

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •
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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc*

Views and Opinions

Our Aim

A NEW comer to the *Freethinker* wrote me a little while ago enquiring what was the main purpose of the *Freethinker*. He asks, "Is it mainly scientific, or is it mainly devoted to an attack on the appalling aggression and insolence of the churches, particularly the Roman Catholic variety of that breed?" Well, to the first half of the question I hope I can truthfully say that the *Freethinker* is scientific in the best sense of the word. Not scientific as that term is commonly understood, as consisting in knowledge about the facts of astronomy and biology and chemistry, etc. Mere industry and average intelligence may achieve mastery in these departments, and leave a man as unscientific as when he began. For science does not consist in a knowledge of facts, but in a method of investigation, of generalizing, and in realizing that "science" is something that applies to the *whole* of existence. Statements to the contrary by some "scientists" prove only that a man may have great knowledge and yet be unscientific.

But, of course, the main aim of the *Freethinker* is the advocacy of Freethought. And in two senses. First in the scientific sense of being opposed to authority in matters of opinion, regardless of what that opinion may be. In whatever field it is found the *Freethinker* is opposed to the forcible suppression, or the forcible inoculation (if that is possible) of opinion. There should be no coercion or compromise where opinion is concerned; compromise is tolerable only where action is in question. And in this respect I think that the *Freethinker* has been true to itself. It has stood up for freedom of expression for Christians as well as for Freethinkers. Its writers are not doing their work with a gag before them. The paper itself neither fawns on its friends nor bends to its enemies. That is the first aim of the *Freethinker*—to fight for liberty of thought, speech and publication.

The *Freethinker* also stands for Freethought in its historic sense—that of opposition to supernaturalism in all its forms. It does not want to "rationalize"

religion, or to reinterpret religion, it wants to end religion because it is fundamentally untrue and socially dangerous. It does not believe in professing agreement with Kingdon Clifford that if a thing be false its falsity should be shouted from the housetops, while taking care to whisper our opinions in a back-room, and even then with a number of miserable reservations. It fights organized religion as social evils, and unorganized religion as both socially and intellectually bad. It has no special hostility to the Roman Church, but treats it as a church that exhibits all the evils of religion in its clearest manner. The other churches, because their history has been different from that of the Roman Church, have not the same evils so well-developed, but they do exhibit them to the exact measure of their opportunity. I know of no exception to this rule. Religions are harmless when they are beyond the ability to inflict injury.

We have no sectarian interests to serve, and no interests that we need bend to. And the need for a paper such as the *Freethinker* is to-day greater than ever it was. Freethought to-day is attacked, not in the surreptitious way of a century ago, when the attack was accompanied by professions of liberality. The fundamental principle of Freethought is to-day challenged on the ground of its having had its day. And we need make no mistake; any great increase in power that reaction may gain will mean an attack on papers such as the *Freethinker*. Safeguards to individual liberty are being swept away by legislation, and political parties are beginning to pride themselves on the ease with which they can silence opposition. The religious spirit as it grows less doctrinally strong in the churches seems to have grown stronger in political life. There are those who say that the weakening of religion has made a paper such as the *Freethinker* less necessary than it was. I do not agree that the situation warrants the judgment. Freethinkers have been clamouring for the repeal of the blasphemy laws, the reply is a Bill constantly cropping up in Parliament for their extension. We have been fighting for a free press, but the destruction of the old individual journalism has left the press less free than ever. In all this the *Freethinker* has its own work to do, and I do not know of any other paper that is doing it.

* * *

The Endowment Trust

I may so take this opportunity of commenting on another matter concerning this paper. My good friend, Mr. Franklin Steiner—although I have not the pleasure of his personal acquaintance—writes in the *Truthseeker* a note which aims at the very praiseworthy object of inducing wealthy Americans to give better support to their own movement. In the course of this note he comments on the death of Mr. Philip G. Peabody, and says, "In the latter part of 1926

the London *Freethinker* announced that an American Freethinker, Philip G. Peabody, would contribute £4,000." This was to the Freethinker Endowment Trust. As I have seen, and heard some extravagant statements concerning the money behind the *Freethinker*, I think the matter worth dealing with.

The *Freethinker* has been in existence since 1881. During that period it has never at any time made a halfpenny of profit, and ever since I have been connected with it (since 1897) there has been a yearly loss. I believe there was before, but I am keeping to my own connexion with the paper. Prior to 1926, the loss was made good by an Annual Sustentation Fund. Then at the suggestion of one of my friends I proposed that regular subscribers should capitalize their annual contributions, and provide a Trust Fund from which the deficiency might be paid. I calculated the annual loss at not less than £400—I was optimistic enough to think that if it were more I could get it by increased business—and that the sum of £8,000 invested at 5 per cent would supply what was needed. A large part of the sum required was given immediately, and Mr. Peabody promised that when the Fund reached £7,000 he would give the extra £1,000 to make up the total sum. That was the extent of Mr. Peabody's very generous contribution, not £4,000, as stated.

The £8,000 was subscribed within two years, and it is under the control of trustees whose power of spending the interest is very carefully controlled by the Trust Deed. I felt very proud of the result. It was the largest sum ever raised in the history of Freethought in this country, and was raised in so short a time that it created surprise—and envy—in various quarters. I may say, not as a boast, but in order to clear the air, that since 1915, I have raised more money for specifically Freethought purposes than has ever been raised in an equal period in our movement, and much more rapidly. I have never begged people to give; I have simply given them the opportunity of contributing.

But the quickness with which the money was subscribed has given rise to many statements as to the money behind the *Freethinker*. That makes it necessary to say a little more. First, there is not a penny of expenditure or income that is not under the survey of a certified accountant, and no cheque can be drawn on the G. W. Foote Company without a second signature. I have not a personal control over a single shilling. I might have had complete legal control, I preferred it otherwise.

Next, the £8,000 was subscribed, but all of it was not available for investment. While the £8,000 was being subscribed the annual Sustentation Fund was suspended, and, as was announced, the amount required to replace the annual loss was taken from the £8,000. This left only just over £7,000 for investment. I have made good the annual loss chiefly out of my own pocket, mainly through drawing from a presentation that was made me about three years ago. I would not say this, but I wish to make the matter clear once for all—or until such time as people forget all about it again. I should add that if at any time the Endowment Trust is no longer necessary, the capital reverts to the National Secular Society.

Every new subscriber will now know the facts; the old ones should be well acquainted with them. There is no hidden millionaire behind the *Freethinker*, there is no secret hoard from which those in control may draw at their will. What is behind the *Freethinker*—and that is of even greater value than the financial help that is so generously given when the need arises, is the love and devotion of its readers. Publicly they recognize, as did Mr. Peabody, that without the *Freethinker* the Freethought movement in this

country would be a body without a voice, and even of those who now attack religion, many might cease to do so if the *Freethinker* and the National Secular Society were not here. I feel quite sure that most of those non-Christians who do not come as far as we would like, would not come as far as they do if we were out of the field. Christians are wise in their generation when they save the strictest boycott, and their strongest dislike for the N.S.S. and the *Freethinker*.

So I may say, with Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who was one of the subscribers to the Endowment Trust, the *Freethinker* is doing a work that no other paper in England is doing. It does not hesitate to speak when the occasion requires. It stands for freedom of thought and discussion, not merely for our friends, but also for our enemies. Some of these enemies, if in power, would use their position to suppress us. Of that we have not the slightest doubt; but we must take the risk. If others are prepared to take risks in the interests of intolerance, we ought to be prepared to take risks in the interests of Freethought. And life is a risk, anyway. I believe that to be *alive* with risk is preferable to being *dead* with safety. And may none of us ever reach the condition of being dead without knowing it!

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Silk-Hatted Secularist

"Master, who clothed our immelodious days,
With flowers of perfect speech."—*Watson*.

"Oh! take the cash, and let the credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant drum"

Omar Khayyam.

It is pleasant to find that new editions of the prose and verse of Matthew Arnold are still being issued by publishers. His work always attracted the attention of cultured readers, but he was never a popular poet, such as Tennyson or Browning. With the exception of a few poems which are met with frequently in anthologies, he cannot be said to have gained really extensive notice. The bulk of his verse, outside intellectual circles, is little known; but his work stands, in a remarkable way, the wear and tear of the years, gaining rather than losing as time passes. Like Wordsworth he possessed a lofty intellectuality which attracted the best minds, but he tempered the wind to the shorn lambs by his urbanity. Swinburne, no mean judge, regarded Arnold as "the most efficient, the surest-footed poet" of his time, and Augustine Birrell said that "the times are ripening for his poetry, which is full of foretastes for the morrow."

It is said to be a wise child which knows its own father, and so it was with Matthew Arnold. Brought up in a strictly evangelical family, he broke completely and finally with his father's orthodoxy, but retained his admiration for his father's character. Matthew Arnold had too great a love for the great classical writers of Greece and Rome to have been long enamoured of the Christian Religion. The world in which his favourite classical writers lived, their views of life, death, and necessity, met his instincts better than the orthodox superstition. It must always be remembered that he belonged to a very religious family, and in theological matters his foes were those of his own household. His father was the stern headmaster of Rugby School, and a man of ability in his profession. Yet young Arnold held his own manfully, and maintained his views against all odds. Writing to his mother in 1863, he said:—

One cannot change English ideas as much as, if I live, I hope to change them, without saying imper-

turbably what one thinks, and making a good many people uncomfortable. The great thing is to speak without a particle of vice, malice, or rancour.

In a letter to his sister in 1874, he said:—

The common anthropomorphic ideas of God and the reliance on miracles must, and will, inevitably pass away. This I say not to pain you, but to make my position clear to you.

Nobody can doubt that Arnold meant every word that he wrote, and the irresistible inference is that in all his theological works—if, indeed, such playful works can be so called—he intended to work to that end. His *Literature and Dogma*, and other works, really helped to mould public opinion in matters of religion. Although no one knew better the value of reticence in literature, he understood the worth of ridicule as a weapon. He realized, as well as Voltaire, that there are delusions for which laughter is the proper cure. He compared the Christian Trinity to “three Lord Shaftesburys,” and the joke became historic. Of the pleasant pastime of bishop-baiting he never showed weariness, nor did his readers. He added to the gaiety of the nation by his facetious references to a former Bishop of Gloucester who wished “to do something for the honour of the god-head.” He was all his life girding at the Free Churchmen, and his urbane ridicule of one of Spurgeon’s sermons at the Newington Butts Tabernacle embalmed the memory of the South London Boanerges like a fly in amber. Arnold knew religion from the inside as well as the outside. He used to quote his own front name with humorous resignation as an instance of the sort of thing one had to put up with. Arnold’s theological opinions were not entirely original, for he was much indebted to the great Continental Freethinkers, Renan and Strauss. But his Secularism was his own, part of the man himself.

How essentially his imagination had become secularized is seen in his poetry, which is often very personal. Thus, in the elegy on his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, he sings:—

“Bear it from thy loved, sweet Arno vale
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
Their morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale.)”

In *Geist's Grave*, his fine poem on the death of a favourite dog, he strikes the same iconoclastic note:—

“Stern law of every mortal lot,
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where,
But thou, when struck thine hour to go,
On us, who stood despondent by,
A meek last glance of love didst throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.
Thy memory lasts by here and there,
And thou shalt love as long as we,
And after that thou dost not care!
In us was all the world to thee.”

Despite his Oxford manner, Arnold was very clear-eyed. He saw quite plainly the beginning of the end of the Christian Religion. Listen to his magnificent lines on *Dover Beach*:—

“The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear,
And naked shingles of the world.”

His language concerning man's relations to Nature is equally striking:—

“Streams will not curb their pride,
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

Nature with equal mind
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly riding and the foundering bark.”

His poetry is not wanting in profundity:—

“Tears are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years.”

Here is an example of his didactic verse:—

“The sophist sneers: Fool, take
Thy pleasure, right or wrong;
The pious wail: Forsake
A world these sophists throng.
Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man.”

Arnold was inimitable. He combined great poetic gifts, the mental and imaginative resources of a scholar, a philosopher, and a man of the world. His literary work was done in the scant leisure of a busy life, for he was an inspector under the Education Department, but he found time to write prose and verse of enduring value. In his purely literary work he admired rather than imitated Sainte-Beuve, the chief of nineteenth-century critics. In his prose, no less than in his verse, he cuts out his thought as if in marble. With a strong, haughty, careless grace, he expresses himself freely. He tells us that Addison's attic elegance “gilds commonplace.” Jeremy Taylor is “a provincial Bossuet.” Burke is “Asiatic”; and Macaulay “a rhetorician.” John Stuart Mill is logical, but knows nothing of style, and the “Holy Trinity” resembles “three Lord Shaftesburys.”

When Matthew Arnold returned from a visit to the United States full of delight at the unbounded hospitality with which he had been received, he told with glee a story of Barnum, the American showman, who had invited Arnold to his house in the following terms: “You, sir, are a celebrity. I am a notoriety. We ought to be acquainted.” Matthew Arnold was, indeed, a celebrity. He has the style of the great masters of literature, the oldest of the arts. In the atmosphere of the future his voice will be clearer, stronger, than it sounds to us amid the upheavals of industrialism. We who read him will pass, but his message of Secularism will remain, a source of strength and joy:—

“The majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved
Rejoicing.”

MIMNERMUS.

We Must Cultivate Our Garden

—Voltaire.

THE skies are gray, and black my mood—
Perhaps it is excess of bile—
I feel depressed; I sit and brood,
And ask myself, Is Life worth while?
This mood in time will pass away,
But for the moment I'm not gay.

I try to draw upon the store
Of worldly wisdom I possess;
I tell myself that more and more
My beastly mood is growing less;
That it will not survive the day:
But for the moment I'm not gay.

A spade! I wish I had a spade:
A garden! I the earth would till:
To keep a garden man was made,
My idle hands have wrought this ill:
Hard work will soon my mood allay,
But for the moment I'm not gay.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

A Victorian Childhood

(Concluded from page 251.)

We also remember the great popularity of the religious pictures mentioned by Lord Berners hanging in the drawing room. "The Soul's Awakening," showing a young girl with a religious book, "raising her eyes to heaven and looking as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth." Another, of a young lady seated at an organ, was called "The Lost Chord," and one felt that it was just as well she had lost it. This picture, along with Holman Hunt's spectacular "The Light of the World," was to be seen in every print shop, and in every Victorian home that could afford it.

At the age of seven, the services of a Mr. Allen, a local curate, were employed to commence his education. Mr. Allen "wore his hair parted in the middle, and this, together with his beard and his general air of mildness, gave him a strong resemblance to the traditional portraits of Our Saviour." So much so, says his lordship, that: "I remember saying to my mother, 'I am sure that I could love Jesus better if He were not so dreadfully like Mr. Allen.'" However, appearances were deceptive in this case, for the Curate turned out to have a real genius for education—a rare gift now, but exceedingly rare in those days—and, in fact, he made the lessons so attractive that the child used to look forward to them, and even the repulsive Latin grammar was made to appear in the light of an acrostic, or word game, which he enjoyed almost as much. Later on, at his preparatory school, where Latin was taught in the usual manner, he came to loathe it.

At nine years of age the boy was sent to Elmley, a preparatory school where his father and uncles had previously been pupils, which was considered to be one of the best schools of the day. It has ceased to exist as a school now, and when his lordship visited the place a few years ago, he found "a feeling of gaiety, of irresponsibility in the air that had been absent in the old days, and I was told that it had been converted into a lunatic asylum."

Arriving at the school, accompanied by his mother, they were entertained to lunch by the Headmaster, Mr. Gambriel, and nobody could have been more pleasant and urbane; he smiled at the boy, patted him on the head, and said, "We shall make a man of him." But with the departure of his mother, there came a decided change of manner, an official chasm had suddenly opened between them. He was taken to the study: "that grim chamber, the scene of many a future agony," and in the corner of which he noticed "an ominous group of canes and birches." In fact, the Headmaster was a sadist, he delighted to torture and terrorize the boys under his control: "It was cruelty for cruelty's sake, pure unadulterated cruelty, and there were no extenuating circumstances of sexual aberration." He elevated the faculty of inspiring terror to a fine art. All, says Lord Berners: "without exception, the older and the younger boys alike, were terrified of him, and, long after I had left school, the memory of him continued to haunt me as an unforgettable horror."

Mr. Gambriel's father, who had been Headmaster before him, was reputed to have been even worse than his son, and it was recorded of him that he was "a perfect old devil"; and if he was worse than his son, he certainly must have been, for the present Headmaster, we are told: "would pull one up by the hair near one's ears. He would hit boys on the shins with a cricket stump. He had a way of pinching his victims that was positively excruciating." He excelled also in the infliction of mental tortures. During meal-

times he would examine the mark books, in a leisurely way, and call up any boys with bad marks:—

It would be difficult to describe adequately all the horror and agony that being "called up" entailed. It nearly always involved the fearful pinching and hair-pulling, but, more often than not, you were sent back to your place with the instructions to come to the Headmaster's study as soon as the meal was over. This meant further tortures, culminating in a caning. The actual punishments, however, were less agonising than the period of anticipation, the suspense of waiting to be called. If one had received a bad mark during the morning, the luncheon hour would be spent in an agony of fear. . . . I can still remember that terrible, devastating panic that seemed to paralyse the digestive organs and deprive one of appetite, and if, as often happened, the fatal summons was delayed till supper-time it was impossible to eat anything during either meal. One boy, when the time came for him to be sent for, was actually sick, and it is surprising that this did not happen more frequently. (Lord Berners: *First Childhood*, pp. 132-133.)

Upon one occasion: "he made one of his victims go down on his hands and knees and lick a straight line on the floor in front of the assembled school." We have dwelt at some length upon this subject as we have been making some research upon the practice of teaching under Christian rule.

It must be noted that the cruelty practised on the boys was not due to any scepticism or absence of religion. Lord Berners says: "Games and religion were both compulsory. The arts were discouraged." And, indeed, a religious service was held every day and three on Sunday. Now although the treatment of the boys at this school was so severe—and it was an expensive school only open to the wealthy, and had the reputation of being one of the best preparatory schools in the country—yet it would not have seemed anything out of the way in the early years of the Victorian era. Even at the end of the century of which Lord Berners writes, this systematic cruelty could not have lasted even for a term, unless it had the support, or at least, the acquiescence of public opinion, and the consent, if not the approval, of the parents.

To-day, when religion has reached its nadir, and exercises less influence on our conduct than at any previous period of our history, such cruelty as Mr. Gambriel indulged in would not be tolerated. The teacher to-day who tried to teach with a rod would be considered as not up to his job, besides being liable for assault for over-punishment; and even now it is not entirely dispensed with. In the County Council schools corporal punishment is still allowed although confined to misconduct, and not for lack of knowledge.

The farther we go back in time the more severe we find the treatment of the child. In Elizabethan times it was ferocious; during the Middle Ages, when the Church ruled supreme over the mind of the people, it was brutal.

But to return to our hero. Two other new boys, named Arthur and Creeling, arrived on the same day, and they set out together to explore the place. Arthur, the younger, was uncommonly ugly, and practically speechless; he was also abnormally clumsy, teacups and inkpots seemed to crash instinctively upon his approach. Once he contrived to upset the lectern as they were going into chapel.

Creeling was older, and better looking, but he had a sanctimonious expression and looked like "a miniature curate." He was smug, self-satisfied, extremely religious, and a sneak capable of reporting any misconduct to the masters. His lordship greatly preferred the company of Arthur, perhaps his helpless inefficiency appealed to him. The first thing

Creeling tried to do, unsuccessfully, was to get into the chapel; "they have a service every day," he remarked, "and on Sunday three times." The prospect seemed to cheer him, but Arthur gulped and said, "How awful!" in a horror-stricken voice.

The next term, one of the new boys was a Roman Catholic. It is most unusual for a Catholic to be sent to a Protestant school; but the boy, named Desmond, was unusual too, for his profanity sometimes even shocked his lordship. He took a malicious pleasure in drawing Creeling out on the subject of "his God," of whom he used to speak in an aggressively possessive manner:—

"Tell us about this God of yours," said Desmond.

"In what way is he different to mine? Has he got a beard?"

"No, of course not," retorted Creeling angrily.

"He is an invisible spirit."

"Really? No beard. Well then, has he got toe-nails?"

"Certainly not!" Creeling was shocked. "I said he was an invisible spirit."

"That's most interesting. And tell me, where does he live?"

"He is ubiquitous. That is to say, he lives everywhere."

"What? Not in the Headmaster's study?"

"Yes. He is everywhere."

"Surely not in the water-closet?"

"I tell you he lives everywhere." And Creeling broke away from us in a fury.

Desmond caught him by the coat-tails, calling out to everyone within earshot, "I say, Creeling worships a funny sort of God. No toe-nails and lives in the W.C.!"

It will be seen that this book is somewhat different from the books usually produced by members of the Decege. We hope that it will be many years, if ever, before his Lordship reaches his second childhood.

W. MANN.

Leave Christ Out Of It!

RELIGION was once upon a time a very definite part of a Christian's mental and moral environment. The teachings of the Bible, and the words of Christ were neither wiser nor more free from consistency than they are now seen to be. But there was a general agreement between members of the same sect as to which teachings should be accepted, and exactly how those teachings should be interpreted.

Churches fought cruelly enough against churches which disagreed with them, but the differences were unmistakably definite and clear. Probably the Roman Catholic Church is the only Church which has retained (even if it has occasionally modified) its faith in all its original definiteness. Papal declarations periodically prove that Catholicism adheres to its historic documentary definiteness of belief.

Other churches wobble! It is as difficult to pin down a Protestant pietist to a straightforward defence of "his" doctrines, as it is to photograph the Loch Ness monster. Is there a Hell? What, where and when is Heaven? Is there a Devil, and how? Is War consistent with Christianity? Could Christ have sinned if he wanted to? The answers of Protestants are no longer to be found in any "Articles of Religion." They disagree according to circumstances. Protestant Christians refuse to discard doctrines they neither understand nor accept.

It is with the utmost goodwill that we recommend humanitarians of all schools to throw Christ and religion overboard. These things interfere with their humane commonsense, without offering any sort of value in return.

Suppose it turned out, contrary to all reasonable expectation, that God exists, that the Bible is true, that Christ is the world's only salvation? Well, well, we must then go back to the savage life of the Dark Ages, of course, and renounce science, experience and all reasonable expectations based on causation. But at least we should not have to lie, deny, prevaricate, suppress, and play foolishly with religion and the Bible doctrines. Good or bad we should have to accommodate our lives to principles which bear no relation to human ethics or human standards.

Mr. Beverley Nichols, in *Cry Havoc*, reports an interesting debate between Mr. Yeats Brown and Mr. Robert Mennel (a Pacifist). Mr. Nichols does not deny that Yeats Brown is a believer in religion, who believes war to be necessary and salutary. He says also "Mennel is certainly a Christian."

Ignoring the obvious farce of both men deriving opposing principles from the same source, and not bothering about Yeats Brown at all, let us look at Mr. Mennel's concern about Christ.

Mr. Mennel is asked about Christ's "driving the money-changers out of the temple," and he makes the perfectly sensible answer: "I shouldn't have done it." If Mr. Mennel had continued to take that attitude the reader would quite understand that he was giving his own opinion, and that it was sheer impertinence for anybody to ask what Christ would have done, or did do.

But soon Mr. Mennel is engaged in a stupid, useless, dull defence of Christ, instead of defending his own opinions, for which he has suffered so much. He "questions the details of that story." He says, "I can't see Jesus laying about Him with a whip."

Mr. Mennel thinks he has to tell the real new humanistic truth about, "I came not to bring peace but a sword." Of course this was only "a figure of speech." "A physical steel sword in the hands of Jesus is to me unthinkable."

We find ourselves wondering whether Matthew xxvii. 51 ought to read, "And behold one of them which were with Jesus drew his figure of speech and struck a servant and smote off his ear?" Also whether Christ meant (in Luke xxii. 36) that "He that hath no sword" should "sell his garment and buy" a dummy sword? And if the disciples who carried out Christ's instruction and brought the two swords to Him had brought steel ones or only figurative ones?

Mr. Mennel, being met on all his biblical defences by his pious opponent, has at last to fall back on the very weak retort, "I suppose the thing is instinctive. . . ." "There are things in the world difficult for us with our finite powers of apprehension to reconcile with the conception of a God of compassionate love."

His opponent "thanks God that the common man is not a Pacifist."

What a sorry spectacle! And how easily avoided without any loss of principle or logic. Religion does not even reconcile religious believers. At the best it wastes time. How can it help ordinary citizens, consisting of all sorts of believers and all kinds of unbelievers?

If religion succeeded it could only do so by creating an incredible unanimity of intolerant bigots. Without unanimity it adds venom to natural dissensions.

Let us leave Christ out of it. It is easier to convert people to a good cause by secular propaganda than to convert people to any sort of religious agreement. A man might in time come to think that Cremation is hygienic: not in all eternity could you prove cremation Christian, or that Christ was a Pacifist, an Esperantist, and a Malthusian, or that he disliked Jazz music, Mixed Bathing and the Dog-tote.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Religion at the Universities

THOUGH we should not expect to find that many professors and other university teachers subscribe to the current creed, except in some extensively bowdlerized form, it appears that believers are not yet quite confined to the divinity departments. A recently appointed teacher of history and a "recognized teacher" of the same subject in the University of London have lately revealed themselves as zealous religionists. The former, in a lecture to our branch of the Historical Association (heard by a large number of pupils of affiliated schools), launched into what was practically a piece of Christian propaganda. The latter teaches New Testament exegesis as well as history (a strange combination) in the University. Both have given wireless talks and written matter for B.B.C. pamphlets. We may therefore well believe that the support of these gentlemen is much appreciated by the large body of professed religionists at the great metropolitan centre of learning—as well as by Broadcasting House, which obviously acts as a powerful magnet on obscurantists, and has become another "home of lost causes and impossible beliefs."

The activity of the divinity side at King's College is shown by a variety of phenomena. At the gateways, in the Strand and on the Embankment, there are five notices of the larger size; two of them deal very briefly with all the faculties; the other three give, in attractively coloured handprint, more extensive information about the faculty of "divinity" only. (The correct name of the faculty is "theology"; but perhaps "divinity" looks and sounds more imposing.) From the latter notice sheets we learn that the department includes a Dean, a Chaplain, and no less than twenty teachers of the various sections of the subject—7 professors, 7 lecturers, and 6 tutors.

In the Great Hall of the College five time-tables of instruction are displayed. On each of these the first word which meets the eye below the heading is "Divinity," the subject to which the period 10 to 11 o'clock on Monday mornings is allotted. This applies not only to the more varied "Arts" course, but also to courses of *Law, Science, Premedicine and Medicine!*

From the London University Calendar we learn that among the recognized societies of the institution is the Student Christian Movement. But I did not see at King's College any notice relating to this. The notice boards of the great Science Library at South Kensington have, however, at my visits in term time during the last few years, been largely occupied by notices of the Student Christian Movement, the Student Christian Union, the Student Church, and of vacation courses or "schools" on religious subjects. Now this library is mainly used by the teachers, researchers and students of the adjacent College of Science (one of the Colleges of the London University). And the phenomenon just mentioned seems to show that a great change has occurred in the course of the last three or four decades. During the three years I spent there as an ordinary student and then as a research scholar, such pietism was, I am sure, quite absent. We had a Students' Union; we held weekly meetings, and we discussed many things; but I cannot recall any discussion or even suggestion of religion. And it seemed to me probable that those of us who had paid any attention to the matter were unbelievers. Three with whom I lived for a time were all Agnostics. At another house where four science students and some others boarded, I cannot recall any reference to religion; but it was interesting to observe that of seven of us the only one who went to Church (except occasionally to hear a noted preacher or a special musical service) was a paid singer in the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Needless to say, the general bearing of the science studied was entirely inimical to supernaturalism. And this was especially so on the biological side, owing largely to the all-pervading evolutionary principle. There was also the persisting influence of T. H. Huxley, and memories of contact with Darwin. The great Professor—and Dean of the College—had retired before I entered. But it was of surpassing interest to hear, for example, that on occasion, just as assembly for lectures had taken place, Darwin would quietly enter, seat himself behind

the students, and receive from them an ovation so long that Huxley had to wait awhile before he could begin his exposition.

University calendars show that one or more religious societies commonly exist at each institution. Edinburgh leads easily with ten. The only society of a heterodox kind at a British University seems to be an Ethical one at Manchester. There is, however, a Students' Rationalist Society at the University of Cape Town.

Professor Iaski has pointed out the need for a "Rationalist Crusade" in the educational domain. Of this the universities are now important key points in respect of the schools, as the school as well as other teachers are being increasingly, and before long may be exclusively, trained there. Obvious efforts are being made to draw more teachers into the theological net by the inclusion of divinity as a full subject for the Teacher's Certificate. It might therefore be profitably considered whether, with the help of Secularist professors and other teachers within the colleges, anything can be done to prevent the current tide of superstition from engulfing some who are to become the teachers and other leaders of the rising and subsequent generations.

J. REEVES.

Acid Drops

Nothing could be more satisfying than the attitude of the Attorney-General, the very godly Sir Thomas Inskip concerning the charge brought against the police by the Duke of Atholl, another godly person. The Duke told the House of Lords about an attempt of the police to get him to agree to an arranged case concerning the running of a sweepstake. Sir Thomas Inskip went direct to the police and asked was the charge true. As the police were the ones charged, to what better authority could a man go? And when the police said the charge was not true, Sir Thomas Inskip promptly told the House of Commons that no further enquiry was necessary. How much better we do things here than in France, where the people, instead of being content with a prompt official disclaimer, start rioting and refuse to believe that a member of the Government is incapable of telling a lie, or of trying to hush up a scandal. After all, the party accused is the one best able to say whether he is guilty, or not, and when he says that he is not guilty, what better authority could one have? We consider that Sir Thomas Inskip's decision reflects credit on his religion, on his profession as a lawyer, and bears testimony to his fitness for his position in Parliament.

Several times we have pointed out that the aim of the Home Secretary and of the Chief of Police, Lord Trenchard, is to create a militarized police force that shall not be a part of the general public. And we predicted that the next move would be to do with the police, what was done in Peel's time for the army, and for the same reason. This is to build barracks in which the police should live, and with their own dwellings, their own sports grounds, etc., the police would then be segregated from the public. Now we see that the Chief Commissioner is pressing for enough "section accommodation" for unmarried policemen, to be followed with the same thing for married ones. The police, particularly in London, are apt to be on too friendly footing with the public. And it might prevent proper use being made of the Fascist movement.

When the scandal concerning the treatment of chief Tschkedi was alive, we mentioned that the annexation of Bechuanaland by the South African Government had been announced in some of the Cape papers some months earlier, and that the row over the chief was one of the moves in the game. The scandal stopped it at the time, but we said that an early revival might be looked for. Now the *Times* of April 26, reports that General Hertzog, in a recent speech, said that the time was now ripe for the annexation of the Protectorate, and that he believed the British Government, if approached, would agree. The reason given is that annexation is necessary in order

to successfully fight pests like locusts and cattle disease. The annexation is purely in the interests of civilization. Thus is the British tradition maintained. Again we shoulder our burden, and if it results in our profit, that it because the Lord rewards those who act righteously.

Colonel Wedgwood raised a protest in the House of Commons on April 25 against the action of the Patriarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, selling titles as a way of raising money for the Church. We cannot understand the Colonel's scruples. He must know that titles are bought in this country—not openly, we admit, but still bought. Perhaps what the Colonel objects to is the sale being open—that is, of course, quite contrary to our method of doing business. For our part we should like to see titles sold openly as heraldic designs and dog-licences are sold. And we are quite sure that there is here a big source of revenue left untapped.

We have a great admiration for the Hitler-Mussolini-Mosley method of voting. It has the merit of securing a united—or nearly united vote. In Italy Blackshirts stand at the doors of the polling station to see how the voters vote. In Germany a man has been sent to prison for fourteen months for inducing another man to vote against the Government. In England Mosley promises to have freedom of speech, provided a man knows what he is talking about—and he will decide whether he is to have a vote or not. After all, castor oil, imprisonment, and "beating" up are not bad methods to secure unanimity of opinion.

In spite of the many thousands of books which have been written to elucidate the problem of the Gospels, and also to try and make sense of some of the Divinely inspired statements therein, it has been left to a Persian to put everybody right at last. According to Mr. George M. Lamsa, the Gospels were not originally written in Greek after all. The great Greek codices, which have been studied with such infinite care and minuteness, and which God had preserved so remarkably, are merely translations from the Aramaic, in which language they were originally written. The translations into Greek are extremely faulty, and prove that the translators did not understand the inspired statements. Mr. Lamsa bases his researches on his translation of the Peshitta (Syriac) text of the New Testament—which is considered an ancient one by most scholars, but of not a particularly high critical value. If he is right, then the whole problem of the Gospels will have to be considered afresh. But what then becomes of God's own Blessed Word and Divine Inspiration? Will our Bibles have to be re-written and fresh translations made into the 640 languages in which it is now circulated? What a delightful game is Biblical criticism!

Mr. Hilaire Belloc has now exposed the "Reformation" myth and the "Elizabethan" myth. "It is the best card," he says, "false history has to play." He denies that it was Elizabeth who was "the personal author of the successful attack on the Catholic Faith in England." He blames "a clique of men," at the head of which stood William Cecil. It was Cecil's plans which forced everything on to an unwilling people, and on to Elizabeth herself. This is very illuminating. In his apology for "Bloody" Mary, Mr. Belloc says it was the "Council" which was responsible for the damnable burnings and tortures which disfigure her reign—not Mary. In the case of Elizabeth, it was "a clique of men" headed by Cecil, which forced the Reformation on reluctant England. The "Council" was, however, Roman Catholic to the core, and did only what the Church compelled it to do. But Mr. Belloc does not blame it. Indeed, he insists that burning alive was quite a normal punishment then, which nobody worried much about. But that is because it was Roman Catholics who were responsible for this foul punishment.

On the other hand, he vents all his anger on the "clique of men," who guided and inspired Elizabethan policy. This is obviously because they are Protestants.

When a Roman Catholic "Council" burns and tortures, well, that is just normal. But when a Protestant "clique" does the same, that is damnable. Thus is history put right, and "myths" exposed. For our part, we see precious little difference between Protestants and Catholics in an age of Faith as far as persecution is concerned. Only in an age enlightened by science and Free-thought can religions wither, and religious persecution cease.

Psychic News exclaims, "Our crying need to-day is for more and more mediums." It would be nearer the truth to say that the crying need of Spiritualism is for more and more credulity. The majority of the recruits to spiritualism are drawn from the ranks of Christians—people whose "religious education" has led them to suppose that credulity is a virtue. Spiritualism owes a great debt to the Christian Churches, for they have created the type of mentality Spiritualism needs, and have inculcated a belief in a future life. What a difference it would make to Spiritualism if only the young were systematically taught to question and reason, to cultivate a sceptical and independent mind, instead of being taught, as they are now, under Christian influence, to believe what they are told, and what has been believed in for many centuries. Spiritualism may have to disturb a notion or two held by Christians, but the kind of mentality engendered by the Christian Churches and the sort of "education" inculcated are a "godsend" to Spiritualism.

A Spiritualist paper quotes a *British Weekly* writer (Nehemiah the Second) as saying, in semi-humorous vein, that "The Church once had a monopoly; it is gone. Education has put 'paid' to her pretensions. Having lost her authority, what is left to the Church to justify her existence? On the whole, the Churches are losing ground; fighting with greater or less intensity, but on the whole being beaten back." Presumably, these are some of the signs that indicate the advent of a revival of religion. Still, from the Church's point of view, all is not lost. There is yet hope while the Church, and not forgetting the B.B.C., can retain some measure of control over education, directing it, as far as possible, into "safe" channels. Nor must it be forgotten what the Church is able to accomplish in the way of hindering free criticism of her claims and the religion she represents. No, there is still hope, and every apathetic Freethinker is helping to keep it alive.

According to Dr. Ralph Sockman, "Our exportation of Christianity is hindered by the inferior quality of the home product." Anxious, as always, to be helpful, we hasten to proffer an explanation of the "inferior quality of the home product." It is that the Church now attracts, to its priesthood, only the lower intelligence among the upper classes, and attracts, to its membership, only the least intelligent of all classes.

Why do pious journals permit writers to lie and misrepresent every secular civic interest of those who happen to disagree with them on utterly irrelevant issues, like religion? How can any decent newspaper print the following fanatical baseless narrow-minded trash? This is what the Rev. W. R. Forrester, B.D., M.C., calls the "New Patriotism" in the *British Weekly*:—

- (1) Only aggressive and radical religion can make citizenship a constructive and compelling motive.
- (2) Only religion can sublimate the combative instinct into profitable service of the community, and so provide a moral equivalent of war.
- (3) Only the Churches, fearless and outspoken, can compel a State that is tied hand and foot to sinister interests, to regulate its own armaments and control the supply of them to others.
- (4) Without religion, an effective League of Nations is only an elusive dream.

"Are women more religious than men?" asks Lady Hosie, M.A., who almost disarms criticism by her naive frankness and humour. She suggests the proportion of women to men in churches may be calculated by remem-

bering the miracle of "the little boy who took five of his mother's loaves and two of his father's fishes to help Jesus" feed the multitude. Amongst the women, Lady Hosie quotes, is a sensible "fair-headed, round-cheeked girl of nineteen," who was asked: "What is the greatest stumbling-block in your mind against religion?" This wise young sceptic replied: "Its impossibility. . . It is unreasonable." Lady Hosie advises women to read the New Testament, and "read it as a woman." We doubt the likelihood that the result will satisfy Lady Hosie. She herself appears to have some kind of reasonable mis-giving. She says: "I shrink indeed when I have heard good men tell an audience of women to be 'grateful' to Jesus, because He has raised the status of women." She repeats, "I shrink, surprised at their blindness," and she points out very pertinently, that it is only a century ago that slavery was abolished in the British Empire.

A Methodist Minister, the Rev. Allen F. Parsons, has raised a hornet's nest in his congregation, some of whom declare that "if he goes on like that he will empty the church." Mr. Parsons says he welcomes criticism and does not like people to attend his services with "preconceived ideas." Good gracious! What does Mr. Parsons think parsons and churches are for? Of course when one comes to read the terrible things which are frightening good Methodists away, one finds some singularly commonplace and orthodox "views" in Mr. Parsons' "worst" "heresies." He appears to have given offence by belittling miracles! Not that he admits any disbelief that miracles occurred about 2,000 year ago, but he doesn't like "the sign being asked for to-day." In true Chestertonian language he says, "God is as much in the ordinary as in the extraordinary." Certainly the non-existent is as real in one place as another. But—and here we are on the side of the most ignorant Methodist—Jesus Christ DID rely on miracles, and promised that "these signs shall follow them that believe." That is why Mr. Parsons is rightly suspect if he cannot swallow poison or handle a boa-constrictor with impunity. From the moment that we found ourselves unable to raise the dead, or talk Chinese, we knew that we were full-fledged unbelievers. (See Mark xvi. 14-20.)

Professor Findlay is convinced that God meant well, but failed. God "tried to convince men" . . . but "it had not availed even with God's chosen people, as the melancholy confessions of the prophets prove." So God tried something else. Prof. Findlay actually explains the different "alternatives" which God was in a position to consider, and the Professor seems to say:—

"If I'd been on creation's scene
A great improvement there'd have been
If I'd but had my way."

"The ordinary facts of life," says Mr. Findlay, "suggest either that the power behind the universe was indifferent to right and wrong, as men understand it; or that God was beaten." As there could not be any *other* idea of right and wrong, it is difficult to avoid Mr. Findlay's very nasty "divine" dilemma. Our vote would be given for the first alternative.

Reminiscences of the late Rev. Robert Horton continue to flow into the pages of religious newspapers. He was a great man, as the Churches count greatness. For many years Dr. Horton fought in press and pulpit against the Roman Catholic Church. With what result? Our own opinion is that the Catholic Church made more impression upon Horton than Horton made on that wily old "Rock." A few weeks before his death, Dr. Horton wrote H. M. Gooch a keen anti-Catholic, "Romanism has its good side, which I, in my polemic, left out of account; its bad side must be exposed in the spirit of charity." And in the same letter he says: "I came to believe that Rome could never conquer England, but the decay of religion following on the war, has given Rome a new opportunity." And whose fault is this? He answers: "The militant Atheism of Communism, and the specious Atheism of Humanism are doing the work of Rome among us." Some folk are never satisfied!

The Christian Tourists in the "Holy Land" are becoming a real nuisance to mankind. One of them writing from "Elin," Bexhill-on-Sea, describes his adventures "After dinner at the hotel where we were served with fish caught in the lake (the sea of Galilee) a dozen of us went for a row after darkness had set in." It is not easy to understand why such midnight larks should call for comment, but the Tourist in question angrily cries for vengeance on the Local Government, which has authorized certain irrigation improvements, which these holiday-makers call "desecrating this lovely spot." He asks for "a plan of campaign to resist this outrage." He sees no outrage at all in the impudent interference of occasional visitors with the necessary public improvements advised by experts in the interests of the health and even the lives of the inhabitants. This is Christianity all over.

Smoking, said Mrs. A. F. Gault, speaking at the National Society of Non-Smokers, is responsible for nineteen different kinds of poisoning. We began to feel alarmed, until we remembered that being alive subjected us to the possibility of at least five times that number. Besides, as medical science teaches that certain poisons neutralize one another it is possible that half of these poisons make inactive the others. And, as a smoker, and as a well-wisher to the world, and if Mrs. Gault is right, we rather wish to see some people run an extra chance of getting poisoned.

Dorset has just opened its fourth Catholic Church in ten months. It is in Weymouth, and is called St. Joseph's, and Bishop Barrett, who opened it, considered what Catholics had done in Dorset "was almost a miracle." The Church has cost £9,000, and is a striking example of how money can always be found for religion, no matter what poverty and unemployment are about. What use in combating either of these social evils is any Church? None whatever. But people will always be found to give money for religious buildings. Credulity and superstition are still as rampant as ever.

It is a very dangerous thing to tamper with God's Infallible Word, yet quite a number of people, thoroughly orthodox, dare to take the risk. Everybody knows that the Lord's Prayer contains the words, "Lead us not into temptation"—which, however curious they may seem on examination, and however difficult to understand, are solemnly repeated by millions of people every day of their lives. A correspondent in one of our big daily papers thinks that the form given in a recent broadcast is much better. It runs thus: "Let us not be led into temptation." Now the very essence of the prayer as given by Jesus is that it is God who must be implored not to lead a sinner into temptation, and the suggested new form gives a totally different meaning. We plump for the official words which are—or ought to be—infallible. How *could* Jesus be wrong?

Fifty Years Ago

I AM content to work in the present without impatience of the future, settling the rival claims of society and the individual in special cases as they arise, and being true to the great *tendency* of Progress through all casual fluctuations of events and all difficulties of practical interpretation. I regard the destruction of theology as the real work of our day. No abiding good can be achieved without that. Thought goes before action, and the moulding of thought is the primary work of reform. We must free men's minds before we can free their bodies. By destroying the tyranny of heaven we shall destroy the tyrannies of earth; and by rescuing men from the thralldom of theology we shall rescue them from the thralldom of falsehood, ignorance and injustice, and give them the world of reality in exchange for the empire of dreams.

The "Freethinker," May 4, 1884.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- S. ATKINSON.—Sorry cannot use. An article to be intelligently humorous should deal with a serious subject, and when dealt with it ought to contain some humour. Both things are advisable in a genuinely humorous article, although both are frequently overlooked.
- L.H.—We have never thought or said that we were infallible, and if any of our articles has convinced you that we are not, then we may take it that, in your case, they have been, to that extent, educational.
- JACK BARTON.—Never trust a Roman Catholic writer and speaker without carefully checking his statements. The question of who was the original of St. George, is with English heraldry still a matter of dispute. The original of the figure may be quite mythical. The tale of the dragon, for instance is told originally of St. George of Coventry, and not of either St. George of Cappadocia, the ex-bacon contractor and army swindler, or of St. George of Lydia, who is said by some to be the original of England's patron saint. And Archbishop Downey is decidedly falsifying facts when he says that the people killed St. George of Cappadocia because of his crimes. As a matter of fact ecclesiastical annals state that he was put to death by the Trinitarians on the course of their crusade against the Arians. By that time, of course, George's career as a swindling army contractor had ended, and he was quite a Christian reformed character. And earlier blackguardisms was never by any Christian body counted a crime in a "saved" character.
- E. HALE.—Always pleased to hear from you. We share your appreciation of Mr. Fraser's articles.
- R. BELL.—You must remember the old advice—it takes all sorts to make a world. A paper that was edited for any particular person, or even any particular type would make curious reading.
- T. SMITH.—Evidently our attempts at being satirical fell flat—so far as you are concerned.
- J. ALMOND.—Sorry, but we do not know anyone who has a copy of the book you wish to see.
- E. A. MACDONALD.—Just a little run down, but nothing serious.
- E.S.—We have heard before of that Anti-God school in which a mat was kept with the figure of Christ on it so that children might wipe their boots on the figure. The race of robust religious liars is far from extinct.
- H. ATKINSON.—Pleased to learn that you find the *Letters to a Country Vicar* so useful for lending to your Christian friends. Judging from the sales it appears to be doing good work.
- WILL MR. HINLEY, of Twickenham, be good enough to send his address to the Editor.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

Sugar Plums

The Annual Conference, which is now but a fortnight's distance (May 20), is to be held this year at Bolton, and it looks as though the attendance will be well up to the usual standard. The business meetings of the Conference are held in the Swan Hotel, Bradshawgate, at 10.30 and 2.30. These meetings will be for members only. There will also be a public demonstration in the large Spinner's Hall, St. George's Road, at 7 p.m. There are a limited number of reserved seats at sixpence and a shilling. A luncheon for members and their friends is provided at the Swan Hotel for 3s. each person. The Agenda of the Conference appears on another page.

With regard to arrangements for the Conference. Will those visitors who will be staying in Bolton over the week-end write at once to the General Secretary stating their exact requirements, so that everything may be done for their comfort. Those who are staying to the luncheon should also write, so that suitable arrangements can be made. Branches that are sending delegates, and we trust that all who can possibly do so will send at least one representative, must send the forms appointing such delegates to the Secretary. The question of an Excursion for the Monday following the Sunday has not yet been decided, but we hope to have information on this point next week.

There is a well-known American weekly called *The Literary Digest*. It is a very useful summary of American and other activities—political, social and religious. It often amuses us to read one of its headings: "Religion and Social Service." The mixture of distinct subjects is misleading in every way. In the number before us we read a wholly admirable article under this heading on the latest attempt being made (by the new Commissioner of Indian affairs) to set in motion, forces which will bring belated justice to the original possessors of the soil. Mr. Collier, the Commissioner referred to, gives no indication whatever of any religious motive in so excellent an aim. We might say a great deal about the "religion" of those responsible for one of the greatest injustices in history. But we prefer to say we honour the President who has said, "the time has come to stop wronging the Indians, and to re-write the cruel and stupid laws that rob them and crush their family lives."

The West London Branch of the N.S.S. has commenced its summer campaign in Hyde Park, although as it holds meetings right through the winter, the "commencement" is only a continuation of what has gone before. But Hyde Park is a rare place for crowds of Londoners and provincial visitors, and the gospel of Freethought as preached by Mr. Le Maine and his fellow speakers must reach numbers who would otherwise end their lives "unsaved." The West London ought to be one of the strongest Branches in London. Particulars of meetings will be found in the Lecture Notice column.

Steps are being taken to place the Hants and Dorset Branch N.S.S. on a more active footing, and, commencing from May 1, meetings will be held every fortnight at 491 Wimborne Road, Winton, Bournemouth. Plans for an active campaign during the Summer will be discussed, and all unattached Freethinkers are invited to join the Branch and co-operate in the work. The Branch Secretary is Mr. I. Saltman, 69 Norton Road, Winton, Bournemouth.

Mr. G. Whitehead will begin his Summer lecturing tour at Plymouth to-day (Sunday), and local saints are asked to make the visit known as widely as possible, and to help towards its success. Mr. Whitehead will address meetings until Friday evening in Plymouth, and then travel to Bolton where he will open with a meeting on the Town Hall steps on Saturday, May 12, at 7.30 p.m., when further announcements will be made. The whole tour will last from May till September, and the expenses will be met by the Executive of the N.S.S.

The Bethnal Green and Hackney Branch N.S.S. will commence Sunday evening lectures in Victoria Park from to-day (Sunday), when Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be the speaker. The meetings will begin at 6 o'clock. The West Ham Branch N.S.S. will also start operations to-day (Sunday), outside the Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, London, E., at 7 p.m. Mr. B. A. Le Maine will be the speaker. If properly managed very useful work can be done in the open, and the importance of a well supported platform should be grasped and acted upon by all members and unattached Freethinkers.

Definition and Meaning

WHEN a child is first taught to speak, its teachers seldom consciously adopt any specific method of instruction. Nevertheless observation of the methods most usually adopted shows that at least one rough principle has almost invariably been adhered to. This principle is to utter the sound of a word in the hearing of the child, and to repeat that sound at intervals not too far apart in certain selected circumstances. The same principle is often adopted in teaching foreign languages to adults.

It has been found by experience that the uttering of a sound with sufficient frequency will result in the child's mimicking the sound of its own accord. But unless that sound is uttered under certain special conditions, the child will merely repeat it indiscriminately and without reference to anything in particular. In order, therefore, that a sound may be of use to the child for purposes of reference, the teacher usually utters it in conditions which present certain elements of similarity. For example, if the child is to be taught to use the word "sugar," the sound is uttered on every occasion that a lump or spoonful of the substance is given to it.

Now it should be noted that every time this operation is repeated, the conditions in which it occurs will inevitably present certain differences. The word may be uttered by different members of the family; the child may be seated in a chair or in someone's lap, or it may be standing; it may be given a lump to suck, or a spoonful may be put in some drink; the time may be morning when there is daylight, or it may be at night in artificial light; the place may also differ; and so on. Thus the complex of impressions received by the child, which will involve the use of all or most of its senses in varying degrees, will always be slightly different each time. But throughout the series there will be two factors whose similarity will be most striking, namely, the sound of the word "sugar," and the substance itself. These two factors become permanently associated in memory, such that it becomes evident that when the child uses the word, it is thinking of the substance to which that word was intended to refer. The child is then said to "know the meaning of" or to "have a meaning for" the word sugar. Alternatively it is said that the child "understands" the word sugar. And conversely it is said that the word sugar "has a meaning for" the child.

Whichever of these phrases we may adopt, it must be clear that the *meaning* of a word which a person is said to have, or to know, or to understand, or which the word itself is said to have, can be nothing more nor less than *the complex of memories associated with that word in the mind of the person*. When a person hears the word uttered by someone else and reacts in the appropriate manner, he is said to understand the meaning of the other person. But this second meaning is the complex of memories associated with the word in that other person's mind. So these two persons are said to understand each other's meaning, or more briefly, to understand each other. In this way the

word is regarded as a sort of bridge or connecting link between mind and mind. This leads to the illusion that one word has the same meaning for both minds; which, in its turn, leads to the further illusion that a word possesses a *true* or *real* meaning which should be the same for everybody. Yet, in spite of the somewhat misleading phrase that "words have meanings," it must be obvious that meaning is not, and cannot be, inherent in a word.

As I have pointed out, no two sets of conditions in which a word is uttered can ever be quite identical even for one child. With two different children, even if they were twins, the conditions would differ still more, no matter how slight or imperceptible these differences might be. With persons of a different generation, family, or social status, the differences between the conditions in which a given word was learnt are likely to be greater still. And obviously these differences will be more marked in proportion as the time, place and circumstances of learning a word vary. *It is impossible, therefore, that two persons can have the same meaning for any one word.* The meanings may be very similar, but they cannot be identical.

We have here a simple and rational explanation of the differences of meaning which are to be found in different localities or social strata, as well as of the gradual changes in meaning which occur from generation to generation. Indeed, this explanation not only covers changes and differences of meaning, but it also accounts for variations in pronunciation and grammar. It even explains how different dialects and languages probably arose. (Readers who believe in the Tower of Babel story need follow me no further.) Fortunately for humanity, however, there is a comparative permanence about many of Nature's phenomena, and of human habits which restricts this perpetual flux of language. And this is what makes it possible for the same words to be used and understood by large numbers of people over fairly wide areas for relatively long periods of time as measured by human standards.

Yet this is no indication that the meaning of a word can be an inherent or permanent quality of the word itself. For if the meaning of a word were something pertaining to the word itself, then when a child or adult has learnt to mimic the sound of the word, he would necessarily have learnt its meaning as well. Experience proves that this is not so. *The meaning of a word, therefore, is not inherent in the word itself.* So when a person uses a word, although for convenience of speech we must assume that his meaning is very similar to ours, we should not fall into the error of assuming that it is absolutely the same. In cases where doubt arises as to the similarity of meaning for two persons, the only satisfactory way of discovering the degree of similarity or difference is by definition on both sides. One-sided definition cannot adequately clarify the situation in which the meanings of two or more persons are involved.

There is another aspect of meaning which we should specially note. As I said at the beginning, parents seldom consciously adopt any specific method of linguistic instruction. The principle which is most in vogue applies chiefly to real and concrete things which can be presented to the notice of the pupil at the same time as the word is spoken. This accounts for the fact that in proportion as words refer more closely to the real and concrete facts of experience, so are their meanings more clear and definite, and less liable to suffer change in the lifetime of an individual or generation. One has only to mention such words as *bread, tree, cat, moon*, etc. But a vast number of words do not refer directly to the real and the concrete facts of experience, and most of these are learnt in a purely haphazard manner. And this accounts for the fact that

most people find it extremely difficult to give intelligible definitions of abstractions, such as *intelligence, personality, beauty, value*, etc.

It may be that a child hears one of his elders use such a word, and his interest may be aroused either by its novelty, its length, its odd sound, the emphasis with which it was uttered, or for some other reason. At any rate, the child asks what the word means, and a definition is given which may vary from the clearly understandable to the wholly misleading. Many people, too, acquire meanings for words, not by either of the methods mentioned, but by guessing what these words are intended to refer to, either from the context of other known words which surround them, or from the circumstances in which they were used by other persons. In many cases people do not even trouble to verify their guesses by enquiry or by the use of an up-to-date dictionary. They just store up one vague memory after another in connexion with the word, and so form a complex of indefinite memories which does service as a makeshift meaning. So we get the curious phenomenon of a word being used in a context that is both correct and grammatical, yet the person using it is quite unable to define his meaning intelligibly. And we also get the still more curious phenomenon of a word being used which, when it is defined, is shown to possess two meanings that contradict or are incompatible with each other. These circumstances account for many of the illogicalities to be found in the sayings and writings of people who are otherwise intelligent, as also of many who are held to be clever beyond the ordinary.

Unfortunately there is no school, college or university that I am aware of, in which proper instruction is given concerning the nature, the functions and the limitations of language, or of its relationship to thought and reason. We need not be surprised to find, therefore, that in spite of their ready recourse to and glib use of speech, the great majority of people, through no fault of their own, are ignorant in regard to the proper use of language and are indifferent to the quality or logicity of their verbal utterances. There is, indeed, scarcely one sphere of human activity or thought in which the harmful effects of this ignorance and indifference are not patently manifest.

C. S. FRASER.

A Holy Puzzle

THE editor has done mankind a great service in collating some of the evidence in proof of the fact that Jesus Christ was God. (*Freethinker*, December 24, 1933.) He was not merely man-God, or God-man, or 'alf-and-'alf, he was God himself. Does he not say as much himself, when he declares that he and his Father are one?

The editor presents only a small part of the abundant evidence contained in the infallible Gospels; but he gives us enough to convince any normal mind that Christ was very God. How could he have been anything else when he did so many things that only God can do?

Beginning with the virgin birth, he begat himself, his Son, and the Holy Ghost, three in one and one in three, all at the same time. This was some performance, and I think all will admit that nobody but God could have done it. (In Chinese Boodhistic lore the Holy Ghost is called "*Shing-Shin*," which seems quite appropriate.)

Then came the birth of the compounded God, and in order to prove that he was God and nobody else, he caused himself to be born in three separate places at the same time, as established by the inspired Gos-

pels. Every person must admit that no other than God could have engineered so remarkable a feat.

Saint Matthew says that his "Wise Men" found the child with Mary his mother in a *house*, presumably an inn by the roadside; a road-house, for instance.

Saint Luke infers that the birth took place in a *stable*, for he informs us that the virgin wrapped her son in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, which is a small trough used for feeding horses, cattle and asses. In fact Saint Luke says as much in the 16th verse of his second chapter, where he states that when his "shepherds" came they "found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger." The trough was undoubtedly larger than usual. Neither must we confuse Luke's "shepherds" with Matthew's "Wise Men." They belonged to different bunches, one being the kind of shepherds who graze their sheep in the snow in winter, and the other "wise men," who were misled and befooled by a "star." But the two supply indubitable evidence of the diversified births.

The inspired writer does not mention a nurse, or doctor, or other assistant as being present; not even Joseph seems to have bothered about the affair—though we shall hear from him later. There was nobody to sever the chord or bind up the wound; the virgin just wrapped her three babies in swaddling clothes and laid them in the manger. It is to be inferred that God assisted at his own birth, taking the places of nurse and doctor and seeing that everything was properly attended to.

Mark and John make no mention of the affair in any way; it was not of sufficient importance to attract their attention. But James, a younger son of the virgin—who remains always a virgin—says that his elder brother was born in a *cave*; and he goes into such minute particulars as to leave no room for doubt. Thus we have assurance, from the highest sources, that God had himself born in three separate places, a *house*, a *manger*, and a *cave*, in order to convince even doubting Thomases that he was verily God and no mistake.

Saint James' story is highly illuminating, and as he was a member of the family we must infer that he got his information straight. He says that his father and mother were on their way from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and when they were within "three miles of Bethlehem," his mother said to Joseph:—

"Take me down from the ass, for that which is within me presseth to come forth."

In reply Joseph said: "Whither shall I take thee, for the place is desert?"

Then said Mary again to Joseph:—

"Take me down quickly, for that which is within me mightily presseth me."

Thereupon James says that his father took his mother down from the ass, "and found there a cave, and put her in it," hurrying on himself to Bethlehem for assistance. This explains the absence of Joseph at the supreme moment. When he returned he found that God, his Son, and the Holy Ghost had been born and laid in the ass's trough, and there was nothing for him to do but stand around and whistle.

Such evidence may not be treated lightly, and I am sure that all who value their souls' salvation will accept it in their hearts and admit that Christ was God. The Old Masters knew the truth, and they gave us numerous paintings in howling colours, queer posturings, and amazing inattention to space, depicting the three births.

If more proof should be desired, it can be had; but why pile McKinley on top of Hood? There is the story of Joseph packing Mary and the three boys on the back of an ass and travelling with them into

Egypt; while at the same time the family remained in Nazareth. Not only was God able to manifest himself in several places at the same time, but his powers were so great that he could take the family and the family ass along with him.

Let none presume to consider these holy things except with reverence.

W. S. BRYAN.

Nevada, Mo., U.S.A.

The National Secular Society

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Report of Committee on Society's Principles and Objects.
3. Executive's Annual Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.
Motion by South London, Manchester, Liverpool, West Ham, Wembley, Chester-le-Street, Birkenhead, Bradford, Burnley, Swansea, and North London Branches:—
"That Mr. Chapman Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S."
6. Election of Secretary.
Motion by the Executive:—
"That Mr. R. H. Rosetti be appointed Secretary."
7. Election of Treasurer.
Motion by Swansea, North London, and West Ham Branches:—
"That Mr. C. G. Quinton be re-elected Treasurer."
8. Election of Auditor.
Messrs. H. Theobald and Co., the retiring auditors, are eligible and offer themselves for re-election.
9. Nominations for Executive.
SCOTLAND.—Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, nominated by Glasgow Branch.
WALES.—Mr. T. Gorniot and Mr. A. C. Rosetti, nominated by Swansea Branch.
N.E. GROUP.—Miss K. B. Kough, nominated by Newcastle and Chester-le-Street Branches.
Mr. A. B. Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch.
N.W. GROUP.—Mr. H. R. Clifton and Mrs. E. Venton, nominated by Liverpool and Birkenhead Branches.
S.W. GROUP.—Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, nominated by Plymouth Branch.
MIDLAND GROUP.—Mrs. C. G. Quinton (Junr.) and Mr. J. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch.
SOUTHERN GROUP.—Mr. L. M. Werrey-Easterbrook, nominated by Hants and Dorset and Brighton Branches.
SOUTH LONDON.—Mr. H. Prece, nominated by South London Branch.
NORTH LONDON.—Mr. L. Ebury, nominated by North London Branch.
EAST LONDON.—Mr. H. Silvester, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.
WEST LONDON.—Mr. B. A. Le Maine, nominated by West London and Fulham Branches.
10. Motion by Stockport and Bradford Branches:—
"That this Conference strongly protests against the declared policy of the British Broadcasting Company in exercising a censorship and boycott, and suggests that this protest be given practical form by subscribers informing the Corporation of their determination not to renew their wireless licence until freedom of expression is given to all forms of opinion."
11. Motion by Burnley Branch:—
"That a small pamphlet be prepared for distribution, setting forth the legal position of Freethinkers with respect to the right of affirmation, and of the withdrawal of children from religious instruction in State-supported schools."
12. Motion by South London Branch:—
"That this Conference reaffirms its adherence to a non-political propaganda."
13. Motion by Liverpool Branch:—
(a) "That Section 17 of the Society's Constitution be amended so as to arrange (a) that each of the existing areas shall have the Conference held within that area in rotation; (b) that a vote of the Branches shall decide in which area the Conference is to be held, and in connexion with which Branch; (c) for the purpose of fixing the Conference, London shall be reckoned as part of the South-Eastern group."
(b) "That Membership Forms shall in the future exhibit a clear explanation of what is meant by the terms 'Active or passive' as printed thereon."
(c) "That this Conference considers that the interests of Freethought can be well served by Freethinkers securing election on public bodies, which will provide greater scope for the application of those principles for which the National Secular Society stands, and that it be part of the duties of Branch Secretaries to supply copies of the *Freethinker* to those engaged in public work in their districts."
14. Motion by Executive:—
"That in view of the many attempts being made to curtail or destroy the propaganda of advanced opinion, and in view of the threat to individual liberty offered by the Incitement to Disaffection Bill at present before Parliament, this Conference urges upon all lovers of freedom to do whatever lies in their power to maintain the limited freedom that has been won for us at so great a cost."
15. Motion by Executive:—
"That this Conference, recognizing that the existence in Statute and Common Law of the priest-made offence of "Blasphemy" gives encouragement to the passing of other measures intended to restrict freedom of thought, calls upon Freethinkers to make the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws a test question at all parliamentary elections."
16. Motion by West Ham Branch:—
(a) "That in view of the general attack made upon freedom of thought in many parts of Europe, and the increasing danger facing Freethought in this country, this Conference reminds all concerned of the great fight that has been waged to secure the limited freedom we possess, and urges all concerned to intensify their efforts to preserve freedom of thought, speech and publication."
(b) "That recognizing the retrogressive influence of organized religion, and the way in which its representatives on public bodies use their influence to strengthen the position of the Churches, this Conference calls on all Freethinkers, whether engaged in administrative work or not, to do whatever lies in their power to secure the complete secularization of local government in law and in fact."
17. Motion by West London Branch:—
"That in towns where no Branch of the N.S.S. exists corresponding members be appointed whose duty it shall be to acquaint headquarters with all local proceedings that are of interest to the Movement."
18. Motion by Stockport Branch:—
"That in the interests of public economy and justice, this Conference is of opinion that all places of religious worship should be upon the same footing as property belonging to non-religious associations,

and thus abolish what is in effect a tax upon the whole community for the maintenance of religion."

19. Motion by Glasgow Branch:—

"That this Conference is of opinion that the setting aside of a column in the *Freethinker* for Branch news would be of assistance to the Society's propaganda."

20. Motion by Birkenhead Branch:—

"That in view of the intolerance prevailing in Birkenhead, the Executive be instructed to appoint a speaker, whose activities shall be devoted to the Birkenhead area."

21. Motion by A. D. McLaren:—

"That this Annual Conference of the National Secular Society affirms its sincere sympathy to our brethren in Germany, Italy and Austria, whose organizations have been destroyed, and their funds sequestered, and promises whatever assistance it is within its power to give."

The Conference will sit in the Swan Hotel, Bradshawgate, Bolton. Morning Session, 10.30 to 12.30; Afternoon Session, 2.30 to 4.30. Delegates will be required to produce their credentials at the door; Members, the current card of membership. Only Members of the Society are entitled to be present. A Luncheon for delegates and visitors at 1 p.m., price 3s., will be provided in the Swan Hotel.

By order of the Executive,

CHAPMAN COHEN, *President.*

R. H. ROSETTI, *Secretary.*

Correspondence

CAN RELIGION CAUSE INSANITY?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I beg of Mr. C. S. Fraser to keep to the point at issue. In order, as I explained, to clarify the position, I made the perfectly reasonable request that he would define four terms, *viz.*, "sanity," "insanity," "idea," "emotion"; but, instead of complying, what does he do? He accuses me of casting "a slur" upon his "integrity." If by "integrity" he means "honesty," I repudiate the imputation. What I wrote was: "Mr. Fraser avers that he read my letter 'carefully.' In that case I have to assume that he excessively relied upon his memory, for he ascribes to me statements which I did not make, and, I may add, which are contrary to my convictions." The final sentence of that statement is quoted by Mr. Fraser, but he omits to include my excuse (which precedes it) for his shortcomings. Moreover, he attempts to defend himself against the accusation of inaccuracy. Unfortunately for his case, his illustrative quotations, I submit, may give evidence of *free-thinking*, but scarcely of *clear-thinking*. May I demonstrate that?

(1) I *did not* say, Mr Fraser notwithstanding, that he had "omitted to notice the 'emotional elements in religion,'" but that he *seemed* "to have omitted to take notice of" them. That was why, in the light of his assertion that he believed there was no "real disagreement between" our "views," I asked him to define the words "emotion" and "idea."

(2) I *did not* say, nor did I infer, that the study of mathematics or of unexciting history could *cure* insanity, but that it often *tends* in that direction—*i.e.*, it *favours* recovery, though it might (and I may add, probably would) be insufficient when used alone.

(3) I *did not* say, "that imminent insanity can often be aborted by measures of an analytical nature," but that "my work as a practical psychologist affords me abundant evidence that imminent insanity can often be aborted by measures" (not "means") "of a genuinely analytical nature (not Freudian) in association with constructive treatment of frequently hypnotic character." To say that 2 plus 2 equals 4 is not equivalent to saying

that 2 equals 4! At least, I have certainly been under that impression since very early childhood.

Now, perhaps, Mr. C. S. Fraser, if I am not asking too much, will be so good as to accede to my request to define those four words, "sanity," "insanity," "idea," "emotion."

J. LOUIS ORTON.

WAR AND POLICE.

SIR,—I am obliged for the copy of the *Freethinker* which you sent me, and much astonished at the quality of the comment on a recent speech of mine, to which you call my attention. Mr. Fraser, the author, blames me for a delusive use of analogy—that is, for making out that things are like which are in fact unlike. In this he obviously misunderstands my argument which ran thus:—

1. Crime in the national state is a breach of national law. Police are used both to prevent and to punish it. It would be much more prevalent but for the fact that the law is supported by force in the shape of police.

2. Aggressive war is a breach of international law (*vide* the Pact of Paris and the Covenant) in precisely the same sense as crime is a breach of national law; and international law cannot be effective in suppressing war without the support of force any more than national law would be effective in suppressing crime without the support of force.

3. It must therefore be recognized that without some effective organized force (by sea, land and air) to support international law and make breaches of it unprofitable there will be no security for peace.

Mr. Fraser condemns this as a false analogy, deliberately used to mislead. What of his own case? "Police," he says, "are specially organized to *prevent* crime, whereas armies are organized to *make* war" (his italics). It is sad to see so clear a thinker basing an argument on so palpable a half-truth, and not even realizing that the word "make" requires analysis. How many wars, I would ask, has the Swiss army "made" in its history?

The truth is that in the past armed force was mainly used for selfish and acquisitive purposes within single States as well as in the relation of States or rulers with each other. Within single States armed force, in the form of police, is now used mainly to defend the law and prevent violence—mainly, though not universally. In international relations armed force is still organized in some countries for the purpose of breaking international law; whereas in others it is quite sincerely organized for the purpose of defending international law and making breaches of it unprofitable. My argument is that armies should be used for the latter purpose only; but that those who organize them for the former purpose will continue to do so unless those who organize them for the latter purpose fulfil that purpose effectively.

There is an argument against this argument—the true pacifist argument that the use of force is in all circumstances wrong. But if that be true, the use of police is as much to be condemned as the use of armies. Mr. Fraser may possibly dispute the analogy between municipal and international law. If so, let him do so plainly. He has no right to suggest that I introduced a false analogy between those two forms of law by stealth, intending to mislead my hearers, since the essence of my argument was to proclaim the analogy and insist upon its truth.

EDWARD GRIGG.

I suspect that our local aspirants to the dictatorship of a Totalitarian England may find some useful support among the hearty life-changers of the Groupist Movement. For both parties believe in short cuts to secular or spiritual power; both are enemies of that self-sufficiency, that independence of mind and will which I take to be the most valuable of human characteristics. Both are romantics and appreciate the value of myth and magic. Both belong to the same school of No Thought.

Ivor Brown, "I Commit to the Flames."

Society News

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.

THE Seventh Annual General Meeting of Members was held on Sunday, April 8, about sixty per cent of the members being present, and a full Agenda was dealt with expeditiously. The President's Report was a very gratifying statement of the most successful year of activity yet achieved. Well-attended meetings, both outdoor and indoor, and a record sale of literature were a source of satisfaction, and should prove a spur to still greater efforts this year. The Financial Statement was also very pleasing, as the Branch had finished with a little in hand, and with every debt cleared.

For the current year the following were elected: President, Mr. J. V. Shortt; Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Ready, Mrs. Shortt, Mrs. Stafford, Mr. A. Jackson; Committee, Messrs. C. J. Harrison, W. McKelvie, J. J. McManus, W. I. Owen, W. Parry, E. P. Serjeant, and W. Wearing; Auditors, Messrs. H. Murphy and C. J. Harrison; Secretary, Mr. S. R. A. Ready, 29 Sycamore Road, Waterloo, Liverpool 22.

Messrs. W. I. Owen, S. R. A. Ready and J. V. Shortt were appointed as delegates to the 1934 Annual Conference.

The business of the Agenda was mainly devoted to arrangements for the running of the Branch during 1934-35, chief being the preliminaries for the outdoor season. One important change was made—the annual subscription was reduced from a minimum of eight shillings to a minimum of five shillings.

S. R. A. READY.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 27, 1934.

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Clifton, Wood, Ebury, Easterbrook (L.M.W.), McLaren, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted, the Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Birkenhead, Birmingham, Hants and Dorset, Chester, Glasgow Branches and the Parent Society. Reports and correspondence were dealt with from Liverpool, Burnley, Aberbargoed, North East Federation of N.S.S. Branches, Council for Civil Liberties, Miss K. B. Kough, and Mr. J. T. Brighton. The Secretary reported that arrangements for Mr. G. Whitehead's Summer work, from May to September, reaching from Plymouth to Glasgow, had been completed. The Annual Balance Sheet was before the meeting and accepted. The recommendations of the Committee for examining the Principles and Objects of the N.S.S., the Conference Agenda, and details in connexion with the Annual Conference were noted and some suggestions made.

The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—“Man and Woman.”

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.15, T. P. Palmer v. Arnold Lunn—“Evolution.”

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, Near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, May 6, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, May 8, Mr. C. Tuson. Stonhouse Road, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, May 9, Mr. C. Tuson. Alival Road, Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, May 11, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside the Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Collins. Platform No. 2, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Messrs. Wood, Hyatt and others. Wednesday, 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ACCRINGTON MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, May 6, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTHE (Market Place): 7.0, Monday May 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BOLDON (Nicholson's Corner): 7.0, Tuesday, May 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.30, Tuesday, May 8, Mr. J. Clayton.

CRAWSHAWBANK: 7.30, Monday, May 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 8.0, Mr. Robert Buntin and Mrs. M. Whitefield—“Secularism, Society and God.” *Freethinker* and *Freethought* literature on sale at all meetings.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, May 6—A Lecture. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, May 10—A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders—A Lecture.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Area): Mr. George Whitehead open a week's propaganda.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, May 5, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Wouldhave Memorial): 7.0, Mr. Flanders—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Sunday, May 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

TRAWDEN: 7.30, Friday, May 4, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEX EDUCATION CENTRE,
CENTURY THEATRE,

ARCHER STREET, WESTBOURNE GROVE, W.11.

Monday, May 7, 7.30. Discussion for women only. Opener JANET CHANCE. Admission 6d. Programme may be had on application.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN.

General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

MEMBERSHIP.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name

Address

Occupation

Dated this.....day of.....19..

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

MINERVA'S OWL

AND OTHER POEMS

By

BAYARD SIMMONS

A Poet of Ours . . . sceptical poets of whom Mr. Simmons is, among modern, by no means least. He has sense of form, grace of word, and vitality of spirit . . . a light, and sometimes, sprightly wit.—A. H., in the *Freethinker*.

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