

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions

A Christian Apology

THE retirement of Dean Inge removes one of the very few men of ability that figured in the Christian pulpit. In a way he was born to the Church, and has found his lines cast in pleasant places. How much he actually believes of orthodox Christianity no one will ever know. It is quite certain that he has thrown over a great deal, since his own avowal to that effect has been made. But he continued to use the old phrases—he seldom engaged in controversy with opponents who *might* prick the bubble of his religious phraseology, and never with one who would be certain to do so. But in these respects, he was in line with thousands of other parsons, both Established and Nonconformist. They pose as “advanced,” because they throw over the more obvious absurdities of their creed, and retain a reputation for piety by keeping to other aspects of their religion that are, fundamentally, quite as foolish. It is this state of affairs that to-day makes so many men and women suspicious of the mental integrity of the clergy. They place their own private construction on Christianity while holding a post and receiving a salary for preaching and professing a different view. In politics many a man professes a programme in which he does not believe, and from Prime Minister downwards they will proclaim their undying conviction to-day in things which to-morrow they will denounce with all the impassioned energy of a man who has just received a much coveted post. But even in politics if a man is a Conservative he must not denounce Conservatism and preach Socialism, or vice versa. He must at least pretend to be what he proclaims he is. He must be true to his salt. In the Churches the rule is not quite so rigid. There a man may at the same time proclaim that he is “truly” Christian while throwing overboard much that has formed part of the “true” Christianity of the Church to which he belongs, and by which he is paid. And few think much the worse of him for so doing. Some excuse him on the ground

that one cannot expect a man of ability to believe “these things” nowadays, others overlook the heresy in their pride of still being able to hold a man of brains, and a large number say nothing at all lest enquiry should be directed to their own case.

* * *

Has Christianity Declined?

Dean Inge writes an article in the *Evening Standard*, in which he deals with the alleged decline of Christianity in England. He says he sees no sign of this and that “one of the best debates in the House of Commons of recent years,” was the debate on the prayer-book. He points out that the British Parliament actually thinks that the forms of public worship are of national importance. I think Dean Inge must have written that with his tongue in his cheek. The debate had little or nothing to do with genuine Christian conviction. In the first place members could say pretty well what they pleased—the party curb was off, and therefore speeches could be made without great fear of consequences. Next, some at least of the speeches made, and which were acclaimed as brilliant, were made by men who had little more belief in Christianity than I have. Lastly, the speeches made by self-called Christians were made, not so much because of the belief they had in Christianity so much as they feared the advance of the Roman Catholic Church, and regarded this as the establishment of the most superstitious, the most intolerable and intolerant religion in the country. Their speeches were inspired not so much by love of their own creed, as hatred of the creed of their fellow Christians. As Dean Swift would have said, they had just enough of Christianity in them to hate each other with an uncontrolled hatred.

What has lost ground, says Dean Inge, is institutionalism, the Churches. Those who want an infallible guide, he says, must look to the Church of Rome. The Church of England makes no such claim, but is satisfied to be “the Church of the people of England, the Nation on its religious side.” That sentence is hardly worthy of the Dean, and one must presume that he is counting on the lack of critical ability of the ordinary newspaper reader. How does the Church of England represent the *nation* on its religious side, or on any other side? It does not represent the religious belief of the Jews, of the Roman Catholics, or of quite a large number of Christian sects. Dean Inge knows as well as I do that there is no religious side to the nation. There are quantities of odds and ends of religion in the nation, but that is all. And to talk of the Church representing these as though they could be brought under one head is as near nonsense as anyone can get. The Church of England, like every other Church in the country, represents those who believe in it—just these and no more.

Church Attendance

But there is a falling off in Church attendance. That fact is too solid to be denied, so it must be explained away. The usual excuses that the sermons are not interesting, or the seats are not comfortable, or the ventilation is bad, or the singing is poor, does not suit Dean Inge. He does not think that "the decline in Church-going is a proof that people have lost interest in Christianity." Well, to what is it due? He says, "it is because the whole machinery of services and sermons were constructed at a time when the majority of the laity were uneducated; they could not or did not read. . . . But the clergy are no longer shepherds, our sheep are often quite as intelligent and spiritually-minded as we are."

That is really a dangerous defence. The services of the Church of England were constructed for an uneducated people! Suppose I cross the t's and dot the i's of this, and point out that it is a solid fact that all religion is intended for an uneducated people, and that religion declines as education is thorough? It will look then as though Dean Inge had either innocently or artfully given us an explanation of religion losing its hold on the people, and also an explanation of its decline. And are we to believe that people went to Church *only* because they could not read, and had to get someone else to do the reading for them, or is the older explanation that people went to Church to get a spiritual "uplift" in the "House of God"? Both explanations cannot be true. And what of the clergy? What of the pretence that they are called to their posts by God? What of the powers that the prayer-book says are given the clergy? Is all this so much solemn humbug that was only to be believed so long as the people were uneducated, and were obedient "sheep" to their "shepherds"? Again, I might put forward that explanation, but how comes Dean Inge to deal such a blow at his brother parsons? Is his farewell to his brother clergy merely an act of putting his tongue in his cheek, and trying to explain away the decline of religion in a way that the more strongly emphasizes the fact that it has lost its hold on the people, and is never likely to regain it? I think that, if I were a parson, I would rather have Dean Inge as an enemy than as a friend.

* * *

Innocence or Impudence?

Apparently the Dean thinks that, so far as the clergy remaining the religious directors of the people goes, the game is up. He says:—

I hope that in the future the clergy will regard themselves primarily as physicians of the soul. The proper study of mankind is man; and there is no more fascinating study than the varieties of human nature. The theological colleges ought to give courses on psychology, including the important subjects where some medical knowledge is desirable. Much more is known about these border line cases than was known fifty years ago.

That, if it were said with full consciousness of its implications, deserves to be characterized as downright impudence. Consider. The medicine-man appears in history as a sheer magic worker. He is what he is owing to the belief that he is specially in touch with, or selected by, the gods. In either case his claim is that he is a person of peculiar "sanctity." In the later religions, particularly in the Christian religion he is endowed by God with powers to "bind and loose," he claims to have the supreme voice in matters of conduct, he is the guardian of a special revelation from God, and in his name he has decreed, when he had the power, what science should teach, and has forbidden anything that opposed the teach-

ings of his sacred book. The clergy have claimed seats in the legislature, and special privileges in all sorts of ways, on the ground of their calling, and their special qualifications.

And now? When one after another these claims to a peculiar sanctity or to peculiar powers have been exploded, after the disastrous nature of clerical interference in science and sociology has become a commonplace, when clerical teachings on religion have been either dismissed or revised, when even the one who is pleading for the clergy admits that they were greatest when people were most ignorant, and have become weaker as the people have become better educated, we are asked to appoint them as "physicians of the soul" presumably with no loss of either status or salary! I do not know of a more impudent claim being made on behalf of the clergy, unless the whole article is to be taken as a cynical attempt to bring the clergy into still further discredit. The picture of the old French aristocrat going gaily and defiantly to his death rather than give up his privileges and acknowledge the new order, is not true of French aristocracy as a class, but it at least indicates what the aristocrat would have done if he had lived up to some people's expectations of him. But the picture of a clergy without the grit to stand by their claims, which is ready to retreat step by step as it becomes profitable for them to do so, ready to surrender doctrine after doctrine and teach as "divine truth" what they have hitherto denounced as Atheistic falsehood, is about as pitiful a picture as history presents. We fancy the clergy will hardly thank Dean Inge for his *Standard* contribution.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Century of Christian Charity

"We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star."—Emerson.

"There is nothing on earth divine beside humanity."
Landor.

CHRISTIAN apologists never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the intolerant religion they profess so loudly. It is well, therefore, to attempt to dispel the ignorance everywhere displayed as to the persecution of Freethinkers by Christians. Although trials for blasphemy have been numerous, the comparatively enlightened nineteenth century holds the unenviable record for the number of blasphemy and free-speech prosecutions, and the earlier years of the present century continue the bad record of its predecessor. The reason is that during this period the working classes of this country woke for the first time to intellectual issues, and the Established Church and governing classes united to suppress, with all the tyrannical means at their disposal, freedom of thought and speech.

A hundred years ago Thomas Paine was dead, but "his soul went marching on." His books, *The Age of Reason* and *The Rights of Man*, were very much alive, and were being circulated very widely. This was one of the earliest concerted efforts made to arouse the workers with the Freethought evangel, and the pioneers had to pay a heavy price for their opinions. And, be it remembered, *The Age of Reason* was, as John Morley puts it, "a thunderous engine of revolt. There were critics of the Christian Bible, it is true, before Paine, but they were scholars whose writings were over the heads of ordinary, plain folk. Paine himself, a man of genius, had sprung from the people, and he spoke their language and made their thoughts articulate." *The Age of Reason* was a brave book, one of the bravest ever written, for

it challenged the entire priesthood of the Christian World. Yet, boldly and courageously as Paine might write, his books would have been still-born from the press but for the extraordinary courage of the Freethinkers themselves. Richard Carlile, for example, endured over nine years' imprisonment in this terrible and prolonged battle. The Christians were thoroughly aroused by so determined and unexpected a resistance, and persecuted without mercy. They attacked women as well as men, and Carlile's wife and sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. The battle was Homeric. As each Freethinker was imprisoned fresh ones stepped into the breach, and one after the other went to prison. Think of it all! One small circle of Freethinkers serving between them over fifty years in prison, thousands of pounds' worth of books destroyed, heavy fines imposed, and all in defence of the elementary rights of free speech in a country which had been Christian for centuries, and which was alleged to be in the very van of civilization.

The Freethinkers fought with their backs to the wall against overwhelming odds, and they gave a most excellent account of themselves. Paine's works were followed by Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy*, Clarke's *Letters to Adam Clarke*, and Cooper's *Holy Scriptures Analysed*. The clergy of the Established Church were so scared that they actually joined forces with the Nonconformists and engineered many prosecutions against the Freethinkers. John Cleave and Henry Hetherington were both prosecuted and sentenced.

Then the Freethinkers did a very bold thing. They exploded the Christians with their own gunpowder. They prosecuted Edward Moxon, and other "respectable" publishers, for selling Shelley's *Queen Mab*, an Atheistic poem for which so many Freethinkers had suffered. This clever piece of strategy succeeded, and the counter attack showed the Orthodox that they were not to have things all their own way.

Quite a campaign was fought around Charles Southwell's *Oracle of Reason*, the first distinctive Freethought periodical. Southwell was prosecuted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and a fine of £100. George Jacob Holyoake, the second editor, followed with six month's imprisonment for a jest after a lecture. Thomas Paterson, the third editor, shared the same fate as his predecessors. These prosecutions were not confined to England, and up in Scotland two stalwart Freethinkers, Finlay and Robinson, were sentenced. Then Matilda Roalfe was imprisoned for selling *The Age of Reason*.

The middle of the nineteenth century came, and the persecutions still went on. But there was a notable change. To their surprise the Freethinkers were no longer outcast and friendless. In 1857, Pooley, a poor farm-labourer, was sentenced to nearly two years' imprisonment for chalking words on a parson's gate. This tyrannical example of Christian charity attracted the attention of Henry Thomas Buckle, the historian, and of John Stuart Mill, who stirred decent people by denouncing such abominable persecution. At the trial of Pooley the prosecuting counsel was the famous John Duke Coleridge, afterwards Lord Chief Justice, and by the irony of events the judge in one of the blasphemy trials of 1883. It was in that year that G. W. Foote, W. J. Ramsey and Kemp, were the subjects of three trials, two before Justice North and one before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. Foote was sentenced by North to a year's imprisonment, and Ramsey and Kemp to nine and three months' imprisonment respectively. The petition for release was memorable, for

it was signed by almost everyone of intellectual eminence in England, and the honoured name of Herbert Spencer fitly headed the list.

In earlier days imprisonment was by no means the only indignity imposed. Daniel Eaton, who was so nobly championed by the poet Shelley, was not only prosecuted seven times, but had the punishment of the pillory inflicted, and £2,500 worth of books destroyed. Shelley himself was judicially declared, because of his known Freethought opinions, to be unfit to be the guardian of his own children. Many years later a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant, the colleague of Bradlaugh and Foote. A large number of prosecutions of the unstamped press were simply disguised blasphemy trials. It was really Charles Bradlaugh's alertness which prevented his own imprisonment for blasphemy. As it was, he had to fight the bigots for thirteen long years for his right to represent Northampton in the House of Commons. A former Marquis of Queensbury was deprived of a seat in the House of Lords on account of his Freethought. Last, but certainly not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes were diverted to other channels, but, happily, the famous Bowman case stopped this form of confiscation. In addition, Freethought leaders have been involved in constant and costly lawsuits, deluged with personal abuse, and have been the victims of a concerted press boycott. G. W. Foote once wittily explained that he had been accused of almost every crime in the calendar except murder. The exception was not due to Christian courtesy, but to the difficulty in finding a suitable corpse.

Persecution brings its own nemesis. Christians sentenced Freethinkers to prison and all manner of humiliation, but the Freethinkers have brought the persecuting Church of Christ to the bar of Humanity. In their hours of apparent failure these Freethinkers actually triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm but not the pains of martyrdom; heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the jubilation of victory. They deserved well, for they laboured not for themselves, but for the world and coming generations. Freedom is one of the most cherished of human possessions. Freethinkers prize "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties." Because of this their work has had vital and permanent effect. History may repeat itself. Should that prove to be so, may we find men and women brave enough to fill the breach as in the days of old.

MIMNERMUS.

THE CHRISTIAN MIND

The belief that every comet is a ball of fire flung from the right hand of an angry God to warn the grovelling dwellers of earth was received into the early Church, transmitted through the Middle Ages to the Reformation period, and in its transmission was made all the more precious by supposed textual proofs from Scripture. The great fathers of the Church committed themselves unreservedly to it. In the third century Origen, perhaps the most influential of the earlier fathers, insisted that comets indicate catastrophes and the downfall of empires and worlds. Bede, so justly revered by the English Church, declared in the eighth century that "comets portend revolutions of kingdoms, pestilences, war, winds, or heat." . . . St. Thomas Aquinas, the great light of the universal Church in the thirteenth century, whose works the Pope now reigning commends as the centre and source of all university instruction, accepted and handed down the same opinion. . . . These men and those who followed them, founded upon scriptural texts and theological reasonings a system that for seventeen centuries defied every advance of thought.

Andrew D. White,

"The Warfare of Science with Theology."

Religion and the Child

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."—*Proverbs* xix. 18.

"Withold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

"Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell."—*Proverbs* xxiii. 13-14.

ONLY those who were educated some time during the last twenty or thirty years of the last century can appreciate the difference in the treatment of children then and now. It seems wildly incredible to the younger generation of to-day, that down to the middle of the last century—and in many down to the end of it—flogging, with birch or rod, on the bare buttocks, raising weals and often blood, was the general practice at the great public schools attended by the scions of the nobility and aristocracy; and that these executions were inflicted personally by pious and learned clergymen like Dr. Butler of Harrow, who afterwards became Dean of Peterborough; Longley, who became Archbishop of Canterbury; Dr. Keate of Eton, remembered for his vigorous floggings, who was a Canon of Windsor; and Busby of Westminster School, whose name was a byword for harshness, became later, a Prebendary of Westminster.

Corporal punishment was then considered as an indispensable aid to teaching, being approved of by parents, who, in fact, inflicted it upon their offspring themselves while they were under their control. To understand this state of things we must realize the ideas and motives governing the people at that time. The great mass of the people, both high and low, believed the Bible to be the authentic word of God, the Old Testament as well as the New. We can remember, as a boy in the seventies of the last century, that there was only one known Atheist in the provincial town where we lived, and he was regarded as a fearful curiosity, branded for the burning. (Years afterwards, long after I had left the town, I saw an obituary notice of his death in this paper). I asked why God didn't strike him dead, as he did people in the Bible? I was told that God would punish him some time, and when he came to die, Satan would be there, and his death would be very dreadful. When Charles Bradlaugh began his lecturing tour under the name of Iconoclast, many people walked miles out of curiosity to see a real Atheist.

In our own home we had family prayers; a chapter of the Bible was read twice a day, morning and evening; and it was always the Old Testament that was read. Consequently the ideas prevailing in the Old Testament were implanted in our minds, and this was intended as a guide to conduct in our daily lives. The book was regarded as a handbook of morals, officially guaranteed by God himself, in which he had recorded his dealings with mankind.

But lest we are regarded as giving a prejudiced and one-sided account, we will take the account of one who lived between the years 1835 and 1902, namely Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*, who also wrote his autobiography in the form of the well-known novel, *The Way of all Flesh*.

Of this book, his life-long friend and biographer, Mr. Henry Festing Jones, tells us: "certainly the childhood of Ernest Pontifex in *The Way of all Flesh* is drawn as faithfully as he could draw it from his own, Theobald and Christina being portraits of his own father and mother as accurate as he could make them, with no softening and no exaggeration."¹

The principal characters in the book are Ernest Pontifex and his father and mother, and the story

consists of their reactions upon one another. Mr. Theobald Pontifex, the father, is a Church of England clergyman who believed in the literal accuracy of every syllable in the Bible. If it is said that God made the world in six days, then he made it in six days. If it said that God extracted one of Adam's ribs and made a woman of it, why then it was so. Adam went to sleep, just as he himself might do in the rectory garden, only Eden was larger and "had some tame wild animals in it."

Then God came up to him, as it might be Mr. Allaby or his father, dexterously took out one of his ribs without waking him, and miraculously healed the wound so that no trace of the operation remained. Finally, God had taken the rib perhaps into the greenhouse, and had turned it into just such another young woman as Christina. That was how it was done. . . . This was the average attitude of fairly educated young men and women towards the Mosaic cosmogony fifty, forty, or even twenty years ago. [Thirty years must be added to these items as the book was published posthumously, in 1903.]

This being the case it naturally transpired that the relations between parent and child should be founded upon the example given in the sacred book as well. Now the authority of the Old Testament Patriarchs over their children was supreme. It extended to life and death. Abraham was ready and willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to the Lord, and knife in hand, was about to do so when the Lord interfered and prevented a murder. As Butler further observes:—

What precedents did not Abraham, Jephthah and Jonadab the son of Rechab offer? How easy it was to quote and follow them in an age when few reasonable men or women doubted that every syllable of the Old Testament was taken down *verbatim* from the mouth of God. . . . Mr. Pontifex may have been a little sterner with his children than some of his neighbours, but not much. He thrashed his boys two or three times a week, and some weeks a good deal oftener, but in those days fathers were always thrashing their boys. . . . At that time it was universally admitted that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, and St. Paul had placed disobedience to parents in very ugly company. In this case there was obviously only one course for a sensible man to take. It consisted in checking the first signs of self-will while his children were too young to offer serious resistance. If their wills were "well-broken" in childhood, to use an expression then much in vogue, they would acquire habits of obedience which they would not venture to break through till they were over twenty-one years old.

Moreover, in those days, children were taught that whatever their fathers did was right. He was above criticism; as Mr. Grant Richards observes: "He was my father, a remote being who surely could do no wrong. . . . even when he thrashed me with a whalebone, which he did every now and then."² However harshly your father behaved, yet you must still love him, just as you must love God, although he has allowed the most terrible misfortunes to fall upon you.

Those who wish to know what a really religious training is like should read that pathetic little book by the late Sir Edmund Gosse, if they have not already done so. After relating how religion poisoned his life as a child, he concludes:—

Let me speak plainly. After my long experience, after my patience and forbearance, I have surely the right to protest against the untruth (would that I could apply to it any other word!) that evangelical religion, or any religion in a violent form, is a wholesome or valuable or desirable adjunct to human life. It divides heart from heart. It sets up a vain, chimerical ideal, in the barren pursuit of which all

¹ H. F. Jones: *Samuel Butler*. Vol. I., p. 19.

² *Memories of a Misspent Youth* (1932) p. 19.

the tender, indulgent affections, all the genial play of life, all the exquisite pleasures and soft resignations of the body, all that enlarges and calms the soul, are exchanged for what is harsh and void and negative. It encourages a stern and ignorant spirit of condemnation; it throws altogether out of gear the healthy movement of the conscience; it invents virtues which are sterile and cruel; it invents sins which are no sins at all, but which darken the heaven of innocent joy with futile clouds of remorse. There is something horrible, if we will bring ourselves to face it, in the fanaticism that can do nothing with this pathetic and fugitive existence of ours but treat it as if it were the uncomfortable ante-chamber to a palace which no one has explored, and of the plan of which we know absolutely nothing. My Father, it is true, believed that he was intimately acquainted with the form and furniture of this habitation, and he wished me to think of nothing else but of the advantages of an eternal residence in it. (Edmund Gosse: *Father and Son*. pp. 329-330.)

When religion was strong, and everyone believed, children were harshly treated, and religion was the cause of that harshness. The better treatment of children coincides with, and is due to, the decline of religious belief.

W. MANN.

William Penn: Pioneer and Pacifist

WILLIAM PENN was born on Tower Hill, London, in 1644. Civil War was raging in England—and perhaps worse in Ireland. Cromwell was winning. Orthodox religious belief as between King Charles and Oliver Cromwell differed little. Differences about how a church should be governed, and what should be the relations between Church and State led to revolution. King Charles was beheaded when Penn was four years old.

Penn's father, an Admiral of the Fleet, although actively fighting for the revolutionary cause, was not always above suspicion of Carlist sympathies. He was for some time imprisoned in the Tower. Later he was released and rewarded as a good Roundhead.

In 1656 the Penns went to live in Ireland, friends of the conqueror's army of occupation. Here they lived in comfort in the midst of the most terrible of all the results of a victorious invasion. Young William saw cruel punishments, the direst poverty, the vengeful resentment of an outraged race—and a new kind of human being—the Quakers!

Many of these "Peculiar People" had been transported to Ireland as a punishment for refusing to fight in Cromwell's army. Some are said to have gone about naked—historians ignoring their absolute destitution and constant hunger which suggest necessity rather than choice as explaining their nudity.

William Penn, not what one would call an emotional sentimentalist, became a Quaker—estranging thereby all his friends and relatives, including for a while his father.

What is a Quaker? Thomas Paine constantly attended Quaker meetings. William Penn too was frequently accused of Deism. The essential feature of the Friends' belief is the overwhelming importance of the "Inner Light." Are Quakers and Deists then very much of one mind? It was part of the indictment which Penn's enemy, the Rev. George Keith, brought against Penn that:—

Penn contendeth that the Holy Scriptures are not the Rule of Faith and Life, but that the light in the conscience of every man is that Rule. (*The Deism of William Penn; Destructive to the Christian Religion: Exposed and plainly laid open*, by George Keith.)

The very courteous Secretary of the Society of Friends, Mr. W. F. Nicholson, informs the writer (in answer to a direct enquiry) as follows:—

I think a Deist might find himself fairly at home in a Meeting of the Society of Friends. It would depend a good deal upon the Meeting which he attended. Whether

an avowed Deist could join the Society of Friends is another matter. I should have thought that the Friends' belief in the Inner Light would stand in the way, but honestly I am not a theologian.

The Freethinker, objecting to the myth of any "Divine" illumination, calls the Quaker's valuation of the inner light (without capital initials) by the straightforward term of the right of private judgment, although he knows well enough that Quakers are apt to insist on some "mystical" explanation of a common experience.

The Quaker and the Freethinker alike, differing as to nature and origin of the inner light, disclaim the authority of tradition, creed, Bible, church, State or parties, and claim the right and duty of being true to one's reasonable self.

In the case of the Freethinker, the theory is the more emphasized because of our knowledge of the immense part played by heredity, a realization of the inevitability of causation, and perhaps the awakening of some kind of social consciousness. Freethinker and Quaker alike are keen not to surrender the recognition of the importance of individual responsiveness.

The Freethinker substitutes knowledge and reason for prayer and belief in God as the means of influencing man's powers of response. But at least the Quaker does not believe that his "Inner Light" is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." The "Inner Light" progresses, and indeed is in constant opposition to the stultifying petrification of authority.

William Penn and Thomas Meade were arrested and tried for the crime of preaching without the Bishop's licence. Their trial on September 3, 1670, made history. Penn was not a regular preacher. He heard that Quakers were being stopped and their meeting-places closed, and he hurried off to make his protest in favour of freedom. The jury acquitted both prisoners, but the judge sent the jury as well as the prisoners to jail. Actually the jury were treated worse than the accused. The judge was furious that a jury should bring in a verdict opposed to his biased bigotry. But this jury refused to budge. They prosecuted the judge, fighting for their rights for twelve months. They obtained a triumphant vindication of the right of juries to ignore directions by judges on points within their jurisdiction to decide.

The fame of William Penn rests on many grounds. Nearly all his misfortunes were the direct result of his active protests against all kinds of religious intolerance. He was strongly suspected of papacy by intolerant Protestants, who could not imagine any but a Catholic wanting toleration for Catholics. He also opposed all oaths, thereby losing all rights of citizenship.

His virtual "kingship" of an American colony (leased to him by the king) gave Penn another opportunity to display his principles. The name Pennsylvania was forced on him by King Charles II., against Penn's wish. Penn not only protested, but offered bribes to the royal secretaries to get the name altered to one of his own choice—New Wales.

Penn set the example of negotiating with aboriginal Indians, instead of exterminating them. He bought their land instead of stealing it. He was perhaps the only American pioneer who never used or countenanced the use of a gun or sword against Indians.

Penn was offered a large capital sum and a share in the profits, if he would sell to a company the right of trading with the Indians. Penn declined "to defile what came to me clean." For all Penn's friendly relations with the Indians were the result of his own pacific policy.

Witch-hunting and witch-burning disgraced many (especially the Puritan) States of America. Not in Pennsylvania! A self-confessed "witch" was once brought before Penn for judgment. "Art thou indeed a witch?" asked Penn. The half-demented old woman replied, "Yes, I have skimmed through the air on a broomstick." "Oh, well," said Penn, "there's no law against anybody skimming about on broomsticks," and this shaft of plain good-humour and common-sense ended the first and last trial for witchcraft in Pennsylvania.

Opinions differ as to Penn's statesmanship. Probably a Quaker is as much out of place in a legislature as an Anarchist would be. At one time Penn acted as a sort of

pacifist Dictator, and Pennsylvania was frequently in trouble. It was a difficult period. The American Revolution was on its way. Neither King George nor General Washington would have had any use for William Penn the Pacifist.

Penn had his faults, but they were fewer and less important than the faults of most great men. He lived up to his principles, and these were mainly in favour of human liberty. There is little to say about whatever theology he had. His sermons are extraordinarily unimpressive and dull—almost if not wholly unreadable. They suggest, not of course insincerity, but that theology bored the author as much as its expression bores the reader to-day. Penn's *Fruits of Solitude* and other works are often strikingly rich in originality and reflection.

There have been wiser men, greater men, men who accomplished more with fewer opportunities. But William Penn was one who, under great provocation, never persecuted. With many opportunities, he had no personal ambitions. In sight of conquests and wealth which wanted only to be taken by means which he abhorred, Penn retained his integrity. He claimed for all the freedom of thought he demanded for himself.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops

It cannot now be said that the Bible is without its influence in Africa, or that our British administrators there are not acting up to its teachings. For example. Mrs. Eugenie Selwyn, the wife of a brother of the Dean of Winchester, was accused of causing the death of a native by a beating inflicted by a "leather harness" described as "inhuman." The native so beaten died as a result of the beating. For the defence it was urged that it was a weapon that was used to thrash natives all over Africa at the command of their masters. But so long as the native is not killed no one interferes. This is in strict accord with the Bible:—

And if a man strike his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two he shall not be punished, for he is his money.

It should be said that Mrs. Selwyn's servant was not punished with a rod, but with a thick leather belt, which it was explained, is used all over Africa. And if the servant had merely been severely punished, nothing would have been done, because, as the Bible says, he was her money. But the "nigger" died, and so she fell under the condemnation of the Bible. And so Mrs. Selwyn has been sent to prison. When she comes out, which we fancy will be very soon, she will be more careful not to punish to the point of lashing to death. It was fortunate for her that her judges believed in the Bible.

Our readers know that we are rather fond of noting the use of question-begging phrases. Here is a gem which comes from one of the representatives of one of the munition firms that supply all nations indiscriminately, and which employ men to persuade each nation that it must arm against the other. "We are," said this gentleman, "carrying out a legitimate business." Bless the man, no one disputes it, everybody asserts it. But it is because it is a *legitimate*—that is a legal business that the complaint is laid. The aim is to make it an illegitimate—an illegal—business. So might the slave-owner have defended himself by saying, "Ours is a legitimate business."

Meanwhile we note that Russia, the moment it gets into the League of Nations begins, as so many predicted it would, to make trouble. M. Litvinof is actually suggesting that the League should consider the question of disarmament. But it is expected that the suggestion will be shelved. Hear, hear! How can the League bring about peace if it is also to persuade people to give up their armaments? Everyone knows that the only way

to preserve peace is to see that everyone is stronger than everybody else. Then when each is stronger than the other we shall all be equal, and the peoples of each nation will go on contentedly maintaining huge forces which it realizes will never be used.

Perhaps it is the fact that Russia has asked for a discussion on disarmament that encourages the *Daily Express* to continue its screams against Russia's presence in Geneva. In its issue for September 28, it again advises Christian men and women to withdraw all support from the League, because it has admitted a country that is "actively hostile to the faith," and it repeats that the League is founded on the principles of Christianity. That is certainly not the case, although we admit that in its squabbles, attention to sectional interests, and the hardly concealed desire of each member of the League to conclude agreements that will give it an advantage over other members, it not inaptly illustrates the workings of Christianity in practice. Perhaps the *Express* meant to say illustrates "the principles of Christianity."

The *Methodist Recorder* continues its discussion on the question raised by Professor Findlay on the "proofs" of Christ's divinity. This has been a difficulty for Christians throughout the ages. Prof. Findlay's proof appears to be that there was a difference between Jesus and mere men. But men may, we presume, be different without that difference converting them into deities. The Catholic Church had a simpler way, making Christ, Mary and the Saints wear visible halos. That gleaming halo, particularly at night, would have been quite distinctive, although in these days of electricity they might have easily been mistaken for an illuminated advertisement affixed to the hat of a "mere man."

Newspaper readers must have pictures to as many items as possible, otherwise they will not read them. Realizing this, and probably having no picture of Mary Brough at hand, the *Daily Herald* in its notice of that lady's death, promptly slapped in a portrait of Tom Walls. Now we expect that when the *Herald* publishes a picture of the Prime Minister's arrival in England from Canada, they will publish with it a portrait of John Bunyan. Bunyan was the creator of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways.

We see it stated that the King and Queen will have to be responsible for the wedding expenses of Prince George and Princess Marina. On making enquiries we find that the parents in our own district usually have to do exactly the same thing. It is this sort of thing that binds the monarchy and the people of this country together.

One of the papers directly after the Gresford mine accident published an article explaining that God had nothing to do with causing the accident. It was man's own fault. Probably, but it was also men, not angels, who went down the pit to try and rescue those who were in it. And if God did not cause it, well, God did not prevent it. The verdict must be that He followed a policy of strict neutrality.

Dean Inge cannot defend Christianity without condemning it. In the course of his articles in the *Standard*, with which we deal elsewhere, he says that "when we speak of 'morality' in this country we think chiefly of sex." That is unfortunately true, but in this truth lies the evidence for the anti-moral tendencies of Christianity. When the ancient Greeks talked of morality they meant the whole of conduct, and when they spoke of an ethical man they meant a straight man, one who did his duty correctly in all departments of life. They used "morality" in its natural and proper sense.

But Christianity altered all this. Instead of a natural basis for morals, as was the case with the Greek thinkers, the Christian took a supernatural basis. And

in the development of a prurient sex complex that followed the establishment of the supremacy of Christianity, this came to cover almost the whole of the moral life. It made unclean that which was not of necessity so, and it helped by its general teaching and attitude to make things immoral that were not immoral at all. The consequence of that is seen in the phenomena noted by the Dean. A man in a Christian community may lie, he may act dishonestly, he may desert his friends, he may scandalize his neighbour. The Christian does not regard that as "immoral," they are venial offences which are better not committed. "Moral" signifies in the main sex, and nothing has been done to poison the sex relationship, and to lower the general tone of morality than this attitude of the Christian Church.

Dean Inge also says, "In my young days, even the most extreme Freethinker generally accepted the Christian standard of morality in these (sex) matters." Probably that is in the main true, but as the old lady said when she was told that Jesus plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath, we don't think any the more of them for it. A great many Freethinkers then, and now, move about in fear of all sorts of Christian taboos, and think far more of what Christians will think about them than they do of the respect due to themselves and to their opinions. Besides Freethinkers usually commence by doubting the religious side of Christianity first; it is afterwards that they proceed to question its relation to morals and sociology.

Though Dean Inge's latest pronouncements on Christianity are nearly 200 years after similar ones by Freethinkers they will, none the less, cause more than a little turmoil in the orthodox camps. Here is a dignitary of the Church, and one of the most scholarly ones at that, admitting that the prophecies in the Bible, at least those which are supposed to have been fulfilled, were actually "written after the event, or the event was so described as to fit the prophecy." And as for miracles, "they can prove nothing with which religion is deeply concerned."

Dean Inge also speaks most contemptuously about the "divinity" of Christ being accepted because of "traditions about his birth and the empty tomb"—quite in the manner of many Victorian "Agnostics," who gave the supposed events up rather painfully, but fixed upon the "human" Jesus as undoubtedly historical. We expect that before the close of the century there will be quite a large number of orthodox clergymen prepared to give up entirely the man Jesus as well, as a myth, but will stick like glue to the wonderful "ideal" described by the gospel writers. It is some satisfaction to know that the work of Robert Taylor, Bradlaugh, Foote, and J. M. Robertson is slowly but surely bearing fruit. Perhaps one day, like Gibbon, they will be hailed as great Church historians!

Miraculous cures at Lourdes seem to be, on the whole, getting rarer and rarer. As a rule, those which "prove" the truth of miracles date back many years, and the further back we go, the more the miracles. Nowadays, the fact that many sick people die at Lourdes and others—including Church leaders—have to be sent back to ordinary secular hospitals, is taken as a matter of course. The other day, one pilgrim, Mr. Charles O'Hagen of Derry, died of heart disease; and another broke her leg and could not return with the other pilgrims. Here are two cases which, one can say with safety, will never be used by loyal Catholics as a proof of the way "Our Lady" looks after the sick, the maimed and the blind, who go regularly to Lourdes to be cured.

Think of it—a decrease of 48,284 Sunday school scholars in Methodism in one year! It is the Rev. F. Norman Charley, Superintendent of London Central Mission, who begs you to think of it. Well, there isn't very much to be thought about it. One explanation may be that it is an "act of God," purposely invented

to try and test the courage of fortitude of Methodist ministers. There's one little ray of sunshine in this dismal disaster. Thousands of children will manage to grow to adulthood without having the impress of Methodism on their character.

Even in the Catholic Church, a tremendous perplexity exists as to the age of "Our Lady" at different periods of her life. The long list of Popes have not been vouchsafed the information from Heaven, and the subject has to depend on the investigations of professional theologians. The curious thing is that on this question they seem to be as utterly uninspired as the veriest heretic. Was "Our Lady" only fifteen at the time of the Virgin Birth? Well, no one knows. And where was she born? No one knows. And where did she die? No one knows. And at what age did she die? No one knows. The opinion of some Catholic theologians is that she was sixty-three on the day of her death. It is merely an opinion for there is no evidence whatever. Perhaps the real truth as to the cause of all this uncertainty is, there never was a Mary. She is just a myth.

No fewer than 10,933,203 volumes of the Scriptures were issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society last year. Think of 10,933,203 people all studying, reading and loving God's Own Revelation to man, and yet so few—comparatively speaking—believing it. Where are the converts this enormous number of volumes of the Bible has brought over to Christianity? Why, the theologians, higher critics, archæologists, and members of the hundreds of sects the one true religion is broken into are still haggling over the precise meaning of God's Glorious Message. Yet, in spite of the world-wide depression, £374,000 were subscribed for the Society in twelve months. What a colossal waste of time, money and energy!

The Episcopal Church in America, which is now holding a General Convention, seems to be in a very bad way. The deficit in mission support is now over £100,000 a year, "which, if continued longer, threatens bankruptcy to the whole communion." Then there is "the problem of unemployed priests and of unpaid and half-starved priests," and of very high salaries for a few and, among other matters of grave issue, a proposal to change the name from "The Protestant Episcopal Church" to "The American Episcopal Church," all to come under consideration. The chief difficulty is, however, that "the Episcopal Church seems hopelessly broke financially." The joke about the whole affair is that in spite of this, the personal expenses of the delegates will total £48,000, while the total cost to the Church will be £300,000, all of which will be found. A great business this, the Christian religion.

When the non-Jewish woman came to Jesus asking for help, Jesus replied, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." That has sounded very bad to many people, but the Rev. Mr. Belden now offers us an explanation that should allay all uneasiness. It seems that this was one of the rare occasions when Jesus was trying to be funny. His "attitude was a humorous one," he only pretended to be reluctant to help her. And alternatively, as lawyers would say, and as Mr. Belden points out, the original phrase means "little puppies." Now that does really make a difference. A woman might be offended on hearing her children likened to dogs. But if they are called puppies, well, that really does make a difference. What a good thing it is that Jesus so seldom meant what he said, or said what he is said to have said so that one could make it mean anything one pleased.

The rector of Gamston, speaking as one who lays claim to a training in philosophy and theology, is certain that it is not the creeds which repel the professional man, and the man-in-the-street, and keep people away from the Church, but "the Modernist denials of them."

In fact "outside clerical meetings where one occasionally meets an intellectual freak," he has never met with a single person who wants a restatement of the "Belief." The rector is probably right. A "re-statement" must seem just as silly to any intelligent person as the real thing; for what is the good of a Christianity without "a real Virgin Birth, a Most Holy Redeemer, a Bodily Resurrection"? It may be something, but is isn't genuine Christianity. The rector thinks that Modernism and Catholicism are quite irreconcilable. But he does not give any solution to the difficulties he, like so many other rectors have to face. We advise him to go right over to Popery. It's the only solution for cases like his.

The military mind is a type that has many affinities with religion. It is slow to learn, tied to old methods and outworn ideas, with a slavish devotion to ritual and decoration that is definitely religious in its nature. And it is usually impervious to reasoning. Thus, taking the argument that the next war would be a war in the air, and that the only form of protection would be to get a sufficiently large number of aeroplanes that threatened to wreck enemy cities, the *Church Times* said that the next war would involve "an indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, women and children." This seems fairly obvious, but it is not so to the mind of Lieut-Col. J. G. McNaught, who writes to the *Church Times* protesting that the statement is "an insult to our regular forces." From that we must evidently understand that while German, or French, or Italian bombs if dropped on English cities, our bombs when dropped will be so constructed that none of the civilians, women, and children living in "enemy" cities will be injured. The air force he says, "does not massacre women and children." That we believe to be quite true, but only of the British air force, or of the air force of another country—so long as it is working with us. But, we must point out to the *Church Times*, that there is a world of difference between bombs that are dropped from a British aeroplane and those that are dropped from a plane belonging to other countries.

Life is a very simple matter to some people. It has no tough problems, no difficulties that may not be removed by a single and simple remedy. For example, from a new book on *Money and Morals*, we take the following:—

There would be no sex-problems, no marriage problem, no prostitution, no birth-control problem, no population problem, no unemployed problem, if our economic problems were solved.

All those to whom life is as simple as it is to this writer will find this a delightful piece of wisdom. Others who realize that economics is only one phase of life, that all sorts of impulses and passions, beliefs and appetites, traditions and customs, tastes and habits play their part in determining human conduct, will not find the problem of settlement so simple that it can be solved by ending the "economic problem," even when we have finally determined exactly what the economic problem is.

Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., says that the pleasantest recollections of his childhood are those of the Puritan Sabbaths. Mr. Foot is a rising Member of Parliament, and one would never suggest that a British M.P. would speak anything other than the exact truth. But one ought to bear in mind two things. First, that in the light of the statement that the Puritan Sunday was the pleasantest part of his childhood, the rest of it must have been of a damnably horrible character, and second, that Mr. Foot represents a very Christian constituency.

Mr. T. F. Rhodes, author of *The Craft of Forgery* (Murray, 10s. 6d.) says that forgery is an art "to which those who have been in Holy Orders, but who have turned to crime, seem to be particularly addicted." This is mere white-washing of all the early Christian Fathers who were absolute experts in forging all sorts of docu-

ments for the glory of God. The Bible is such a mass of interpolations and forgeries that it is now impossible to guess who wrote what; and the word "original" has become a standing joke amongst Bible scholars.

The Rev. F. B. Freshwater is the chaplain to the Actors' Church Union. He is quite opposed to those people who still "look on the actor and actress as an unclean and immoral person"—though he did not insist too strongly that most of the people holding these views now and in the past were followers of Jesus. The actors and actresses who heard Mr. Freshwater recently must have been very grateful when he said that he "would rather eat fish and chips in the meanest and poorest dressing-room of either circus or theatre than take champagne in the vicarage of an anti-theatre parson." What have the anti-theatre parsons got to say to this piece of rousing independence these days?

The Rev. W. J. Elsley, M.A., Canon of Liverpool, has just written a book on a very "vital question." It is entitled *Jesus Christ—God or Man?* and we only call attention to it to affirm our unshaken belief in Christ as a God. We are convinced he never was, and never was intended to be, a man. Jesus is very God of very God, and we trust Mr. Elsley will be able to convince all his hearers on this point as well as, we hope, we have convinced our readers.

Minnie Pallister supplies the readers of the *Daily Herald* with advice about domestic troubles like marriage and cooking. It seems that all domestic jars would cease if the "solemn words of the marriage service were taken to heart"; the "solemn words" referred to are "Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder." Yes, but God does so often "join together" such irreconcilables. Besides how does it happen that God does all the "joining" and is absolutely deaf, dumb and dead for ever after? Surely if God marries people He also divorces them. If not, what sort of God is it that lures two souls together and then repudiates all further responsibility?

An American writer, Professor F. A. Spencer, has written a biography of St. Paul. He decries Paul's egotism and compares him with the ordinary Fundamentalist Preacher of our day, who imagines he is God and Christ in one. He believes Paul to have been an uneducated "smatterer or sciolist." "His famous speech on Mars' Hill was a ludicrous failure, much as if a man who knew only what he had read in a newspaper should address one of our scientific associations on a technical topic." The author treats the "vision" on the road to Damascus as "hallucination following nervous collapse." He thinks (as Sir William Ramsay did) that Paul was a victim of malaria all his life. "Paul's attitude to celibacy was pathological." This book, published by Harpers, is called *Beyond Damascus*.

Fifty Years Ago

WHAT shall we say, too, of those Christians who have eyes only for the sufferings of their God at Golgotha and disregard the misery of their fellow beings through the ages? Hearts that are callous to the ills of those with whom they are brought into actual contact are supposed to be moved by the agony of a being who died eighteen hundred years ago. What is the worth of such a religion? Have revelations brought in righteousness? Let the history of Christianity, with its conflicting sects, its sanguinary religious wars, its persecution of heresy, and its constant opposition to education, science and Freethought, answer. When preachers tell us of the scene on Calvary we think of the long crucifixion of the people nailed by faith and fear and ignorance to the cross of superstition.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. C. KEAST.—We join in your high appreciation of the late J. G. Bartram. He was a fine example of the old type of Freethinker, who had won his own freedom by fighting, and was always zealous to secure a like liberation for others. We had known and respected him for more than forty years. Sorry Mr. Cohen is too busy at the moment to do what you ask in the other direction, but will send on something that appeared in the *Freethinker*, and which may serve.

B. G. HOWELLS.—Mr. Flowers' article is hardly worth dealing with at any length. There are so many misunderstandings of elementary fact in it, that it would take several articles to clear them up. Much of the article is just impudence.

S. WINCKWORTH.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the "Views and Opinions" in our issue for September 30. We remember perfectly meeting you, and hope to renew our acquaintance on some future date.

S. NEWTON.—The exact title of the pamphlet is *Bulletin III. of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research: The Identification of the "Walter" Prints*, by E. E. Dudley. Published by the Council, National Laboratory of Psychical Research, 13d, Roland Gardens, South Kensington, S.W.7. 1932. Price 2s. net.

MRS. D. M. NORTHCROFT AND R. B. KERR.—Next week. Sorry, crowded out this week.

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

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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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

To-day (October 7) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, at 7.0, on "The Fight for Freedom of Thought." There is every reason to expect a crowded meeting, and those who wish to make sure of a seat should get to the Hall in good time. On the last occasion of Mr. Cohen's visit to Liverpool a number had to be turned away. Admission will be free, but there are a limited number of reserved seats at one shilling each. On Sunday next (October 14) Mr. Cohen will visit Manchester.

The regular Sunday meetings of the Liverpool Branch will be held in the Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street (off London Road). The lecturer for October 14 will be Mr. J. V. Shortt, who will take for his subject "Freethought, a First Principle in Sociology." The lectures will commence at 7.0. We hope that all our Liverpool friends will do what they can to make the meetings known. Copies of the lecture syllabus can be had of the Secretary, Mr. S. R. A. Ready, 29 Sycamore Road, Waterloo.

We have said many hard—but we hope just—things against clergymen, but we have usually appended the qualifying statement that there were many to whom what we said did not apply. In spite of Shakespeare the hand of the dyer is not always or indelibly stained by the material with which he works. And we have just met with an exception among parsons. The Rev. W. R. Witcomb, of Sparkbrook, Birmingham, is chairman of the Sparkbrook Study Group (presumably this group is attached to his church). In the course of a week or two someone is to address the Group, who is to explain what reason led him to reject Christianity. Most clergymen would have thought it very tolerant to have invited such a speaker, and to have stopped there.

But Mr. Witcomb is not merely tolerant, he is fair, and wishes his Study Group to know both sides of the case. So he writes us for books or pamphlets to give his students so that they may have an authoritative basis on which to work. He does more than this. He prints a circular giving some of the issues existing between Christians and Freethinkers. The circular consists of eight paragraphs, giving statements, four of which are taken from Mr. Cohen's writings. And the circular ends with a recommendation of five books for reading, one by the Bishop of Birmingham, one by Professor Oman, and Mr. Cohen's *God and the Universe*, *Materialism Re-stated*, and *Theism or Atheism*.

Mr. Witcomb is, on the face of it, a very exceptional kind of clergyman, and if the majority of his order were as liberal as he, while this would not in the least affect our opinion of Christianity, we should, at least be able to think more highly of those who profess it. In fact, if invited, Mr. Cohen would not mind running down to Birmingham to address the Sparkbrook Study Group. It would be an experience to address a body of people who were genuinely anxious to know both sides of the case.

A joint committee of the Lincoln City Council and the local Branch of the British Legion has decided that there shall be no military parades at this year's Armistice Commemoration service at the local War Memorial. This is the first Council that has had the courage to take this step, and we hope it will have many followers. For some years we were quite alone in protesting against the way in which this annual ceremony at the London Cenotaph was turned into a military parade, and also into a huge advertisement for the Army. After some time a timid voice was raised here and there. These voices have been steadily growing, and we trust will keep on growing.

We have no objection to the ceremony itself, but we do strongly object to the dwelling upon the greatness of the "soldier's sacrifice," as though that were the supreme act of "sacrifice." The courage shown by the men who earn their livelihood in such occupations as coal mining is as great as anything displayed by soldiers, and the courage in facing death for the sake of others was well displayed by those who attempted the work of rescue at the Gresford Mine disaster. To exalt the mass-developed courage of the soldier over the heroism that is displayed in other walks of life, to hold a huge military parade to the exclusion of other departments of life, to hold up the bravery of soldiers to the admiration of the young, and to say nothing in the speeches made and sermons preached of the folly, the filth, the criminality of war, and of its always demoralizing consequences, is to make a very valuable contribution to the continuance of war. All that is required to complete the processions would be special deputations from the munition-making companies bearing small dummy models of their wares. We might at least have the decency publicly to thank those who help our soldiers, and the soldiers of other peoples, to do the job that we set them to do.

The *Referee* will not please a great many of those Birth controllers who like to mix religion with their birth-control advocacy, by saying:—

The legitimization, as it were, of birth-control, thanks largely to the work of Charles Bradlaugh, in the latter years of the nineteenth century, ranks as one of the greatest victories of humanity over stupidity and prejudice.

Our readers will regret to hear that Mr. C. S. Fraser, whose pen is always welcome in these columns, has for some weeks been very ill, but is now slowly recovering. He writes very cheerfully, that although his recovery may be slow, yet he is on the mend, and hopes to get into touch with readers of this journal very soon. We are quite sure that he has their best wishes, as he has ours, for a speedy recovery to complete health.

We are glad to see several letters in the *Birkenhead Advertiser*, including a very good one from the President of the local N.S.S. Branch, replying to some of the criticism passed by others in the *Advertiser*. The Birkenhead Branch has none too easy a task, and we hope that local friends will give it their hearty support.

The Failsworth Secular Sunday School will hold its Autumn Services to-day (Sunday) at 2.45, and 6.30 p.m., in the School Building, Pole Lane. There will be selections by the Band and Choir, and Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "Jesus, Fascism, and Freethought," in the afternoon, and "Christianity and the World Crisis" in the evening. The Committee has also arranged a Tea Party and entertainment for Saturday, at which the comedy "The Luck of the Draw," will be presented. Further information may be obtained from the Hon. Sec., Mr. J. Walvin, 225 Ashton Road West, Failsworth, near Manchester. Mr. Rosetti will be present on Saturday.

A debate has been arranged between Mr. Allan Flanders (N.S.S.) and the Rev. Mr. Reid (Unitarian Minister from Middlesboro) to take place on Friday, October 12, commencing at 7.30 p.m., in the Unitarian Church, Bridge Street, Sunderland. The subject, "Resolved that Humanity has not gained from Christian Teaching," will be affirmed by Mr. Flanders, who will open the debate. There will be some reserved seats, which can be obtained from the Branch Secretary or at the door.

We recently drew attention to a resolution of the Association of Assistant Masters, protesting that the teachings of religion was no business of the State or of the State-schools. This resolution was, of course, made necessary only by the teachers themselves. They have for so long permitted parsons to use them as catpaws, that the ministers of all denominations have found themselves strong enough to make moves which will give them a greater influence in the schools than they have at present. It is because of the latest developments in the schools in the direction of a larger measure of religious instruction and supervision that the protest of the teachers was made. But the protest needs to be continuous if it is to have much effect.

In the *Schoolmaster* for September 20, the following letter appears:—

Sir,—For some time now I have been troubled by a conscience. I was confirmed in the faith of the Church of England while in my teens; I am now an Agnostic. The position, as I see it, is that, if I make a public declaration of my faith (or lack of it), my future prospects will be seriously affected. Yet I cannot avoid taking this step if I decline to teach Religious Knowledge, and this I feel I ought to do. The matter became more urgent last week when I obtained a form of application from the Heston and Isleworth Authority. One

of the questions on this form is, "Are you a Christian, and are you prepared to teach the Christian religion?" All of the questions have to be answered. I shall not waste time applying for that headmastership, which was of a council school.

I think it will be obvious that an extension of this kind of thing would inflict great hardship on me. Is it just? After all, a man's conscience plays strange pranks sometimes. When I became a schoolmaster I was a Christian; why should I be denied professional advancement because my religious outlook has changed? I can think of no other profession—other than that of the Church—where this would be possible.

This inquisition into the religious opinions of a teacher is simply damnable. It means that nineteen teachers out of twenty who are after that post, will commence by telling a lie about their religion and will, if they get the job, retain it by playing the hypocrite. This will, of course, not trouble the religious world over much. Lying and hypocrisy have always accompanied established religion, since what it aims at is professed conformity, not honesty of character or intellectual rectitude. The Heston and Isleworth education authority is doing what it can to entrust the children of the district to men and women who are least fit for the task.

Surely the Board of Education could make a move in the matter by reminding the Education Authority that it is not justified in making an inquisition into the religious opinions of teachers. If an Education Authority in a district in which Communism, or Freethought or Socialism was very strong, made similar enquiries with regard to the opinions of candidates on the subjects named, there would soon be circulars issued. And cannot the National Union of Teachers, one of the strongest Trades Unions in the country, take an interest in something else besides wages? If a move were made to lower wages or pensions the N.U.T. would be up in arms. But as it is only a question of resisting an attack on the character of teachers and pupils, it will, we expect, remain, as usual silent.

Chasing Shadows

(Continued from page 619.)

I HAVE mentioned that there is a true and a false Agnosticism, and the point reached in the last article seems appropriate for the introduction of a word or two on this question. Special importance attaches to this distinction at present, because of the general identification by the more sophisticated theologian and the less philosophic scientist of the type of Sir James Jeans of two distinct and quite independent questions. And at the recent meeting of the British Association we had Sir James stressing the fact that we know nothing of the real nature of things, and the Bishop of Carlisle welcoming this admission as a proof of the nearer approach of science to the belief in God. For this confusion of the "thing-in-itself" and God, we are in this country largely to thank the extraordinary action of Professor T. H. Huxley. Setting out to explain that he had no belief in a God, he said he found that he had no answer to the "problem of existence," and in contradistinction to the "Gnostics" of antiquity, he described himself as an *a*-gnostic. But the Gnostics, as such, never made any profession of knowledge about the problem of existence; they were pretenders to a special "illumination" concerning God and angels and the like. They were what are called to-day "Mystics," and who attract the type of mind that has a belief in fortune-telling, the perusal of dream-books and the purchase of Old Moore's Almanack. The two questions which Huxley jumbled together have no connexion in either their history or their origin. But in

jumbling them together Huxley did the cause of the godites a very valuable service, and ever since his time it has been popular for some scientists to talk about "God" when they meant something else, for theologians to talk about something else when they meant "God," and for others to claim wisdom by saying they were undecided about God when they really meant they did not believe in him.

What, then, is a legitimate Agnosticism? We have seen that all knowledge is a translation of the elements of feeling into intellectual signs. This is so obvious on the simplest analysis that John Stuart Mill suggested as the best definition of "Matter," the "Permanent possibility of sensation," meaning that as our knowledge of an external world consisted in a consciousness of sensations of varied kinds, our thoughts of it existing always implied in the possibility of reviving the sensations originally experienced.

Now, until we put the old question again in what I take to be a more reasonable form, it is permissible to say, "Granted the existence of an external world, granted also that my knowledge of an external world consists of impressions in terms of *my* feeling, what is this something like that exists apart from me? What is the nature of 'existence'?"

But the question so put, as it usually has been put, and as it must continue to be put until the question is newly and properly framed, does not admit of a satisfactory answer. If there is an existence apart from me, and if all I know of it is the effect it produces on my sense organs, then it is an obvious impossibility for me to know what this existence is "in itself." It is like asking what would flying be like if there were no atmosphere? And the answer is that there could be no flying in the absence of an atmosphere, since the resistance of an atmosphere is one of the conditions of flight.

This is the situation that gives rise to a genuine Agnosticism. But it has nothing whatever to do with a belief in the existence of God. So far as a *belief* is concerned one either has it or one is without it. You cannot reasonably say, "I do not know whether I have a belief or not," any more than you can say, "I do not know whether I have a belief that I am or am not reading these lines." If one believes in a God, then one is a Theist. If one does not believe in a God, then one is an A-theist—he is without that belief. The distinction between Atheism and Theism is entirely, exclusively that of whether one has or has not a belief in God. Intelligently used, Agnosticism is possible in relation to many things, but it is not possible in relation to the belief in God. In this connexion it is not only out of place, but it is dangerously irrelevant. I do not wonder that the religious world has received the gift of Huxleyan Agnosticism with such thankfulness. In the circumstances it came as an unexpected blessing. It helped a number to find in the uncertainty of the Agnostic a recommendation of their own belief, and it enabled the man who does not believe in a God to crave mercy of those who do.

To get back to our main line. There exists a strong and universal conviction that *I* am not *you*, that at any rate the existence of individuals is an independent one. Hardly less strong is the conviction that *I* am not *it*; that just as individuals are independent of each other, so *things* are independent of *me*. The only real questions at issue with regard to the second of these convictions is as to the nature of "things."

In what has gone before, we have seen that the answer is, ignoring subdivisions, threefold. There is the crude reply that the "it" considered as some-

thing distinct from the "I," exists just as it is pictured in my consciousness. This is clearly unsatisfactory and does not fit the facts. First "it" does not appear as the same to all. An "it" which is red, or blue, or green, to me is neither that nor any other colour to a blind man. Or, an object that is red to me may be green to someone else. My consciousness of the colour of "it" is evidently due to its relation to me. Colour is not the property of a single object, it is the product of an "object" in relation to an "I." Take any other quality by which we know an "It"—weight, hardness, shape, etc., and the inference is the same. To every "I" the object is to our understanding the product of two factors, an "I" and an "It." Whatever the "It" may be apart from our awareness, it is quite evident that it is not as it appears in our consciousness, for it is only because of the presumed effects the "It" produces on us that we know it at all. The "It" cannot be merely the sensation of colour, or of weight, or of shape, for these sensations belong to a nervous organism, and no one has ever assumed, outside the realms of fantasy, that the "It" was alive.

Crude realism being ruled out, we are left with the remaining two hypotheses. Is the "It" a creation of the "I"? Is the world a projection of my consciousness? Well, this would certainly explain the differences the world presents to different persons, and if a man obstinately sticks to that I do not know any way in which he can be decisively shown to be wrong. But the hypothesis would remain eminently unsatisfactory, and is quite out of touch with the general conviction of mankind.

It should also be pointed out that the philosophical justification of this position proceeds along two main lines. To account for the persistence of the world, an identical world, to more than one "I," one set of believers assumes the existence of a world of "mind" which creates and perpetuates the identical world of individual observers. The objection to this has already been given. If we use the term "mind," we must mean the only mind we know. And the only "mind" we know is not a thing but an abstraction. It is a general term to cover the activities of a specialized nervous structure. If anything else is meant by it, then it is certainly not "mind" as the term is understood, and, therefore, it is not mind at all.

The Berkeleyan position is a variation of this—it might in technical terms be called Idealistic realism—it regards the identity of perceptions, so far as that exists, and the perception of an objective world as due to emanations from the "mind of God." There is a half-hearted revival of this by such men as Eddington and Jeans.

I hope that some of those who claim to be strict Materialists will not faint, but the other answer to our question is substantially identical with the one given in terms of "mind." The hypothesis here is that the "It," the real and enduring "It," is a world of "Matter." But the reply given to those who argue that the real and enduring thing is a world of "Mind" must also be given to those who hold that the object which produces in us a consciousness of an objective existence is "Matter." For to "Matter" we attach a very distinct significance. We mean by it something that we say has weight, and extension, hardness, etc. But it is perfectly plain that weight and hardness and extension are as much affections of the senses as colour or smell. Each of these feelings is a statement of the relation between an "I" and an "It." And we must say to this type of believer in matter, just as we said to the believer in mind, that when we speak of "Matter," we must mean the

matter we know, not something of which we have no conception whatever. "Matter" as a thing in itself, is as unthinkable as "Mind" in itself, and one might as well call either "God," and have done with it—of course, defining God as something unknown and unthinkable.

I do not, be it said, question the existence of "Matter," and I hope to show later a reasonable sense of the use of that word. What I do question, on the dual ground of intelligibility and utility, is the existence of a "matter" which is not the matter I know. I am merely insisting that where words are used they should stand for something known or knowable.

This something of which the known is a mere symbol bears various names, on which no more is needed than a passing word. Spinoza called it "substance," but it was not the known substance, Bradlaugh, in his statements of Atheism, preferred to affirm "one existence of which existence I know only modes." But as all we know are modes, and as modes can only be known when contrasted in terms of likeness and difference, we are in as great a confusion as ever. For if mode is a part of existence and if "existence" is merely a general term covering all known and knowable modes, then we do know existence in knowing the modes. If it is not so, and existence is not like any known existence, then we are back with the unknown and knowable "thing-in-itself." And words by whomsoever used should stand for something intelligible.

The favourite word to-day is "Reality," which with its religious use is calculated to have a narcotising influence over a certain type of mind. "Reality," as opposed to the supposed evanescent things with which science deals sounds as though it really meant something real and tangible, instead of its being one of the emptiest of phrases in the mouths of those who use it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Christian Baby-Bombers

THE ordered system of human sacrifices prevailing amongst the primitive anthropophagous religionists pales its ineffectual fires before the indiscriminate holocausts of modern warfare, from which Christian shareholders in firms that manufacture armaments of a terrifying and homicidal capacity never hitherto known derive comfortable dividends. Every great power which has learned up-to-date accidental methods of warfare vies with the others in making more and more efficient the instruments and engines of human destruction.

It is not so many years since Freethinkers were persecuted for advocating common sense means for abolishing the dread arbitrament of war; and even unto this day it is considered a highly honourable thing that our school-boys should at an early stage be thoroughly instructed in military arts. So at the summer season we see large drafts of cadets from all the fashionable schools going into camp practising manœuvres and engaging in mimic warfare.

The feeders of our Army are the Boys' Brigades, the Boy Scouts and these School and College Cadets. All these organizations have a militaristic basis; and it is impressed upon our youth that it is a noble thing to be trained to fight for the honour of one's

country. Early inoculation has a long-lasting effect; and those who strive to eradicate the falsehoods instilled by the governing classes for generations are confronted by the traditional feeling thereby engendered. "It is a pleasant and a becoming thing to die for one's country." Is it?

What after all does dying for one's country effect? And when the ordinary working man speaks proudly of "my country," how much of his country is really his? He is gulled into believing that, when required to fight, he is fighting for great ideals for international righteousness and a lasting peace. There is no great war in the history of the world which was not claimed by each of the belligerents to be on his side in reality a war of this kind. Every great war has been a war to end war. But a generation having intervened; and some episode being exalted into a justifiable pretext for another war; the megaphonic propagandists and subsidized orators shout from every platform, calling on the citizens in the hour of the nation's imminent danger. And the loudest of these propagandists and orators are the Christian pulpiteers of the ever-present black army, who secure themselves soft and cushy "spiritual" jobs far behind the fighting line. Their value as fomenters of international bad blood is so great that their persons must not on any account be placed in jeopardy. As creators of the blood-lust *par excellence* they rival the potency of the rum rations served out to bring to the surface the animal savagery of the hitherto peaceably disposed men—conscripts hounded by force into the ranks of the armies. He who dares to refuse to fight is made a pariah; is spat upon; ostracized; put into prison and upon the most menial and disgusting tasks. He is stigmatized as "a swine," because he refuses to take a part in helping to bomb babies.

Nobody is more eloquent in mouthing about "national honour" than the cleric. His duty is to preach weekly the duty to their country of the men who are to be cannon-fodder in the next war if it comes. The parson who may kick against flaunted militarism gets the frozen *milt* or is held up to scorn. Even in the Nonconformist Churches the blessing of Cadets' and Scouts' flags is not uncommon. By such means the minds of children are impressed with the emblems of war. It certainly does not seem inconsistent that military insignia should find a place in Church Services periodically, seeing that the God worshipped by Christians is nervously described as the Lord of Hosts and the God of Battles, who having girded his sword upon his thigh goes forth to conquer his enemies. Much of the phrasology and symbolism of Christian worship is pervaded by military ideas.

How long will the common people be deluded? How long will they remain at the mercy of these self-interested quacks of divinity? How long will they accept their *dicta* as infallible? When will they individually gain respect for their manhood and form their own independent opinions, instead of being dependent upon the opinions of self-appointed "spiritual" advisers, who play upon their weaknesses and susceptibilities, and even induce them to accept myths as facts? Until they do that and dismiss their spiritual pastors and masters they will not merely allow the bombing of babies to continue to be a possibility; but they may themselves actually be employed one day in working the infernal machinery which is capable of such horrors and such frightfulness. What are we to think of Christian teaching when after 2,000 years man's brutal instincts still remain so largely uncontrolled?

IGNOTUS.

The Catholic Way with Youth

"There are in the elementary and secondary Catholic schools some 427,000 children; and from these schools about 47,000 leave annually. It is maintained by some authorities that we have an annual leakage of 14,000, and the converts average about 13,000 yearly."

(*Universe*, October 10, 1932.)

THE above quotation is an interesting comment upon a problem which is the constant source of anxiety to the Roman Catholic Church. Normally it can rely upon its traditional experience in the handling of children to ensure that those who come under its guiding influence remain true sons and daughters of Rome for the rest of their lives. In village communities where the parish priest can easily keep a watchful eye upon his flock, it is not difficult to subordinate the would-be deserters by the force of public opinion, for the priest plays a powerful part in the secular as well as the spiritual life of the community. In large towns, however, the Catholic Church finds it impossible to maintain as close a contact as it would like with all the children who leave its schools. The reason it adduces—and it rings truer than the one sometimes put forward by the less discriminating to the effect that it is due to a conscious rebellion against religion—is that there are so many diversions in the modern world to strain religious ties coupled with the special migratory problem due to the difficulties of finding employment for juveniles. It is true that the Catholic Church does what it can to provide what it calls "after care," in the form of missions and clubs, but as the opening quotation shows these are confessedly inadequate to meet the competition of the cinemas, and similar diversions.

It is not surprising therefore, to find the Catholic Church utilizing the world scout movement to the full in attempting to arrest the leakage. Too little credit, however, is given the Church for the rapidity with which it recognized the advantages for itself that the birth of Baden-Powell's Scout Movement in 1908 presented. Geoffrey O. Bell, Hon. Secretary of the Catholic Scout Movement, tells us that:—

His Eminence Cardinal Bourne has occasionally reminded us that when the Scout Movement was about to be formed, the Chief Scout consulted him; and we have been told by "B.P." that the advice given him by the Cardinal was exceedingly valuable.

There are roughly about 2,000,000 scouts in the world, of which the Catholics claim two-thirds.

We're not out for soldiers; we're out for souls, and that's where the Catholic Scout Movement enters in this problem of leakage.

With these words Lord FitzAlan urged the strengthening of the Catholic Scout Movement in 1932:—

... in its fight for the bodies, minds and souls, the threefold trinity of their nature, of the world's boys, the sons of God.

Scouting is especially Catholic. I am bold enough to say that no one outside the Catholic Church can appreciate its advantages, its help and its true worth as those that are inside; and whilst giving unstinted praise and thanks to the Chief Scout for the marvels he has done, we may thank God still more that He has seen fit it should be done. (*The Rev Malcolm G. Dunlop*, formerly Scoutmaster of "The Cardinal's Own" Troop.)

The three principles by which the scouts are bound are:—

1. Duty to God and the King.
2. To help others.
3. To keep the Scout Law.

Broadly speaking, the modern Scout movement shows rather clearly the corrupting influence of a

good idea being applied for base ends by a bad institution or in the interests of unworthy people. No one would deny that in as much as scouting tends to develop in young people good bodily habits, a sense of discipline and a desire to be of assistance to others, it is an admirable institution. But, as the Catholic advocates of the scout movement declare, these character traits are strengthened with due regard to God and the King. That is to say, a scout should not allow himself to think that the present governing authorities, whether they be religious, republican, fascist or monarchial could be in the wrong. It means that when his reason dictates that in international relations his country is perpetrating injustice a scout must support the diplomatic representatives of his particular countrymen. In short, adherence to the first scout law demands unquestioning obedience to authority. So long as this law prevails in the scout movement, all its other benefiting influences are valueless. To give an example. The movement is world-wide; the spirit of brotherly assistance is supposed to be universally recognized. In times of peace there is considerable fraternization between scout groups from all over the globe, when the hand of friendship is vigorously shaken all round. In times of war, however, the same hands are to be found tearing at the throats of the friend-cum-enemy.

Scouts in 1914 found that the ideal of international brotherhood, which was supposed to permeate the scouting movement, completely failed to stand the test of reality which the Great War put upon it, simply because those who were responsible for the War only saw the scout movement in the different countries as a reliable auxiliary to the regular armies, and did not hesitate to use it as such.

Whereas the Catholic Church is able to explain the paradox of Roman Catholics blowing one another to bits under the auspices of an identical God, by regarding it as God's pleasant way of speeding his elect to paradise; the scout movement which nominally exists to promote the brotherhood of man, but which actually exists to foment nationalism and international rivalries, has no such convenient expedient. Its purpose is all too clear from the fact that it is led by militarists who welcome any movement which guarantees unswerving loyalty, firm discipline and a readiness on the part of its members to be murdered on the strength of a particular conception of patriotic duty.

In the same way Rome sees in the scout movement something else besides keeping youth physically fit. Rome has seen its leakage problem as a weakness in its own organization. Having arrested the natural development of the minds of young Catholics at a point where cultural values have a lessened appeal, it cannot control to the same extent the animal nature of Catholic adolescents without special machinery. At the school-leaving age children usually evince a desire for freedom, under the present educational system, on account of the enforced restriction they have previously suffered. This finds expression in the juvenile desire to engage in manly pursuits—and in crowded industrial towns often takes on an anti-social nature. It is during this stage in the development of the young that the priest finds himself unable to cope with his task of retaining their religious sympathies unless his contact with them is exceptionally close. His difficulty is increased in the case where the religious sympathies have been held at all only through his power of intimidation. The scouting movement in the "right" hands thus has the advantage of providing an outlet for the hooliganism of the boyish nature without breaking the religious tie. In the years of adolescence, on the contrary, there is every likelihood of the respect for authority being increased.

We Freethinkers are bound therefore to oppose the Scout Movement in the same way that we should oppose any other organization which is set up to foster respect for authority, even if it has a semblance of providing something of public benefit. For so long as organizations exist which have the recognition of authority as their primary aim human liberties will be unnecessarily limited with greater ease by those who want to exercise dictatorial powers.

It is no coincidence that the Fascist countries are those where the Catholic Scout Movement was strongest, and the following quotation from the *Universe* (September 9, 1934) tells its own tale:—

Over 1,000 Fascist Boy Scouts from various parts of Europe were presented to the Pope by their chaplains. They came from South Africa, Egypt, Canada, the United States, Belgium, Rumania, Syria, Yugoslavia, Greece, England and Ireland, and were the sons of Italians living in those countries.

G. F. GREEN.

Correspondence

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to your commentary on my letter regarding my father, the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, I have to inform you that I quite appreciate the difference between honesty and accuracy. Nevertheless, Mr. Cutner is very ill-advised to accuse my father of credulity, which he has no right to do, unless or until he has examined all the evidence which my father investigated so exhaustively. When Mr. Cutner has had fifty years of practical experience, as distinct from theoretical surmise, he will be qualified to give an authoritative opinion. Until he is in that position, he would do well to refrain from committing himself to assertions which remind one somewhat pointedly of "the crackling of thorns."

DENIS P. S. CONAN DOYLE.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 28, 1934.

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

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted, monthly financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Brighton, Birkenhead, Blackburn, Plymouth, South Shields, Bethnal Green, West London, Tees-Side Branches, and the Parent Society.

Permission was given for the formation of the Tees-Side Branch N.S.S. The death of Mr. B. A. Le Maine, Mr. J. G. Bartram, and C. V. Thorpe, was noted, and appreciation of their work for the movement, and sympathy with the relatives was expressed. Reports of meetings and other matters were dealt with from Bradford, Swansea, Edinburgh, Sunderland, Glasgow, North London, Oxford, Fulham, Darlington, Pitsea, The International Federation of Freethought Societies, Messrs. Brighton, Clayton and Whitehead. A report concerning the West London Branch and its reorganization was dealt with and instructions given. The receipt of a legacy of £25 from the estate of the late George Hollamby was reported.

The next meeting of the Executive will be held on October 26.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Olaf Stapledon—"Outgrowing a Great Religion."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, October 8, Mr. P. Goldman—"Psychology, Religion, and the Child."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Conway Hall, 49 Theobalds Road, W.C.): 7.0, A Lecture—"The Sedition Bill."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, George Bedborough—"Is Religion any Source to Human Welfare?"

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, October 7, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, October 8, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, October 11, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. 6.30, Mr. Wood (W.P.). Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park gates, and literature to order.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. Edwin Monks—"Crime and the Criminal."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Pickford—"Christianity and Conduct."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole Lane, Failsforth): Autumn Services, 2.45 and 6.30. 2.45, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Jesus, Fascism, and Freethought." 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Christianity and the World Crisis." Band and Choir selections. Saturday, October 6, Tea Party and Entertainment.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (St. Andrew's Hall, Mid. Hall, Door G): 7.0, Mr. Andrew Kent, M.A., Ph.D., F.C.S.—"Arguments Against the Theory of Evolution." *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature on sale at all meetings.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen (President N.S.S.)—"The Fight for Freedom of Thought."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Secularist—"Our Principles and Objects."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. Allan Flanders—"Catholic Piety and Peace."

OUTDOOR.

COLNE: 7.30, Friday, October 5, Mr. J. Clayton.

HAPTON: 7.30, Monday, October 8, Mr. J. Clayton.

NELSON: 8.0, Tuesday, October 9, Mr. J. Clayton.

WATERFOOT: 7.30, Sunday, October 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

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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.

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