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

Views and Opinions

The Blight of Belief

It is an established anthropological truth that cannibalism is of religious origin. Its beginning is rooted in the belief that man is literally what he eats, at least so far as that he absorbs the qualities of what is eaten. If the eaten one is strong, the eater partakes of his strength; if he is wise some portion of the wisdom of what is eaten passes into the eater. As the intelligence of the race develops this primitive and crude belief is toned down in one direction and elaborated in another. A vague and nebulous supernaturalism becomes an elaborated religion with much ritual and much "rationalizing" of primitive customs and beliefs. The cannibalistic act must be performed only in a certain way, at certain times and with selected persons. The victim becomes a "sacred" person, the sacrifice becomes the important thing, because it is the sacrifice that endows the victim with the qualities which they who partake of the sacrifice hope to acquire.

In a great many of the religions of the ancient world this belief is found in active operation. Nearly all the "mystery religions" have it, and it is evident in the earliest forms of the Christian religion. Sometimes the sacrificed victim is an actual human being, sometimes it is an animal, sometimes a living victim is omitted altogether, and there is a symbolical representation of what was once a very horrible fact; but running through all is the belief that they who partake of the sacrifice are endowed with certain qualities which they would not otherwise have. When we enter the stage at which the Christian religion appears, the belief has been elaborated in a form which is still expressed in the hymns that gloat over the blood of Jesus, and is preserved in the doctrine of the Mass, in which the flesh and blood of the God is eaten and drunk, either literally or symbolically. There was, indeed, no need for Jesus Christ to be a God before the crucifixion, and if he ever existed, it is unlikely that anyone recognized him as such. A messenger

from God, maybe, but that is a different thing. It was the sacrifice that made him a God, and after his sacrificial death, we have the primitive cannibalistic rite performed in a modified form at the last supper.

All this is a very old story, and a very familiar one to those who *understand*, even though it is not familiar to those who merely *believe* in the Christian faith. And it is of importance to what is to follow to bear in mind the fact that while advancing culture compels religionists to modify their actual practices, we have evidence of their one-time reality in the language, and the symbology of religion. It is worth noting that one of the commonest of charges brought against the early Christians was that at their secret meetings they actually offered as a sacrifice a human being, usually a child, and then ate its flesh and drank its blood. Human sacrifice, and religious cannibalism is thus deeply imbedded in Christianity as ideas, and is exhibited in its doctrines, in its basic beliefs, and in its hymnology. In practice it is only found to-day with atavistic or pathologic individuals who occasionally lapse into a literal acceptance of teachings that have with others been reduced to poetical expressions, although occasionally some queer sects crop up with the original thing as a recurring feature in their ceremonies. But every time a Christian takes the bread and wine, and in doing so believes that he is, either actually or symbolically, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of his God, he is bearing witness to the nature of a belief of the origin of which he is, of course, profoundly ignorant. And when Jesus gave bread to his disciples and said, "This is my body," and wine, and said, "This is my blood," the New Testament is illustrating that reversion to a more primitive state of culture, of which early Christianity offers so many illustrations.

* * *

Barbarism in Germany

Now this blood rite theory has been revived against the Jews in Germany, under the Hitler regime. There is nothing new in this. Time after time the charge of killing a child for sacrificial purposes has been brought against the Jews, and in various parts of Europe has been used to incite to massacre. Less than sixty years ago there were actually some Jews tried for this offence in a German Court. That this monstrous story should again be set going in Fascist Germany is in line with the brutal barbarity which characterizes what Lord Rothermere's papers describe as the best governed country in Europe, and with which our own Fascists are in very close "spiritual" sympathy, even if their association is not of a more intimate character. The man in charge of the anti-Jew campaign in Germany is Julius Streicher. He holds one of the highest positions in the country, he is an intimate of Hitler, and the

editor of several papers, the most notorious of which is *Der Stürmer*. Streicher is an ex-teacher who was expelled from his profession some years ago on account of his irresponsible character. A medical report declared he was not responsible for his actions, that he was suffering from progressive paralysis, and was subject to hallucinations. In 1931 this sadistic semi-lunatic was placed in charge of the "Brown House," and was made responsible for the campaign against the Jews. He has never had a word said against him by our own Fascists—although they have indicated, rather faintly, that they have no desire to persecute Jews in England—provided they behave as good Mosleyites should behave. Streicher's papers have of late been full of this old religious story of sacrificial blood, and there have been both accounts of pictures and letterpress of Jews slaughtering Christian children, eating their flesh and drinking their blood. One can quite believe that even decent Nazis are filled with shame when they see Streicher's publications, but decent men and women must keep very silent under German Fascism if they are to remain alive. This campaign of Hitler and Streicher is, as the *Times* says, of such a "pornographic" and "prurient" character, that it appeals to "a certain kind of depraved mind," and from the issue for February 7, it cites the following:—

Against race violators and sexual criminals a new law has been created. It shall protect the German people and the Aryan race. It is the law of castration. Our knowledge of the Jewish question has led us to the opinion that all Jews, in fact, should be castrated.

These papers are being circulated in England (we have in London an agency for Nazi propaganda), and in the House of Commons, on May 15, Commander Locker-Lampson asked the Home Secretary whether he would prevent the circulation of such a paper among the English public, as it might give rise to ill-feeling. I hope that the Government will do nothing of the kind. The story of the Jews killing human beings and eating their flesh and drinking their blood as part of their religious ceremonies, is about as likely to affect decent-minded men and women, as would be the tale that Christians were literally eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a ceremonially slain man when the ceremony of the mass is performed. Fortunately England is not yet Fascist, and until it is we may trust to the decency of men and women to treat these tales for what they are worth—as indications of the character of those who tell them, rather than of those against whom they are told. If I had the power I would circulate the journals of this syphilitic, sadistic, degenerate brute throughout the length and breadth of Britain—even at the risk of offending Lord Rothermere—and thus lay bare the nature of the people who are controlling the "best governed country in Europe." The more stupid a tale is, the more monstrous the lie, the more absurd the story, the greater the publicity that should be given it. But I see by later news that Hitler has now ordered the confiscation of this particular issue of *Der Stürmer*, for even he has had to bow before the indignant comments of the foreign press, and that of the better type of Germans. But Hitler was mainly responsible for the persecution that has gone on. He said nothing during the weeks this filthy publication was being circulated, and his close friend, Streicher, still holds the principal post in Bavaria. We said some weeks ago, that the longer the Fascist rule endures the poorer becomes the type that upholds it. Events are proving the truth of what we then said.

The Appeal to Religion

And the moral of it all? Well, I have headed these notes "The Blight of Belief," and terrible as is the story that present-day Germany is writing in its brutal war upon the intellectual and literary life of the country, I wish to note one of its features because the *Freethinker* is the only paper in this country that is likely to do so. Religion, as I have so often pointed out, belongs to the earliest manifestations of man's conscious life. Its doctrines and specific beliefs are fashioned under the fear of giving offence to those supernatural beings who are believed to control everything. And in connexion with these religious beliefs there grow up a cluster of practices which to-day are taken as unmistakable manifestations of the savage. Cannibalism, the killing of the aged, the sacrifice of human beings, the growth of intolerance and the practice of persecution, all root originally in religious belief. In course of time religion is controlled, more or less effectively, by the developing social sense of the Community, but it is suppressed rather than eliminated, and it is always there to be awakened into virulent activity. It hates as nothing else hates, it can be intolerant as nothing else can be intolerant, it can be cruel with all the ferocity that springs from a distorted sense of right and duty. And it will be noted that in the sadistic indecency of the Hitler-Streicher campaign the appeal is directly to what is substantially religious feelings. It is the old religious feeling that is being stirred up against the Jew. It is the religious tribal feeling that is being evoked in this absurd Aryan campaign, a campaign that aims at establishing the supremacy of a "race" that is as mythical as Santa Claus. It is part of the blight that religion casts over a people. So long as religion, even in a dormant state, remains with masses of the people, so long it can be roused to evil. It is not by the mere destruction of specific doctrines and precise beliefs that one can hope completely to destroy religion. This can only be done by a complete re-orientation of both convictions and beliefs.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Another Atheist Poet

"Swinburne was the greatest of our lyrical poets—of the world's, I should say, considering what a language he had to wield."—George Meredith.

"We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions."—G. W. Foote.

SINCE Shelley no poet sings more loftily, or with more fiery passion, or with finer thought, than Swinburne when arraiging Priestcraft at the bar of Humanity. The critical reaction against some of the pettiness of the nineteenth century has in nothing been more noticeable than in its treatment of Swinburne who was a great as well as a most melodious poet.

A red Republican in his University days, Swinburne imperilled his position by his outspokenness. He displayed boldly in his rooms a portrait of Orsini, who attempted to assassinate Napoleon the Third. So well known were the young poet's political views that he was actually invited to stand for Parliament by the Reform League, but, on the advice of Mazzini, he declined wisely to give up poetry for the political arena.

It was the publication of *Poems and Ballads* that caused Swinburne to become famous in a night. No such tumult had been caused in literary circles since the appearance of Byron's *Don Juan*. The air resounded with clamour, and Swinburne's vogue became extraordinary. Robert Buchanan voiced the respectable view in an article, entitled *The Fleshey*

School of Poetry, and complained that *Poems and Ballads* were unfit reading for the young. Swinburne's reply was crushing: "I do not write for school-girls, I leave that to the Buchanans." Some idea of the poet's influence may be gathered from Scott-Holland's statement that young University students shouted the poems, sang them, and even attempted to imitate them. Not only the "curl'd perfume'd darlings" of Cambridge and Oxford were affected by the poet's verse, for G. W. Foote has told us how the poet's lyrics roused him like a trumpet-call. One memorable day, the future Freethought leader, then a young man, recited Swinburne's *Mater Triumphalis* on the hills outside Edinburgh, whilst his life-long friend Joseph Wheeler, lay on the grass at his feet and applauded.

Some of Swinburne's most heretical poems are to be found in *Songs before Sunrise*. The *Hymn to Man* is frankly, even triumphantly, Atheistic. In the *Prelude* he writes:—

"Because man's soul is man's god still,
What wind soever waft his will,
Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led."

In another passage he treats the priests with fearful derision. He represents them calling on their deity, and he says, "Cry aloud, for the people blaspheme," and he concludes:—

"Thou art smitten, thou God; thou art smitten; thy death
is upon thee, O Lord;
And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through
the wind of her wings—
Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of
things."

In his lines apostrophizing the figure of Christ on the Cross, he says with Voltairean bitterness:—

"Thy blood the priests make poison of,
And in gold shekels coin thy love."

The poet's scorn draws no distinction between the Priests and their deity:—

"No soul that lived, wrought, and died,
Is this their carrion crucified."

Swinburne regarded prayer as folly and he vents his scorn in music:—

"Behold there is no grief like this;
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in the air?
Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate.
And these shall answer you again,
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?"

In the *Hymn to Proserpine*, he sings:—

"O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all
knees bend;
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the
end."

In another poem, *Song in Time of Order*, he breaks out:—

"We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the King,
And the lie at the lips of the priest."

Henceforth, until his seventieth year, Swinburne was an acknowledged force in European literature, and men came to think of him with Shelley, with Wordsworth, as one of the singers who mark an era. For two whole generations he upheld that splendid tradition of Liberty, and gave us poems, poetic plays, and criticisms, which breathed into our literature new harmonies and the spirit of revolution. It is the simple truth to say that, had not Swinburne lived, the world would have been largely ignorant of the infinite flexibility and potentialities of the English language,

for he blew all things to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius. He enlarged the frontiers of poetry, although men of rare genius had ransacked verse for centuries before he was born. Compared to Swinburne, Keats and Coleridge are poor of resource, limited in range, timid in execution. This is not to say that Swinburne has excelled them in ideas or melody, only that he was master in the use of a far wider choice of instruments.

One quality of Swinburne's writing leaps to the eye of the dullest reader. It is his enthusiasm for right causes. The warmth of his praise is an endless delight. How he has sung the praises of Cromwell and Milton, of Shelley and Landor, of Whitman and Victor Hugo is well known. More enduring than the marble of the Genoese monument are those lovely lyrics of which Mazzini and the cause to which he dedicated his life were the inspiration. The love of Liberty has been a common possession of our greatest poets, and hardly one of them has failed to give splendid expression to this feeling. But Swinburne has surpassed them all in the ardour of his devotion, and in the rapture of his praise:—

"The very thought in us how much we love thee
Makes the throat sob with love, and blinds the eyes."

It comes to this in the end. The greatest poet of the latter part of the nineteenth century was an avowed Freethinker and unabashed Republican. In his unforgettable verse we find the most magnificent expression of the claims of the indomitable human spirit which stands erect in the presence of adverse fortune and bids defiance to all malign fates. It was a most animating message that the leaders of the great French Revolution bequeathed as a legacy to the nineteenth century. Equally inspiring is the message which this great poet of the nineteenth century brought to the twentieth as a gift:—

"Our glorious century gone,
Behold no head that shone
More clear across the storm, above the foam,
More steadfast in the fight
Of warring night and light,
True to the truth whose star leads heroes home."

MIMNERMUS.

The Literal and the Metaphorical

IN two earlier articles ("Definition and Meaning"), I drew attention to the necessity for possessing clear and intelligibly definable meanings for the words we use, if we aim to think and reason logically. To facilitate the acquisition of clear meanings it is advisable not only to know how they are established in the mind, but also to understand the causes which produce differences of meaning between individuals and change of meaning from one generation to another. Some of these I have already indicated. In the present article I wish to enlarge on one particular aspect of the use of words which tends to variation in meaning, and which, unless we understand its method of operation, may lead to confusion and needless disagreement in discussion.

Although I have shown that no person can have *exactly the same* meaning for a word as any other person, yet I pointed out that the meanings of two different people can be *very similar*. This also applies to fairly large social or territorial groups of persons; and when it occurs, a word is said to have a *commonly accepted meaning*. This phrase does not imply that a meaning is in any way inherent in, or a permanent quality of, the word itself. All that it implies is that at a given time each individual possesses a meaning for a word which is so similar to the mean-

ing of every other individual in the group that, for most practical purposes, definition is not called for.

The extent to which any particular meaning is commonly accepted can never be precisely ascertained. All that one can do is to arrive at an approximation from personal experience in conversation with others or by reference to up-to-date books. With words that are unfamiliar to us, we are less likely to be dogmatic about what we consider to be its common meaning. But with the majority of words which we use, most of us reach a definite approximation at a fairly early age. And it is these meanings which I call the primary or *literal* meanings of words. Stated in another way we may say that *when a word is presented without context the first definition which a person would give would be a definition of his literal meaning.*

This rule has no genuine exceptions. The only apparent exceptions are those in which two different words are spelt in the same way when written, or pronounced in the same way when spoken. Thus the word "sole" as a noun may mean the bottom part of a boot, shoe or foot; or it may mean a fish; or, if it is spoken, it may also mean that part of a human being which is alleged to live after death (soul). As an adjective it means "single" or "only." These are all literal meanings of what would appear to be one word. But we are justified in declaring that each is a distinct word which happens, through the accident of circumstances, to be spelt or pronounced the same.

In actual practice words are never presented to us, or used by us, without some context, either verbal or factual. Consequently, whatever meaning we may assign to a word apart from its context, its precise meaning when in use is always determined by the context in which it appears. In most cases the context is enough to enable us to distinguish clearly between two different words that are spelt or pronounced the same. Thus in the sentence, "My foot measures two inches less than a foot," there is not likely to be any confusion between the first "foot" (meaning the lowest portion of the human anatomy), and the second (meaning a unit of measurement). But in other cases the context is not always sufficiently clear to help us make this distinction. Thus we sometimes find the phrases "the laws of nature," and "the laws of God" used together in such a way that we are led to believe the word "law" to be the same word in each case. A little practice in definition, however, would at once dispel this illusion. In the first case the word would be recognized as meaning "a formula which seeks to provide a single explanation for a number of diverse phenomena"; and in the second case "a rule of action issued by some authority."

It will be seen how easily in this way the literal meanings of words may become slightly, or even greatly, varied. It is, indeed, the context and nothing else which is responsible for the growth of what I call *secondary* or *subsidiary* meanings. And it is these secondary or subsidiary meanings which permit us to use words in a metaphorical way. Apart from different words that are spelt or pronounced in the same way, the question arises: How are we to determine whether a word is being used literally or metaphorically? Let us take a concrete case for analysis and see whether any useful criteria can be discovered.

Personally I use the word "ripe" in the literal sense as an adjective that describes fruit at a stage of growth when they are most suitable for consumption by human beings. I will now give four sentences in which this adjective is used, though not necessarily in my literal sense:—

(1) That apple is ripe.

(2) Those rowan-berries are ripe.

(3) That cheese is ripe.

(4) The time is ripe for action.

Analysis shows that my literal meaning fits perfectly into the context of the first example. In that case, therefore, I can say that I am using the word *literally*. In the second sentence I would not wish to imply that the berries were humanly edible, so my meaning would differ from the literal meaning to the extent of omitting the words "by human beings." This is what I call a *secondary* or *subsidiary* meaning. Yet it is so near to my literal meaning that few people would be likely to regard its use in this case as being anything other than literal. But if I were afraid of being misunderstood, as I might be by a child who had acquired the same literal meaning as myself, I would feel called upon to make myself clear by adding some such qualification as: "But don't eat them because they are poisonous." In other words, having recognized that I am not using the adjective in a strictly literal sense, I am compelled to qualify my meaning or to explain the extent to which it differs from the literal.

In the third sentence the difference in meaning arises from the fact that I am not using the adjective to describe "fruit." I am, in fact, omitting a part of my literal meaning which I consider to be essential to that meaning. And this is still more clear in the fourth sentence where my literal meaning has been cut down until only the words "at a stage most suitable" are left. I would therefore personally consider that in both these cases I was using the word "ripe" *metaphorically*.

It will be seen from this analysis that, once having provided ourselves with clearly formulated definitions of our literal meanings, we are in a position to discover whether we are using a word in a literal or a non-literal sense. So we obtain this criterion: *If in a given context the literal meaning of a word does not fit exactly, then we are using that word either in a secondary or metaphorical sense.* (I am, of course, purposely ignoring those cases in which words are being misused.) Besides this we note that, *if we use a word in a secondary sense which is liable to be mistaken for its literal sense, we should always make our divergence from the literal clear by further definition.* Having found that a word is not being used literally, nor in a sense which is so near the literal that it needs qualification, we are then in a position to declare that it is being used *metaphorically*. And we may verify this by two further criteria. (1) *When the literal meaning of a word would make nonsense of the context in which it appears, then (apart from actual misuse) we know that the word is being used metaphorically.* And (2) *when, on definition, it is found that the meaning of a word is a curtailed or limited form of its literal meaning, such that some material element of the latter has been omitted, then we know that the word is being used metaphorically.*

The use of secondary or metaphorical meanings often tends to destroy the literal meanings by superseding them in popular favour. Thus the adjective "cunning" which formerly meant nothing worse than "skilful" or "clever," now has the literal meaning of "clever in a sly or deceitful way." Another interesting example is the verb "to prevent." At present it means literally "to stop from doing, or happening." Formerly it meant literally "to guide," and it is still used in this sense in the archaic terminology of the Anglican prayer-book. The prayer which begins: "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings," has been misunderstood by more than one child who was compelled to attend church services. If we try to bridge the gap between the former and the present literal meanings of this verb,

we might get a graduated series of this sort. To guide; to go ahead of; to get in front of; to get in the way of; to obstruct; to hinder; to stop from doing (or happening). At any given time the first of any two consecutive meanings would be strictly literal, the second more or less metaphorical.

In poetry and in writings or utterances that do not purport to be dealing logically with problems of thought or action, the use of metaphor is often a convenience, and is sometimes regarded as a beauty. Apart from this, metaphor presents almost as many dangers as analogy. There is, indeed, much similarity between the two forms of speech. As an example we may take the saying: "The scum of society always rises to the top." Literally *scum* means "the impure or offensive elements of a liquid which rise to its surface." As used in this saying, the part which refers to "liquids" in the literal meaning is omitted and the remainder is kept. By using all the criteria previously mentioned, we recognize that the word is being used metaphorically. Analogically stated, the saying might be worded thus: "Just as scum always rises to the surface of liquids, so do offensive persons always rise to the upper grades of society." The weakness of this analogy, if it is not obvious to the reader, may easily be exposed by the methods outlined in my article on "The Dangers of Analogy" (*Freethinker*, April 22, 1934). Its absurdity may be emphasized by the similar metaphor: "The dregs of society always sink to the bottom."

One authority on language has declared that all statements are metaphorical, and that the sentence "sugar is sweet" is no more literal than the sentence, "that man is an ass." But if this is true, then there would be no difference in meaning between the words *literal* and *metaphorical*; and it would be equally true to declare that all statements are literal. The fact is that this authority, like so many others, had never troubled to form clear definitions of the terms he used. And because of the gradual steps by which meaning may diverge from the literal to the non-literal, he was deceived into supposing that no possible distinction could be made between the literal and the metaphorical.

It is of considerable importance, therefore, that those who are anxious to reason logically should make it their business to formulate clear definitions of the words they use. For only in this way will they develop that clarity of thought which will enable them to discern the linguistic traps that so often occur as a result of the use of words in their secondary or metaphorical meanings.

C. S. FRASER.

Freethought and Dictatorship

Is a dictatorship necessarily bad? Or shall we judge its character from its behaviour? Does the bare fact of it being a dictatorship condemn it from the start? Or shall we wait to see what it does before passing a verdict? Is there that in its *character as such*, which precludes any good arising from the *character of such*? Or may the dictatorship be vindicated by taking its functioning as the criterion of its worth?

In a word, shall our opinion be determined by considerations *a priori* or *a posteriori*?

And when I say "our," I mean the opinions of Freethinkers, interested in the safeguarding of Freethought.

Can Freethought exist in harmony with a dictatorship? Or does a dictatorship, whatever its subsequent nature, render freedom of thought impossible to flourish.

This is not to enquire whether the dictatorship is for "social good"; they can all safely affect that. It is to establish a definite criterion of "social good." It is to ask whether a dictatorship is compatible with the healthy mental attitude of Freethought.

What we want is freedom of discussion without penalty for the expression of opinion, or for the exercise of individual liberties which does not impede the liberties of others; and hence the opportunity to persuade others by reasoning with them, or to be oneself persuaded. This is Freethought, and should not be confused with the "freedom" to put into practice our opinions regardless of the well-being of others. That is chaos. Agreed? Then let us continue.

What is a dictatorship? That is, what is the essence of any dictatorship *irrespective* of the aims it pursues? Here is a provisional definition: It is the exercise of uncontrolled power over the people, the weapon being punishment of adverse criticism. This definition makes intolerance an essential feature of dictatorship.

Where intolerance is, Freethought cannot be. Hence, on this view freedom of thought cannot exist in harmony with a dictatorship. On this definition, therefore, we shall expect suppression of beliefs. Now from the general to the particular. Do we find intolerance and suppression in Russia? On January 19, 1917, the Church Patriarch in Russia publicly anathematized the revolutionary Government, threatening it with "hell-fire excommunication." "We ask all faithful children of the Orthodox Church not to have anything to do with these monsters of the human race." As if in reply, the revolutionary Government, on January 23, published its decree on freedom of conscience and religious societies, recognizing legal equality of all religious cults, with preference to none, and tolerating every form of religious custom and ceremony which did not disturb the public peace.

I pick up books like Dr. Hecker's recent *Religion and Communism*,¹ which is a study of religion under Soviet Russia, where the author, himself a religionist, has peaceably spent the last fifteen years; and find there is every indication that Christians may peaceably pursue their customs and ceremonies. If their adherents grow less, we must look, not to vicious suppression, but to secular education and the absence of social props. The Russian youth of eighteen may indulge in as much religion as he pleases.

Do these conditions obtain in Germany and Italy?² If not, then we cannot class Russia with them, under our present definition of dictatorship.

Was the definition faulty, then? If so, what definition of a dictatorship *would* put Russia with Germany? Take the following: A dictatorship is rule without regard to the opinion of the majority.

Now to say that this form of government is *necessarily* bad, is to commit yourself to saying that a government in which the opinions of the majority are the deciding factor, is *a priori*—necessarily—the best form of government, *i.e.*, Democracy, no matter how it functions is inherently the best form of government.

All history gives the lie to the theory that numbers are a guarantee of wisdom in government.

Therefore, though I should on *a priori* grounds suspect a government of the majority, I should not finally condemn it until I had seen how it functioned. For instance, I see our present English democracy riddled with petty dictatorships of an intolerant nature—Sir John Reith, the Archbishop of Canter-

¹ See also *Russia To-day*, periodical.

² The continued existence of the Atheist paper, *La Critica*, is apparently attributable to the high repute of its editor, Benedetto Croce, in centres of learning.

bury, the Press dictators, even one so far away as the Vatican. The apathetic mass will respond to an appeal, not to the head, but to the belly.

Is there anything to be said in favour of Democracy, *as such*? (I am not bound to suppose it is a well-educated one). Yes, there is a case. The chances of coercion, it is held, are less when the people itself has the authoritative vote. But even this may result in a "dictatorship" of the many over the few; the majority may coerce the minority, *i.e.*, may unnecessarily infringe on their liberties; and Freethought is no safer than before.

It is the fact of intolerance, not the number of its victims, that is the issue.

So that *no* form of government, whether Dictatorship, Democracy, or what-not, is, so far as Freethought is concerned, to be preferred over another, *before consulting its record*, *i.e.*, irrespective of its aims (unless its definition includes intolerance).

Hence, my condemnation is not of Democracy in the abstract, but of this and that specific application of it. Similarly my condemnation of a Dictatorship must follow the study of how it behaves; unless we include intolerance in the definition, in which case it is necessarily inimical to freedom of thought, and can straightway be condemned.

Conclusion. If in our definition of dictatorship we include intolerance and suppression, then the inclusion of Russia in that category is, in view of Hecker's book (and others) extremely questionable. It is safer to take liberties with one's friends than with one's enemies, true, but we are risking doing them an injustice.

G. H. TAYLOR.

National Secular Society

EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE PRESIDENT

THE period covered by this report has not been prolific in spectacular events, but it nevertheless is full of significance for the future of our movement. Everything points to the fact that we are approaching a testing time, and it is well that we should be at least ready for whatever the future has in store. For this reason, and also because members are kept informed through the columns of the *Freethinker* of everything of importance to our special work, it is necessary to take no more than a very general survey of the year's operations.

During the year the Executive has been directly responsible for the delivery of over 500 lectures—an increase on the figures for last year. The majority of these were delivered in the open air, but a number of indoor meetings were held in good halls, and in very many cases to large audiences. Sometimes people had to be refused admission. So far as the direct responsibility of the Executive is concerned a great deal of the open air work has been done by Mr. George Whitehead, who has a full-time roving commission, by Mr. Jack Clayton, whose sphere of operations lies in Lancashire, and Mr. J. T. Brighton who covers Durham and Northumberland. The reports of the work done are all satisfactory. Mr. Clayton ploughs a generally lonely furrow, but is making good headway. Mr. Brighton is working with a number of other speakers, and in this case the Executive is helped by an old Tyneside stalwart, Mr. J. Bartram, whose long experience in the district is of value to everyone concerned. There are several new speakers at work in this district, to whom only this general acknowledgment of their efforts can here be made.

The growth of this work undertaken by the Executive, a comparatively new feature in the history of this

Society, is one that is worth emphasizing, if only because it means a largely increased expenditure of cash, and a much larger expenditure of energy at headquarters. The latter can be attended to without much trouble, but it is well to call the attention of subscribers to the financial aspect of the operations. This side of our propaganda will grow, not diminish, and it is desirable that it should develop.

The work of the Branches throughout the country has proceeded with commendable success. Very much more might and ought to be done in Scotland, but the Glasgow Branch is hard at work, and has found its removal to a larger and better-situated meeting-place in every way beneficial. Liverpool and Manchester each report a good season's work, with some meetings that have broken all records. Other Branches while having nothing very special to mention are pursuing their regular tasks, with generally satisfactory results. The new Branch in Dublin is very active, and has met with some very bitter opposition from the press, which is largely under priestly influence. But a very energetic literature campaign is being carried on, and that must result in the growth of a healthy—the Church would probably call it an unhealthy—state of opinion.

Once again the Executive feel that its duty is to place on record how much our Society owes to those men and women in the country who so generously give their services to the Cause. It is gratifying to say that this kind of help, involving as it does much hard work and some expense, is performed by too great a number for individual mention, but it may be enough to say that their work is invaluable to the Cause, and without it the business of our movement could not be carried on.

During the past year we have had the pleasure of welcoming the usual number of new members, but we have also had to say good-bye to many old ones. Among those on whom death has laid his hands we may note Mr. G. Alward, of Grimsby, a staunch Freethinker of the Bradlaugh days. Mr. Alward, despite his advanced age, was a frequent visitor to the Society's functions in London. He was a much respected man in his "home town," where his opinions were well known and his character highly respected. Mr. Philip G. Peabody is another of whom death has robbed the movement. Mr. Peabody was a member of a well-known American family, and a very frequent visitor to this country. He was a great admirer of the *Freethinker*, and one of the largest subscribers to the "Freethinker Endowment Trust." Mr. Peabody's generosity was not felt merely in connexion with Freethought. He was a regular subscriber to many humanitarian movements in this country, in the United States, and elsewhere. A man of simple habits, and of unimpeachable character, his death has removed one whose loss will be felt in many directions.

It has been said that the past year has not been rich in events, but there are two which call for special mention. These were the Centenaries of the Births of Charles Bradlaugh and Robert Green Ingersoll—two of the outstanding figures in the world of nineteenth century Freethought.

Colonel Ingersoll was probably as well-known in this country as in his native America, and he may safely be reckoned as the most influential propagandist of the Freethought of his time among the English-speaking peoples. Of a commanding presence, genial disposition, and the widest human sympathies, he possessed a wit and eloquence that veiled profound thought under a graceful phrasing which captured the love and admiration of his friends, and moved his enemies to despair. The centenary of his birth re-

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Acid Drops

We have very little sympathy with the outcry against certain religious bodies having their money invested in companies that make war material. It is one of those exhibitions which prove the inability of most people to do five minutes clear thinking, and their liability to be led away by any unreasoning piece of sentimentality. What is an organization to do with its funds? If it puts it into any business connected with chemicals, that is a business that stands to gain by war scares. Put it into shipyards, and these build either war vessels, or commercial ones that may be subsidized by the Government for use if war comes, or will be engaged in carrying war materials all over the world. Put it into anything connected with iron or steel or nickel, and there is the same gain from war-talk or from war. So one might go from industry to industry and show that one must reach the same conclusion, even if it is only cocoa that is to be used in feeding the troops, or clothes that may be worn by them. Or if the money is placed in the bank, with or without interest, the banks will use the money to invest in concerns that are directly connected with war, and will even finance countries to make war. And if it is placed in Government stock, it will still be used for war—when required.

All this talk about having nothing to do with war sounds well, but it is war sound and nothing else. One cannot live in a country where war is being thought of or prepared for without being either a loser or a gainer by it. The fact that people think they can stand aloof from war, simply shows the small capacity that exists for sound thinking. The way to end war, the only way to end war, is to kill the war-mind, and to kill the constant advertising of war that goes on. For years we have been almost alone in protesting against the advertising of war that goes on at Armistice Day, in military tattoos, in that goes on at Armistice Day, in military tattoos, in naval displays, in the parade of soldiers at civic ceremonies, in the talk that goes on of the heroism of war, in replacing the soldier in the front in all our national ceremonies. It is nonsense to imagine that one can live in a country and separate oneself from the life of that country, whether in times of war or peace. But we can do our best by word and action to make war appear the cowardly and contemptible thing it is. We can fight against all encouragements to militarism, while we are at peace, and when we are at war we can, if we have courage enough, continue to maintain that war leads to nothing but disaster and degradation.

Consider: everyone knows that a great blow would be struck at the encouragement to war if the private manufacture of arms were forbidden. How many will make that a point in their political agitation in the next general election? Anyone who wishes to know can know that the Treaty of Versailles distinctly forbade military drill of any description to be carried on in any educational establishment in Germany, because such drill was a direct encouragement to militarism. How many will agitate for this rule being applied to this country? How many will protest against taking crowds of boys and girls to see the military tattoo at Aldershot—the main purpose of which is to create an enthusiasm for the army? How many engaged in work connected with civil bodies will protest against military escorts at civic functions, or absent themselves as a protest, if the practice is persisted in? No general agitation of this kind will be carried on. Resolutions hoping that the Government will do its best to promote the cause of peace, when this same Government permits Germany to be supplied with aeroplane engines, which may be used for bombing machines, and to supply any country in the world that cares to go to war with war materials, and then argues that we must have increased armaments because we need protection against the military engines we have just sold, and insists also on making it a criminal offence that war is a beastly thing, and leads to no profitable result. And those who are protesting against a religious organization investing its funds will rest content if the money is taken out of Vickers and invested in Govern-

ment stock, which means that the investment will be used to buy war-material of Vickers and other munition-making firms.

The "Religious Editor" of the *News-Chronicle* made a poor affair of his first "innings." Three insignificant items of stale news which anybody could have copied from the smallest religious weekly, and being behind with the news even of the "Higgins" resignation. What a wash-out! We notice there is no change in the other parts of the same "daily": the murder serial, the money changers' columns run on, racing "as usual." Religion is just one item amongst many.

A merry party of British-Israelites met last week to hear a lecture by Mr. (we hesitate to say "Rev.," in view of recent protests) Ben J. Allen, who outlined "God's Plan." The report says that he predicted that "Christ was coming, and everything He objected to was going to be kicked out." Quite a characteristic of divine "plans" in general. Goering and God?

The new vicar of Furzedown, Rev. E. Henson, is announced as "fearless and unconventional." Here is the first "flower of speech" from the fearless one. "Nowadays, people seem drunk with amusements . . . even a child of fourteen is blasé in these days." All that this paid preacher means is that his antics no longer amuse grown-ups, and that even a child of fourteen knows what a fraud his creed is. If he is unconventional, he probably doesn't believe in it himself.

Five thousand men, women and children grovelled in the dust, the other day, to receive the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament outside Tyburn Convent, near the Marble Arch. Beautiful pictures of this crowd grovelling appeared in many of our national papers, and nobody seemed surprised. But had 5,000 "savages" been caught by the camera in a similar attitude before some pagan deity there would have been roars of laughter at their stupidity and credulity. We wish some good Catholic would tell us the difference between a white man grovelling in front of a crucifix and a black man grovelling in front of a stone. We see none whatever.

The Rev. J. O. Hornabrook raises the question, "Is Methodism able to pay its way?" He intimates that material economies will be needed, he admits that Methodism is suffering both from depleted funds and smaller attendances than before the war. One instance he gives which could be duplicated over and over again in many if not all religious sects. "In a certain Northern town, there are eight Methodist chapels within a square mile, with seating accommodation for five thousand people. The total congregations do not number five hundred. There are twenty thousand people within half a mile radius" . . . "The obvious thing is to scrap all eight chapels." We agree, but why not "scrap the lot" everywhere?

The vicar of Immanuel, Streatham, Rev. Porter Goff, does not like spiritualism. Of course it is all *true* enough, but "not in a dark room, but at the altar in our Church," there "we shall find ourselves in communication with the spirit world." Trade competition, apparently.

Religion seems to have had a nasty set-back in parts of America. The Rev. Dr. Truett, of Texas, says, "Our wealthy Baptists have suffered heavily. Men who used to hand us out great sums of money do not have a lead pencil left." Do they get "stung" so badly? Wealthy Americans will have to attend another Church if Baptists hold them up like this.

We welcome any steps which will secure permanent peace, but it is silly for Christians to talk rubbish about that being the aim or the message of religion. The Bishop

of Ripon imagines that "every time we say 'Our Father,' we are helping the cause of peace. As if family quarrels are not the worst of all fights sometimes. When will Christians learn that "Our Father" and "Our brethren," and "Our nation," are the very phrases of war, not of Peace at all. As an American humorist sagaciously said, Negroes are not our brothers nor our sisters nor our wives, but we are going to free them all the same. It is a poor pacifist who insists on some blood relationship being established and proved before we can make peace with anybody.

Aimee Macpherson, the American evangelist, advocates sterilization as an aid to health, says an American paper. Mrs. Macpherson declares that she has seen in her Temple three generations of idiots. We do not doubt it, but how otherwise would Aimee have got her temple filled? It looks as though she is getting tired of the game. In this country parsons would welcome successive generations of any kind that would stick to the Church, and the last thing that preachers complain is the poor mental quality of their supporters. But Aimee ought to thank God for the obvious help he has given her in her work.

Mrs. Marston Acres, discussing the question of women as preachers and priests, the other day, said that "the only reason why Our Lord did not take a woman disciple was because a woman's word was not acceptable as legal evidence in those days." Whether this correctly gives the reason why some of the Twelve were not women, we have no means of knowing, but, Bible in hand, a good many of the early Church Fathers attacked the fair sex with a foulness that would surprise most women, even including Mrs. Marston Acres. For the rest, we can see no reason whatever why women should not be priests, cardinals or popes. What wonderful confessors they would make! Needless to say, Mrs. Acres was strongly opposed by a mere male, the rector of Pitsea. Admitting women into the ministry, he declared, would drive three parts of its members from the English Church, and he, for one, would have seriously to consider his position. But as most of the positions in which man has firmly entrenched himself has been stormed by woman, we anticipate her victory again in this case. Why not?

Mr. Alfred Noyes has just written a book called the *Unknown God*. As a good Roman Catholic convert Mr. Noyes must surely *know* God—or, at least, claim he knows God, through Christ Jesus, His Blessed Son, etc. However, it seems that like so many of the *intelligentsia* who have nowadays fallen headlong into the Catholic Church, Mr. Noyes discovers that he was once sceptical in very early youth, and he was forced "by purely critical thought to accept the implicit Christian philosophy." He came up against Darwin, Huxley and Spencer, but found that "the opposition with which they were engaged was not really Christianity at all, but simply scientific dogmas of the generation that preceded their own work." Poor Darwin, Huxley and Spencer! When one thinks that they were not fighting Christianity at all, but "scientific dogmas," it makes one almost weep at so much hopeless futility. And when one thinks of the 80,000 odd works which were written against them by Christians in defence of their faith, it only makes matters worse.

Mr. Noyes was brought back to "reality" by "a Person, who as earth rose, had stooped from heaven to meet it." Needless to say this Person was Christ, who spoke "in a written language that is aesthetically unique." From the Person, it is only a short step to the Church, and thus by the use of pure reason and logic is Christianity vindicated, the Church placed more firmly on a rock, and God becomes known. We see precious little difference in the conversion of Mr. Noyes and the conversion of some repentant—yet fully-believing-sinner to the holy tenets of the Salvation Army. They both become Christians, and after all, conversion is only the means to the same end.

Dr. John Laird has just written a book on Thomas Hobbes. A reviewer points out that Hobbes was a "sanguine materialist" of a far more thorough-going type than Karl Marx. "His justification," he writes, "for looking on religion as the main cause of sedition, a force to be curbed with diligent strictness, explains why modern Atheism has its roots in the seventeenth century." Dr. Laird, however, points out that "Hobbes was a psychologist of genius, a notable metaphysician, a political thinker of enduring renown, and the father of British ethics in the great period." He also considers the *Leviathan* one of the great books of the world, and Hobbes, as a literary artist, greater than any other English-born philosopher. This is not bad for a "sanguine materialist" and Atheist, as Hobbes undoubtedly was.

The Archbishop of Canterbury thinks "there is some danger" in not realizing the significance to the full of the famous hymn from the *Dream of Gerontius*, by Cardinal Newman. The first verse is worth repeating:—

Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three, and God is one;
And I next acknowledge duly
Manhood taken by the Son.

We give it as a specimen of a great mind doddering, for the proper epithet of this kind of hymn is *bilge*. The Archbishop calls it the hymn of the "Christian student," but it is hard to believe that, in these days, even a Christian student cannot understand the "full significance" of "God is three and God is one." Does even the Archbishop *really* believe this?

The elementary school children of Portsmouth managed to get an Ascension Day holiday, and they were all taken for an educational trip to the Cheddar Caves. The Rev. Bruce Cornford is very indignant. The holiday, it seems, was granted so that the children could attend Ascension Day services, "but they left too early to go to the morning service and came back too late for the evening service." This is very hard lines. Eight hundred childish souls on the brink of perdition—or something like it—because they prefer a railway trip to a Church Service! Mr. Cornford should have held the service in the Cheddar Caves—twice. We give him this tip for next year.

Fifty Years Ago

I HAVE always said that (Randolph) Churchill's love for religion was accurately expressed by the family pension of £4,000 a year. A man who loves God at that rate naturally loves him a good deal. Churchill had an evident interest in keeping Mr. Bradlaugh out of the House. The junior member for Northampton was an Atheist. That was a horror. But there was a far greater horror. He was bent on abolishing Perpetual Pensions, a worse heresy than denying the Trinity or ridiculing the "blessed book." If he had been *only* an Atheist; that is, if he had been an Atheist and a Tory instead of an Atheist and a Radical; Northcote and Churchill might have met him at the door of the House and introduced him to the Speaker. And if he had said "But I am an Atheist you know! How about that oath?" they would probably have answered, "Oh never mind that, keep it dark!"

Yes, Perpetual Pensions were at the bottom of it all, and the murder is now out. While Mr. Bradlaugh has been kept out in the cold, the titled pensioners have been following the example of the Duke of Richmond, who gained the right to levy blackmail on the industry of the English people because his ancestor was a bastard of Charles the Second. They have been arranging with "the Treasury" to commute their pensions, so that before policeman Bradlaugh appears on the scene they may have safely carried off the swag. Among the rest, the Marlborough family has accepted £107,000 down in lieu of £4,000 a year for ever, because they know that *this for ever* means a very short time when the democratic spirit is fairly aroused.

The "Freethinker," May 25, 1884.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. READ.—Your announcement of a debate which is to take place on May 25, did not reach us until May 17, a day after the issue for the 20th went to press, and too late for the notice to be of use to provincial readers.

P. W. R. SILKE.—Thanks. Always glad to receive cuttings.

H. E. SIMPSON (Brisbane).—Bradlaugh and Ingersoll forwarded with *Selections from Ingersoll* to balance cash sent.

J. H. SHAW.—Crowded out until next week.

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 Farringdon 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.

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

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums

The 1934 N.S.S. Conference was a very decided success. The attendance was one of the best of recent years, and the whole of the proceedings were marked with a freedom of criticism and good-natured discussion of the issues raised that offered a fine example of Freethought in practice. Another very marked feature of both the business meetings and of the evening public demonstration was that, while the older members of the Society were well represented, there was a very large proportion of young men and women, keen in their interest, and alert in their judgment of everything affecting the work and prospects of the movement. For ourselves we said good-bye to the Conference, feeling that there was every cause for renewed hope in our work and for increased confidence in those in whose hands the future rested. We print this week the Executive's Annual Report. The report of the Conference proceedings will appear in our next issue.

The public demonstration in the Spinners' Hall went with a swing from start to finish. The hall was quite full, and the varied speakers displayed just that mingling of light and shade, grave and gay that kept the interest of the audience unabated for more than two hours. Mr. Clayton lashed the clergy generally for their attempts to fit the old teaching into new ideas, Mr. McLaren deeply interested those present in his grave warning of the dangers fronting freedom of thought, Mr. Whitehead had everyone with him in his exposure of the absurdity of Christian beliefs, Dr. Carmichael showed his usual ability to take a commonplace fact and use it to illustrate an important principle, Mr. Rosetti's speech was, as usual, full of good things, well-expressed, and Mr. Brighton delighted everyone with a short speech, well conceived, artistically brimful of wit and satire, the more effective because so carefully restrained. The President had little to do to send the audience home from

a meeting that must have impressed all strangers who were present, and which certainly pleased the "old hands." It was a fitting close to a fine day's work.

We draw attention to a glint of intellectual sunshine from South Africa. An effort is being made to form a Branch of the National Secular Society there, and Mr. A. S. Tregaskis, 72 Fifth Avenue, Mayfair, Johannesburg, will be pleased to hear from any saint willing to co-operate. In due course we hope to hear there has been a good response from South African Freethinkers within reasonable range.

Blackburn Freethinkers will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. G. Whitehead, who will be on a visit for a week's lecturing in the locality. Details of the meetings, which begin to-day (Sunday) will be found in the Lecture Notice column. There is an active Branch of the N.S.S. at Blackburn which will co-operate at all the meetings, and the local officials are hoping that unattached braves will introduce themselves with a view to joining.

At the last meeting of the Bradlaugh Memorial Committee a suggestion was received from Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, that as there appeared no immediate likelihood of using the balance of the donations received by the Committee, the upkeep of the monument to Bradlaugh, at Woking, should be undertaken out of this fund. This stands at just over £132, as was stated in the *Freethinker* for April 15. And it was originally intended to be held as a reserve towards providing a memorial in the House of Commons when the opportunity presented itself. No such opportunity has yet appeared, and the Committee decided to vote the sum of £70 to defray the upkeep of the Woking monument in perpetuity. The Committee felt that this would fall in with the wishes of the subscribers.

There must be a number of Freethinkers in Edinburgh who are interested in Freethought propaganda. The Glasgow Branch intends seeing what can be done to form an active Branch in that city. Those who are ready to lend a hand will please communicate with Mrs. Whitefield, propagandist secretary to the Glasgow Branch, at 351 Castlemilk Road, Glasgow. We hope to hear of a good response.

Mr. Joseph McCabe's *The Riddle of the Universe Today*, Watts & Co., 5s., is a book that should do good work in the direction dissipating the sedulously advertised fiction that the science of to-day has discarded Materialism. Mr. McCabe has a tolerably easy task in showing from numerous representative scientific writers that in every branch of science "materialism," properly understood, is more firmly established than ever. It could not be otherwise. Science began in materialism, and no matter how strained the interpretation of new knowledge may become in the interests of religious theory, science cannot depart from its materialistic basis without losing its scientific character. Mr. McCabe's book, if it will be read by those who need it most, should do a deal towards pricking the bubbles that are constantly being blown by religiously-minded scientists, and by literary men who make use of scientific jargon to the confusion of themselves and their readers.

There is only one word of criticism we have to pass on the book, and that has to do with Mr. McCabe's use of the theory of "emergent evolution." Quite rightly Mr. McCabe exposes the use made of this by those who use it as a method of establishing their Theism. But he is not right in asserting that "emergent evolution is neither science nor evolution, but a pattern of words devised and used to cover a rejection of the teaching of evolution while professing to accept it." On the contrary, it is strictly scientific in character, and was actually used in the first instance to clear theistic implications out of science. The term "emergent" was first used by G. H. Lewes, in order to present and correct a popular heretical description of causation as an invariable sequence. It meant, and means, no more than the fact that the product of a combination of factors is different from the factors themselves,

and that the quality of the product cannot be predicted from a knowledge of its components. The most familiar example of this is the wetness which "emerges" when oxygen and hydrogen are combined and form water. It is true that some theists have used "emergence" in the sense of something that emerges in the sense of a man emerging from a doorway, or a fish emerging from the water, but that is only a manifestation of a very common trick in theistic reasoning; a misuse of language that has occurred with regard to "evolution." "Emergence" offers a perfectly materialistic account of things, and the only account which accurately fits the fact. Apart from this misconception, which appears to be shared by some of the scientists who are quoted with approval, Mr. McCabe has produced a book which should be of service to Freethinkers, and enlightening to those Christians who may be induced to read it.

Executive's Annual Report

(Continued from page 326)

ceived scant notice in the press, considerably less than would have been given to a much-divorced film star or a defaulting company promoter. That was to be expected; but the *Freethinker* issued a specially illustrated number which enjoyed a very large sale. It was much praised both in this country and in America, and here, at least had the effect of creating something of an Ingersoll revival. It may safely be said that as a consequence there has been aroused an interest in Ingersoll that will enable the writings of America's greatest Freethinker, even in death, to continue their work of mental emancipation.

A movement is on foot in the United States to erect a monument to Ingersoll. Not quite all the money required has been subscribed, but a well-known sculptor is proceeding with the statue, and Congress has voted a piece of land in Washington on which the monument is to be erected. One cannot even think of our own Government acting in this way towards Bradlaugh.

The centenary of Charles Bradlaugh touches this Society more intimately, because he was its founder, and for many years its President, until failing health compelled his resignation. It was at the suggestion of this Conference that it was resolved to make the celebration of the centenary a matter of national importance. An invitation was issued to the Rationalist Press to co-operate with your Executive in forming a committee which should be made up of men and women representing many forms of advanced thought in religion, politics and sociology. The invitation received a cordial response; a distinguished committee was thus brought together, and a considerable sum of money was raised. Lectures were arranged, a press campaign initiated, and a memorial volume comprising a sketch of Bradlaugh's life, with essays by various writers and a reprint of some of Bradlaugh's representative writings, issued. It was hoped that it would be possible to get a memorial tablet placed in the House of Commons to so great a parliamentarian. But religious feeling was too strong for that; for while prominent men of the various political parties privately sympathised with, none had courage enough to take a leading part in publicly doing honour to so famous an Atheist.

One day this may be done; meanwhile it is pleasing to be able to place on record the fact that very considerable publicity was gained for Bradlaugh, and incidentally for the Freethought Movement. Over three hundred notices of the centenary appeared in the press, and all the meetings held in different parts of the country were well attended. More was heard of Bradlaugh during the period of this campaign than had been the case since the days of his parliamentary struggle. It is true that a number of the notices

that appeared about Bradlaugh attempted to bury the great Atheistic-Republican fighter beneath the respectable politician and the antagonist of religious views that are no longer held by anyone of consequence, but that was only to be expected.

One result of the two centenaries was certainly that of bringing the names of Bradlaugh and Ingersoll prominently before a generation which, thanks to the policy of killing a dead heretic by saying nothing whatever about him, had grown up in complete ignorance of their life and work. But greater than bringing to the notice of a new generation the work and character of the two great Freethinkers was the quickening of interest in the Freethought Movement as a whole. It was this object which the Conference had in view when the celebration of the Bradlaugh Centenary was first suggested, and there is every reason, when all opposing forces have been taken into account, to be gratified with the result.

Reference has been made to the near future providing a testing time for Freethought and Freethinkers; and the circumstances that warrant this forecast show themselves in rather sharp and startling contrast to the conditions prevailing during the stormy days of Charles Bradlaugh. What one may call the orthodox opposition to Freethought is still with us, and it is still active and virulent. The blasphemy laws still disgrace our Statute books and disfigure the common law. There is even a Bill, which every now and again is brought before Parliament and secures a very substantial vote, that aims at making it a punishable offence to place Freethinking opinions before children under sixteen. Children over that age are left with no more protection than is afforded by the existing laws. Religion is still strongly established in the schools, and the press boycott operates the more successfully owing to the existence of a syndicalized press, and the growing dependence of the press upon advertisers.

A more serious onslaught on freedom of propaganda is made by the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, which has received a second reading in the House of Commons. No more dangerous, or more retrogressive measure has for well over a hundred years been introduced by any Government in this country. Ostensibly aimed at preventing men of the army, navy and air forces being exposed to the same kind of propaganda that civilians are able to endure without serious harm, this Bill gives the right of unlimited and unspecified search for seditious literature, provided only that some highly patriotic policeman has sworn before a magistrate that he has reason to believe that certain persons have seditious literature in their possession. This is a convenient method for any Government to send its political enemies to prison, for the Church to remove troublesome "agitators," and for the "making" of evidence when desirable. Houses may be entered, private papers searched; and the freedom of the subject is placed at the mercy of a policeman and a magistrate. And when literature—which could be found in almost anyone's house who reads anything better than the *Daily Mail* or the *Christian Herald*—is seized on the ground that it is seditious, the prosecution are not required to bring evidence to secure a conviction. It is for the man who has the literature to prove that he does not intend to use it for a criminal purpose. This is an entire reversal of English law and practice, and no man can be sure of his liberty under such a law. If this Bill become law, and it most probably will unless very drastic resistance is promised by those public men and women who have protested against it, there will be small ground for English men and women to protest against the burning of books by the gun-men of Germany, while they

submit to laws that make the possession of books that are objectionable to the Government an offence punished with imprisonment. More than a mere protest—to be followed by submission afterwards—is required. Public notice should be given by those who are protesting that they will not submit, even though the Bill becomes part of the law of the land.

This exhibition of intellectual intolerance, taken with the religious favouritism exhibited by the law, is the more curious, since side by side there has gone on a decided weakening of the power of organized religion, and in general a marked decay of religious belief. It is probably correct to say that this condition of things is only possible because Freethinkers have not been sufficiently insistent in their claim for justice. Non-Christians are still more anxious to placate Christian prejudices than to make their own opinions clear and their claims to justice emphatic. We do not *get*, because we do not *demand*; and the history of the world proves that religion never willingly grants toleration. Like all vested interests it yields only when it can no longer hold. Freethinkers and social reformers would do well to bear in mind a slightly altered version of a New Testament precept, "Seek ye first the kingdom of justice and all else shall be added unto you."

So far we are travelling along the ordinary lines of obstacles to the growth of Freethought. But to-day there is offered a challenge such as Bradlaugh's day never encountered, and of which it may be said that it requires a sterner and a more idealistic type of courage to face. Bradlaugh was fighting a public opinion which *professed* to believe in freedom of opinion, however much it failed to carry out the principle in practice. In his legal fights his contestant was, often, the State which professed to hold a level judgment between all opinions, and professed also to guarantee, within liberal limits, freedom of expression. There was a professed agreement as to the right of free expression, and the one attacked could thus turn the weapons of the attacker against himself.

To-day the position has changed. Largely as a consequence of the general demoralization brought about by what so many of our own clergy declared was "God's own War," the basic principle of Freethought, without which a Society such as this one has very little justification for its existence, is denounced as a superstition and as a crime against the State. Going to greater lengths than even the Roman Church ventured to go, this new philosophy—if one may call a jumble of ambiguous phrases a philosophy—claims to suppress every opinion in every possible field of thought save one. Our opinions on ethics, on religion, on politics, are all to be selected for us in the name of the State. It is a claim greater than the Roman Church ever dared to make, and just as one consequence of the action of the Christian Church, with its relatively limited claims, was Europe's Dark Ages, so one may make sure that the State control of opinion to-day would mean the degradation of civilization wherever the Fascist ideal becomes realized in practice.

But this governmental form of the rule of gun-man has been established over a large part of Europe, and wherever it has been established, one immediate consequence has been the break-up of Freethought organizations, the robbery of their funds, and the brutal torture or execution of all who were believed to be opposed to the sadistic barbarity of the Fascists. The threat to freedom of thought is now strongly organized, it has the power of the State behind it, in a way and in a form such as it has never before had, and between that and Freethought there can be no compromise.

Naturally the effect of this intensified crusade against Freedom of Thought has been felt very severely in various parts of the Continent. In Italy, Germany and Austria, Freethought organizations and progaganda have been suppressed, although the *Internationale Libre Pensée* still carries on with its headquarters in Brussels. In Germany, the crusade has been extended from a crusade against Freethinking unbelief to a warfare against all forms of teaching and thinking that involve the least degree of independence. But even away from Europe the forces of reaction appear to be making some efforts at asserting themselves. In Canada and Australia there have been several prosecutions for blasphemy, and South Africa has become distinguished by having a blasphemy case for the first time in its history.

There is no need for us to cherish any illusion. Between the enemies of the Freethought tradition and those who are responsible for its maintenance there can be no compromise. We need not go out to seek combat, the indications are that our enemies will come to seek us. And if what is now going on be any guide to what we have to face, it is that we shall have to meet an endeavour to uproot independence of thought, and that the conflict will be conducted with ruthlessness such as no civilized country has yet known, and which the Roman Church at its worst did not manifest.

It is in these respects that the times are more testing than anything we have known in our history. To meet this successfully there is required a more discriminating courage, a greater devotion to principle than was ever before demanded. We are confident that the Freethought Party in this country will prove itself well worthy of its traditions, and true guardians of the principles upon which the National Secular Society is built. What we have to do is to awaken a sense of the value of what we *now* have, and of the need of closer co-operation between Freethinkers, in order to guard what has been won. There are thousands upon thousands of convinced Freethinkers in this country who are doing little or nothing to help. They were born in comparatively comfortable times, they are in enjoyment of privileges which our immediate ancestors had to fight hard to win; but they must take care lest they wake up one day to find these privileges destroyed in this country as they have been wiped out elsewhere. We must bring into close touch with our movement the huge number of people who, while not opposed to us, are yet against us, because by their inertness they are giving valuable help to the enemy. There ought not to be a single large town in the country in which there is not a Branch of this Society. Such Branches could be formed, if only a few industrious workers were brought together in each district to say that this shall be.

For nearly seventy years the National Secular Society has carried on the Freethought tradition. Every other advanced movement owes it much, for to every reform movement it has sent ardent workers filled with the desire to elevate life. It has claimed freedom, not merely for itself, but also for others. Indeed, our basic claim is not for freedom for *our* thought, but freedom for *all* thought, whether it be right or wrong, wise or unwise. There is no justifiable middle course, for the moment we grant the right to prohibit one form of thought we grant at the same time the legitimacy of suppressing all forms of opinion save one.

It is without any desire to be alarmist that your Executive feels it a duty to call upon all Freethinkers to guard carefully the standard of freedom that has been so dearly bought by past generations of Freethinkers. That what has been so hardly won may be

easily lost, recent and current events prove; and every indication is that before long we may have to fight—and fight hard—to retain the liberty we have gained.

Finally, it may be that we should all do well to consider whether in existing circumstances attack is not, after all, the best and surest defence. Actually, we cannot stand still. We must attack the enemy in order to prevent his attacking us. Our claim is that life cannot be well-lived, or completely lived, while man moves under the shadow of superstitious fears or bends before a mental tyranny. We are soldiers in the war of human liberation; and even though some of us fall, if we fight as we should fight, we shall not fall without leaving behind us those who will carry to final victory the principles of true freedom without which real civilization cannot long endure.

The Story of a Wayward Genius

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG was born in Stockholm in 1688, and died in London in 1772. The second son of Dr. Jasper Swedenberg, professor of theology in the University of Upsala, and later Bishop of Skara, who was traduced as a heretic because he valued ethical culture more highly than soulless creed. Emanuel's life may be divided into two distinct periods. The first of these, closing with his fifty-fifth year, was given to the service of science and practical affairs, while the second, embracing nearly thirty years, was wasted on theology and occultism.

His studies at Upsala University concluded, Swedenborg visited France, Germany, England and Holland. In 1719, the family was raised to the rank of nobility by the Swedish Queen and henceforth its name was changed from Swedenberg to Swedenborg. When Emanuel returned to his native land, Charles XII. appointed him to an assessorship in the School of Mines, and during the siege of Frederikshall he displayed his practical ability as a military engineer. Swedenborg was at this time keenly interested in mechanical and economic problems. In the Swedish Upper Chamber he discoursed on the decimal system, the currency, the balance of trade, while his handling of the drink question made him the main pioneer of the Gothenburg System.

Profoundly interested in the exact sciences, Swedenborg composed pamphlets dealing with algebra, in which he presented the earliest statement in Swedish of the differential and integral calculi. Among various other themes that occupied his busy brain were several practical problems concerning dockyards, saltworks, the depth of the oceans, and a method of determining maritime longitude by means of the moon. So intensely utilitarian was Swedenborg's outlook that he refused an appointment as mathematical professor at Upsala, because of its purely theoretical character. A decade was then devoted to mining and smelting problems, both in Sweden and abroad, and to the elaboration of a theory explaining the origin of the material universe. This work was published at Leipzig, the expenses being borne by the Duke of Brunswick. It appeared in three immense folios magnificently illustrated, bearing the title *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia*, and made Swedenborg known throughout intellectual Europe. In this work Swedenborg enunciated the nebular hypothesis in advance of both Kant and Laplace. Yet, he remained discontented with his results, and became ambitious to pursue man's spirit into its most secret recesses. His researches in physiology

and anatomy were directed by his desire to unravel Nature's psychical complexities, and were incorporated in his *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* (1741) and his uncompleted *Animal Kingdom* (1744-5).

The importance of Swedenborg's scientific labours was not appreciated until the nineteenth century was well advanced. But when his numerous manuscripts and published writings had been critically examined it became obvious that in many branches of natural knowledge he was ahead of his time. For instance, his studies in fossil remains reveal him as the forerunner of all succeeding Scandinavian geologists, while in various other scientific inquiries he was a brilliant pioneer.

Swedenborg displayed remarkable aptitude in physiological inquiry. It appears that: "In 1901 Max Neuburger of Vienna called attention to certain anticipations of modern views made by Swedenborg in relation to the functions of the brain. Swedenborg showed 150 years before any other scientist, that the motion of the brain was synchronous with the respiration and not with the action of the heart and the circulation of the blood, a discovery the full bearings of which are still unrealized. His views as to the physiological functions of the spinal cord are in agreement with recent research, and he anticipated modern research on the functions of the ductless glands."

All this fruitful labour which might have led to invaluable discovery was unfortunately forsaken in favour of spiritist hallucination. This unhappy turning point in his life Swedenborg inscribed in his diary. He experienced a medley of strange dreams and weird communings with spiritual entities. He even imagined that he could freely communicate with the unseen world whenever he desired. So bemused was he with these illusory phenomena that he relinquished his assessorship and resolved to devote his remaining days to the ministry to which the Lord of the Immortals had appointed him. He gave the reading public the first fruits of his spiritual discoveries in his *Heavenly Arcana*, printed in 1749. At times, in wandering mazes lost, but still with lucid intervals, this strange book purports to reveal the true meaning of Genesis and Exodus. The opening chapters of Genesis are remnants of an older document still preserved in Tartary, and are purely allegorical in character.

Adam symbolizes the earliest Church, and the Deluge denotes its disestablishment. Holy Writ as a whole is pervaded by a spiritual grace much as the soul etherealizes the body. All the Biblical books are the genuine revelation of God, save those that possess a power of edification only. These uninspired writings include such Hebrew masterpieces as Ecclesiastes, Job, and Proverbs. Others included in Swedenborg's list of inferior productions are the Song of Solomon, Esther, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles.

When the Jewish Church had passed its prime, God made himself manifest in Jesus, who assumed human form in its humblest condition, when the Virgin's goodness transfigured her son into the state of divinity. The holy spirit emanating from Christ's divine humanity is precious beyond price. It seems that with the advent of Jesus, Jehovah ceased to exist, for to Swedenborg Christ was the sole deity, and he only should command our supplication and worship.

The Church instituted at Christ's coming ended its career in the eighteenth century, and Swedenborg was firmly persuaded that he had witnessed, in the realm of the spirits, the Great Judgment pronounced in the year 1757. Now began a new dispensation forecast in the New Jerusalem of Revelation.

Swedenborg had been chosen as the precursor of the New Church, and his writings contain its teachings. To those who demurred to a doctrine so curious and surprising, the seer answered and said that at an earlier and ruder time men were unfit for its reception, and that even the primitive Christians were too undeveloped to comprehend it.

That a naturally gifted man of scientific attainments could be sincere in these spiritual claims may be regarded with scepticism. One, however, has to recall the long series of supernatural occurrences which he believed himself to have witnessed. He tells us that "he was introduced by the Lord first into the natural sciences, and thus prepared . . . heaven was opened to him." Swedenborg's completed powers of personal contact with God had been preceded by an apprenticeship of vivid dreams and visions, and he frequently listened to strange conversations between invisible spirits. Then he assures us he was charged with the spirit of God, and instructed by the divine voice to proclaim the doctrines of the New Church. The Lord also permitted him, or at least, his spirit, to see the heavens and the hells, and hold communion for several years with angels and spirits, but the entire teaching of the New Church came directly from the mouth of the Lord himself when Swedenborg's spirit stood in the divine presence.

Swedenborg never proselytized nor was he anxious to found a sect, but his novel interpretation of the Bible led to the formation of the New Church. Two Church of England clergymen became zealous in their advocacy and dissemination of the new evangel, Thomas Hartley, rector of Winwick, and John Clowes, vicar of St. John's, Manchester. Hartley translated two theological works of the master-seer, and Clowes preached New Church doctrines within the fold of the Anglican communion. This minister discouraged the creation of a new organization, translated many of the master's volumes, and published a brave array of expository and polemical writings. To the ceaseless activities of Clowes the marked influence of Swedenborg's evangel in Lancashire may be ascribed.

The earliest congregation of the New Church formed in London met in 1788. A conference followed, and a publication, the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, appeared in 1790. Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Accrington all became centres of New Church doctrine. Subsequently, missionary endeavours were organized; in 1852, a training college for ministers was instituted, and in 1928 some seventy Swedenborgian Societies were reported in England, whose membership totalled about 6,300 merely.

New Church organizations spread to the three Scandinavian countries, and a few supporters are scattered throughout the European Continent, America and other regions; but there is little likelihood that the sect will ever embrace more than a minute fraction of the world's population.

When Swedenborg died his remains were laid to rest in the Swedish Church, St. George's-in-the-East, but in 1908, at the urgent request of the Swedish Government, Swedenborg's bones were transferred from London to Stockholm, the capital city of his native land.

T. F. PALMER.

The flames to which I commit the enemy are those of argument, reinforced I hope, by a little salutary rudeness and by a spark or two of insolent contempt. These are the only flames which can finally consume.

Ivor Brown.

Correspondence

SHELLEY AND ATHEISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As an elusive debater Mimmermus may fitly be compared with Mr. Arnold Lunn. Finding difficulty in meeting the arguments I put forward, he ignores some of these, and attributes to me statements I have never made, because they obviously are easiest to ridicule.

The Freethought leaders I quoted—it still pleases Mimmermus to call them "critics"—Robertson, McCabe and Salt, would be as willing as Mr. Foote to come to Mimmermus's conclusions. Again, will he say to what he attributes their desire to wound Shelley in the house of his friends? I fancy this hypothetical wounding—existing in Mimmermus's imagination—even if there were grounds for the truth of the suggestion is hardly so prejudicial to Shelley's fame as Mimmermus's suggestion that Shelley meant one thing and said another. Here is the full passage from Trelawny regarding Atheism—"It is a word of abuse to stop discussion, a painted devil to frighten the foolish, a threat to intimidate the wise and good. I used it to express my abhorrence of superstition; I took up the word, as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice. The delusions of Christianity are fatal to genius and originality: they limit thought." Hogg has a passage which provides an interesting annotation of this, "One morning a few days after I made Shelley's acquaintance, I was at his rooms, and we were reading together, two Etonians called on him, as they were wont to do; they remained a short time conversing with him. 'Do you mean to be an Atheist here to Shelley?' one of them inquired. 'No,' he answered, 'certainly not. There is no motive for it; there would be no use in it; they are very civil to us here; they never interfere with us; it is not like Eton.' " I make Mimmermus a present of the last sentence of the first quotation if he really wants to be foolish enough to maintain that a man who refers "to the delusions of Christianity" must be an Atheist. Where, I want to know, is Shelley's reference to "immature literary merit"?

How long has Mimmermus regarded orthodox publications like the *Gentleman's Magazine* as authorities on the exact grade of heresy to be assigned to an intellectual rebel like Shelley? In the quotation given there is no reference to Atheism. Mimmermus knows full well that Shelley's Godwinian views on sex, held to be demonstrated by the career of the unfortunate Harriet Westbrook, were as much anathema to a review of this character as his anti-theological views. I do not suppose for a moment the animadversions would have been milder had the writer known that Shelley had abandoned his early Atheism. Likely enough he would have said the same of Thomas Paine.

All that the writers of the article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* say is that Shelley attacked the orthodox gods. There is nothing in *Prometheus Unbound*, or in these critics' remarks upon it, inconsistent with a spirit of the universe, or the oversoul of Emerson which approximated to Shelley's later view. Why cannot Mimmermus oblige with some definitely Atheistic passage like Swinburne's, "Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten."

May I conclude by saying that I read many of the articles of Mimmermus with pleasure, notably a recent one on Matthew Arnold. I wish, however, he would be a little more careful about his facts—and give up debating.

W. KENT.

[Owing to our limited space we have been obliged to curtail the above letter. We wish correspondents would bear in mind that a letter should be a letter, not an essay. We think, also, that this correspondence must cease, unless either Mr. Kent or "Mimmermus" has something new to add. After all, a repetition of opinions about Shelley do not carry one very far. Shelley's own works are there, and if either of the controversialists care to submit an article dealing with Shelley himself, and his opinions, our columns are open.—EDITOR.]

THE MONGOLS.

SIR,—To my description of the frightful character of the Mongol invasion, Mr. Bailey objected that Mr. Williamson's account, in his *Evolution of England*, is quite different. It is, and anyone unacquainted with the subject, would be misled into believing that the invasion was quite a beneficent affair. I replied by giving some examples of what the invasion was really like, from the standard histories of the Mongols by Howorth and Curtin.

Williamson's account of the Mongols only occupies one, out of the 480 pages of his book, and he gives no references, or authorities for his statements. Sir Henry Howorth was a distinguished Orientalist and scholar. In the "Introduction" to the four volumes of his great work on the Mongols, he devotes fourteen closely printed pages to a consideration, and a critical commentary, on the contemporary annalist and historians, of China, Persia, Arabia, Turkey and Russia, the countries invaded. In addition to these, he makes use of modern historians who have gleaned in the same historical field; distinguished Orientalists, giants of learning, like Von Hammer, Erdmann, Fischer, Wolff, Muller, and Klaproth, among others. To all these annalists and historians, ancient and modern, Howorth gives copious references throughout his work; which is, indeed, a monument of learning.

Mr. Bailey states that his reading has taught him that it is impossible for savages to be so cruel, because they have not reached civilization! Mr. Bailey seems to be under the influence of the exploded Rousseauite idea of the "Noble savage." Has he ever read of what the red Indian, Sioux and Apaches, were capable of in the way of cruelty, before they were contaminated with civilization?

W. MANN.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

SIR,—Your able and interesting article entitled "The Way of Salvation," could be annotated by a passage from *Clara Hopgood*, by Mark Rutherford (William Hale White), a theological rebel who knew evangelical non-conformity from within. Two girls are conversing at a boarding school.

"I suppose your father is a foreigner?"

"No, he is an Englishman."

"But if he is an Englishman you must have been baptized, or sprinkled, or immersed, and your father and mother must belong to church or chapel. I know there are thousands of wicked people who belong to neither, but they are drunkards and liars and robbers, and even they have their children christened."

"Well, he is an Englishman," said Madge smiling.

"Perhaps," said Selina, timidly, "He may be—he may be—Jewish. Mamma and papa pray for the Jews every morning. They are not like other unbelievers."

"No, he is certainly not a Jew."

"What is he, then?"

"He is my papa, and a very honest, good man."

"Oh, my dear Madge! honesty is a broken reed. I have heard Mamma say that she is more hopeful of thieves than honest people who think they are saved by works, for the thief who was crucified went to heaven, and if he had been only an honest man he never would have found the Saviour and would have gone to hell."

W. KENT.

Obituary.

SIR JOHN SUMNER

WE regret to record the death of Sir John Sumner. Sir John was in his seventy-ninth year, and a staunch Freethinker of long standing. In his younger days he was a very ardent admirer of Charles Bradlaugh, and his devotion to the memory of Bradlaugh never weakened. From very small beginnings he worked up the famous Typhoo-tip tea business, one of the largest in this country. But his close attention to business never diverted or weakened his interest in Freethinking and humanitarian work.

His name appeared in every subscription list in these columns, and for some years he was one of the principal supporters of the Malthusian movement. He was a liberal contributor to many other reform movements, and took a keen interest in philanthropic work. In this direction he had some years ago founded a Charitable Trust of £140,000 designed to assist deserving persons, who through no fault of their own were left without provision for their old age. A man of fine character, ready sympathy, and keen intellectual interests, he represented a type that is all too rare in the business world. Perhaps the best that could be said of him was that he was the master of his business, but we cannot think that his business was ever the master of him.

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, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Making a New Age."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mrs. E. Grout—"Can God do Wrong?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0, Sunday, May 27, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Sunday, May 27, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, May 28, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, May 27, Mr. C. Tuson. Rushcroft Road near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, May 29, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Wednesday, May 30, Mrs. E. Grout. Aliwall Road near Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, June 1, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, opposite the Library, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. G. F. Green—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, A Lecture. 3.30, Platform N. 1, Messrs. Collins and Wood. Platform No. 2, Mr. Hyatt. 6.30, Messrs. Hyatt, Bryant and others. Wednesday, 7.0, Messrs. Collins and W. P. Campbell Everden. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood and Saphin.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Blackburn Market): 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, May 27, Mr. G. Whitehead (London). Blackburn Market, 7.30, Monday, May 28 and Thursday, May 31, Mr. G. Whitehead. Town Hall Steps, 7.30, Wednesday, May 30, Mr. G. Whitehead. Hen Market, 7.30, Tuesday, May 29, and Friday, June 1, Mr. G. Whitehead.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, May 28, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Dunne Square, Paisley): 8.0, Saturday, May 26, Jack Quinn—"Religion in Politics." Muriel Whitefield—"Father, Forgive Them." West Regent Street, 7.30, Sunday, May 27, R. T. Buntin. Miller Street, 8.0, Thursday, May 31, A Lecture. Literature on Sale. Members please support.

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

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, May 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Would Have Memorial): 7.0, Wednesday, May 30, Mr. J. T. Brighton, A Lecture.

STOCKTON (The Cross, Market Place): 7.0, Sunday, May 27, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £3,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five Trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the Trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trustees set themselves the task of raising a minimum sum of £8,000. This was accomplished by the end of December, 1927. At the suggestion of some of the largest subscribers, it has since been resolved to increase the Trust to a round £10,000, and there is every hope of this being done within a reasonably short time.

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There is no need to say more about the *Freethinker* itself, than that its invaluable service to the Freethought Cause is recognized and acknowledged by all. It is the mouthpiece of militant Freethought in this country, and places its columns, without charge, at the service of the Movement.

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