Vatican governs England. Judging from what one sees, as soon as Freethinkers take a more active part in public life, will a more sensible way of Government be adopted. May I ask how many Freethinkers take up the arm-chair philosophical attitude in the Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and Political Parties? Not so the Roman Catholic, he very sensibly takes up the militant side and sees to it that his Church, at least if not helped, is not hindered. I am tired of Freethinkers who fill their bookshelves with books and smoke the pipe of philosophy.

If all the Freethinkers of Stockport were in earnest and joined the local Branch of the N.S.S., and took up the cudgels of Freethought, we could make our selves a force both in public and social life. It is no good complaining of the Roman Catholics taking an active part in public life. Let every Freethinker in the country follow their example. Be up and doing.

G. BURGESS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 23, 1934.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Clifton, Wood, Le Maine, Ebury, McLaren, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted, and the financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Liverpool, Bradford, S. London, N. London, W. London, Bethnal Green, Glasgow, Nelson, and Parent Society.

Correspondence and reports were submitted from Newcastle, Chester, Paisley, Bethnal Green, Burnley, Bolton, Glasgow, National Peace Council, International Federation of Freethinkers, and Mr. J. T. Brighton. Preliminaries for the Annual Conference at Bolton, and Mr. Whitehead's summer engagement were discussed. A very successful Annual Dinner was reported, and final arrangements for the Caxton Hall Social announced. The Chairman informed the meeting that the scheme for advertising in trains on the Underground Railways was now in operation. The next meeting of the Executive will be held on Friday, March 23.

The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

Obituary.

MR. CHARLES E. BENTLEY.

I REGRET having to record the death of Mr. Charles E. Bentley, of Rusholme, Manchester—who died at the early age of fifty-five in hospital, as a result of pneumonia.

The deceased was a convinced Freethinker, and had been a member of the Manchester Branch for many years, where he was regarded as one of the most reliable and conscientious workers. He was a very familiar figure at our meetings, and his loss will create a void difficult to fill.

Mr. Bentley was, amongst other things, a member of the Cremation Society, and left instructions that his remains were to be cremated, and that no mourning was to be worn. Mr. F. E. Monks conducted a secular ceremony at the Crematorium on February 24, at half-past three, when he paid a striking tribute to our late member, in the presence of many relatives and friends including officials and several members of the Branch.

Our sympathy goes to his widow and children in the great loss they have sustained.—H.I.B.

Who can compute what the world loses in the multitude of promising intellects combined with timid characters, who dare not follow out any bold, vigorous, independent train of thought lest it should land them in something which would admit of being considered irreligious or immoral.—*John Stuart Mill.*The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness, the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel, the cripple.—*Shakespeare.*

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

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

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. F. Victor Fisher—"Judaism, Jewry and Jewish Persecutions."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"The Reformation of Democracy."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 5, Mr. A. McHattie—"The Relation of Land Restoration to Freedom."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Independent Labour Party Rooms, 133 Forest Lane (Forest Gate End): 7.30, Mr. H. Stewart Wishart—"God, Authority and Dictatorship against Atheism, Reason and Freedom."

WORKERS' CIRCLE (5 Arundel Gardens, off Kensington Park Road): 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—An Address.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, A German Refugee—"The Truth about Germany."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. F. Maughan (Bolton)—A Lecture.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, Mr. G. Baldwin—"Progress, Security, Equality."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, H. P. Turner (Burnley)—"Ithyphallic."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. T. L. McDonald, B.Sc., F.R.A.S., F.R.S.E.—"Life in Other Worlds." Freethinker and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, 53rd Anniversary of the Opening of the Secular Hall.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Handel Lancaster (Liverpool)—"Costume Historicus."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton (Co. Durham)—"Civilized Savagery."

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Social Hall): 7.0, Thursday, March 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Modern Christians and Ancient Ideas."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. H. W. Spear—"Phallicism."

SUNDERLAND DISCUSSION CIRCLE: 7.0, Tuesday, March 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Survival."

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