

# THE FREETHINKER

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**Views and Opinions.**

**Words and Phrases.**

I DEVOTED my last week's notes to a justification for indulging in what mentally lazy and mentally hazy people call "splitting hairs." As another preliminary exercise in mental discipline, I may take a passage from G. Bernard Shaw's *Black Girl in Search of her God*. After quoting the old maxim, "Don't throw out your dirty water until you get in your clean," he wisely warns us that it "is the very devil unless completed by,"

This also I say unto you, that when you get your fresh water you must throw out the dirty, and be particularly careful not to get the two mixed.

Now this is just what we seldom do. We persist in pouring the clean water into the dirty; and our minds are always muddled in consequence. The educated human of to-day has a mind which can be compared only to a store, in which the very latest and the most precious acquisitions are flung on top of a noisome heap of rag-and-bottle refuse and worthless antiquities from the museum lumber-room. The store is always bankrupt; and the men in possession include William the Conqueror and Henry the Seventh, Moses and Jesus, St. Augustine and Sir Isaac Newton, Calvin and Wesley, Queen Victoria, and Mr. H. G. Wells, and dozens of people more or less like Stuart Mill and myself. No mind can operate reasonably in such a mess. And as our current schooling consists in reproducing this mess in the minds of every fresh generation of children, we are provoking revolutionary emergencies, in which persons muddled by university degrees will have to be politically disfranchised and disqualified as, in effect, certified lunatics, and the direction of affairs given over to the self-educated and the simpletons.

This passage is really the main thesis of Mr. Shaw's book, although none of the newspaper reviewers, who usually mistake two or three snippets from a work for a review, saw it.

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**Muddled Minds.**

Now, as in books and pamphlets and articles I have been saying this same thing for over forty years, I was very pleased to see it endorsed by G.B.S., par-

ticularly as the need for this advice is to-day greater than ever. The rush of new knowledge is great, and the eagerness of some to acquire it, and the concern of others that it shall not displace old-fashioned thought-forms, combine to the end of retaining a very considerable quantity of the dirty water which mixes with the clean water that is taken in. It is quite common to find scientific men whose minds are a glorious jumble of the clean water of scientific thinking and the very dirty water of the thought of primitive African medicine-men. Sociologists follow with a mixture of up-to-date generalizations and pre-scientific thinking. Moral philosophers continue the procession with a mess of new ideas and ideals and loudly professed admiration of outworn folk-customs and half-civilized practices. Some reject the Christian mythology, but lack the wit to see that this should involve a restatement of established ethical values. Politicians live in the twentieth century, but their thoughts find a natural habitat in the environment of at least two centuries ago. Rarely indeed is the old water emptied out when the clean is taken in. Instead of being off with the old love when they take on with the new, men loudly protest that while they have taken to themselves a new spouse they have no intention of seeking a divorce from the old one. A cry is raised against placing people of "advanced" ideas in the position of teachers for the young, when, as a matter of fact, it is these advanced teachers who should educate the young. If we must find a job for the worshippers of old ideas, they should be restricted to the education of people over fifty.

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**Man and Nature.**

As happens, not uncommonly, Mr. Shaw himself affords, in some directions, an illustration of the evil he deplures. For example, if there was ever a clear instance of the practice of mixing dirty water with clean, it is surely to be found in his parading the rather ancient conception of a "life-force" which is assumed to be pushing itself from a "lower" to a "higher" form of existence. This escapes the charge of being called a very old anthropomorphic concept by its being expressed in a more abstract form. But a conception is not the less crude because it finds expression with what *looks* like scientific precision.

To begin with, the very terms such as "higher" and "lower," convenient enough when used for purposes of classification, are no more than primitive anthropomorphisms when applied to natural processes. In terms of strict science "life" is no more than a descriptive epithet used to indicate a synthesis of properties and qualities manifested by objects called living. Save that it serves the purpose of keeping on good terms with established propositions, no useful purpose is served by separating the descriptive term from the properties and writing as

though "life" stood for something in itself. There is no more a conceivable "life" apart from things called living than there is heat apart from those things called hot or colour apart from things called coloured. The idea of a force of any kind pushing its way through matter, like water forcing its way through a tube, is a conception that belongs to savages and children, not to scientifically mature minds. There are inanimate objects and there are living objects, and whether we correctly call an object one or the other depends upon the presence or absence of a known set of properties. One might just as well talk of a "heat-force" as of a "life-force." It would be as useful, and as warrantable.

Mr. Shaw is, in plain words, carrying the ghost of a god round with him although he probably imagines that he is quite free from such an encumbrance. He is not alone in this, there are plenty of others, and in many directions, as I shall try to prove before I conclude. "A force behind nature," a "force through nature," the "destiny of a people," "the end to which nature works," a "mystery behind phenomena," etc., are illustrations of the persistence of the god-idea, or as Mr. Shaw says, it illustrates, the fact that our minds are lumber-rooms for all the rubbish of the past along with the new and interesting things of the present.

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#### That "Life" Force.

If I may split yet another hair, I may offer much the same kind of criticism against the use of such terms as "higher" and "lower," when applied to nature. They are useful, but they do indeed "play the very devil," as they have done with Mr. Shaw, if they are taken as more than classificatory conveniences. When I was quite a youth I learned from that splendid Atheist, Spinoza, that everything was perfect after its kind, without reading into it the gross fallacy that this invited us to revere the power and perfection of "God." Spinoza's "everything is perfect after its kind" is no more, with him, than a plain statement of Determinism. He means that every product is the exact consequence of its factors, and can be nothing else. A cow is no higher and no lower than a man, it is just different; and if we call one higher and the other lower, it is only as they approach or recede from a standard of excellence formed by ourselves. As Kant said, long after Spinoza, design is not something we find in nature, it is something we ourselves place there.

But there is clearly no essential distinction between a God who deliberately calls things into existence on the lines of what Spencer called the carpenter theory of creation, and a "life-force," acting like blood trying to force its way through a restricted artery. A "force behind nature," "a power not ourselves that is working for righteousness," a "symbol of which this world is the expression," or "a mathematician whose thought is the world"—at least, there is no distinction that is of vital importance. It is true the advocates of the life-force, etc., may say that the savage was only groping after what their more exact and more profound knowledge has revealed; but, on the other hand, the savage might retort that all that these others have found with their centuries of investigation, accumulated knowledge, and superior instruments of investigation, is what he found out alone, and by his own native wit. And, clearly in this conference of discoverers the honours would lie completely with the savage.

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#### False and True

The fundamental likeness between these different kinds of gods should be perceptible to an intelligent child; the difference of name would certainly not

deceive a bright youngster. The wolf wore the old granny's night-cap and nightdress, but the young visitor observed that the teeth, the eyes, the face was not right. Mr. Shaw, Professor Jeans, Professor Edgington, and the rest are indulging in sheer theologizing. None of these has outgrown his theology; they have simply modified it and stated it in what they think are untheological terms. Their error belongs to the same order of fallacy which assumes that crudity becomes less crude if it is expressed in abstract language, and that abstractions become entities if they are printed in capital letters. In reality all that is done by this change of terms is exactly what was done when Magna Charta was signed, and when that gigantic "fake" was later passed off on the public as the charter of English liberties. The Charta converted privileges and favours into legal rights, and is responsible for the fact that until to-day we have not been able to sweep aside the feudalism that was institutionalized and legalized at Runnymede. By giving old delusions and old fallacies a new name we naturalize them in a new environment, perpetuate and give a new status to ideas that might otherwise be discarded. The clean water of science is taken in, but the dirty water of theology is not thrown out. The result is a clouded mixture which to the observant bears, like a river carrying for many miles traces of the strata through which it has passed, evidences of the stages through which it has come down to us.

But there is not, and cannot be, a law against intellectual adulteration. A better logic in the service of a disinterested reason provides the only hope. And, that way, there lies at present, neither the promise of social ease nor financial gain.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Religion and Insanity.

THE relationship between religion and insanity is a subject which presents certain interesting aspects, and it is one that merits closer investigation from a rational standpoint. Opponents and protagonists of religion are apt to stultify their arguments by exaggerated statements about this relationship. The former have sometimes been guilty of saying that religion is a serious cause of mental derangement, or even that it drives people to the lunatic asylum. The latter, on the other hand, try to make out that Atheism leads to mental torture, and they support their contentions by repeating the usual lies about the death-bed ravings of Atheists.

Freethinkers and rationalists know that these stories are untrue. They know, too, that true Atheism can only be the result of free and logical thinking, whereas religion requires neither logic nor reason for its mental acceptance. It is, therefore, a matter of some importance that they should appreciate the real facts of the question, namely, what relation, if any, exists between the religious and the insane mentality?

We may state quite definitely at the outset that religion cannot be the cause of insanity. And this is as true as the statement that Atheism cannot be the cause of insanity.

Insanity, as the term is commonly used, refers to a disease, or diseases, of the brain. The brain is a material part of the body and as such it can only become diseased through material means. A disease of some other part of the body, a blow, a tumour, or the lack of some physical element necessary to the health of brain tissues, any of these may cause insanity. Religion and Atheism, however, are general terms which refer to ideas, beliefs, theories, etc., which are not material things. It is, therefore, as impossible for them to effect the brain materially as it is for patriot-

ism, socialism, or mathematics to affect the stomach.

It is true that religion and Atheism usually involve certain kinds of behaviour. And it is obvious that some sorts of behaviour might affect the brain. Thus, if it were an essential part of some religion to consume a brain-damaging drug, then we might say that a particular religion caused insanity. But even this statement would not be strictly true. For it would not be the *religion* that caused the insanity, but the *drug*.

Another proof that religion does not cause insanity is the fact that millions of people are religious, but they do not all become insane. Yet, when all this has been said in defence of religion, the records of most mental institutions do definitely indicate some kind of connexion between religion and insanity, which is not manifest between Atheism and insanity. And my aim here is to make the true relationship clear.

Medical authorities have classified insanity under various heads. In some cases post-mortem examination shows evidences of lesions, or changes in the brain texture, when no previous diagnosis could assign a cause. In other cases insanity regularly supervenes after the occurrence of a known disease. But in a large number of cases, in which even the brain tissue shows no sign of change, it is not possible to name any specific cause.

As with so many other diseases whose immediate causes are not known, the most convenient basis of classification is to be found in the external symptoms. This applies to insanity, which is largely classified according to the behaviour exhibited by the patient. And the one sort of behaviour which serves as the most frequent and reliable clue to the disease is *what the patient says*. In fact it is precisely the *illogicality* of the patient's utterances which constitutes the chief evidence whereby the presence and the nature of the disease is most readily determined. And the chief criterion by which it is adjudged that the disease has been cured is the resumption of *logical* speech and action.

Now if one of the main effects of insanity in its many forms is to damage the capacity for logical thought, we might be led to expect that the topics which occupy the minds of the insane would be mostly those in which the need for logical thinking is small or absent. The more logic or clear reasoning that a subject requires, the less would we expect to find it as a matter for discourse by the insane. We, as Atheists, consider true Atheism as only to be attained by logical and rational thought, and we regard religion as a manifestation of illogicality. If we are right, then on this particular point we should expect to find a larger proportion of religious talk among lunatics than of anti-religious or Atheistic talk. What is the evidence?

I will quote two passages from a book of collected lectures delivered to clergymen by the Danish mental specialist, Dr. H. I. Schou, who is himself a God-believing Christian. Here they are. "*In practically every form of insanity we may find fixed ideas of a religious character.* And this applies to diseases arising out of definite and well-known organic causes, as for instance syphilitic cerebral paralysis, or arteriosclerotic dementia (senile dementia). Even in alcoholic delirium the patients may have revelations of eternal bliss or suffer the tortures of hell." And again: "We may say that no other class of ideas is so permanently represented in a mental asylum as the ideas of religion."

Of course the conclusions which this author comes to are not the same as mine. But, being himself religious, it is not surprising that he is blind to the obvious implications of the evidence which he adduces.

With a naiveté which is incredible except in the religiously-minded he says: "I would refer to some historical instances of mania-depressive mental disturbance, showing in the first place *how frequently it may occur among persons of great spiritual gifts*, and secondly, how the intellectual activity of such persons may actually be developed and advanced by such mental suffering." The italics, which are mine in this case, bear out the relationship I am endeavouring to establish. The latter half of the sentence would contradict it if the author's words meant what they seem to mean. But the cases which he cites are of persons practically unknown outside Denmark (Graundtvig, Kierkegaard and Birkedal) and their so-called development was purely "spiritual." In no case did this so-called development or advancement contribute one atom of useful knowledge such as might have helped to alleviate, or remedy, or throw new light on the disease.

The author himself asks the question: "Why are religious ideas and experiences so frequent in cases of insanity?" And he gives three answers, all of which are true. But the interpretations which he gives to them are patently untrue, because they are self-contradictory. First he says that "in a Christian community all persons are imbued from childhood with religious ideas"—which is true. But they are also imbued with other ideas. Why, then, should religious ideas predominate in the insane? Because, says the doctor, "the hour of need is certainly the hour of psychical suffering; it is then that one turns to the old truths as the only ones that offer any support." In view of the suffering and appalling terrors of religious origin, examples of which the author repeatedly cites, one is forced to wonder what he means by the word "support." Not one single case is cited in which the religious ravings of the patient serve to support him or comfort him in his "hour of need."

The absurdity of the doctor's contention is emphasized in other places where he says, "The Bible must in some cases be taken away from the patient," and "at certain stages all spiritual reading is undesirable." Again, in answering the question whether one should pray with the insane when they themselves wish it, he says, "It is better to pray for the insane than with them," and even so the praying should not be done in their presence. "My own recollections of attempts in this direction," he says, "are not such as to tempt me to repeat them." How does this tally with the claim that religion is a support?

The second answer is, "that religious ideas are a mere jumble of nonsense to people . . . they attach no profound meaning to the thing." This is also true, and bears out my views. But the author makes no comment upon this answer.

The third answer is because of "the primitive character of religious life." And the doctor interprets this in the words: "religious life is a primitive thing, a primitive tendency, a natural inclination, an instinctive craving . . . resembling the sex instinct and the craving for food." The statement that religion is primitive in character is correct. It is as primitive as superstition (which is the same thing) and as primitive as illogicality or ignorance. But to equate the word "primitive" with the words "natural" and "instinctive" is not correct. Unfortunately for the author's views, the theory that religion is instinctive or natural has been disproved beyond dispute by hard facts. And the hardest fact of all is that no religious community dares to test the theory by omitting to pump religion into its young. Children do not need to be taught what hunger is; nor is the sex-instinct a result of education. But it

would be interesting to see how their so-called "religious instinct" would develop in the total absence of any religious instruction.

On the strength of the evidence it seems hardly necessary to labour the obvious conclusion. The remarkable prevalence of religion, as compared with any other subject which occupies the minds of the insane, is as convincing a proof of its illogicality as anything can be. And herein lies the true relationship between religion and insanity. Both are terms which imply the absence or the lack of logical thought. What is most irrational in the mind comes to the surface most readily when the brain becomes diseased. And in civilized communities the most irrational body of ideas is contained in religion.

C. S. FRASER.

## The Baby and the Bath-water.

"O ghastly stories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!  
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all  
knees bend:  
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the  
end."—*Swinburne*.

"OLD soldiers never die, they simply fade away," runs the popular song. The same may be said concerning religious dogmas. The blasphemies of one generation are the orthodoxies of a later one. The attacks of the Freethinkers on the theologians are beginning to tell heavily, and the ecclesiastics of all denominations are getting panicky, and are throwing away their accoutrement in their frantic efforts to escape. How things are going in the Christian camp may be estimated by the bare statement that the belated publication of an alleged *Life of Christ*, by Charles Dickens, has been hailed as "a great man's affirmation" of the truth of the Christian Religion. Ignoring the fact that Dickens himself was an undoubted heretic, Christians might have paused before they sought to endow their cause with prestige by counting the corpses of a previous generation.

In the far-off days when Dickens wrote his very sentimental account of Christ, Paine's *Age of Reason* had been selling steadily for over half a century, and Renan's *Life of Jesus* was, a little later, raising a storm throughout the Christian world. What tempests those two books provoked! Whether men applauded or criticized, none could deny their power. Priests might rail and the pious might sigh, but they both have had to reckon with these two Freethinkers. And it is no disparagement of Paine to say that Renan's work was as deadly to the Christians as the thunderous frontal attack of *The Age of Reason*. Not even the most reactionary of the commentators on the Gospel legends have written as they would have written had Renan's book never been published. It was a famous victory for Freethought, for Renan's scholarly method is as fatal to religion as Paine's critical thoroughness. Airily and daintily the scholarly Frenchman explained away the wonder and the glamour of the Christian legends.

Then Matthew Arnold took a hand in the debunking of Christian dogmas. In his fascinating theological works, if the term be not misapplied to such light-hearted productions, Arnold wore the velvet glove over the steel gauntlet. His *Literature and Dogma*, and other works, stung Christians like a swarm of wasps. When he described the Orthodox view of the Holy Trinity as being that of "three Lord Shaftesburys" he fluttered the dovescotes of Orthodoxy from John O'Groats to Land's End.

The publication of Thomas Scott's *English Life of Christ* was a further attempt to debunk the Christian

legends. But far more important events were the starting of *The National Reformer* and the foundation of the National Secular Society, both of which had such influence in waking the working classes of this country to intellectual issues. In this connexion it is significant that George Jacob Holyoake, one of the founders of Secularism, should have also been a pioneer of the Co-operative Movement. Both of these organizations sprang from the working-classes themselves. Indeed, the governing classes viewed them, in the early days, with the gravest suspicion. To-day the Co-operative Movement proves beyond all cavil and dispute the ability of the working-class to conduct its own affairs, for the Co-operative Societies form the largest private trading organization in the world, possessing its own plantations, its own fleet of steamers, with wholesale and retail depots throughout the length and breadth of the country. This is high praise, but the Freethinkers achieved a more notable victory, for they, with rare courage, risked their own liberty in widening the frontiers of intellect. The Freethought Movement is a far nobler and wider evangel than a purely business concern. It has its roots in intellectual necessity, and, deeper still, in ethical right. It is based on the psychological law of human development. Perpetually reaffirmed from generation to generation by its leaders, it is to-day changing the character and direction of the ideas of the civilized world.

It is strange to think what a grip Priestcraft had upon this country until quite recently. Men still living can remember the repeal of an old Act of Parliament forbidding the sale of meat in Lent. Theatres used to be closed during "Holy Week." Sundays were regarded as a close season for all relaxation, with the exception of churches and public-houses. Even to-day the average citizen is only becoming aware of the farmers' burden of a tithe charge on agriculture, which tax is used to swell the stipends of the clergy. At one time the Church of England, the official religion of the country, recognized no less than a hundred days of fasting or abstinence during the year. So one might go on quoting illustrations, but enough has been said to remind people that we are only just emerging from the aftermath of the Ages of Ignorance and Faith.

The real meaning of the enormous changes in people's minds is that the Christian Religion is crumbling, due to the attacks of the Freethinkers. Never was there so little religion, never so much Secularism, as at the present time. Never have men attended places of worship so little, never have they attended hospital and philanthropic meetings so assiduously. Christianity is in the melting-pot, and Secularism is slowly permeating everywhere. The Christian Religion no longer satisfies, for no faith can satisfy which is found out. Men, nowadays, no longer accept upon mere trust the mistaken ideas of their remote and ignorant ancestors. Priestcraft had not a safe seat on British shoulders in the Ages of Faith, even before the days of the so-called Reformation. It is an impossible dream now that there is an organized Freethought Movement, for Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing men from the absurdities and barbarities of uncivilized times perpetuated by the clergy.

The last lesson, apparently, that these priests will learn is that the premier issue for educated and thoughtful people is not the sub-editing of old ideas and ancient legends, but what is true? In controversy, these priests too readily abandon the alleged supernatural element in their religion, overlooking that they have thrown out the baby with the bath-water. Historical Christianity was nothing if not dogmatic. In debunking dogma there is little left

but a residue of sentimentality, which will grow small by degrees and beautifully less as the years pass. Without credulous belief in the alleged "supernatural," the Christian Religion would have long since died out. It is not a creed of "love" and "brotherhood" which has fascinated ignorant millions through so many centuries, and caused them to fill the priests' coffers with untold gold.

According to the legends, Christ claimed that he was a "god," and his "proofs" were that he multiplied bread and fish, healed the sick, and restored the dead to life. The whole question is reduced to one of facts. If we can believe that Christ was really born of a virgin, that he performed prodigies, that he returned from the grave, and left the earth like an aeroplane, then we need not hesitate to accept the priestly pretensions. If, on the other hand, we believe the proofs for these pretensions are inadequate, or that natural laws are never broken, no talk of the "Golden Rule" or "the Sermon on the Mount" will make believable the fictions upon which the Christian Religion is based.

Some priests are astute enough to see this, and the Romish Church, the most important of Christian sects, affirms that its own miracles are a continuation of those mentioned in the Biblical legends. They tell us that the so-called "cures" at Lourdes and elsewhere, and the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples are precisely such as those mentioned in their Scriptures, and that the apparition of their Virgin at La Salette is as genuine as the miracles in "Old Judee." The Greek Church priests take the same attitude, and contend that the fake of the Holy Fire at Jerusalem every year is simply the latest link in a great chain that extends back to the talking snake in the Garden of Eden. The two most important of the Christian Churches would have men's minds "bounded in a nutshell." The Protestant clergy, who address more educated congregations, pay lip-service to the human intellect. In so doing they are heralding the beginning of the end of the Oriental Superstition, which has been used to oppress men throughout the centuries.

"Nought may endure save mutability," said Shelley. In Italy, when a native stubs his toe, or runs into a wall, he is said to remark, "Corpo di Bacco!" which being translated means, "Body of Bacchus!" This ancient deity has not been worshipped in that country for two millenniums. It is quite conceivable that in the future an Englishman will tread on a banana-skin, fall heavily, and exclaim, "O Christ!" And that will be all that will remain of the once-powerful Christian Religion, which supported armies of priests for two thousand years.

MIMNERMUS.

## George Eliot's Crucifix.

A CHRISTIAN contemporary recalls that 60 years ago David F. Strauss died. He was only twenty-seven when he wrote his famous *Leben Jesu*.

By an unexpected series of circumstances Marian Evans, better known as George Eliot, was entrusted with the task of continuing and finishing the translation of Strauss's masterpiece which a friend of hers had begun.

It was George Eliot's first introduction to literary work. It involved tremendous effort (Miss Evans had to learn Hebrew, she needed an acquaintance with Greek, and she had to be thoroughly equipped in German).

George Eliot was not more than twenty-two when she declared with force and wit, that she did not be-

lieve the Bible, and at twenty-four she was translating Strauss's infidel work, following it with Spinoza's *Tractatus*, and later with Feuerbach's uncompromisingly Atheistic *Wesen des Christenthums*.

When just out of her teens she had accepted the necessitarian doctrine, given up church-going and incurred her pious Father's anger by her "infidelity."

It is not therefore surprising that the *Christian World*, instead of giving its readers a taste of Strauss or Feuerbach prefers to give nothing but the old story of George Eliot's *Crucifix*. This is how the *Christian World* refers to the translation:

While engaged upon it she kept a crucifix on her desk, lest the cold iconoclasm of Strauss should destroy what was left of her early attachment to the person of Christ.

At this stage it is difficult to say that this story is a fabrication. Its origin is however found, not in anything George Eliot ever said, nor in any statement she ever saw (when she might have contradicted it).

There was no crucifix at all. Mr. J. W. Cross, who gives neither confirmation nor contradiction otherwise, states clearly that:—

There was a cast, 20 inches high, of Thorwaldsen's grand figure of the risen Christ, which was placed in view in her study at Foleshill, where she did all her work at that time—a little room on the first floor, with a charming view over the country.

In February, 1846, Mrs. Bray wrote to Miss Sara Hennell giving a highly-coloured account of George Eliot's alleged illness. The letter is not given in full in the voluminous Letters (mostly, of course, Eliot's own) in Mr. Cross's *Life of George Eliot*. Mrs. Bray's letter refers to George Eliot's "pale, sickly face and dreadful headaches and anxiety too about her father . . . this illness of his has tried her so much . . . nevertheless she looks very happy and satisfied sometimes in her work." And it is in this letter that occurs the only reference to the story now told by the *Christian World*. What Mrs. Bray says on that point is:—

Miss Evans says she is Strauss-sick, it makes her ill dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion, and only the sight of the Christ image and picture make her endure it.

Analysing the legend we find the only allegation of anything actually said by George Eliot was an expression of impatience at a very busy task. It is Mrs. Bray's own view as to the cause of the impatience, and Mrs. Bray's own belief as to George Eliot's strange remedy. Mr. Cross tells us about a small statue. Mrs. Bray herself adds a "picture" whose existence has no confirmation.

About the very date of Mrs. Bray's unauthenticated guesses, George Eliot writes the same Miss Hennell quite a different reason for her momentary depression. She had omitted to send to the printers four pages of MS., and there was a risk that certain vital corrections would be overlooked in consequence.

It almost looks as if the young translator had anticipated some sort of story such as Mrs. Bray had told. George Eliot writes (February, 1846) explaining that it was not the story of the Crucifixion (and the Resurrection) that had troubled her. She dismisses these lightly and wittily, saying that these "are at all events better than the bursting asunder of Judas." And this she calls "this dull part of Strauss." She adds, indicating what might have been the source of any "illness" of her own, "Father is pretty well, and I have not a single excuse for discontent through the livelong day." It is in this letter too that she expresses the joy and interest which her work gives her:—

I do really like reading our Strauss—he is so *Klar und ideenvoll*. . . . Next week we will be merry and sad, wise and nonsensical, devout and wicked together.

The last quoted sentence shows what sort of human being this singularly gifted woman must have been: not the kind to turn to a crucifix for her consolation.

George Eliot felt deeply the fear that Strauss's rationalism might never be appreciated. Her sorrow was for "the millions who cannot enjoy Strauss." There was even a danger that her translation would never be printed. "I begin utterly to despair that Strauss will ever be published unless I print it myself." "I am quite happy," she said, "only sometimes feeling the weight of all this unintelligible world." That quotation from Wordsworth is what almost all rationalist writers have felt when they see the ease with which rubbish is published and the obstacles placed in the way of rational thought finding expression in print.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### The Knight and the Oyster.

"At the luncheon given by Colonel J. J. Shute, M.P., at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, one of the guests, Sir Noel Curtis-Bennett, had a pleasant surprise.

"He found two small pearls in one of his oysters—a discovery which he regards as a good augury for the further success of the boys' club movement, of which he is the national vice-president."—*From a Liverpool Daily Paper.*

As great philosophy doth spring  
From grain of sand, from blade of grass,  
So, oftentimes, from a little thing  
Great consequences come to pass.

The acorn hides the giant oak;  
The royal babe the warrior king;  
Yea, for her very mightiest stroke  
Fate uses oft a puny thing.

Then let Sir Noel stare not in  
Surprise that Fate should wish him well  
By smiling on him from the twin  
Lamelke of an oyster shell.

When pair of laughing pearls peeped out  
Like roguish eyes from quilted bed,  
Dispelled was all Sir Noel's doubt  
As he their happy message read.

The message none could fail to guess;  
It was that this sublime conjunction  
Of guest and oyster made success.  
The structure had assured the function.

But was that happy message true?  
Ah, how did good Sir Noel know?  
Why, good Sir Noel plainly knew  
Because the oyster told him so.

And now he rests, his peace assured;  
For though the earth's foundation shakes,  
The boys' club movement is secured—  
An oyster never makes mistakes.

Oh happy fish, by Fate decreed  
To rise from ocean's rocky cloister!  
O happy feast, in hour of need,  
That brought Sir Noel to the oyster!

O happy boys on lucky day!  
O happy pearls on lucky dish!  
May time immortalize the lay  
Of good Sir Noel and the Fish.

TWINKLE.

### Acid Drops

We do not suppose for a moment that men like Hitler, and Mosley, or even the principal avowed supporters of them are overburdened with a sense of humour. But they all help to prove the truth of the old saying that the best humour is often of the unconscious variety. For example. Hitler has just ordered that every couple married in Wurtemberg shall have presented to them a copy of his book, *My Fight*. Surely the title should have been altered for the occasion to "Our Fight," with perhaps a supplementary chapter on *Infantry* tactics. Two other examples of the same kind come to hand from the British pantomime troupe. The Minister of Propaganda announces that it is quite false that British Fascism is anti-Semitic. British Jews will not be disturbed—so long as they do what is proper. And a supporter of the Mosley gang announces in the *Daily Telegraph* that speech will be quite free under Fascism. Free speech will be encouraged "provided the speaker knows what he is talking about." Devil a doubt of it! But what a lot of dull dogs these Fascists must be.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has issued a statement concerning our lack of rain. He does not believe in appointing a day of prayer, but "men should lay their needs before God"—kind of remind him of his non-attention to duty, and their prayers should be "spontaneous and continuous," so as not to give God a chance of forgetting. And we do like the word spontaneous! They are told to be spontaneous! There is nothing like having plenty of time to prepare an impromptu. But if God reads the papers he is likely to tumble to it that the prayers are not quite so spontaneous as they appear.

Whether evolution, Darwinism or any other kind, is accepted by intelligent members of the Roman Catholic Church, is a question they would rather, as a rule, not discuss. But that the "vulgar," that is the less intelligent believers, must not believe in evolution, under pain of eternal damnation, is a truth no Catholic can deny. Here is the answer given by a pious editor to one of his readers:—

Catholics *must* believe that the whole of the present human race descended from one single pair, Adam and Eve. The various physiological differences—or rather anatomical ones—in the existing races can be accounted for sufficiently by differences in climate, culture, etc.

True Christianity has never, in fact, budged from the standpoint of the writer (or editor) of Genesis. Adam and Eve were "created" by God exactly as described, and the truth of the Bible is once again infallibly demonstrated. This is still the kind of nonsense taught by God's own Church.

The speech made by Lord Dawson recently on Birth-Control in the House of Lords, has certainly ruffled, not only those who believe in contraception, but also those who are violently opposed to it. One Catholic writer referred to it as "a particularly pestilent speech," and he pointed out that "the Archbishop of Canterbury gave another illustration of the futility of Anglican leadership." The same writer is also angry with the poorness of the opposition by Catholic peers in the House of Lords. "After making all allowances," he writes, "there are too many (peers) whose neglect of their opportunities of service is nothing less than a scandal that calls for public protest." Perhaps even Catholic members of the "nobility" are secretly in agreement with Lord Dawson that "Birth-Control has come to stay," and therefore deliberately stay away from the House so as not to affect the vote. In any case, it may well be that it is in itself a "public service" for peers of any creed "neglecting their opportunities" of interference in matters of public interest. One thing does emerge, however, from the controversy—Birth-Control *has* come to stay.

Now that that stupendous leader of men, Herr Hitler, has dealt with both the Protestants and the Catholics in Germany, he has felt the necessity of putting something in their place. To begin with, a book of carols has been published "in which Herr Hitler takes the place of the Holy Child." A translation of one carol is thus given by one of our leading Anglo-Catholic journals (which does not like Hitler!):—

Quiet night, holy night, all are sleeping. Only the Chancellor watches alone with loyal guardianship, watches well that Germany may prosper. He's always thinking of us.

It looks as if Hitler will not only expect Germany to accept him at its Saviour, but also the world. Hitler as our Lord and Saviour! But the curious thing is that millions of Germans will sing these holy carols with perfectly straight faces!

One of our Church papers insists that "money is required for building new Churches. Money is required for building new schools. Money is required for the mission field. Money is required for social services, the most important of which is the provision of decent housing." How significant that the last, which is by far the most important for which money is required, should be put *after* all the others! Let us have first our new churches, our (church) schools, and our missions; then (and not till then, of course), the social services. But why not decent houses first? Why not the complete abolition of slums? Why not social security of some kind for the unlucky unemployed? Why not well-fed children in State (and therefore, secular) schools? Are not these things a million times more important than building churches or finding money for "missions"—than which, surely, nothing more hopelessly futile could be thought of? Perhaps Christians are, after all, afraid of pressing their creed on to a happy and prosperous community. A good home here in this world is far more substantial than any of Christ's promises for the next. But then that is the object of Secularism.

A gentleman described as "Prof. Bertram Lee Woolf" chooses the unlikely pages of the *Leader* for an article headed, "What would happen if the Churches were closed for a month." A permanent closure would, of course, be better, but in any event little good would follow if religion and unreason still dominated human minds. Why any kind of "Prof." should cry "Wolf, Wolf," when nobody threatens this sort of closure, we can only guess. The article, the "Prof.," and the *Leader* are, of course, entirely unimportant: the competitors who read the "clues" to big prizes offered by other journals, are unlikely to worry about "Prof." Woolf's absurdities. He says thousands of workers "would feel almost as if they had been stabbed." Well, they *have*! Religion has done more evil to organized labour than a thousand capitalists or a million blacklegs. These silly stories are really an admission of guilt. If closing the churches even for one month would have such devastating results, the churches which remain open are responsible for the existing evils which their alleged vast influence does nothing to prevent or cure.

Sir Richard Gregory, "the great scientist," is interviewed in the March number of *Great Thoughts*. He says nothing at all about science, but a great deal about religion . . . or possibly the Editor has suppressed anything he said on any of the subjects on which he has any kind of information. "There is no science without religion," says Sir Richard, whose study of Nature's laws has created "a respect for them and reverence for their maker." We need a picture of the "great scientist" worshipping the "maker" of the recent earthquake, and "respecting" a few cyclones. Sir R. Gregory admits that "Scientific investigation *may*, at times, appear to undermine the foundation of belief" (the italics are ours) "but that need cause no anxiety, for, in the course of years, the truth will prevail." It sounds like the old story of the Counsel who telegraphed his client, "Justice has triumphed." His client instantly replied: "Appeal immediately."

Dr. Harry Fosdick well-known in New York, writes in the *Christian World*, on "Is Christianity Possible." It is certainly highly improbable even if "Christianity" means only the brand favoured by such modernists as Dr. Fosdick. "Are Christ's ideas possible in a world like this?" he asks. But the moment you begin to talk about handling serpents and drinking aqua-fortis your modernist always says, "O, that isn't really Christ's idea—that passage is an interpolation." We do, however, get nearer to definitions when Dr. Fosdick commends the "Sermon On the Mount," about which he says, "Every element in Christ's teaching is liveable." The "Sermon on the Mount," is very much more praised than read. Its teaching on divorce, on adultery by "looking on," on being perfect ("even as your Father in heaven is perfect") on neglecting to insure against robbery, on defending yourself, on mutilating yourself if your eye or hand or other member of the body "offends" you—all these are teachings which *may* be "possible," but are surely not "liveable"—in decent civilized society.

According to a pious writer, "One inevitable result of seeking the will of God is the discovery that we are seeking other things besides." We like that "other things beside." But this discovery is usually made by others about those who are doing the God-seeking.

The *Daily Mail* informs its intelligent readers that Dickens' *Life of Our Lord*, which that paper is publishing, "is a priceless addition to English literature, and one of the most remarkable manuscripts of the century." This must be so. For the *Daily Mail* (1) is an acknowledged authority on English literature and remarkable manuscripts, and (2) has never been known to say anything but the truth. Whether "Our Lord" would be pleased that an account of his "Life" should be used to increase the sale of the *Daily Mail*, and to enrich the wealthy directors of that paper—God only knows.

The President of the Methodist Conference, in an appeal for support towards the *Sinai Codex* fund, says:—

It is hardly necessary for me to point out the importance of this appeal to Methodists who venerate the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. The *Codex* is one of the two most ancient and important manuscripts of the Bible. That it should be in the safe custody of the British nation, and available for Biblical scholars who are endeavouring to fix the original text with complete exactitude, is a matter of great moment to the Christian Church as a whole and Methodism in particular.

Seeing that no one is certain as to the date on which the *Codex* was written, and on what earlier text it was based, and that in any case it is comparatively late, the promise of anything concerning the "original text" is not very bright. But where so much folly exists a little more cannot make a serious difference.

A reviewer quotes the following from a new theological book:—

The doctrine of the Trinity has its germ and incentive in the religious experience recorded in the New Testament; it is not surprising, therefore, that however difficult we may find the form given to it by tradition, the fundamental assertion of this doctrine is still a necessity of thought.

This may be translated thus. However absurd the doctrine of the Trinity may seem, it is still necessary for the Christian to believe in a three-headed Deity.

A reverend doctor exclaims that it is "dreadful to go through great areas that are churchless and practically pagan." For our part, we can imagine a meat purveyor being similarly horrified on observing a colony of vegetarians—and for a somewhat similar reason.

A newspaper reader wants our schoolboys and school-girls to confine their knowledge of history to accurate history books (as used in schools), as history served up

by Hollywood films is not usually "in accordance with true facts." The protest may be justified. But is history as served up in schools always true? There is no doubt that history in Catholic schools is history with a bias to serve the Catholic superstition. But are there any schools—Protestant or Catholic—which reveal the truth about the Christian Church? History in schools is merely what the ruling classes, and priests and parsons want the masses to believe concerning past events and individuals who influenced those events. Much of it is a mixture of truth, half-truth, and just plain lies—not forgetting the lie by implication and by suppression. What kind of a knowledge would those in our schools—from the elementary upward—get of Freethought and the part played by Freethinkers from the books supplied, or from the teachers on whom the pupils have to depend? Much of the teaching provided gives the pupils much to unlearn in their later years.

Miss Evelyn Underhill's latest pious work, *The School of Charity*, is blessed by the Bishop of London. She is an authority on "mysticism." She is also by way of being a poet. Her two volumes called *Immanence* and *Theophanies* are not without some fine lines, but they consist mainly of "mystic" ideas, so-called presumably because the meaning of her words is generally misty:—

"On every nest  
There doth my Godhead rest."

Conveys the idea (if any) that "Godhead" is a sort of brood-hen. Her "Saviour" speaks in another poem:—

"Mine is the Voice that cries  
In wood and desert . . .  
And Mine the Sacrifice  
That tortures and that saves."

Which leave us in doubt as to whether we are to praise the torturer no less than the Saviour.

Mr. Jack Common (in the *Adelphi*) regards "Christianity" as a fit phrase to express "the Socialist dynamic." Mr. Martin Cleobury replies in the February issue of that journal, very properly objecting to that "confusion of the issues." Mr. Cleobury seems to be an Atheist-Communist, but he quite needlessly concedes a disputed point as if the Christians were indisputably justified in a totally unjustifiable claim. He says, "True; Christianity gave us the doctrine of the Brotherhood of man." "True!" It is absolutely false. It is just as accurate as pretending that Christ loved animals because he called the Gentiles "dogs." Brotherhood in the widest sense of the word was taught by Lao-tze and Bhudda. Christ's idea of "The Brethren" was narrow, national and noxious.

An Epsom Minister who has "burnt six-hundred of his own old sermons," asks the advice of Rev. John Bevan, M.A. It is rather late in the day to seek advice about sermons already thrown to the flames, but Mr. Bevan thinks his Epsom friend "should have no difficulty in making two fresh and arresting Sermons every week." It is distinctly unkind to tell a man (who has already had the big job of destroying 600 sermons) to make a further hundred every year, presumably also to be burnt. It reminds us of the curate who asked his vicar "didn't I put fire enough into my sermons?" The Vicar replied, "Yes, but you didn't put enough of your sermons into the fire." The specimen sermons, doubtless the best of their kind, which we hear in nauseating numbers over the wireless "arrest" us, with amazement, that such bunk can ever exist outside an asylum or a museum.

Things have reached a pretty low ebb if Sir Alfred Hopkinson is right. He says (in the *Contemporary Review*) that "the only hope for mankind is in the Christian religion." We can at once reassure this extreme pessimist that the case is not *quite* so bad as that. Sir Alfred strikes an enigmatical note when he says "A fair survey of the state of our country or of others to-day, leads to the conclusion that . . . by far the most important influence . . . is that of religion." Sir Alfred Hopkinson, K.C., LL.D., almost justifies his Jeremiahs, on that ground alone.

Rev. Charles Brown D.D. undertakes the difficult, perhaps impossible, task of explaining, "What is the Passion of Christ." Some of us irreverently imagine that what we familiarly call "getting into a 'paddy,'" is about the same thing whether we are Napoleons, Christs, or plain Robinsons. Dr. Brown says that Christ's passion "was really His Self-emptying, Self-giving, and Self-identification with the human race." In other words, behaving like an ordinary human being. If that is the case what on earth was there for him to be miserable about?

This is a blighted world, according to the *British Weekly*, whose "Watchman" has four columns of dreary, teary, weary pessimism worthy of Job in a London fog on a winter Sunday. Poor "Watchman," he sees the real cause of all earth's terrible misery—nothing seems to escape his lantern-eye. "The Christian Church has bowdlerized the Holy Scriptures disgracefully." And how? by "showing a certain squeamishness about the Old Testament." We repeat And How!

The Rev. John Bevan, writing as "One Parson to Another," recognizes that "our ideas and our speech seem academic and artificial to our hearers." Yes, Mr. Bevan, and in this case things *are* what they seem.

M. Jan Tupy of Zhor, Southern Bohemia, had a pet dog named Bafik. M. Tupy was very fond of his dog and, when it died, over the grave he erected a stone with the inscription R.I.P. Resurgam. Now M. Tupy was, it appears, a Christian and a regular Church-goer. But there were other Christians and Church-goers about, who, presumably, felt insulted at the thought of having dogs as their companions in Paradise. Detecting in M. Tupy a lack of proper pride, they brought an action for blasphemy against him. M. Tupy was, we are glad to say, acquitted and now, no doubt, is having misgivings as to the quality of the company he may have to mix with, when they all meet together in the Happy Land above.

What a delightful Roman Catholic atmosphere must exist in Quebec! Mr. Georges Lamontagne, a warden of the parish of St. Maxime de Scott, actually had the nerve to bring a civil action against his pastor, Fr. E. Berard. For this unheard of impudence, Cardinal Villeneuve promptly excommunicated the malefactor. Such a terrible sentence brought Mr. Lamontagne to heel at once, for he immediately submitted to "ecclesiastical authority." The Cardinal then lifted the ban, Mr. Lamontagne crept back into the bosom of the Church, and called off the civil action; and all is right once again, in the world. And we are really living in the year of Grace, 1934!

### Fifty Years Ago.

The *Birmingham Daily Mail* has a long and vigorous article on Mr. Foote's release, one passage from which is worth quoting: "Mr. Justice North acted towards Mr. Foote with partiality and severity, and the Home Secretary, in a flagrantly objectionable manner, refused to modify the sentence, yet we have Mr. Justice Stephen actually drafting a Bill for abolishing the laws of blasphemy, under which Foote was convicted. If men in high places, moved by a sense of what is just and right, find themselves bound to an attitude of tolerance, what is likely to occur in the case of people in other classes of the community? Why, exactly what has happened. Where Mr. Bradlaugh had one follower at the beginning of his contest, he has a hundred now. Where Mr. Foote had one sympathizer before his trial, he has a myriad now. Yet the opinions of these two men have undergone no amelioration whatever." The *Mail* charges the bigots with making popular heroes of leading Freethinkers, to the great detriment of Christianity!

The "Freethinker," March 9, 1884.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- S. ACKROYD.—The price of *The Principles of Psychology* is 21s.
- FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. Jessop, £1.
- C. JEFFREY.—We believe that Mr. Boulter is dead. Mr. Hyatt is still in the land of the living.
- A. POWELL (Johannesburg).—The Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolate of the Transvaal is no exception to the run of such gentry when they are dealing with men and things that are opposed to the Church. As you say, lies, slander, and misrepresentation are their common and usual weapons.
- IGNOTUS.—We are busy with other things at the moment, but the article is worth keeping for future reference.
- G. GARRIKSON.—The verses have been printed many times in Freethought papers, and some years ago were issued as a leaflet. They are quite well known.
- ANONYMOUS.—We wish to advise several correspondents who have written us during the past week that all letters must be signed with the name and address of the writer. A pen-name may be adopted if necessary.
- A.R.—Thanks for cutting. Hope to find your Branch more active during the summer season. We appreciate the difficulties under which you are working.
- N. JACKSON.—Thanks, shall appear.
- R. HOLMES.—We fancy the lines come from Busby's version, published at the beginning of the nineteenth century.
- S. MORRIS.—We have heard no more of the debate with the Nottingham cleric. We are not sorry. We enjoy a discussion, but we get little satisfaction from discussing with incompetent people.
- D.P.S.—No one but a monomaniac would ever dream of attributing a war to one nation or to any one cause. Human affairs, and particularly international ones, are not quite so simple as the assumption implies. The cause of the world war was just—those engaged in it.
- J. MCKENNA.—We do not mean by "splitting hairs," using more words, but using exact words.
- R. B. DAVISON.—We are pleased to learn that there was a good attendance at Mr. Le Maine's lecture before the Worker's Circle; better still, that the address was followed by interesting questions and discussion.
- R. CHAPMAN.—We deeply regret to learn of the death of Mr. Hannan. He was, in our recollection of him a very fine character.

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

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It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith.—John Stuart Mill.

## Sugar Plums.

We are heartily glad that an effective protest has at length been made against the censorship of the B.B.C., a censorship which is the worse because it is operated under the pretence of permitting all sides to be heard. On March 5 a working man, Mr. William Ferrie, had been invited to give a working-man's view in a series of talks on "Modern Industry and National Character." Mr. Ferrie prepared his speech, which was blue-pencilled in many places by the B.B.C. He agreed to the revisions, but when he came to the studio to deliver his address, he found that it had been still further cut and revised until it bore no likeness to the original document. So Mr. Ferrie took the only way, in the circumstances, of making an effective protest. He said nothing, to the officials, but after a few introductory words, took a deep breath, and before he could be shut off, said that his speech had been so censored by the B.B.C. that it was a mere travesty of what he had written, and he would not deliver it. He was at once cut off, and the listeners were treated to gramophone records. Now we shall see whether this example of Mr. Ferrie's will inspire some of the other B.B.C. speakers to make a stand in the interests of intellectual decency.

When last September we protested against the insult offered to Bradlaugh by dealing with his centenary in a few minutes' censored speech, we were met with the absurdly futile reply that the speech was delivered exactly as written. No more stupid apology for anything was ever offered. When a man writes or speaks regularly for a censorship he becomes of necessity a part of that censorship. He writes only that which he knows the censorship will pass, and he is, therefore his own censor. We have every confidence that to-day the copy of journalists in Germany is printed exactly as written, but we hardly expect that even the defenders of the B.B.C. censorship will dare to say that the articles are not censored all the same. The essential quality of censorship is allowing to be made public only what a man or a Committee permits to be said. Whether this is done by the censor himself, or by the writer acting for the censor does not make a penny's worth of difference. So we remain unrepentant in what we said, and still regard the Bradlaugh Centenary celebrations as having had two black spots. One, the unwarranted impudence of the chairman, Colonel Wedgwood, in proposing the toast of "The King," after he had been informed by the Secretary that the Committee, in view of Bradlaugh's strong Republican opinions, had decided to omit the toast; and, second, the delivery of a censored speech by one of the B.B.C. speakers in pretended honour of a man who hated censorship with every drop of blood in his body.

And now we are waiting to see how many of the B.B.C. speakers will refuse any longer to deliver a speech as their own, after it has been either blue-pencilled by the irresponsible nobodies of the Corporation, or censored by themselves, in view of saving official censors the trouble. It is playing the humbug to talk of believing in free speech when the very manuscript from which the speaker is reading has just passed a board of censors before it could be made public. Such speakers are, consciously or unconsciously, co-operating in a censorship of the most demoralizing kind. A man may submit to an open and avowed censorship without any marked loss of character or self-esteem. But a man who connives at a censorship which pretends to be permitting freedom of speech, and to present to the public a subject from all points of view, is helping to keep in being the most contemptible and the most dangerous form of misdirection. We shall see whether Mr. Ferrie's action will have any effect on other B.B.C. speakers.

Quite a number of applications for membership came before the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive. We were pleased to see this, as it may lead to more concerted action between them. We have a num-

ber of subscribers in South Africa, and as the *Freethinker* has a habit of passing round, it is tolerably certain that the number of subscribers do not represent anything like the number of militant Freethinkers, who if they could be brought together might do some very useful work. As usual, we shall be pleased to place the services of this journal at the disposal of any attempt made in the direction of organization.

Two or three weeks ago we commented on the prosecution for blasphemy that had taken place in Bombay against Dr. D'Avoine. The case was the most outrageous that has occurred in any part of British possessions, not excepting some that have taken place in Canada. What gives a very ugly complexion to the whole matter is that the attack on Dr. D'Avoine appears to have commenced with the late Commissioner of Police in Bombay, Sir Patrick Kelly, a Roman Catholic, and that the present prime mover seems to be Inspector Lyons. He seems to have engineered the prosecution, and was loud in proclaiming that *his* religious feelings had been outraged by what had been said. Dr. D'Avoine has, we are pleased to say, been acquitted of the charge of blasphemy, so the feelings of this very susceptible policeman will continue to be lacerated. Dr. D'Avoine writes us that success for the prosecution would have been a serious blow at Freethought propaganda in India, and in that we agree with him. He also asks whether a question on the subject could not be asked in Parliament on the matter. We doubt whether anyone would, but the attempt to get someone to do so may be made. We congratulate Dr. D'Avoine on the fight he has put up, and the success achieved.

Saints in the Burnley district are reminded that Mr. R. H. Rosetti speaks on behalf of the East Lancashire Rationalist Association in the Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley, to-day (Sunday). At 2.45 p.m., the subject will be, "People, Dictators, and Persecution," and at 7.0 p.m., "Christianity and the Growth of Militarism." Both subjects are of interest to others besides Freethinkers, and should attract a full house for each session.

Messrs. Watts have added two more useful works to their new well-known *Thinker's Library*. The first is a new edition, revised and enlarged by F. W. Read, of Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's *Penalties Upon Opinion*. It forms an excellent summary of most of the cases in which reformers have had to suffer for the "crimes" of heresy and blasphemy, commencing with the twelfth century and ending with the infamous imprisonment of J. W. Gott in 1921. There is also an account of the Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Bill of 1930, and in an Appendix there is given the Draft Bill for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, introduced by Charles Bradlaugh in the House of Commons in 1889 and rejected. If any criticism of the book must be made, we feel that Mrs. Bonner could have given more precise details in some of the cases. For example, more might have been made of Robert Taylor, and surely, the case of John Clarke, one of Carlyle's heroic shopmen, and the author of *A Critical Review of Jesus*, should have been put on record.

The second volume is a selection from the essays of Ernest Crawley (the author of *The Mystic Rose*), edited by Theodore Besterman. Under the title of *Oath, Cursing and Blessing*, the writer has gathered together a mass of information from all parts of the world, of absorbing interest. His range of reading is remarkable, and the list of his authorities formidable. It is quite impossible to summarize such a work, packed as it is with thousands of references to the customs, beliefs and superstitions of savages and civilized peoples. It is interesting to note that, being a clergyman, Crawley "hedged" a little when it came to dealing with Christianity. He says:—

In Christianity the birthday of Christ is only less important than the Passion and Resurrection. Even here the social aspect of religion is prominent, and by a coincidence, the date finally decided upon is that celebrated in paganism as the annual birthday of the sun, just as

the weekly day of the sun, the Christian Sunday, was the weekly birthday of the Solar Deity, and in Hebrew mythology the first day of Creation.

It was not exactly a "coincidence." It was deliberate.

Hodder & Stoughton publish a *Life of Sir Henry Jones*, the village cobbler (never a snob) who lived to become a Professor of Natural Philosophy in Glasgow University, and Gifford Lecturer. He was greatly beloved by all who met him in any capacity. The biography tells of his very "Modernist" ideas in religion. He wanted to cut down the Christian Creeds to one single phrase "I believe in a God who is Omnipotent Love." It is a ghastly irony on that brief creed to learn that this splendid humanistic teacher suffered the extreme pain of incurable cancer. It gives us no pleasure to contrast his unwarranted belief with his unmitigated pain against which he fought heroically. "He died learning." There is a world of significance in those words.

## The Victorian Era.

WE hear a good deal of praise, of late, of the Victorian Era. And indeed, it was a very fine era for the upper classes; for those who, like the Duchess of Sutherland, had a princely mansion in London, with another great house in the country, a steam yacht, and a villa on the Riviera; or those whose sons, educated at the schools and Universities, were predestined to the Army, Navy, the Church, the Law or the Medical Profession. This class also provided the Consuls and Rulers for our overseas possessions and Diplomats to foreign Courts.

Yes, it was a very fine Era for these overlords, but when they walked blindly into the world-war, they brought it crashing about their ears. Many of the great London mansions have been converted into flats or offices, or pulled down.

But for the toiling millions in mill, and mine, and factory, who worked to support this luxurious existence, it was not so fine. And even among the upper class, at least during childhood, and until they left school, there was a great deal of barbarity and cruelty. Very little attention was paid to the individual requirements of the child, all children were supposed to be alike, and any divergence was regarded as mere faddiness or wilfulness; to be corrected by shakes or slaps, at home; at school by birch and rod.

Mr. Edgar Jepson, the popular novelist, in his recently published book, *Memories of a Victorian* (Gollancz, 8s. 6d.) shows that many things were tolerated, and even approved, in that era, which to-day would put the perpetrators in the dock. Mr. Jepson was himself a Public School and University man, so that he cannot be accused of the bias of an outsider.

Mr. Jepson describes himself as "a melancholy child"; his mother protested that he was "always grizzling." Now, when a child is like that, there is some cause for it; it is not natural; and the more enlightened people of to-day seek for the cause and try to alter it, but Victorian children were not humoured in this way, and if they did not survive, well, that was the Lord's will and we must submit to it. Mr. Jepson attributes his condition: "Partly to my delicacy and partly to the later Victorian cooking and clothes which could only be digested and worn without anguish by the hardier children than I," and he declares of their cook: "In the course of her cooking career she killed more children than Herod, and appendicitis took the place of consumption, which killed off the majority of my aunts and uncles before they were twenty-one, as the scourge of the Middle Class. Plain cooks killed two of my sisters and nearly killed a brother with appendicitis." (p. 22.) And it was

not only the cooking, but the food itself that he revolted against. He says that there was a superstition in his family that meat was the only nourishing form of food, but he detested it, especially the manner in which it was cooked. But no one, says Mr. Jepson, "when I was a child, knew that the food that you like is the food that nourishes you, and they could not leave me to my bread and butter. Meat was the thing, and meat I had to eat, and I cannot conceive of a more fruitful source of melancholy in a delicate child."

As if that was not enough to embitter the child's life, there was the flannel superstition, which consisted of a belief in the efficacy of wearing flannel next to the skin; which must have been almost as irritating as the penitential hair shirt of the Catholic ascetics:—

How well do I remember the tortures of the Sabbath morn! Always on the Sabbath morn I was inducted, protesting, into a fresh vest and fresh pants, and every pant and vest was scratchier than the last, so that all church-time I was rubbing my back against the back of the pew, and all the grown-ups in that pew, in a most unchurchly frame of mind, were scowling at me for fidgeting. All Sunday I fidgeted unhappily, a curse to myself and an irritation to grown-ups; but still they stuck to their flannel, and the flannel stuck to me. (pp. 23-24.)

His parents meant well, but they suffered the Victorian lack of scepticism, and, "Saddened with the optimism of the Church catechism, they took it that all, except Mr. Gladstone, was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and never dreamt of examining the devastating superstitions foisted on the bull-dog breed by butchers and the manufacturers." These things, says Mr. Jepson, made him a sceptic long before his teens; with the result that: "in my eighth year you had but to hold up anything to my childish admiration, or even better assure me that it was for my good, and I would examine it with a cold and snarling incredulity which would presently leave it in rags." (p. 26.) But he soon found that it was wiser to keep the result of these examinations to himself.

There is another infliction that Mr. Jepson has forgotten to mention, but we remember most vividly, that is the Victorian medicine. The horrible powders, taken in jam; the black draughts; the uncoated rhubarb pills. The abominable mixtures in bottles! The more atrocious the taste and smell of the medicine, the more efficacious it was considered to be. The doctors knew of this popular belief and flavoured accordingly. To-day, children's medicine is so pleasant to take that they ask for more.

Then there was the Victorian religion. The parsons were well-mannered men of good family: "but they performed the service in a wholly mechanical, or even wooden manner, and in the same manner preached sermons of astounding dullness, never marred by a touch of eloquence or imagination." (p. 30.) We can testify that it was the same in the Chapels, and we can wholly sympathize with him when he says:—

How I did hate the Church! There was always such a lot of it. I think that the rest of the congregation also felt this. They had seen all that they desired to see of one another by the time they reached the Psalms. . . . Then on the top of it all the least intelligent son of a good family would take a text and say nothing about it for forty minutes without stopping. It was hard on a Christian child. To my melancholy childish mind every fresh sermon droned at me, drove another nail into the coffin of the Church—not, of course, that it mattered to the Church. (p. 32.)

Then there was the Evangelical Revival. As our author quite truly remarks: "The actual basis of Victorian Society was the fear of Hell," and he remembers that upon calling his brother Sidney, aged eight, a fool: "he said with immense joy: 'I'm your brother and you've called me a fool. Now you'll go to Hell and be hit on the head with a hammer!'" During the Revival, missionaries went from town to town, and were generally dyspeptic through hard tea-drinking. During a mission at Leamington, says Mr. Jepson, "now and again a stranger would stop me in the street, and with a darkling air say: 'Are you saved?' To avoid discussion and possible admonition, I always said: 'Certainly.'" Once he, inadvertently stepped into a railway carriage holding a clergyman, who

said in triumphant accents: "Young man, do you know what happened to the Atheist, Voltaire?" Coldly, I said that I did not. "He mocked at the idea of Nebuchadnezzar's eating grass, and on his own death-bed he ate dung!"

It seemed to me that the wealthy philosopher must have had very poor nurses, and I said, pertinently, I think: "Where did he get it?"

The clergyman was rather taken aback by the quite reasonable question; then, after a pause, he said solemnly: "It was there, young man. It was there." From his tone you would have thought that it had fallen from an outraged Heaven. (p. 89.)

Mr. Jepson's remembrance of his schooldays are very similar to our own. Grown men used to say to him: "Ah, your schooldays are the happiest days of your life!" Upon which, he remarks, "if I had not had better days than those, I trust that I should have had the good sense, after turning on the gas, to put my head into one of the earliest gas ovens invented." The punishments were atrocious. Leamington College, of which Dr. Wood was headmaster, was Mr. Jepson's school: "That good Doctor of Divinity would cane the small boy who had annoyed his form master, across the back of the knees with a hamstringing effect that crippled him for some days," until he caned a very gentle boy because his father sent him back to school a day late. The father removed the boy and wrote to the *Times*. There was a devil of a fuss and the birch was substituted for the cane. "The Doctor did what he could with it; but the birch only stings, it does not bruise, and though he died a Dean, he was never quite the same man again." As Mr. Jepson observes, a ruffian gets a dozen strokes with the birch, for a brutal assault, but he has seen a boy of twelve: "get more than twenty strokes of the cane along his back and thighs as hard as the Doctor, exasperated by the affront to the Ideal, could lay on. I never saw a boy get less than ten." No wonder the death-rate for children was so high. The only wonder is that it was not higher during the glorious Victorian Era.

W. MANN.

Once when he was on his way to Sunday School he saw some bad boys starting off pleasuring in a sail-boat. He was filled with consternation because he knew from his reading that boys who went sailing on Sunday invariably got drowned. So he ran out on a raft to warn them, but a log turned with him and slid him into the river. A man got him out pretty soon and the doctor pumped the water out of him and gave him a fresh start with his bellows, but he caught cold and lay sick-bed nine weeks. But the most unaccountable thing about it was that the bad boys in the boat had a good time all day and reached home alive and well in the most surprising manner. Jacob Blivens said there was nothing like these things in the books. He was perfectly dumfounded.—*Mark Twain.*

## The Ecclesiastical Circus.

"They shall no more be a prey to the heathen; neither shall the beasts of the fields devour them."

*Ezek. xxxiv. 28.*

"Who's afraid of the big bad wolf!"

*Pantomime Song.*

ADDUCING its title from Scripture by its own peculiar process of reasoning, the Christian Church claims jurisdiction over the whole of "creation," with full power and authority to exorcise, excommunicate, excrete, anathematize, curse, blast, and damn, everything animate and inanimate. Thus the trials of predatory wild animals, and noxious pests form (for us) some of the most entertaining episodes in the history of the ecclesiastical judicature. The famous French juriconsult Chasaneé, supported by the authority of the prophet Malachi, has laid it down as a maxim that the best way to get rid of locusts is by paying tithes—a maxim in view of which, it seems fortunate for our present-day British farmers that the ridding of agricultural pests does not rest with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. It may safely be concluded that the attitude of the priestly authorities towards the noxious animals, including the vermin, was on the whole cordial.

As befitting a Christian country, our ecclesiastical circus opens with the *Festum Asinorum*, a procession of sacred asses. Headed by Balaam, on his talking she-ass, from the pages of "Holy Scripture," ride Abigail, deserting her home for the favours of the bandit David; Achsah, of spring-well dowry fame; Ahithophel, the Judas of the Old Testament; the thirty sons of Jair on their thirty asses; Saul the searcher after she-asses, and the founder of a kingdom; and finally Jesus of Nazareth, greatest of the Messiahs, on his commandeered and permanently disguised ass's colt, seeking to inaugurate the ideal kingdom with a raid on the local stock exchange, and an attempt to smash the priestly monopoly in Paschal lamb, only to meet with the fate of the revolutionary, and to have a post-mortem "Spiritual" empire thrust upon him. Stimulated into activity by the spiked croziers of a thousand Christian bishops, the jaded and age-weary asinine company parades by. Inflamed with the wine of two thousand years of mass, the priests bray forth their "hec-haws" according to the rubric,\* while, maddened with the fiery dome of "divine grace," from beneath their banners of blood and fire, the militia of the "Kingdom of God" on Earth send up their chorus of "Hallelujas" and "Glorias."

As an equestrian feat, that of the fiery steeds of Elijah for ever stands unrivalled. Though purified by the celestial fire the horse has never been freely accepted by the Church. His ancient association with the worship of the generative principles, and later connexion with the Greek hippodrome and Roman circus, unfitted him, it was claimed, for chaste Christian company. The real objection, however, to-day, as in the time of Augustine, his bitterest antagonist, rests on the fact that the cult of the horse, has ever been a dangerous rival to the religion of the lowly ass-rider. The equestrian ring attracts as large a gathering of the faithful, to-day, as does the Christian Cathedral; an annual horse-show claims more attention than a Church of England conference; a Grand National rivals in public attendance a Eucharistic Congress; a Derby Week arouses as much world-wide interest as does a Holy Year of Jubilee.

The elephant is in a different category; of heavenly origin, this servant of the High-Gods of the East beholds with philosophic calm and kindly tolerance the

comparatively modern Triune Deity of the West. Catholic ecclesiastics, in return, hold the elephant in high veneration, because of his well-known continence, and his immemorial practice of a form of birth-control advocated by the present Pontiff in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*. It is, on this account, considered lucky to touch the elephant, save, of course, the "rogue" elephant, which, existing apart from the common herd, possesses the savageness of the Ishmaelites combined with the madness of enforced celibacy. The curious belief once held that the elephant has two hearts (because of its display of extremes of temperament), is abandoned to-day even by Fundamentalists, leaving all to conclude that the religious phenomenon called "change of heart" takes place in a like manner in the elephant and in the Christian. A hair from the tuft at the end of the animal's tail, worn in a ring or bracelet, possesses the same magical virtue as does the inscribed amulet known amongst Catholics as the "Miraculous Medal," the Church's counter-charm to the aphrodisiac mandrake or Hebrew "love-apple."

Protector of the Tribe of Judah, the lion stalks majestically through the Old and New Testaments. As representative of the national god Yahveh, he played havoc with the Assyrian colonists of Bethel, who "knew not the manner of the gods of the land." In the "uncanonical" gospel of Matthew, it is related that the little boy Jesus played with a couple of lion-cubs that frisked like lambs about him, while both sets of parents looked on with reverence at a distance. This recognition of the lion as the type of Jesus Christ throws an illuminating light on the leonine miracles recorded in the Roman martyrologies.

That the bear was a deity held in much awe and reverence before man realized that he was superior to the beasts, and began making gods in his own image, is evidenced by the fact that his name was held taboo by all the uncultured peoples to whom he was known—"grandfather" and "honey-paw" being his favourite appellations. This distinction of name-taboo shared by so many of the animal deities has descended to their anthropomorphic successors. Thus "Yahveh" was a name held in holy terror among the Hebrews; as to-day the name of the man-God "Jesus Christ" is mentioned with reverent awe by primitive god-fearing folk; protected in England by acts of Parliament against "blasphemy," and in the Catholic Church by the notorious Dominican Society of the Holy Name. To rekindle the fires of faith in a world grown cold, Jesuit psychology has in later times propagated a fresh cult with its new name-taboo—a "popular devotion" to an emblematic heart of flesh, be-devilled and self-grilled by the fiery ardour of its divine love—under the inspiring title of the "Most Sacred Heart." That popular adoration should extend to the Divine Hand, the Blessed Foot, and the Most Holy Hair, would be on the recognized lines of all religious "development." Already the world has the Sacred Hand of Vishnu, the Hand of Glory, and the Red Hand of Erin; the *Pedilavium* and the Papal Toe; the Sacred Tonsure and propitiatory hair-sacrifice to Hygeia; and as a last remnant of once powerful cults, we still have the Monkey's Paw, the Porcupine's Claw, and the Elephant's Tail-tuft. Taking to heart the lessons of anthropology the hierarchy have, however, recently checked this trend of popular worship by reverting to the "Divine-King" conception, and establishing the festival of "Christ the King," with a corresponding elevation of their own spiritual "lordships" to the dignity of episcopal "excellencies."

\* See *Cath. Ency.*, "Asses, Feast of"; *Ency. Brit.*, "Fools, Feast of."

### Bluffing the Commandant.

IN *Escapers All*, a book containing a number of thrilling escapes during the war—a collection of various stories broadcast last year, is a humorous account by E. H. Jones of how he bluffed the Commandant at Yozgad in Asia Minor. Time hung heavily with the prisoners until a few of them began studying spiritualism with the aid of a "Ouija Board." As very little satisfaction came from the planchette, Jones began to cheat, meaning to own-up afterwards. With one, or possibly two eyes upon he directed the tumbler to spell out the messages required, and in a very short time he was in control of a number of spooks. As their prison was in danger of being "strafed" in the event of anyone escaping, Jones, who desired freedom, wanted to incriminate the Commandant, Kiamzim Bey, who was a keen spiritualist. Not only the soldiers interned, but also the Turks, including Kiazim consulted the spooks on various domestic matters, including the finding of some buried treasure.

Jones buried an old revolver in the garden, and told the interpreter that the treasure was guarded by arms, which must first be discovered.

Jones found that ceremony was essential, so, in the presence of Turkish witnesses he built a fire of shavings in the garden, over which he poured water. Then with outstretched arms he recited a mystic incantation, which, he said, he had learned from the Waas of Burma. Jones deserves credit for his ingenuity for his incantation was no other than a Welsh love lyric. He thought—rightly that a phrase like, "Gwyn fyd na chai Cymru ei diwifwr eihun" made an excellent incantation, and events proved him correct, for an old rusty revolver was found.

The treasure itself took more finding, and when Kiazim's subordinate became impatient and wanted the spooks to "get a move on" Jones very very obligingly put six grains of calomel into his cocoa, which had the effect of making him a complete and very obedient convert.

But Jones eventually produced the treasure as well—or, at least some signs of it. He had three gold liras buried in tins at different places, which were eventually found to the great joy of all parties concerned, some of the Turks even kissing Jones and his accomplice before they could resist.

In the end, the spooks informed Kiazim that the two Englishmen were mad, and had to be sent to Constantinople. The Turkish doctors at Yozgad certified their insanity, and Jones with his companion had to feign madness for quite a long time. At Mardeen they pretended to hang themselves, which nearly proved fatal. Then they denied the accusation, though the rope-marks were visible. It took them ten days to get to Constantinople, and they were raving lunatics all the time.

It all came right in the end, for, after a time, they were exchanged for other prisoners. But, as an example of bluffing surely Jones' exploit deserves to rank high in the gentle art of leg-pulling.

ALAN TYNDAL.

### Correspondence.

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF OPINION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In Mr. Austin Verney's article on "The Organization of Opinion," it is stated that the last N.S.S. Conference resolved: "That this Conference re-affirms its adherence to a non-political programme." Does this resolution mean that the N.S.S. is so non-political that it is indifferent to what is going on in the world at the present time—the reaction against and the destruction of Parliaments? Has not the destruction of Parliaments been disastrous to freedom of thought?

There would seem to be a call upon all who value freedom to defend Parliament. The best defence we can make is to improve it so that we may be fully proud of it. Mr. Austin Verney directed attention to a serious defect—the absurdities, the insincerities, associated with the present electoral system. The practical working of this system limits seriously the freedom of the citizen; it

deprives many of any share in representation. Proportional Representation enlarges the freedom of the citizen. There are many not familiar with the system of proportional representation advocated in this country, and in use in many places in the English-speaking world. I shall be glad to send explanatory leaflets to any who apply. The reform of Parliament is a responsibility that belongs to all.

JOHN H. HUMPHREYS.

[It is a pity that Mr. Humphreys is not better acquainted with the N.S.S., or he would know that the resolution means no more and no less than that the Society holds itself aloof from all political parties and programmes. But so far as political parties operate so as to threaten those principles for which the Society stands, action through political action may be necessary—to that extent, but no further.—EDITOR.]

#### THE MORMONS.

SIR,—We were greatly interested in reading "The Story of a Strange Sect," in the *Freethinker* of February 4, by T. F. Palmer, and the letter in the issue of February 18, by George Bedborough. The treatment is fair and impartial, and well-written. It gives a rather interesting sketch. There are, however, one or two points which might be more accurately stated. Mr. Bedborough says, for example, that in Salt Lake City "the Mormons are in a decided majority." Mormons in Salt Lake City constitute only forty per cent of the population, not a majority. Also, only about two instead of ten per cent of the members practised polygamy.

The property confiscated by the U.S. Federal Government, in 1887, belonging to the Church, was returned in 1893 and 1896.

Naturally, different people have different "explanations" to account for Joseph Smith and his revelations. It is only natural that it should be so, but the statement that his experiences "partly deranged a brain and nervous system never normal," is a bit time-worn. Joseph Smith was a man of great physical vigour, singularly free from sickness. He was fond of games and wrestling, in which he was very adept. Mr. Dana, not a Mormon in any sense, in his *Text Book of Nervous Diseases and Psychiatry*, deals with this type of thing, and says: "The characteristics of the paranoic are that his work is ineffective, his influence brief and trivial, his ideas really too absurd and impractical for even ignorant men to receive. I do not class successful prophets and organizers like Joseph Smith, or great apostles of social reforms like Rousseau as paranoics. Insane minds are not creative, but are weak and lack persistence in purpose or power of execution." (pp. 649-50, sixth edition.) Believers in the law of cause and effect could not consistently attribute the striking results of Mormonism in uplifting and educating its members, its success as an institution, to a partly deranged brain.

Mormons are just as eager as "Freethinkers" for new truth and investigation in all fields of knowledge, indeed, they are outstanding leaders in education. As to being "oblivious to the march of modern thought," Mormonism decidedly is not. Indeed, in the fundamental conceptions of modern science as to the indestructibility of matter and energy, the reign of law, the new astronomy, proper diet and other things Joseph Smith was years ahead of the world. (see *Joseph Smith as Scientist*, by Dr. John A. Widtsoe.)

Yours in the interest of truth and human progress,

FRANKLIN S. HARRIS, JR.

#### DEMOCRACY.

SIR,—I have noticed of late a decided anti-Socialist tendency in your journal, so perhaps you will allow me a little space to dispel the illusions of some of your contributors, especially on dictatorships.

The first illusion is that we are living in a democracy. We are not. There is not, and never has been, a democratic Government in Britain. The Unemployment Bill now before Parliament proves that. The Bill is not being discussed at all, it is being forced through under the "guillotine." Another illustration. The late Labour Government (although it was in all essentials a capitalist one), being compelled to make a few trifling concessions to its rank-and-file supporters, was forced out of office by the dictatorship

of the Bank of England. Every capitalist Government is the tool of High Finance. The Lena Goldfields Co., too, has been able to hold up a trade agreement with Russia for the last fifteen months. I could fill the entire issue of the *Freethinker* with further proofs of capitalist dictatorship.

The second point I wish to make is that to place Russia in the same category as Germany and Italy is sheer intellectual idiocy, worthy of Mr. James Douglas or Collinson Owen at their worst. Either that, or it is hypocrisy, a worse vice.

Stalin is no more dictator of Russia than Mr. Austin Verney is of this journal. If Stalin did not carry out the policy laid down *yearly* (not every five years) by the Workers' Councils (Soviets), he would be expelled. Likewise other members of the Executive. This is Democracy, the only one in the world to-day, indeed the first in history. JAS. M'INTYRE.

[Mr. M'Intyre quite misses the point. We are not concerned in this journal with advocating or decrying Socialism, as such. But we are concerned with the maintenance of certain principles, and so far as these are infringed by any system our criticism is relevant. Mr. M'Intyre is equally wide of the mark with regard to Russia. No one but a bigot will to-day deny the advance Soviet Russia has made on Czarist Russia, or the immense interest and importance of the Russian experiment. But the likeness between Mussolini, Hitler, and the Soviet, lies in the common denial of freedom of criticism of both the religious, economic and social policy involved. Whether this freedom is denied in the name of "the people," or in the name of a single dictator makes no difference. It is certain that in not one of the three countries would one be permitted to attack the existing system as one may, with all allowances for drawbacks, attack the system in this country, from the Crown downward.—EDITOR.]

#### AN ANTI-WAR PARSON.

SIR,—One must be fair, even to a parson. The Rev. Leyton Richards (unless there is another of the same name), was one of the few parsons who consistently opposed the war, and consequently lost his job. He was on the Executive Committee of the No Conscription Fellowship, and was prosecuted by the authorities for his anti-war attitude. From that point of view he is too good a man to be connected with his present calling.

EDMUND J. FORD.

#### National Secular Society.

SOCIAL AT CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER.

It was a merry party that assembled in Caxton Hall for the N.S.S. Social on March 3. As usual the Somerville Band provided excellent music, and dancing went with a swing to the enjoyment of dancers and onlookers. The violin solos from Miss Somerville were played with feeling and spirit, and received enthusiastic applause. Miss Hebe Haworth and Dennis Redhead entertained the company with amusing songs and patter as "He, She, and a Piano." The "Few words" from our President, as usual, soon had the party in the grip of interest and admiration by the flashes of philosophy and wit, liberally coated with his characteristic humour. In such an assembly, where gaiety and enjoyment is the order, only a master could make "A Few Words" a looked for and appreciated item in the programme. We regret that illness prevented Mrs. Venton and her band of helpers undertaking the refreshment department, but fortunately there was a ready response to the Executive's call for volunteers, and Mrs. Quinton, Jnr., Mrs. Grant, and Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, with the help of some mere men, worked hard and merrily, and judging from general remarks, successfully to make the inner man—and woman, happy and content. Auld Lang Syne by the company was the final event in a thoroughly enjoyable evening, in which the only unsuccessful item was trying to find the man who hadn't enjoyed himself. Mr. B. A. Le Maine acted as M.C. with his customary cheerfulness and efficiency.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

#### Obituary.

GERALD MASSEY'S DAUGHTER.

WE have to record the death of one of the two surviving daughters of Gerald Massey, famous as a poet and Egyptologist. Miss Massey died at the age of 82, on February 23 last, after a short illness, in a nursing home at Anerley, and was buried at Elmer's End Cemetery. The name of Gerald Massey is not so familiar to the present generation as it deserves to be, for Massey was a thorough-going Freethinker, and his books on Egyptian mythology showed remarkable industry, and in some directions, great insight. He was devoted to his work, and the forty years of labour represented by his six bulky volumes on Egypt, prevented his family from being well provided for; and though in his later years he was granted a small pension from the Civil list, this was promptly stopped at his death, despite the efforts made to induce the Government to continue the pension for his widow. A sister lies in the same cemetery as Miss Massey.

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

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

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. E. Livesy Fowler (League of Nations Union)—"The International Situation To-day."

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

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 12, Mr. J. Marchi will speak on "Esperanto."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Roston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Codex Sinaiticus."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Independent Labour Party Rooms, 133 Forest Lane, Forest Gate End): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury—"Freethought and Progress."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, Cloughton Road, Birkenhead): 8.0, Monday, March 12, Mr. W. Fletcher—"The Development of the Idea of Evolution."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 8.0, A Debate:—Mr. H. Searle and Rev. W. G. Brown. Subject: "Did Jesus Christ ever Live?"

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley): 2.45, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"People, Dictators and Persecution." 7.0, "Christianity and the Growth of Militarism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. Arthur Copeland—"The Abiding Poor." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. W. Kent—"Religious Life in Medieval England." (Lantern Illustrations).

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. W. T. Wood (Chester)—"Liberty."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, Mr. Saphin (London)—"God, The Bar to Progress."

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Social Hall): 7.0, Thursday, March 15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Mind and Matter."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. F. G. McCluskey—"Walt Whitman, Poet and Humanist."

SEAHAM HARBOUR: 7.0, Wednesday, March 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Disease and Religion."

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

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