

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LIV.—No. 27

SUNDAY, JULY 8, 1934

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>The Pilgrim's Way—The Editor</i> - - -	417
<i>The Laird of Little Grange—Mimmermus</i> - - -	418
<i>The Light of the Eastern World—T. F. Palmer</i> - - -	419
<i>The Amateur Philosopher—Ignotus</i> - - -	421
<i>Notes from America—Franklin Steiner</i> - - -	421
<i>To Read the Bible is to Reject It!—Frank Hill</i> - - -	422
<i>The Miracles of St. Martin—Medicus</i> - - -	425
<i>The Flight from Freedom—H. Culner</i> - - -	427
<i>Wind-Worship—H. T. Shore</i> - - -	428

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

Views and Opinions

The Pilgrim's Way

On July 1 the King and Queen headed a "National Pilgrimage" back to the Cathedrals of England. The pilgrimage will continue daily until July 15. The King and Queen attended a special service at Westminster Abbey, and went there "as pilgrims bearing pilgrim tickets." That is not, of course, the historic manner in which pilgrimages were undertaken. A pilgrimage usually meant something that was uncomfortable, a journey performed at great inconvenience and even danger. Such was a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, when many a knight escaped the troubles at home by stirring up domestic and other troubles abroad. Or when ordinary men placed peas in their shoes—without boiling the peas first—and every pang of pain became, in their disordered imaginations, a proof of their piety, and an offering to God. But the King and Queen, in performing the journey from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey were not exposed to very great dangers, the animals in the Green Park and in St. James' Park were kept well under control, neither of their Majesties put peas in their shoes, and they were received by the "big shots" of the Abbey, so that everything was done to show that King George and Queen Mary are helping God in gaining the attention of the people. One would not be greatly surprised if there were placed over the doors of the cathedral the notice "Patronized by the King." It is done in other businesses, why not in this? It is certain that the whole performance is on the same level as that of any business establishment. Nor is there any doubt but that many thousands will visit the Cathedrals because the King and Queen have gone with pilgrim tickets in their hands. When the young manhood of Britain wait anxiously on the kind of crease worn by the Prince of Wales in his trousers, the elder generation may well wait to see how the King and Queen approach the Abbey with pilgrim tickets. And as, we understand these tickets are to be sold to common people, we

suggest that if the authorities of the Abbey were to advertise that on payment of half a guinea, anyone may, for five minutes, sit in the seat occupied by the King, many thousands of pounds could be raised in this way. We are high-spirited and independent people!

* * *

Spectacular Religion

All the treasures of the Cathedrals are to be opened to the public; but it must not be taken that the object of the painful pilgrimage is to develop the historical, the artistic, and the antiquarian taste of the community. It is hoped to result in "the widest pilgrimage back to the Church in more than 500 years." "Back to the Church" means, of course, back to the English Church, for it is not to be believed that the King, whose religion was picked out for him before he was born, and who is sworn to protect the Established Church, whether he believes in it or not, is taking part in a movement to bring back the people to any other Church. But 500 years ago the present Church of England did not exist, so there will be a pretty muddle if the Lord overlooks the meaning of the pilgrimage and brings the people back to the Church of 500 years ago. The authorities ought to have been more precise, and it is hoped they will make it quite clear in their prayers that when God is asked to bring the people back to "the Church" they do not mean any Church, but the Church of England.

Winchester promises a religious play as part of the ceremony, and there are great possibilities in this direction. Instead of the stodgy pageants and wooden miracle plays, why not arrange a few lively and appropriate films. I am quite sure that Walter Disney's "Noah's Ark," with its dainty colouring and realistic scenes would be very attractive. The picture of Mrs. Noah carefully jotting down the animals, including the domestic insects, as they enter the Ark, would be very impressive. To say that Noah took "of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort," is a very bald statement. But to see them entering two by two, and to see them coming out, with each pair accompanied by a pair of little ones (except the rabbits who have multiplied considerably), and the pitching of the vessel, with the sickness of the animals, would bring home the flood story in a way that preacher and writer have never yet managed to do. What is more, it might induce parents to bring their children; and I am quite sure that these would be quite enthusiastic pilgrims with such an entertainment awaiting them. On a more spectacular scale the film of "Ben Hur" might be introduced; but in that case I would suggest that a slight modification should be made. Jesus should be made to say instead of "On this rock I will build my Church," "In England I will found my Church," and instead of the crucifixion being consummated, Ben Hur could come in riding a "bronc," and firing a six-shooter, cut down Jesus at a critical comment and ride

off with him. How the children would cheer! It would give them an appreciation of a church service such as they have never yet had.

* * *

Follow My Leader

If religious people were given to reflecting on their creed, or if intelligent people who profess to believe in religion, were given to using their intelligence where religion is concerned, the fantastic absurdity of the whole thing would be apparent. For what we have here is an exhibition staged as a "come-back" to religion. As an exhibition, there is nothing to be said against calling general attention to the beauty of our cathedrals, to their archaeological value, and even to their interesting character in relation to the history of religious ideas. But the engineers of this pilgrimage, with the King and Queen going through the solemn farce of buying a pilgrim ticket, and the flunkeyism of Mayors and Sheriffs, whether they believe in religion or not, following the example of the King and Queen, is not intended to quicken interest in archaeology, or in art. The sole aim is to trade upon the muddled intelligence and simian like imitativeness of numbers of human beings to get them to come to Church regularly, or more regularly than they have been in the habit of doing. And in some measure it may succeed. Those who in politics take their war-cries from a leader or a committee, or their views of world-politics from the "scare-heads" of the stunt-press, who praise and blame what they are ordered to support or denounce, may well be led to believe that there is an "abiding truth" and a supreme value that are somehow enshrined in a half-crown ticket in a pilgrimage that is headed by a King and a Queen. At any rate it is as clear and as convincing a proof of the truth and value and intrinsic quality of Christianity as anything that I have yet come across.

* * *

A Case of Bankruptcy

I remember the late Rev. F. B. Meyer once said, concerning certain happenings, "It looks as though God had gone bankrupt." It was an expression permissible to a Christian parson, as was Martin Luther's "half-witted God," but it would have been downright blasphemy in this journal—and certainly would have been objected to by those unbelievers who are so very careful lest the feelings of Christians should be lacerated. But, after all, bankruptcy is the only term that really fits the present position of either God or religion in general. Remember that a firm or a man is bankrupt when he is unable to meet his contractual liabilities. And the contractual liabilities of God are plain. He made the world and he made man. He worked to a plan, and everything that is done is according to that plan. Even though, as some of his defenders now argue, part of the plan was man's irresponsibility, and the unpredictable nature of what he would do, these incalculable factors were yet part of that plan. Clearly those beings who are born have a clear right to demand that they shall have a fair opportunity for a healthy and rational life; that they shall be something more than mere flies, to be killed by wanton boys for a few moments idle sport. It does not matter that this description fits only a minority of human beings. A single unsatisfied creditor is enough to make a man bankrupt, and a single case of injustice is enough to bankrupt either the goodness or the wisdom of God. All that can be said against this is that God has not done what man attributed to him. It is not God, but man's belief in him that has changed. And that may be granted; but on either count the case against religion is complete, and the clergy are left trying to satisfy an imaginary need with the shadow of a non-existent commodity.

Once upon a time it was a case of "... by the grace of God King of England," to-day it is far more, "God, by the grace of King . . . believed in by the people of England." God has become the tag of an advertisement; and over the Cathedral door might be inscribed "the God worshipped here is patronized by Royalty." If that were done the pilgrim business would at least have the honest candour of the "Purveyor to the Royal Family," with which many a business man has announced the nature of his trade. To-day religion is recommended by, here a famous scientist, there a racing specialist, or, again, a member of the Royal Family. The people are invited to make a pilgrimage, at 2s. 6d. per head, not to pray or to worship, but to view the literary and artistic treasures which they contain. Religion is becoming, frankly, a matter of exhibition, in the hope that a few here and there may mistake interest in the antiquarian exhibits for a revival of religious faith. With some few that may result, for religion has to-day become very accommodating. Religion has become with the ordinary man whatever he likes to make it, and with the clergy, anything that will draw a congregation. And a two and sixpenny pilgrimage, headed by a King and Queen is as likely as not to attract the type of mind to which alone the religion of to-day appeals.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Laird of Little Grange

"That same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow."

Spenser.

"The mind hath its hundred gates, and all those gates
can genius throw open."—Landor.

EDWARD FITZGERALD, a notable English writer, died in 1883, almost unknown. Only a few people had even heard his name. The public had little chance of hearing it, for he was so shy that he took more pains to avoid publicity than others do to seek it. He wrote about remote subjects, appealing only to cultured people. When his friend, Tennyson, dedicated *Tiresias* to Fitzgerald, the tribute seemed merely the outcome of friendship. The ordinary reader discounted the praise of that—

"Golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well."

To-day Fitzgerald's version of Omar Khayyam is probably read as much as any verse except that of Shakespeare. It is quoted in leading articles; novels contain quotations from its quatrains; its haunting verse has been set to music.

If a man is known by his friends, the world has small need of a formal introduction to Fitzgerald. He was a man of notable friendships. At school he made acquaintance with Spedding, the Baconian critic, and at Cambridge University with Thackeray. The years which followed united him to Alfred and Frederick Tennyson, Carlyle, Bernard Barton the poet, Lawrence the artist, and others.

Fitzgerald's biographer, like the immortal knife-grinder, has no story to tell. Of independent means, he followed no profession, and he lived the life of a recluse in Suffolk on the North Sea Coast. At one time he lived in a small house near Woodbridge, named "Little Grange." And "laird of Little Grange," as he humourously signed himself, he remained for some years. Dying in his seventy-fourth year, he is buried in Boulge churchyard, and a rose, transplanted from the tomb of old Omar, has been planted on his grave.

His friend, Carlyle, saw in it all "a peaceable, affectionate, ultra-modest man," and an innocent life. Like Shelley, Fitzgerald had a great fondness for the sea, and for sailors. One old Viking, the hero-fisherman of Lowestoft, whom we know as "Posh," was a personal friend. Fitzgerald thought "Posh" a greater man than Tennyson or Thackeray, because he was not self-conscious. The Viking succumbed to an undue devotion to Bacchus, but Fitzgerald thought none the worse of him on that account. Curiously, the man who gave us Omar's *Rubaiyat*, that rhapsody of wine, woman, and song, was very abstemious. He was a vegetarian, and he nearly killed Tennyson by persuading him to become vegetarian too.

Fitzgerald's books were all published without his name on the title-page, except his version of Calderon's dramas. He wrote a memoir of Bernard Barton. Later he printed his remarkable dialogue *Euphranor*, *Polonius*, and a rendering of the Agamemnon, and four editions of his masterpiece, the *Rubaiyat* came out before his death. His letters were published posthumously, and helped to consolidate his growing fame.

Owing to his living in the country, Fitzgerald devoted much time to his correspondence, and proved himself a delightful letter-writer. His friends were men of outstanding ability, and the companion of such giants must have been no ordinary character. When a man is loved by other men of his own intellectual stature, and of a wholly different type, there must be something genuine in him. Men do not like another man because he is a genius, least of all when they happen to be geniuses themselves. It would have been impossible for Fitzgerald to keep on writing uninteresting letters to such men for nearly half a century. Indeed, Fitzgerald's letters are among the best in the language. There is hardly a dull line in them, and they are the more piquant reading on account of their literary heresies and heterodoxy.

His taste was all for ancient books, old friends, familiar jests, and well-known places. His favourites were really great writers, and he loved Cervantes and Scott, Montaigne and Mme. de Sévigné, she herself a lover of Montaigne, and with a spice of his Free-thought in her. He loved that old Persian, Omar, with whom his own fame is so closely associated, and that other old-world Freethinker, Lucretius. London had no attractions for him, chiefly because it hid nature. Like Thoreau, Fitzgerald knew the life that suited him, and had the wisdom to abide by it.

If any justification were needed, his version of Omar's "Rose of the hundred-and-one petals" would be enough. The charm of that great poem is that it voices the scepticism at the back of all thinking-men's minds, and makes magnificent music of it. What a translation of Omar was Fitzgerald's: "A planet larger than the sun which cast it," said Tennyson. In sober truth, the translation is finer than the original, and in this resembles the "Authorized" version of the New Testament, which, as Swinburne reminds us, is translated "from canine Greek into divine English."

In his version of the *Rubaiyat*, Fitzgerald proved himself a consummate artist. The magnificent opening is pure, unadulterated Fitzgerald, and again and again throughout the poem the master hand is revealed. For example, in one of the later verses, by the addition of two words, Fitzgerald has turned a mere commonplace into a fearful indictment of the god-idea:—

"O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
And even with paradise devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of man
Is blackeued, man's forgiveness give—and take."

In particular, Fitzgerald voices Secularism:—

"O threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing, at least, is certain,—this life flies;
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies."

The folly of prayer is insisted upon in lines of passionate bitterness:—

"And that inverted bowl they call the sky,
Whereunder crawling, cooped, we live and die,
Lift not your hands to it for aid, for it
As impotently rolls as you and I."

Like Lucretius, Fitzgerald introduces argument into his poetry, and with the same deadly effect. Noting how self-contradictory is theology, he says:—

"What! out of senseless nothing to provoke
A conscious something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted pleasure, under pain
Of everlasting penalties if broke!

What! from his helpless creature be repaid
Pure gold for what he lent him, dross allayed.
Sue for a debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer—oh, the sorry trade!"

"A sense of tears in human things" breaks out in the following:—

"Ah, love; could you and I with him conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire;
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire."

In his adaptation of the old Persian's *Rubaiyat*, Edward Fitzgerald added his own name to the lengthy bead-roll of great English poets. A shy recluse, he dreamed one dream more lasting than we ourselves, or he, or the very Suffolk coast he lived on. He knocked at the portals of the world of imagination and caught glimpses of its glories, and it is this that gives him his secure, his exceptional place among the masters of English verse.

MIMNERMUS.

The Light of the Eastern World

SINGULAR as it seems, scarcely anything save rumour had reached Christian Europe concerning Buddhism until the tenth century of our era. The founder of this remarkable cult was born in India about 560 B.C. Of royal descent, Siddhartha, also known as Sakya, which was his family name, or by the designation of *Sakya muni* (the Sakya sage), the Buddha was also called Gautama, the name of "the solar race," to which his kindred belonged. Among other titles bestowed upon Siddhartha in his later state of beatitude is that by which he is best known—the Buddha or "the enlightened one," and "he who is liberated from existence by a knowledge of the truth."

Buddha's birth and upbringing, like that of Christ, have been overlaid by myth and legend, so much so, that the learned Orientalist, Prof. Wilson, doubted the philosopher's very existence. Senart and Kern, again, saw in the Buddha of tradition a humanized solar deity, whose strange exploits were to be interpreted in terms of a sun myth. These views, however, met with little acceptance among Orientalists, and despite the miracles and marvels that have since clustered round his life, Buddha must be considered as truly historical as Mahomet, Savonarola and other religious reformers.

As expounded in its sacred writings, Buddhism may scarcely be claimed as a religion at all. Yet, at this hour it is at least the nominal faith of over 500 million people, or more than twice the number of all the countless Christian sects combined.

The diffusion of Buddhism began in Gautama's lifetime, when missionary and monkish efforts led to the conversion of several Indian princes. But the faith

was, at a later time in India, much more widely spread by the Emperor Asoka in the third century B.C. The Scythian ruler, Kanishka, was another royal convert, whose extensive dominions embraced Cabul, the Hindu Kush, Cashmere, the Punjab, and Rajputana to the plains of the Upper Ganges.

In the first century of our era Buddhism was the established religion of North Western India, but it soon declined, and ever since the fourteenth century Buddhism has been almost extinct in India, although it survives in Ceylon, and remains the treasured faith of Burma. For, with the downfall of Asoka's dominion, the Hindu Brahmans regained their ancient ascendancy and encouraged a pitiless persecution of the peaceful and non-resisting Buddhists. To-day, China and its contiguous territories comprise the chief entrenchments of Buddhistic belief.

The doctrine of impermanence is one of the leading principles of Buddhism. Mutability everywhere prevails, although evolution is constantly proceeding. A mountain range may persist for untold ages, but is destined to vanish at last. So, the most majestic monarchies having arisen from humble beginnings enjoy their splendid day, and then slowly but surely wither and die. Whether life assume the form of an ephemeral insect, whose existence is measured in hours, or appears as a stately tree that endures for 1,000 years, inexorable death succeeds at last.

These old-time Eastern teachings remain familiar to contemporary Western thought. The English bard's famous lines express poetically, opinions necessitated by modern discovery and research, and it is noteworthy how closely they resemble the teachings of a far earlier day:—

"There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

"The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go."

The immortality of the individual human soul, a doctrine so dear to the heart of the orthodox Christian is absent from Buddhistic philosophy in its uncorrupted state. A belief in an indwelling ego is certainly cherished—a belief inherited from a lower faith—but even this essence is subject to the laws of mortality. The Buddhist explains the presence of pain and sorrow as a consequence of the individual's conflict with untoward surroundings. As the late Prof. Rhys-Davids puts it: "To the universal law of composition and dissolution men and gods form no exception. The unity of forces which constitutes essential Being must sooner or later be dissolved; and it is to the effort to delay that dissolution that all sorrow and all pain are due. . . . Wherever there is individuality there must be limitation; wherever there is limitation there must be ignorance; wherever there is ignorance there must be error; wherever there is error there must sorrow come."

Man's many afflictions are traced to his perpetual struggle amid antagonistic surroundings. Passions are awakened and desires engendered which he cannot satisfy, strive he ever so bravely. His ambition is seldom attained and even when he secures the coveted prize it proves barren in his grasp. Evils on all sides make mournful our lives until merciful death relieves us. All these grievous happenings, declares the Buddhist, are inseparable from conscious existence. Perpetual peace is assured only when human personality is absorbed in Nirvana, where struggle and strife are no more. Rhys-Davids considers this profound,

if pessimistic philosophy "an attempt to give a scientific explanation of the great fact of the existence of evil, and certainly the most consistent, if not the most successful, of all the efforts that have been made in that direction."

Buddhism concedes the existence of the separate soul, or individual personality. Yet each man must realize that his personality is the result of his past and present experiences. Despite their seeming independence, men "are really no more separate than the bubble in the foam of an ocean wave is separate from the sea." They are the impermanent products of natural forces, and will remain at their mercy for ages to come.

The Buddhist concept of Karma strives to explain the persistence of the principle supposed to sustain living things. Karma is not only a theory of the transmission of souls, but it also serves as a solution of the problem of fate. The good or evil deeds of past lives relive in those that follow later. This is essentially an ancient Eastern theory of heredity, or, as one writer put it: "It was a poetic attempt to lift this mountain of fate, to reconcile this despotism of fate with liberty, which led the Hindoos to say, fate is nothing but the deeds committed in a prior state of existence."

In uncorrupted Buddhism there is no personal god, no paradise, or place of torment. The beneficent acts performed during life pass after death to other creatures who have no conscious association with those that went before. Heaven, so far as it ever exists, is experienced in our earthly dwelling-place. As the illusions of sublunary life disappear, as human consciousness becomes exalted and refined, so at last it enters the peaceful realm of Nirvana, where all men's troubles cease.

To its honour and its glory, pure Buddhism is untainted with the spirit of persecution. Although far older than the Christian and Moslem creeds, Buddhism set a bright example which its successors never followed. Gautama decried war and declared that no good Buddhist might shed his brother's blood. Kindness and considerate treatment of the lower animals he inculcated, and hospitals for the care of men and beasts under Buddhist auspices arose.

Buddhism became the light of Asia, but its original purity was soon sullied. To win and retain converts in foreign lands it was driven to compromise with the cults already established. Hence the paraphernalia of gods and demons, heavens and hells, of nominally Buddhist communities.

Buddhism is now the religion of Mongolia, Manchuria, China, Tibet, Siam, Burma, and many neighbouring States. India, in company with Java and many Malayan territories has long departed from the faith. In Hindustan, the cradle of the religion, as Massingham notes in his interesting essay, *The Tragedy of Buddhism*, "only the buildings and frescoes with their Persian and Greek inscriptions remain to testify to the power of faith which rested solely on the hearts and minds of men, and owed its diffusion equally to its success in exalting, and its failure in safeguarding, that primary ideal."

T. F. PALMER.

WORDS AND THINGS

What we are continually talking of, merely from our having been continually talking of it, we imagine we understand: so close a union has habit connected between words and things, that we take one for the other; when we have words in our ears we imagine we have ideas in our minds.—*Jeremy Bentham*.

The Amateur Philosopher

It is often said that a man who is a fool and does not know it is in a sorry plight. There is nothing more congenial to most than judging other people. Each of us is more or less a fool. The most abject is he who is devoid of any sense of humour. In him you are likely to find the acme of stupidity.

But though men are often given to taking themselves too seriously, there are fewer still who realize the extent to which their acts, speeches and writings are coloured by their environment. The egoist invariably thinks he is as full of originality as an egg is full of meat. And he pities his fellowmen because they cannot see that if they took his advice they would soon make the world a place fit for heroes to breed in.

If you have more than enough to live on you have nothing to worry about unless you are bodily or mentally diseased. And in such a fortunate condition it is comforting to set up and practise as a professional philosopher. The first thing is to find an audience or a following, and a sounding board in pulpit or newspaper, from which you can expound your doctrines of salvation. The second thing is to avoid treading on the corns of anybody who can hit you back. The third thing is to cultivate the folk who control the money market, and to be sure not to "speculate," but always to "get in" on gilt-edged investments.

Our professional philosopher therefore never becomes a Jack-the-Giant-killer. Such a rôle is not only ridiculous, but blatantly self-assertive. It is melodramatic, childish and provokes a scoffing. It is calculated to extinguish respect for your steady and dignified carriage and conduct. The ordinary people don't need stories of adventure, but drilling in the virtues of which you are the promulgator. You do not object to thrusters, but you won't be one yourself. When necessary you can get one of them to do a job of work for you, but you are not to dirty or ruffle yourself or your broadcloth by getting into the serum. No, the professional philosopher gets no particular fun out of life; and that being so, he is damned if the ordinary person shall.

It would probably surprise the professional philosophers if they were told that there are many ordinary persons who are entirely indifferent to them, and who pay no attention to, and are entirely uninfluenced by their preachings. The professional philosophers could not dream of any number of such people having ideas of their own, which do not conform to the "principles" enunciated by them. Such a thing is incredible! There may, of course, be some disgruntled cynics who don't follow them. But they are negligible.

The most instructive way in which to ascertain the qualities of the professional philosopher is to study his attitude towards and his policy for the down and outs. The down and outs have no means of organizing themselves—invariably they must submit to *force majeure*. The professional philosopher and his allies who rig the money markets watch the poor crawling creatures as a scientist studies microbes, and as they sip their coffees and liqueurs and puff at 3s. 6d. cigars, they enquire for the millionth time: "what is to be done with these creatures? They do not seem to ascend to any higher scale of existence although we have provided them by voluntary public subscriptions with mission halls and by-laws and model lodging-houses and free libraries and hospitals and prisons. What more can great men do?"

As a down and out myself, who is an amateur philosopher only, I have watched great flocks of powerful

seagulls flying over the heads of two of us human beings tramping over bent hills by the sea many miles from any human habitation, and I have said to myself in a flash of understanding, why, if these powerful birds had the idea they could collect and organize and kill us, and pick all the flesh off our bones in an hour! And then it occurred to me that there is an actual army of human seagulls and cormorants and vultures and hawks, who are doing that precise thing in effect with the underdogs and down and outs of their own kind! But I am only an amateur philosopher.

Is it not a comical picture, this of a band of robbers and murderers sitting down to a feast and discussing how they can save the souls of the poor creatures they have plundered? It would be comical if it were not so tragical. It has been said there is a law for the rich and a law for the poor. There is in reality no law for the rich. The law is only for the poor.

But even at the rich man's table there is always the menacing spectre of *Insecurity*. The "Ups" of today may be "Downs" to-morrow! There are mumbblings and threatenings and questions from without! There are sounds of crowds massing with a resolution to see wrong righted—to see falsehood exposed—to enforce justice. And the fat revellers at the laden boards do not like it. So they increase, with the aid of scientists, the means of resisting those they have robbed. They strengthen their defences, and increase their military forces. If they can but keep the maintenance of the mob at a mere minimum, and satisfy them with an occasional meat bone, all will be well. But alas, the mob is producing more and more amateur philosophers who publicly burn the text books of the professionals, and actually stand upon first principles and have the impertinence to define justice—to give that much abused term a definition which has never before been acknowledged in the diatribes and consoling speeches of the professionals!

Insurrection! Revolution! Communism! Of course it is all three. Is it to continue that unto him that hath shall be given, and that from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have? The bitter irony of what is an actually correct description of the power that money wields to-day!

Even the "advanced" organs of opinion will not speak other than mincingly and "philosophically" about this ghoulish and ghastly tyranny of money. Need surprise be expressed when the Honourable and Reverend super-gangsters—the elegant and cultured financiers and usurers—are copied at their own game by some of the oppressed, who are only able to employ cruder methods?

IGNOTUS.

Notes from America

At last the ministers of the United States have taken a position against war. So it is heralded throughout the daily press. When we scrutinize it closely, however, we find all to be noise, merely to give the preachers an issue and something to talk about. The facts are: A questionnaire was sent to 100,000 ministers asking them their attitude, of these 80,000 in round numbers did not make any reply at all. Subdividing again, 14,000 said they were opposed to any war under any conditions, and the remaining 6,000 answered with qualifications. Not such a good showing for the clergy after all, when we consider that but 20,000 of the 100,000 addressed condescended to answer. No war is a success, as a prominent journal of this date says, unless it is blessed by religion. But wait until the war comes to see how the churches and clergy stand. Then it will depend upon their interests—for instance, how many chaplains will be needed, what kind of an issue can be made of it by the white-chokered gentlemen, and what other issues or benefits are in store for them in the future? They were opposed to the

European war when some one else was fighting it. Yet, as soon as we were involved, they sniffed the battle from afar off. It was in their interest. During the Civil War the churches of the south were for the Confederacy, while those of the North were for the Union, as a rule, but not all of them. An emotional output is necessary before a war can be started. In the Civil War the tocsin was "Save the Union." In the Spanish American War it was "Humanity," without any mention of the sugar trust. In the World War it was "Save the world for democracy," without regard to the millions that would be lost to American capitalists if the Allies were defeated. Wait to see how the ministers will stand until we hear the tocsin raised for another war.

* * *

The Church is growing in the United States. So their statistics tell. But where is the ocular evidence? Not in the Churches themselves, where most of them are two thirds empty. Not in the current literature of the day, where religion is viewed indifferently. A synod of the Presbyterian Church held in Denver bemoaned the fact of the great number of popular writers who do not "acknowledge Christ." Not in improved morals, which in all departments are so low that the Attorney-General of the United States is alarmed, and Congress recently passed a law making it difficult for criminals to escape from one state to another. As to the number of church members we all know the list is padded. The most honest history of the United States that I know of, *The Rise of American Civilization*, by Charles and Mary Beard, Vol. 2, p. 750, truthfully gives the facts in these words: "When it was pointed out that this estimate of nominal membership, based on statistical reports made by the clergy, including a large proportion of children, the width of the breach in the church universal becomes all the more striking." As illustrative of this fact we note the rapid repeal of the Prohibition Law, or the Eighteenth Amendment. This was sponsored by the churches and forced upon the American people during the war hysteria. When, last year, the States voted to determine whether this Amendment should be retained, of those that voted, but two favoured its retention, while seven of the forty-eight States did not vote. Quite different from war days, when fanaticism was at its height. Some Freethinking prohibitionists cannot see why a Freethought paper, speaker or publicist should criticize prohibition. Were I many times a prohibitionist I would yet be compelled to unveil the religious fanaticism, bigotry and hypocrisy which accompany prohibition propaganda. And I regret to say that many Freethinking prohibitionists are not unaffected by the same mania. The repeal demonstrated what all thinking men knew before, that prohibition failed not merely in its professed object, but brought in its train other and worse evils.

* * *

In these notes I will say nothing of the present condition of Freethought in America, but will speak of it in a later article. The enforced inactivity due to the ravages of the depression has been greatly to our detriment and of the country also. Yet it has not been as bad as it would have been had the Churches not felt the depression, relatively as much as ourselves.

* * *

Talking about universal peace and no more war, a beautiful exemplification of the former, of more value than any of the vapourings of the ministers, has occurred between the United States and Canada. For one hundred and twenty years neither country has maintained soldiers on the border, nor war ships on the lakes. In the war of 1812, the Americans captured York, now Toronto, in Ontario. The American army was commanded by General Pike, the discoverer of Pike's Peak, who was killed. The Americans carried away the mace of the Ontario House of Parliament. Now the ladies of Toronto have raised a fund to erect a monument to General Pike, while President Roosevelt has ordered the return of the mace to where it once belonged.

Chicago, Illinois.

FRANKLIN STEINER.

To Read the Bible is to Reject It!

Says *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney, N.S.W., Australia):—

W. M. Hughes, who is much given to quoting scripture, relates how one day, as a K.C. of the English bar, he lunched with distinguished judges of the Appeal Courts. Over the port, one learned judge remarked, "I've made a really interesting discovery to-day. I was reading the Bible, to find—that Dan and Bathsheba were names of places, and not—as I had always thought—names of people, like Sodom and Gomorrah."

The Bible—in point of numbers—is for ever being represented as the most widely-distributed book on earth.

But—who reads it?

In so far as it purports to be read, the readers may be divided into two classes: (1) the clerical parasites who get a living by prating it, and (2) those who—wading through it, with the least glimmering of intelligence or understanding—recoil from it as a repository of stupidity, ignorance, and filth.

The Bible, in brief, owes its continuance—to the extent that there is a pretence to a belief in it—to the fact that it is NOT read.

The reading of it, if in any way proportionate to the capacity of the average human intelligence to pronounce judgment with regard to it, would have meant the consignment of it to the scrap-heap hundreds of years ago.

And the Hughes extract from *Smith's Weekly*—showing this pre-eminently among those who might be expected to know something about it, side by side with the "heathens" and "pagans" who provide the field for its fatuously-vaunted distribution—is the clearest, most conclusive evidence that the Bible remains with us to-day—SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS NOT READ.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Acid Drops

The following does not require comment, but it does deserve the widest publicity. It is from the *New Statesman and Nation* for June 25:—

We are a peculiar people. At the Aldershot Tattoo I was impressed first by the enormous and quiet efficiency of the traffic arrangements for over 70,000 persons; and next by the solicitous care which as early as eight o'clock on a hot night forbade us to buy a glass of beer without first paying 2s. for a supper we did not want. Aesthetically, the show was magnificent; the lighting, the grouping and colouring were admirable. It was an odd fancy to give us "visions" from *Tannhäuser*, but they were pretty. It was an odder fancy to choose as a principal scene James II reviewing in 1686 the troops which deserted him less than three years later—can it have been intended to preach that military loyalty ought to be only conditional? The precision in elaborate movements of the five thousand men performing in the Tattoo was beyond praise; their sisters, *les girls* of the Paris music-halls, are inaccurate by comparison. The drill of the Coldstream and Grenadier Guards was the most miraculously perfect spectacle I have ever seen. But at this point the moralist in me began to pop up his disapproving head. As long as we taxpayers have to pay for the training of troops, it is very proper that we as well as the generals should be given some pleasure from the spectacle of its results. But the discipline required to reduce human beings to such exquisite machines, is it, for practical purposes, necessary? If militarism is rightly defined by the Oxford dictionary as "the spirit and tendencies of professional soldiers," there has never been such a display of militarism as the Tattoo. As long as we have an Army, we must wish it to be efficient, but is there any relation between efficiency in drill and efficiency in modern warfare? Or is it just efficiency propaganda? After bludgeoning us with this formidable display, the programme informed us that the Army was an "undemonstrative instrument of mercy and hope." A clerical voice offered "praises and thanks to God through Whom they (the Army) have brought Help to the Weak, Justice to the Oppressed, Light and Health to the Darkest Places of the World, and Freedom to Men." A cross appeared on the

sky-line, where a minute before Britannia by waving a trident had produced an illuminated troop-ship, and the audience without any feelings of hypocrisy stood up to sing "Abide With Me." Whether the "Help of the Helpless" was Christ or Britannia remained agreeably obscure. "Abide With Me" was rapidly followed by "Mademoiselle from Armentières." We are indeed a peculiar people.

"The Business Men's League" had its Annual Conference last week. Dr. Saleeby spoke, and was supported by a wholehogger gang of pious tectotallers. One report says the gathering was really "the Local Preachers' Mutual Aid Association under another name." The fact is it is a society professing to represent commercial travellers, but is just a Christian bit of proselytizing. Surely if anybody wants to make the world think that alcohol is an evil, they need not go to the Bible for their texts. We must circulate more copies of Mr. Foote's *Beer and Bible*. The Bible is decidedly not a "temperance tract."

"The Flight from Reason" is the fit and appropriate headline in the *Christian World*. It is only mad people who boast that they have lost their reason. There is some sort of lip-service paid to some sort of reason, but we know where we are when we read of "the vicious mistake of intellectualism." The writer has evidently not made THAT mistake. "God," he says, "is the Infinite Reason." A study of "His Word" would hardly have led us to suppose so.

There are some silly journalists who pretend to believe (or as Dean Swift said, "would have us believe they believe") that Germany is seething with irreligion. Fr. V. D. Ropp, Elder of the Christian Storm-troop of Berlin, is at present in this country. Fr. Ropp writes (with all the storm-troopers backing the statement), "The German nation has done with Atheism and indifference." This is borne out by the fact that the Storm-troopers have "done with," and done away with, as many Atheists as they could lay their hands upon.

Dr. Jacks has been kicking back at the Bishops who objected to Unitarians preaching in the big Joss-house. His reply is not lacking in vitriol. He predicts that "unless the churches are able to transcend their institutional selfishness, their corporate self-seeking, and uncharitable relations . . . the days of organized Christianity are most assuredly numbered." "A religion which cannot live without the Nicene Creed to support it is a dying religion." He is not far wrong in saying that the Church has not only excommunicated Unitarians, but has excommunicated "knowledge, science, philosophy, and human culture in general." Well, well, it hardly seems to be the sort of church an enlightened man would seek to be patronized by.

Dr. Justin Dixon complains that if the Almighty wanted to talk to one of his own prophets to-day. "He would have to make an appointment through the prophet's secretary, and when they met, their conversation would be interrupted by telephones and wireless crooners." But why on earth should the Almighty want to talk to any of the present-day "prophets"? Hasn't he had enough of them to last Him all His eternal life?

A Japanese has written a book on *Christ and Japan*. He claims that Christianity has completely converted the upper classes of Japan, but has failed altogether to secure any foothold on the people, or as he puts it "it has no force to guide the moral life of the milling masses." To an outsider it looks as if Christian militarism, navalism and Christian aviation has "inspired" the ruling classes in war-like activities, but the people who have to pay in lives and money are less easily "converted."

There have been high times at Heckmondwike. A "Preaching Festival" is an annual affair which shows a regular decline alike in preaching ability and in listening

capacity. Fewer people heard worse sermons. One young fellow named Sangster "threw down a direct challenge to Humanists, Atheists, and the followers of the 'New Morality,' who would abolish Christ as obsolete." Mr. Sangster "battled with them all on their own ground, and convicted them of futility." It must have been a merry meeting, and we should like to hear some more of this juvenile marvel. Unfortunately the rest of his sermon is not reported.

Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics are so near together and yet so far from each other! The Anglos are always protesting that they are really Catholics, true Catholics, and only differ from the Romans in repudiating the Pope in England. The Romans, on the other hand, repudiate the Anglos altogether. The leading writer in a prominent Roman Catholic journal advises his brother believers to read the latest church quarterly, entitled *Ecumenica*; they will then see that the "Anglican communion is an institution with no coherent mind, and riddled with heresy from top to bottom." We used to think that the Roman Church hated Calvinists more than anything else. We think they have now transferred this hatred to the Anglican Church. And we have thus a further proof as to how Christians love one another.

It is interesting to find a Catholic editor telling one of his readers that the "Apostles were personally infallible." It seems also that they were possessed of "extraordinary privileges" as Apostles, which, as mere Bishops, they did not possess. Which is why a plain, ordinary Bishop only "inherits the ordinary powers of the Apostles and not their extraordinary ones." Bishops, therefore, are not infallible, which is rather extraordinary, as they behave and talk as if they were—or at least, the Roman ones do. The others disagree so violently among themselves that poor unfortunate laymen like us instinctively know that Bishops are not infallible. The only one who distinctly claims to be absolutely infallible—sometimes—is the Pope. But other Bishops say he is not—ask Dean Inge. What a pretty picture of Christian unity is shown directly Bishops—or any Christians for that matter—begin to talk about "infallibility!" As for the infallible Apostles, didn't they all scuttle directly Jesus was taken? What a crew!

A Christian correspondent of a religious weekly asks the editor to enlighten him (or perhaps her) where did Frances Ridley Havergal write the beautiful poem beginning:—

"O! Mother's Knee, O sacred spot
As years advance forget it not."

Most of us remember better the "tender spot," not very sacred, where the slipper really hurt and made us literally and sadly "Stand up for Jesus." Our own Mother had two knees, but perhaps F.R.H. did not think the duplication important in a poem.

In the presence of the Duchess of York, the Rev. E. Barson, after explaining that Spurgeon's Orphanage had now become a highly respectable school, even to the extent of sporting its own "old school tie," made quite clear that it was no "mere philanthropy." The Orphanage has never, he said been "a mere clothing, feeding and educating" affair. Not a bit of it. That would stamp it at once as disinterested good-will to those in need. Ah no. "It has always been motivated by the desire to make the boys and girls enlist as soldiers of Jesus Christ." That is what we have always said.

If you want to know what Eternal Life means, don't ask Professor Findlay. He thinks it doesn't mean "Everlasting Life." So far, so good. But when it comes to positively identifying "Eternal Life," the all too-learned Doctor says (it would be exaggerating to say he tells us) "What is meant is that certain actions or states of mind and will have effects which are not limited to this conscious life of things and people whom we can touch and see; their origins or their effects may be invisible, out-

side our realm of sense-perception altogether, but are all the more real for that." And people have been put to death for trying to understand gibberish of this kind.

There is a bit of good old-fashioned criticism in the *British Weekly* review of a terrible book by Dr. Parkes Cadman, about "The Prophets of Israel." The comments are devastating and undoubtedly deservedly so. "The atmosphere of the book is hot," "His sketches are done in scarlet and black, and green and purple. That may be one reason why he is able to admire the bizarre effects of Ezekiel." He keeps his severest shaft to the end, where he refers to the "illustrations." "A reviewer who does not pretend to any faculty for art criticism must rest content with saying that these are eminently in keeping with the letter-press."

Rev. Norman Maclean defends war. Only, of course, it must be the sort of war which Mr. Maclean approves. Dropping bombs on people will be all right if it is done (by a League of Nations or some kind of holy and righteous combination) in order to "compel the nations to stand at the bar of international justice." He thinks "Law" is what is wanted. Any law apparently, for Mr. Maclean describes "Law" as "the operating will of God." It is interesting to read all the old and (we thought) exploded fallacies of Christian defence of war which are considered good enough for Mr. Maclean's readers. He quotes with approval the use of the rod to children, and the way "Our Lord swept down on the money-changers" as justification for force. He says, "Force, in short, is the basis of God's throne." A wiser man than Mr. Maclean said, truly, "Force is no remedy."

Far be it from us to rejoice when anyone suffers. But the *News-Chronicle* reports that forty cripples were injured by being in a "Faith Healing" Tent at Bootle, where the Rev. Edward Jeffreys was doing his stuff. The Tent was blown down, and "the injured had to be removed to the hospital." Just a common hospital! What an anti-climax. And the Lord who does so much to give strength couldn't manage to keep erect a mere tent-pole.

The religious gentleman, who a year or so back, confidently predicted the end of the world a fortnight after he spoke, seems to have fizzled out completely; but a near relative is carrying on the good work. His name is, appropriately enough, Mr. Emanuel Church, and he is a British Israelite. He used to be a Theosophist, but he is now convinced that the English are "the Lost Tribes." After studying the Great Pyramid, he quite confidently predicts that "on December 5, 1935, a Theocratic Government, combined of Church and State, will rise in England." This will naturally be a blow to Sir Oswald Mosley, but perhaps the Theocratic Government will secretly be composed of Black Shirts. "Armageddon" will arrive on September 16, 1936, and it seems Italy and Russia will fight it out in Palestine. The whole world will then be drawn in, and God will eventually and personally interfere with the Dove of Peace. Needless to say, after that the Jews will at once acknowledge Christ as the Messiah. "Economic sanity and good laws" will then come from England, the Dominions and America. Thank Heaven, no foreigners are mentioned, and thank Heaven again for these Blessed British Israelites.

What a magnificent chance the latest Trunk Murder gave our Spiritualists and mediums! All they had to do was to get in touch with the poor victim in Summerland, who could easily identify herself by her name, and, just as easily, give the name of the murderer. The living spirit would also be able to indicate the whereabouts of her destroyer, and thus help to administer Justice in the name of England and Christianity. Alas, mediums and clairvoyants are dumb where murder is concerned—or for that matter, kidnapping. They are also dumb when it comes to naming big-priced winners in racing or locating buried treasure. Where they succeed so well is in telling you that a stud your grandfather lost a century ago will be

found under the big oak tree in your garden; or they will throw the button-hole flower your second cousin is wearing in Australia right on to the table before you in London; or they will whirl a grand piano round and round a room you're not in till it smashes to pieces; or produce spirit photographs by the score of your dead relatives. But somehow they never can find a murderer, a kidnapper, or a Derby winner. How very strange!

Here is, according to the *Church Times*, all "that the doctrine of the Trinity means or ever did mean":—

God has revealed Himself in creation, in the prophets, in the Jewish law. . . The faith of Christianity consists in the belief that Christ, and the Holy Spirit whom He sent to take His place on earth are both God in exactly the same sense as the Father, so that creation, redemption and sanctification, are all equally and directly the work of God himself.

If this does not seem as "crystal-clear" as the writer thinks it is, then you can add:—

Christ is not God because he is a perfect Man. . . On the contrary, He is perfect Man simply because He is first of all God.

What more can a Trinitarian want to prove that three makes one?

The same paper tells us that "in many workhouses up and down the country may be found elderly priests, whose only fault is that they were unsuccessful." That such a wealthy Church as the Church of England can allow "unsuccessful" priests—of any denomination—to finish out their old age in a workhouse is surely typical of "real Christianity." Or it isn't. But whether it is or it is not, could callous treatment go much further in a religion which professes "faith, hope and charity," of which the greatest is "charity"?

A correspondent to the *Daily Express* writes protesting about the "childish maniac" who 'plasters walls, doors, various entrances, etc., with "God is love," written in chalk. The paper actually prints the protest! What are we coming to when a thoroughly orthodox God-fearing Christian is thus publicly exposed as a "childish maniac" because he publicly advertises his belief that God is love? Are we a Christian country or not? And what is the difference between this kind of a nuisance and, say, the nuisance of church bells, or a Salvation Army band?

In spite of Jesus' well-known denunciation of lawyers, Cardinal Bourne "blessed" the new offices of the Society of Our Lady of Good Counsel (which is composed of Catholic barristers and solicitors). What would Jesus have said? Would he *dared* to have denounced lawyers so scathingly had they been good Roman Catholics and had their offices been blessed by a holy Cardinal?

Fifty Years Ago

CHRISTIANITY AND CRIME

FREETHINKERS are the most illogical people on the face of the earth. They ought to be frightfully wicked, but they are not. Any Christian can demonstrate that Free-thought leads to drunkenness, theft, adultery and murder; and it is perfectly clear that, if we act on our principles, we ought to commit these offences as easily and frequently as we eat and drink or lie down to sleep. But somehow we don't. We are as moral as our neighbours, and sometimes a little more so. We don't fill the gaols or even the workhouses. We don't even commit suicide, although Lord Tennyson has written a poem to remind us of our duty in that respect. We are the most perverse, stiff-necked, "cussed" set in the world; and it is no wonder that Christians are enraged at our obstinacy. If we had any sense of decorum we should commit a few crimes just to keep their logic in countenance.

The "Freethinker," July 6, 1884,

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4
Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

TO CORRESPONDENTS

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Lane, 105.

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.

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.

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.

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

We must ask the indulgence of our readers and correspondents this week, but the unexpected absence of the Editor from London over the week-end has necessarily held up some things for the time being. Everything will be made good next week.

Motions passed at the Annual Conference of the N.S.S., where applicable, were forwarded to the departments concerned and acknowledgment have now been received from the Home Office, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the B.B.C. Another motion called for the appointment of members of the N.S.S. in towns where no Branch of the Society exists, to acquaint Headquarters with local items of interest and importance to the Movement. Very useful work could be done in that way, and the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, would be pleased to hear from members of the Society willing to act in that capacity.

Sunderland reports very good meetings addressed by Mr. G. Whitehead, and much new interest has been aroused. Mr. Whitehead is now operating in the area covered by the N.E. Federation of N.S.S. Branches, and the value of co-operation with keenness and commonsense behind it is being shown in the large audiences, already acquainted with Freethought, which gather to hear him each time he lectures.

MENTAL SLAVERY

The truth is people who can control their ideas, who can think about what they want to think about and what they want, are extremely rare. The overwhelming majority of people cannot; they are at the mercy of outside ideas, which they are powerless to keep at bay; or else, if they have ideas of their own, they are slaves to them, not masters.

Paul Cohen-Porthem, "The Message of Asia."

The Miracles of St. Martin

(A REVIEW)

THE subject of miracles, among Freethinkers, is apt to be treated with a mere shrug of the shoulders because, as it is commonly stated, the Age of Miracles is past. It is true that the hold of the miraculous upon the Western world is not comparable to what it was in former times, but it should never be forgotten that a very formidable part of Christendom is still breathing the atmosphere in which the miraculous flourishes, and only pressure from the scientific world outside prevents the Church from cultivating the fruits of her philosophy to the full capacity. The miraculous has not disappeared. It is only clouded over and reduced in intensity by a critical and sceptical generation. Not so long ago Mr. Arnold Lunn, whose writings have been almost eulogistically reviewed by "Artifex," a notable theological writer, in the *Manchester Guardian*, was defending miracles from the public platform in the City of London. If the Age of Miracles were, in the full sense of the word, past, Mr. Clayton Dove's new booklet entitled *The Miracles of St. Martin*, would not have the interest which it undoubtedly has. It is a brief work, but none the less valuable on that account; and it is prefaced by a short but pithy introduction from the pen of Mr. Chapman Cohen.

What Mr. Dove sets out to do, and in my opinion succeeds admirably in doing, is to present us with a sample from bulk in the study of miracles. He takes the case of St. Martin as typical, and then proceeds to a detailed treatment of his subject, made comfortable for the reader because of its circumscribed character. But the modest dimensions of what Mr. Cohen calls "his scholarly essay" do not rob us of essentials, for Mr. Dove makes it clear to us that what applies to St. Martin applies equally to the study of miracles elsewhere. There is much that the author leaves to the intelligence and imagination of his readers, but that is a virtue rather than a fault. The type of reader who is worth writing for is quite capable of doing his own spade work, and his pleasure in all books consists not so much in what he gets out of them as in what he is made to put into them. The arrangement of the essay is well chosen. First we are introduced to the testifier. We naturally want to meet our informant. And so pleasantly does Mr. Dove unfold him to us, in company with his cronies of A.D. 400, that we develop quite a personal interest in him. A graceful and cultured figure, Sulpicius Severus. I am agreeably affected by having made his acquaintance. After covering this ground Mr. Dove next gives us the testimony. The author is faithful to records, but evidently chooses his own language in which to recount the miracles. It is well that he does, for his style has the double attractiveness of a sustained dignity, blended with an undercurrent of satire. His manner of relating the miracles brings us many a quiet smile over his sly humour. Finally he turns from history to commentary, and winds up with a section headed "Remarks."

The author has evidently taken trouble over his research, and we may feel assured that what he gives us is authentic. Numerous bibliographical references hint to us that he is no casual or hurried writer. From the first two sections of the essay we glean whatever lesson we may. Each will take according to his kind. For my own part, Mr. Dove brings out very clearly the truth that the belief in miracles has virtually nothing to do with the evidence in their favour. The characters from whose writings and correspondence the testimony is derived are clearly as cultivated as most men of their time, and no less honest. But their

testimony has no connexion with either their learning or their virtue; it is evidently the outcome of their religious devotion. Sulpicius said of his own writings concerning St. Martin, "He who shall read these things faithfully, this same man will commit sin."

When we come to look into the miracles themselves we see the usual admixture of illusion, wrongly interpreted fact, embellished testimony, sheer fancy, psychopathic experience, simple exaggeration or fantastic explanation which act and interact subtly to perpetuate the atmosphere of the miraculous. It is obvious that, given the strong will to believe, these factors, operating in every conceivable combination, can make a miracle out of anything and everything from the genuinely anomalous down to the veriest commonplace. That is why, from one standpoint, it is a pity that Mr. Dove bothered to analyse a few of the miracles in his final remarks. As Mr. Cohen pointed out in his characteristically profound introduction, miracles must be understood *en bloc* or not at all. The problem has ceased to be historical and has become psychological. Not that Mr. Dove would fail to agree with this, but he has permitted himself to talk at times of natural explanations of the miracles, and that is perhaps the only weakness in the essay. Once we start to bandy words with the believer over the authenticity of individual miracles, we become immediately submerged in a sea of conflicting testimony. And we deserve what we get, for we are sailing in the wrong waters altogether. We might as well commence to argue with a deranged person about the authenticity of a particular delusion. While he can confine us to the area circumscribed by his delusional nexus he will beat us for sheer rational penetration. It is only when we force the problem on to the broader basis that forms the background of his whole mental attitude that we are able to show the diseased character of his thought. It is thus, surely, with miracles. Never discuss the individual miracle. It is a medley of truth and falsehood there is no disentangling. It must be viewed from afar, in company with all others of its class, against a background of anthropological dimensions. But that is by the way. In his essay as a whole Mr. Dove has done us a great service, all the greater because, without losing any of the substance of the matter, he has given us a text of a size to suit both our time and pocket. Freethinkers would do well to possess this booklet. It will put arrows in their quivers. MEDICUS.

ON THE DANGER OF TRUTH IN MORALS

If there is any danger, it is of the alarmist's own making. He has cried long and loud that the whole frame of society and morality hangs upon the acceptance of certain disputable and disputed propositions, and if he cries loud and long enough, it may well be that a number of mankind will believe him. So believing they may live to see the weakening or the downfall of the doctrines on which they have been artificially taught to pin their moral faith; and in this manner it may come to pass that their last state is a good deal worse than their first. The sowers of pious fiction reap hunger and emptiness, and then cry out against honest men for taking away their consolation. They sit whining and bickering over the ashes of their dead illusions. . . . There is only one remedy, which is to discard all fiction and all connivance at fictions, to seek for such grounds of morality as are clear and certain, and to hold those fast. It is not a very difficult matter for men who are able to put themselves on free and careful enquiry to see the sanctions of moral conduct, so far as it is within the range of sanctions, need not be derived from any region beyond common experience, but are implied in the constitution and the very existence of Society itself.

"Essays on Jurisprudence and Ethics,"
by Sir Frederick Pollock.

Obituary

MRS. THOMAS ROBERTSON

ABOUT midnight of the 29th June I received by telephone news of the death of Mrs. Florence Robertson, of Glasgow. The news was not unexpected, as I had already received word of her serious condition. But no amount of warning can divest death of that abruptness and sense of loss which marks the breaking of old ties, particularly when it marks the passing of an old and dear friend. On Sunday I travelled to Glasgow, longing to be with the family, and yet dreading to arrive, to be present at the cremation which took place in the Western Necropolis, on July 2. I returned to London on Monday night, in order to see this issue of the *Freethinker* through the press. The ceremony at the Crematorium was kept as private as possible, and my own remarks were of the briefest. When feelings run strongly every word is an ordeal, and it is seldom that I have spoken with a greater sense of effort. Between myself and Mrs. Cohen and the Robertson family there existed terms of affection based on an unbroken friendship of nearly forty years. Mrs. Robertson was within a few weeks of sixty-one. She leaves two daughters, a son—and her husband.

Florence Robertson came of fine Freethinking stock. On the female side her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents take the record back to the days of Thomas Paine and Robert Owen. Probably heresy ran in the family before that. I knew her father and mother, and greatly admired them both. They possessed an independence that appears to set better on Scottish shoulders than on those of more southerly people. They were both unswerving in their opinions, and carried their principles with a pride that was a little reminiscent of the Covenanter's devotion to his creed. They were precise in their judgment of others, but merciful in its application, and there was a notable exercise of self-effacement in whatever public work they were doing. They remain engraved on my mind as representative of the finer type of Freethinker of the older generation.

Their daughter partook of their qualities in what one may call a more rarified form. When I first knew her it was early in her married life, and the eldest daughter, now the mother of a family, was then a little dot of about two. Since, my close acquaintance with the family bred a love and respect for Florence Robertson that I am never likely to outgrow. I never knew her do a mean or dishonest action, and do not think she was capable of doing one. If ever she showed signs of intolerance, it was towards meanness and dishonesty in others.

In the main her life was spent within her home, and that home life was permeated with an atmosphere of the deepest affection. I have never known a family in which it was more strongly evident. Yet for all its strength, it was neither sickly nor sentimental. It was an expression of the kind of tie that is formed by people of strong nature, and who can afford to dispense with all fear of misunderstanding. Those who understand this type of home life, will also understand how much its existence depends upon the wife and the mother.

Those who know as I know the affection in which obtained between Florence Robertson and her family, will appreciate the courage with which they are meeting the blow that has been dealt them by fate. But fate cannot rob them of what has been, and the years of happy family life will always be theirs—a vast reservoir from which to draw comfort and strength. Death is always hard, but it has at least that compensatory feature. If children and husband are mourning the loss of a beloved wife and mother, myself and my wife are mourning the loss of a very dear friend, and in mutual sorrow there may be something of an anodyne for the unavoidable grief that each is feeling.—C.C.

GERALD HENRY LAWSON ROYLE

THE whole country must have sympathized with Mr. and Mrs. George Royle on the loss of their son, Gerald Henry Royle, and the sympathy of Freethinkers will, in particular be extended to them. Gerald Royle was sixteen years of age, one of the youngest, and, for his age

one of the most expert fliers in the country. He had been flying since he was fourteen. During flying exercise in Yorkshire, his machine caught on fire and crashed. Nothing could be done, and death must have been instantaneous. It is a terrible blow to the parents, but, again, I am writing of intimate friends, and the family life is so strong, and so attuned to all that is best, that all the consolation that a reasoned Freethought can give is theirs. And with parents I do not think that a loved child ever dies. It is with them always, and when the sharpness of the wound is gone, the sweeter memories take possession. Sorrow is made to minister to love, even as love is the cause of sorrow. By a pretty thought, which the boy would have appreciated, after the body was cremated, the ashes were taken up in an aeroplane and scattered over the flying field.

Mr. Royle will be remembered at the Annual Dinners, for which he very kindly undertook the musical arrangements. He and his wife are both staunch Freethinkers, and loyal to their convictions.

We would not make this the condition of extending our sympathy to parents who have suffered the loss that Mr. and Mrs. Royle have suffered, but it adds emphasis to our feelings. A brave young life abruptly closed. Our thoughts go out to the parents who have to face the void.

C.C.

The Flight from Freedom

It is doubtful whether, at the beginning of the century, any convinced Freethinker would have thought it worth while to argue the question of freedom of speech, of the free dissemination of ideas, or of the freedom of the press with another convinced Freethinker. To him Freethought meant free-thought, irrespective of the opinion held or expressed. Brought up in the tradition of Paine, Carlile, Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, he would have taken agreement on the question of freedom as granted. The word "dictator" would have been laughed at. Even in Freethought (that part of freedom of speech dealing with religion), the Freethinker of thirty odd years ago would have scorned the right of any of his leaders to determine what he must or must not believe. He claimed the right to form his own judgment on the evidence. He claimed the right to call himself a Secularist or an Atheist or an Agnostic or a Rationalist. He was ready to debate the question, and was willing to admit defeat on any special point if he were defeated. But he resisted with the whole of his being any other right but that of intellectual conviction.

Our leaders, Bradlaugh, Foote and the others never contested this right, however much they deplored what they may have thought wrong thinking by other members of the party. Bradlaugh allowed—it never occurred to him to act otherwise—Mrs Besant perfect liberty of opinion on the question of Socialism. He thought she was wrong, but he recognized her right to think out the matter for herself. And even when she definitely joined the Theosophists, and saw a "secret doctrine" behind the phenomena of the Universe, he still felt she should be free to express her beliefs and convictions openly and with perfect liberty.

Foote preferred the word "Atheist" to the word "Agnostic," and he argued the matter out with Holyoake just as Bradlaugh did with Herbert Spencer. But none of these disputants would have used force to compel their opponents to believe as they did. The matter was one of intellectual conviction, and in a world of diverse peoples, it was impossible for them all to agree. Could anyone doubt the sincerity of Foote, or Bradlaugh, or Spencer, or Holyoake? They were soldiers in the great fight for freedom; their methods were different, but who can truly say one alone had

the truth, that one alone was indubitably scientific and absolutely right?

This was the atmosphere into which I made my first entry in the greatest of all causes. I imbibed the teaching of our great leaders, the long and splendid line of reformers, heroes, and martyrs of Freethought. What an honour it was to join their company! Paine and Carlile, Robert Taylor and Robert Cooper, and the early Holyoake and Bradlaugh, Ingersoll and Foote—and later, McCabe and Robertson and Chapman Cohen—they and many other lesser and humbler lights taught me the word "liberty" and what it really meant and implied. They were the great Libertarians! They unshackled my mind from *fear*, that great nurse of religion. They taught me to hold my head up and face the unknown.

And Freethinkers were not the only men who taught me the love of liberty. There was Milton:—

Liberty which is the nurse of all great wits . . .
Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue
freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

There was Swift:—

Of what use is freedom of thought, if it will not produce freedom of action, which is the sole end, how remote soever in appearance, of all objections against Christianity? And therefore the free thinkers consider it an edifice where all the parts have such a mutual dependence on each other, that, if you pull out a single nail the whole fabric must fall to the ground.

And there were many others. Let us be just even to the believers in such an outworn creed as Christianity, and admit that some of them also upheld, and fought for, liberty—liberty of speech and action. But as the years went on, I found a slow, almost imperceptible change in our attitude towards liberty. It was hardly noticeable at first, but the passions roused by politics played the very devil with free thought. I noticed it first in the suffragette movement. Women were denied the vote—let us break up all meetings. Let us deny free speech to those who differ from us. Let us burn and smash and even kill—or be killed—if necessary, but we must have our way. We have truth and justice on our side, and nobody has the right to differ from us. We are going to inaugurate a veritable paradise on this earth once we get the vote—and so on.

There were Socialists and Communists (I am not in these pages going to discuss their economics) who, fighting at first for the right to preach their doctrines, denied it to those who differed from them. Even the meetings of such a doughty champion of democracy as Charles Bradlaugh were broken up by Socialists as far back as the '80's of last century.

There were the anti-vaccinationists and the antivivisectionists, whose meetings were time and again assailed by medical students, and often completely broken up. Temperance reformers and vegetarians also came in for their share of abuse, and dozens of other "reform" movements were attacked, and if possible compelled to retreat by the determined opposition of those who refused the reformers the right to state their case. Only rarely has the opposition taken the form of good-natured chaff.

Freethought is still made almost impossible in certain districts. Even a coldly scientific examination of Roman Catholic claims would get very little chance of being heard in the midst of a hostile Roman Catholic population—but this has almost always been the case, and it is neither surprising nor unexpected.

But some Freethinkers, though used to this attitude from their religious enemies, are ready to adopt it themselves directly someone opposes their political beliefs. Like the Suffragettes, they have the Truth. It is scientific and fool-proof. It is 100 per cent

efficient, but it must be first forced on to the people and then, when everyone believes in it, there will be no one to criticize it, and free speech will be tolerated. It is impossible for them to be wrong, and impossible for any opponent to be right. Moreover, the time has gone by when opponents can be *educated* to any particular political dogma. It will have to be accepted one day, come what may, willy-nilly. Why not therefore accept it now?

No one who follows the trend of the revolt against freedom of opinion can deny that, since the conclusion of the war, it has gained in intensity. Freedom of opinion is almost lost in any and every revolution. As Bukharin well said in his *Programme of the Communists*, "The working-class revolution cannot grant freedom of organization, freedom of speech, freedom of the Press." And Lenin added, "Liberty of the press is liberty for the rich to buy the press."

I must repeat again that I am not concerned with the merits of Bolshevism or Communism or Fascism or Mosleyism or Nazism as a theory of state. Everybody knows that neither Mussolini nor Hitler will tolerate any criticism whatever, either of themselves or their powers or even the ultimate aim of their dictatorships, unless it be enthusiastically favourable. As for Sir Oswald Mosley, he has repeatedly said full freedom of opinion will be allowed under his dictatorship—*provided that the critic knows what he is talking about*. No reactionary Roman Catholic transplanted from Torquemada's day could have put his case against freedom of speech better than that.

Now if members of all or any of these parties were to insist on the use of force in the name of their particular creed, I, for one, would understand their attitude. But with all the good-will in the world, I simply cannot understand why some of them drag in Freethought and talk as if Freethought was really synonymous with their economic or political beliefs—unless, of course, they mean by Freethought something quite different from what I do.

I claim the right to criticize religious beliefs, the right to disbelieve them if I wish to, the right to propagate my reasons for disbelief by word of mouth, or by printed articles or books. I do not claim the right to do so with scurrilous or obscene language, nor the right to do so at any time or at any place. I claim the right for my neighbour to do the same as I, and, in addition, if he thinks fit, to criticize me or my beliefs. I grant the same right to religious people, and the fact that they might suppress me if they had the power, is beside the point.

On the question of freedom of speech, I claim the right fairly to criticize any existing institution or political theory, and I am not to be deterred by any believer telling me he and he alone is right and has the Truth. "I say," said old Walt Whitman, "discuss all and expose all—I am for every topic openly." Or as Auberon Herbert put it (the most extreme view and one with which I am not, naturally, in full agreement):—

Of all the miserable, unprofitable, inglorious wars in the world is the war against words. Let men say just what they like. Let them propose to cut every throat and burn every home—if so they like it. We have nothing to do with a man's words or a man's thoughts, except to put against them better words and better thoughts, and go to win in the great moral and intellectual duel that is always going on, and on which all progress depends.

If, for example, Communists propose—in words—to suppress the "present form" of Government, and claim the right to express their views, they must concede the right also to the Fascists. They must both be prepared to allow the anti-Communist and the anti-Fascist, the Roman Catholic and the Royalist, the

right to attack "the present form" of Government, whatever this may be. No one has the right to break up another man's meeting because he does not agree with the purpose of that meeting. It should be the duty of the Government in power to allow free, fair criticism by all its enemies, and see that the various contending bodies are not broken up by opposition. Those citizens who wish to express their views have the right, so long as they pay rates and taxes, to demand full and adequate protection. This used to be the attitude of the old Secularists I came into contact with years ago, and is still their attitude. Some of the younger "Freethinkers" see a Utopia ahead which can be got only by the vigorous suppression of all political opponents, and anyone who does not agree with them is, of course, "reactionary."

So be it. I, for one, am that kind of "reactionary." Standing aside from Communism, National Socialism, Fascism, Revolutionary Socialism, Mosleyism, Roman Catholicism, Dictatorships of all kinds, I prefer to be a Freethinker. I have my own views on politics and economics, but I stand for intellectual conviction and integrity and honesty; and also for love, and mercy, and justice.

H. CUTNER.

Wind-Worship

To us, accustomed as we are to regard the ancients as ignorant in comparison with ourselves, it may seem a surprising fact that they were acquainted with several arts totally unknown to-day, *e.g.*, that of amalgamating gold and silver into a compound metal resembling amber: just as tin and copper are amalgamated into bronze.

And yet, in the main, our misunderstanding of ancient peoples is due to our not realizing their complete ignorance of some matters in which we have been so thoroughly instructed, that we generally assume our knowledge of them to come by nature.

As a needful preliminary to a correct understanding of the early ideas anent "Spirits," we have to realize that in former times men were entirely ignorant of the fact, to us so obvious, that we inhabit an ocean of air.

Knowing of the wind when it blew, of their own breath and that of other animals, they yet were unaware of the existence of air. When all was quiet around, they knew of no air except their own breath.

Furthermore, they had no idea that this breath is constantly changing its substance, that we breathe out stale air and draw in fresh; but took for granted that the same breath that came out at exhalation went in again at respiration. This process they believed to continue throughout a man's life, until, at death, he, as they said, "*gave up his spirit*"—*i.e.*, the breath went out and this time did not return.

That the words "spirit," "soul," "ghost," and their various equivalents in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, originally meant simply wind and breath is of course generally known; but the fact needs to be constantly borne in mind if we are to understand the ideas of the ancients. For example, the poem well known under the name of "*The Emperor Antoninus's Address to his Soul*," beginning in its English version, "*Thou little fluttering thing*," seems, to anyone who understands the word "soul" only in its modern meaning, a ludicrous and unfounded string of absurdities; but when it is recollected that "soul" means breath, and that a man's breath was assumed to be the same substance throughout his life, the meaning of the poem becomes plain enough.

As another example, the passage in the Old Testament which speaks of "the spirit of man which goeth upwards and the spirit of the beast which goeth downwards" has been taken as a divine revelation that there is a future life for men and not for other animals; but all it actually expresses is the fact that a man's breath, being expelled generally in a horizontal direction, and being warmer than the surrounding air, rises, in accordance with the general tendency of hot air to rise, whereas animals such as bullocks, for example, expel their breath in a downward direction, with force sufficient to counteract the tendency of the warm air to rise.

Their breath being a miniature wind, the Ancients arrived by analogy at the idea that the great wind was the breath of a great Being, that is, as they said, "the Spirit of the Lord," and any movement of the air which was not the breath of men or animals was assumed to be in some way a portion of this great Spirit or Breath. For instance, when one of Ahab's prophets gave another prophet a smack on the face and said, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me unto thee?" the Spirit that he referred to was the wind of his blows, and the "inner chamber" of the reply is a room without windows, into which the irreverent prophet would flee in the vain hope of hiding himself from "the Spirit of the Lord," i.e., from a great wind.

To regard the wind as the "Breath of the Lord" may seem strange in a country such as ours, where the wind (on land) is seldom to be feared; but it is easily understood by those acquainted with the occasional extreme violence of the wind in other parts of the world. Even at the present day, there may sometimes be observed in English people who have been brought up in the West Indies, or elsewhere where hurricanes prevail, a sentiment that to the stay-at-home Briton seems almost like a superstitious worship of the wind.

H. T. SHORE.

Correspondence

FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Austen Verney, in your issue of June 24, reminds us, in his instructive essay on "Freethought and Social Science," that "the first requisite of a forceful policy is a vigorous people," should arouse us to consider if the policy of Church and State is designed to promote the welfare of a vigorous people?

Freethinkers may be in little doubt regarding the deterrent influence of the Church in this respect, although some may hesitate in applying a similar term to the policy of the State, yet conceding there is evidence of much distress in our midst!

If consideration is given to the State policy dealing with the problem of unemployment, then the evidence apparent in the condition of those subject to be thus provided bear witness that the administration has failed to secure "the preservation of a people's standard and its enhancement," such as Mr. Verney rightly conceives, "should be the paramount concern of National polity."

What, then, is the obstacle that causes meagre results to flow from a policy assumed not alone to alleviate distress, but adequately to nourish a vigorous people?

Food is produced in abundance, much is actually destroyed, while the needy suffer hunger. There is no lack of physical means to convey abundance to those in need. The lack is in the medium that functions to facilitate distribution and convert the need of consumers into effective demand. This medium is the life blood of production, but restrained to a trickle for distribution.

This medium is money and its equivalent credit. Money when rightly regarded is without value, and costs

but a trifle to make, yet needful to facilitate production, distribution, consumption and exchange of services. Surely, then, there need be no deterrent to creating and providing consumers with money or credit equivalent to the price of what is produced for consumption, and thus remove the obstacle that causes a lack both of effective demand and distribution.

Assuming this to be correct, the difficulty which hampers Ministers of State in administering a policy to effect "the preservation of a people's standard and its enhancement" is one of finance. The origin of this difficulty is traced to the action of an earlier generation in relinquishing the monopoly of credit creation and money control to a private banking corporation. From this bank the State is now obliged to borrow and pay interest, while the extent of accommodation is at the discretion of directors, whose first duty is, naturally, in the interest of its shareholders.

Evidently, then, whatever policy statesmen pursue the financial requirements for its administration is subject to the approval of the directors referred to, they and not the Ministers of State become the ultimate arbiters of a people's standard, they, the unseen power behind the throne.

To rectify this state of affairs and achieve the forceful polity Mr. Verney commends, Major C. H. Douglas in his writings on Social Credit has, to put it in the words of a Professor in Economics (R. F. Irvine) "I am convinced he shows the way out!" This way is beyond partisan politics, and promises economic security to all.

J. BROWN.

SIR,—I doubt whether it is possible to write on politics and economics without stinging someone to reply, and Mr. Verney's three articles on "Freethought and Social Science" are no exception in this respect.

I am not going to criticize Mr. Verney for his marked anti-Socialist bias; he is entitled to his opinion. Moreover, people who profess to be unbiased, in politics as in religion, are usually either hypocrites and cowards, or else they are too ignorant of the subject in question to form an opinion. I cheerfully admit that I have a very strong Socialist bias. But most Socialists do not hold that Socialism is a "cure-all," as Mr. Verney suggests, and I would recommend that he at least reads *Labour and The Nation*, the policy supported by the majority of Socialists in this country, before he passes judgment upon us.

Now consider Mr. Verney's arguments against Socialism. He points out that Capitalist enterprise has developed the resources of the world. Incidentally, he does not demonstrate that Socialism could not have done the same or better, but that is a side issue. If the profit-making urge has been useful in the past, it does not follow that it will always be useful. Capitalism is a napkin which society can afford to discard at quite an early age.

Mr. Verney's other objection is that he dislikes the Communist dictatorship practised in Russia. So do I. As an argument against Socialism that simply will not do. It may be a clever—and thoroughly dishonest—party trick in the heat of panic General Election to label the democratic Socialists of this country as "Bolsheviks run mad," but to try to identify the two policies in the sober columns of the *Freethinker* is an insult to the intelligence of its readers.

Clearly Mr. Verney has failed utterly in his effort to discredit Socialism.

In his third article he refers to the vexed questions of free trade and currency stabilization. A few minutes' thought will show him that in a socialized state, both of these problems automatically disappear. If he cannot follow the reasoning behind this statement I will gladly enlarge upon it.

It is significant that not only has Mr. Verney failed to present any sort of case against Socialist doctrine, but he has also failed to produce an alternative policy to tackle those problems which Socialism can overcome.

H. T. BUCKLE.

REACTION IN FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—If this discussion is to be productive of any profit at all, it will first of all be necessary for Mr. Stafford to drop his air of conscious superiority: at the moment he seems to be in the ranks of those whom "Medicus" has so aptly described as the "unquestionably right." Furthermore he must rid himself of the idea that he can dispose of the criticisms of opponents, not mentally inferior to himself, by sneers at their low level of thinking and by irrelevant references to "characteristic talkativeness" and "vulgar clap-trap."

There is a clear-cut issue between us, and Mr. Stafford would do well to meet it without evasion. In his original article he said that if Freethought is to render the fullest possible service to mankind it should include the free and unrestrained criticism of social and economic questions: later in that article he stated that in the upbuilding of the Socialist society some limitation of freedom of expression will be imposed. Now does Mr. Stafford agree with that proposed limitation? Or is he, like other Freethinkers, determined to fight for the right to criticize that upbuilding, even if his criticism be translated as intending to prevent that reconstruction? If the former, then he is giving mere lip-service to Freethought; and casuistry about being allowed to criticize the methods but not the theories of the people in power is nothing more than so much verbal trickery; but I admit that it may be a case of self-deception.

As for Freethought and fundamental changes in the structure of society, Mr. Stafford seems very hazy about his position. First he suggested (page 364 *Freethinker*, June 10, 1934) that Freethought could not bring about such a change; now in his letter of July 1, 1934, his complaint that, *unless Freethought does bring about such changes, it is no better than the religious attitude to social problems*, gives the impression that he thinks it can. (Italics mine). I can leave him to sort out his beliefs for himself.

Perhaps I can best illustrate my belief that Freethought is a method of approach, and not a scheme of settlement by likening it to a tool and not a blue print. By the free and intelligent use of that tool men and women can settle most, if not all, social problems in a manner conducive to human happiness—but, of course, they may not decide in favour of Communism.

S. R. A. READY.

SIR,—Mr. Egerton Stafford says his critics show "incapacity to realize the difference between allowing criticism of the methods for reconstructing society and restricting speech and writing, intended to bring about activity in the direction of preventing that reconstruction."

For "difference" read "harmony"; and those 31 words make sense (though not truth). As they stand, they are nonsense. But when defending the "jail for the mind," which, at present, extends from the Rhine to Vladivostok, perhaps clear writing would be unwise.

C. HARPUR.

"RESPECTABLE" WRITERS

SIR,—In your issue of June 24, under the heading "The Daring of Davidson," signed by "Mimmermus," you refer to Miss Marjorie Bowen as "nothing, if not respectable." Presumably this refers to her work as a writer; I should rather gather that "Mimmermus" could not have read all Miss Bowen's works, for some of them are not respectable in the conventional sense of the word, especially those written under the name of George Preedy. I suppose he has read the works of Miss Bowen written when she was in her 'teens and early twenties—I should advise him to read *Bagatelle*, and *The Knot Garden*, and her latest book, *The Triumphant Beast*, which deals with Giordano Bruno, one of the greatest Free-thinkers.

Your magazine ought to review this book.

P. J. MOULE.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JUNE 29, 1934

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

Also present, Messrs. Rosetti (A. C.), Clifton, Wood, Easterbrook (W. J. W.), Ebury, Preece, McLaren, Mrs. Venton, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed, financial statement presented. New members were admitted to West London, West Ham, North London, Burnley, Hants and Dorset, South Shields, Bolton, Blackburn, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Pontypridd, and the Parent Society. Permission was given for the formation of a Pontypridd and Rhondda Branch N.S.S. Report of the Society's co-operation in the organized demonstration against the Incitement to Disaffection Bill held in Liverpool and Trafalgar Square, London, on June 24, was made and accepted. Lecture reports and communications from the Council of Civil Liberties, Messrs. Brighton, Clayton, Whitehead, and from Newcastle, Birkenhead, Bradford, Woolwich, South London, Swansea and Burnley Branches. The Secretary received instructions for the booking of halls in London for the coming indoor lecture season. Motions remitted from the Annual Conference were dealt with. The Secretary reported the receipt of a legacy of £31 5s. from the late D. J. Thomas.

The next meeting of the Executive will be held on July 20.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Sense of Community."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCHES N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, July 8, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, July 9, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, July 12, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Brockwell Park): 7.30, Sunday, July 8, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, July 10, Mr. P. Goldman. Stonhouse Street, High Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, July 11, Mr. E. C. Smith. Aliwal Road, Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, July 13, Mr. G. F. Green.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, opposite the Library, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood and Bryant. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Saphin and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Collins and Hyatt. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Saphin and others. Wednesday, 7.30, Mr. Campbell Everden. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood and Saphin. Friday, 7.30, Two Lectures.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON (Grand Corner): 7.0, Friday, July 13, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, July 9, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S. (491 Wimborne Road, Winton, Bournemouth): 8.0, A meeting will be held every Tuesday night. Freethinkers on holiday cordially invited.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of High Park Street and Park Road): 8.0, Thursday, July 5, Messrs. D. Robinson and A. Jackson. Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, July 8, Messrs. J. V. Shortt and C. McKelvie.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.0, Sunday to Tuesday, July 8, 9, and 10, Mr. G. Whitehead.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, July 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Would Have Memorial): 7.0, Wednesday, July 11, A Lecture.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (Market Place): 7.0, Sunday, July 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, A Lecture.

PRIESTCRAFT

BY

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN

Cloth 6s.

Postage 3d.

Five Leaflets by Chapman Cohen.

WHAT IS SECULARISM ?

6d. per 100.

DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH?

1/- per 100 (4 pages).

THE BELIEFS OF UNBELIEVERS.

1/- per 100 (4 pages).

DOES MAN DESIRE GOD ?

1/- per 100 (4 pages).

ARE CHRISTIANS INFERIOR TO FREETHINKERS ?

1/- per 100 (4 pages).

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

TWO NECESSITIES of a TRUE RELIGION

A FREE WILL & A FREE MIND

Read SWEDENBORG'S convincing arguments in "DIVINE PROVIDENCE"

A Unique and Unrivalled Work

500 Pages. 6d. Paper or 1s. 6d. Cloth Post Free

SWEDENBORG SOCIETY, DEPT. F.T., 20 Hart Street, London, W.C.1

PENCILS, advertising the *Freethinker*, 2d. each or 2s. per dozen, post free. Special terms for quantities, or to Branches.

ACADEMY CINEMA,

Oxford Street.

Ger. 2981

The Gay Masquerade
"LIBBES KOMMANDO" (U)
Delightful Viennese Music. And
"THE ROAD TO LIFE" (A)

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

An Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books sent post free for a 1½d. stamp.

N.B.—PRICES ARE NOW LOWER.

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN.

General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

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

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

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

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

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP.

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

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

Name

Address

Occupation

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

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

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

Christianity, Slavery and Labour

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Paper 1s. 6d. Postage 2d. Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH

BY
G. W. FOOTE

Price 6d. Postage 1d.

Letters To a Country Vicar

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Paper 1s. Postage 2d. Cloth, gilt 2s. Postage 3d.

Infidel Death-Beds

BY
G. W. Foote and A. D. McLaren

Price 2s. Postage 3d.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Paper 2s. Postage 2d. Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

SELECTED HERESIES

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth, gilt 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Price 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

Footsteps of the Past

BY
J. M. WHEELER

Price 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

THE MIRACLES OF ST. MARTIN

By
C. CLAYTON DOVE

With
Introduction by Chapman Cohen

This is a booklet that should be read by all Freethinkers, and by as many Christians as can be induced to do so. It offers a scholarly illustration of the genesis of the miraculous, and the use made of that belief by the Christian Church.

Price Post Free - - 7d.

THE "Freethinker" Endowment Trust

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 £8,000, 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.

The Trust may be benefited by donations of cash, or shares already held, or by bequests. All contributions will be acknowledged in the columns of this journal, and may be sent to either the Editor, or to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. H. Jessop, Hollyshaw, Whitkirk, Nr. Leeds. Any further information concerning the Trust will be supplied on application.

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.

The address of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.