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Views and Opinions

The Decline of Miracles *

FOR several generations confidence in the miraculous has been losing force. I use the word "confidence" rather than belief because events show that even among what are called advanced believers there is cherished some hope that the miraculous may to some extent be re-established. Dr. Barnes, who by the ultra-orthodox is regarded as the incarnation of reckless "Rationalism" applies his destructive criticism to physical miracles only, as though the reign of law was the less certain in the mental than it is in the material sphere. And the attention given by religious believers to all stories of the marvellous, the joy with which are received the incoherences of certain scientists who proclaim that causation or determinism is not universally applicable proves that the belief in the miraculous is not yet dead.

It is confidence in the miraculous that has weakened. For sectarian reasons the Protestant has denied the reality of the miracles of the Roman Church, and as usual has shown himself quite logical when analysing the claims of a rival creed. But he has stopped short, save in extreme instances, at a denial of the miracles of early Christian and Bible times. And with that self-contradiction which is the inevitable consequence of primitive ideas struggling for existence in a modern environment, while asserting that miracles ceased with "Bible times," no one has advertised the existence of the semi-miraculous in everyday life more than has the Protestant. Protestant literature is almost as full of narratives of individuals who have experienced cures from disease, or protection against accidents, as are the lives of the saints. Protestantism aimed at the democratisation of miracles, not their abolition. Above all, for the general mind, confidence in miracles has been undermined by the extension of the idea of natural law, and has thus created an expectation of a scientific explanation of whatever occurs. But miracle is essential if we are to have a live re-

ligion. Otherwise "religion" stands for a mere word that can serve no better function than a cover for cowardice or compromise.

* * *

Science and the Miraculous

Two methods of maintaining the belief in the miraculous are adopted. One is the simple religious plea of accepting scientific teaching with regard to nature at large, while holding to a kind of reserved area for miracles in the life of individuals. The other is that of the mistaken policy of a number of scientists who have become well-known to the general public for the use they have been to religion rather than for their work as men of science. On the latter ground their names would hardly have appeared in the newspapers, and preachers would never have mentioned them. But let them say "The universe suggests the thought of a great thinker"—a quite meaningless verbalism—and they are proclaimed from thousands of pulpits as great scientists, and their deliverances labelled as the latest and most authoritative teachings of science. No easier avenue to popularity exists to-day for the scientist than a public patronage of religious ideas. The Church would have burned that sort of man a few centuries ago, it would have imprisoned him at a later date, and boycotted him only yesterday. To-day it fawns where it once cursed.

The argument of this type of scientist is that new conceptions of ultimate physical processes seems to point to a world of spirit—a deliverance that is quite scientifically unintelligible. This undefined world of spirit is next translated into evidence for the existence of God, and therefore to the possibility of miraculous, or semi-miraculous, intervention. The whole thing is wrong, demonstrably wrong. The argument has neither scientific, nor logical, nor philosophical justification. The fact of there existing incalculable, even inconceivable, operations in nature certainly does not warrant fantastic conclusions about a "spiritual world." The honest form of speech here would be "I do not know." I fancy that future generations will view the religious fantasies of Sir James Jeans much as the present generation now regard the speculations of Newton concerning prophecies.

But the existence of this prostitution of science by scientists certainly makes it worth while considering anew the whole question of miracles, and it may also be worth while to do this by way of a criticism of Hume. And for doing this one may offer two reasons. One is that so far as the general body of non-religious folk are concerned, their position is still that of Hume. The other is that there are certain corrections of, and certain additions to, Hume's statement of the case that may profitably be made.

* The first article on this subject appeared in the *Free-thinker* for November 4.

Hume and Miracles

Hume's argument against miracles is, in the main, that which is adopted by most people with regard to testimony of all kinds, whether they know anything about Hume or not. In substance it amounts to this; that the evidence required to establish the credibility of any narrative must increase in strength in proportion to the unusual character of the occurrence that is to be established. For example, if we were told that a man and woman were seen running down Oxford Street in the early hours of the morning we would accept the statement, provided that our informant was not notorious for his untruthfulness. But if the statement were made concerning a couple of elephants or giraffes, we should require much stronger evidence, and if the statement were made concerning a couple of angels, we might well reject the tale as being either a lie or a delusion. No one questions the soundness of this rule; in fact, everyone puts it into practice.

Hume's argument is little more than an elaboration of this common rule of practice, with one important addition. This addition is the utilization of the argument from natural law. He argues that the most invariable experience we have is that summed up in the phrase "law of nature," and a law of nature is established by *invariable* experience. It does not admit of any exception, which means that human experience has run in one direction and in one direction only. So, he argues, when we are told that something has happened which runs contrary to a law of nature, it is easier, and more reasonable to believe that our informant is a liar or is mistaken, than to believe that in this one instance a law of nature has been broken. Common sense says of such stories, "I do not believe it," and common-sense would be right, particularly if it were accompanied with the proviso, "If it did happen then, it will be found, sooner or later, that this occurrence will be found to be an expression of some wider law."

Hume's argument is, in short, that the credibility of a reported event depends upon its harmony with experience. But laws of nature are summaries of experience in its widest and most comprehensive aspects, and so long as we define a miracle as a violation of natural law we have against it the whole course of human experience. There is not, Hume believes, evidence of a sufficiently strong character to upset it. An event may be very unusual, and to ignorance may assume the character of a miracle, that is, be due to the action of some supernatural force, but further investigation may place the alleged miracle in the class of natural events to which it belongs. If Hume is right it looks as if the acceptance of miracles can never be made a question of logic, it must always be a matter of faith, and, to cite Hume, "We may conclude that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. And whoever is moved by faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience." This disposes of any attempt to base either Christianity or miracles on a basis of logical reasoning.

This is Hume's famous argument against miracles, and which has become classic with the anti-religious controversialist. Yet I do not think it is quite as complete as it might be, or as Hume thought it was, particularly when it is considered from the standpoint of Hume's own philosophy.

We may note that Hume does not deny the *possibility* of miracles, a fact which I imagine has commended it to that class who prefer to show what they

think is impartiality by favouring the wrong side. He simply affirms the impossibility of producing any evidence for a miracle that will outweigh the presumption against it. I think that the reason why Hume did not advance to the further stage of denying the possibility of a miracle was due to certain misconceptions of the nature of causation, and that had his conception of the nature of causation been of a different character he might easily have been able, not merely to reject particular miracles, but also to have advanced to the position of denying the possibility of any miracle. As it stands Hume merely establishes the incredibility of stories of the miraculous, and in this there are many intelligent believers in religion who would agree with him. They would agree that many alleged miracles are no more than mere delusions, or the products of ignorant wonder in face of phenomena that are not understood. But that, while weakening the presumption in favour of miracles in general, does not assert the impossibility of miracles happening. Indeed, I think a Christian might well, nowadays, grant the truth of much that Hume said, and make two counter assertions. First that the question of the possibility of the miraculous was not, on Hume's own principles, fairly met by him, and secondly, that on the religious definition of the character of a miracle, the case for miracles, as laid down by religionists was not squarely faced.

I will deal with this point next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Pains and Perils of the Pioneers

"There is a bad time coming, and civilized mankind will, morally, be uncivilized before civilization can again advance."—*Herbert Spencer.*

"You see how how this world goes!" is one of Lear's pregnant exclamations in the greatest tragedy penned by the master-hand of Shakespeare. Gloucester, who is blind, says he sees it feelingly, and Lear replies:—

Look with thine ears: see how you justice rails upon you simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief.

Lear, even in his ramblings, gives terse, pungent expression to thoughts extraordinary for acuteness and depth, but he seldom surpasses this transformation scene in respect to suggestive import and vivid presentment.

This apparent paradox is partially explained by the history of religion. Read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, *Wheeler's Dictionary of Freethinkers*, and *Lecky's History of Rationalism*. See how, through many ages, independence of mind was killed off, and hypocrisy and servility fostered. For many centuries Europe was given up to the Christian priests as a sheep to the shearers. With thumb-screw in hand, and threats of eternal damnation on the tongue's tip, the priests did their awful work. Thus it so often happens that some prison records are bright spots on the scroll of history.

The priests resented all inquiry. Hence there is an unfortunate affinity between pioneers and prisons. Many of the noblest men and women in history have suffered long and cruel incarceration within the grim walls of gaols for their devotion to truth. Prisons have thus not infrequently been glorified by the halo of the martyrs. How many brave soldiers of the Army of Human Liberation have rotted in gaols? How many men of genius have solaced their im-

prisoned hours with their pens, learning in suffering what they taught in books?

The ancient priesthood commenced the work of persecution. In old-world Athens, Socrates solaced his prison hours with philosophy before he drank the deadly hemlock among his sorrowing disciples. The Christian priests, even more fanatical and murderous than their Pagan predecessors, sometimes dispensed with the mockery of a trial, and, as in the case of the unfortunate Hypatia, resorted to plain murder. The great Galileo, when he was old and poor, suffered in a Roman dungeon, and Roger Bacon was on two occasions imprisoned—once for a period of ten years—on the common charge of heresy and magic. Yet he, too, like Galileo, disturbed the pious ignorance of his contemporaries with ideas of discoveries that were to be realized after his death.

Nor can we forget that the hapless Giordano Bruno, perhaps the greatest martyr of all, suffered the horrors of a cruel imprisonment before his tragic end by burning at the hands of the hired assassins of the Romish Church. Thomas Paine knew the inside of a prison. To relieve the tedium of the loneliness during his captivity he composed part of the world-famous *Age of Reason*, a thunderous work, for which scores of men and women afterwards suffered imprisonment. It was while in the Bastille that Voltaire wrote the greater part of the *Henriade*. The priests were always anxious to arrest Voltaire, but owing to his influence and position he always evaded their eager clutches. Richard Carlile, his family and associates, had more than their share of pains and penalties for daring to defend free speech. Carlile himself suffered over nine years' imprisonment, and his family and shopmen divided among them about fifty years' confinement. That warm-hearted poet, Leigh Hunt, endured two year's captivity for satirizing the Prince Regent, afterwards George the Fourth, of indifferent memory. Thomas Cooper, one of the Chartist leaders, was no stranger to the interior of a gaol. His *Purgatory of Suicides* was another instance of mind triumphing over captivity. Ernest Jones, another Chartist leader, also belongs to the roll of men who have, by the resources of genius, converted a prison into a palace of thought. Charles Southwell, the first Freethought editor, was imprisoned, and aged prematurely by his fight for Freedom. Edward Truelove, the Freethought publisher, was sentenced to imprisonment when over seventy years of age. G. W. Foote had to endure twelve months' incarceration, and had to listen to the mocking voice of a Catholic judge telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the service of the Devil. Foote was equal to the occasion, for he replied: "Thank you, my lord, your sentence is worthy of your creed."

Christians even persecuted their fellow-Christians, and the early Nonconformists suffered terribly. John Bunyan was not a Freethinker, but he spent twelve years in Bedford Gaol for militant Nonconformity, and wrote part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while in duration vile. Bunyan had a most excellent humour, as all readers of his book are aware. A snuffling busybody came to visit him, and declared, "the Lord" had ordered him to search for him in half the prisons of England. Bunyan retorted: "If the Lord had sent you, you need not have taken so much trouble. The Lord knows I have been in Bedford Gaol for these twelve years."

Among the host of noble names of those who have suffered imprisonment we have referred only to a few, and most of these were apostles of Freethought. Freethinkers have ever been the most potent forces of progress. No other men are discussed so widely; but

magnificent as is their life-work the men are greater. Hissed at by superior people, stoned by the vulgar, they find that intellectual honesty is not appreciated in a saucy world. Perhaps the hardest trial to be borne is that of seeing charlatans ride by in their motors, or, in other words, to mark the success of humbug and dishonesty.

When a politician carries on a campaign he encounters the resistance of only a portion of the community, whereas a Freethought leader, directing his campaign against forty thousand priests and clergy, and their hundreds of thousands of satellites, has to bear the brunt of an enormously greater opposition. No enmity is more relentless, nor more venomous, than religious hatred. The abuse directed against leading politicians is politeness itself compared with the assault and battery made upon a Freethought leader. The politician has, at least, the support of many newspapers, but a leading Freethinker is certain to be insulted by all papers alike. Accused of almost every crime, their actions misrepresented, this well-nigh intolerable animosity is, in reality, a tribute to their influences. Even if the pioneers escape imprisonment their lives are by no means a bed of roses. Charles Bradlaugh had to suffer defeat after defeat for sixteen weary years in a battle which was Homeric in its intensity, and his dying ears never caught the echo of his final triumph. Like Francesco Ferrer, fronting the rifles of his enemies, he had to find his triumph in his own brain.

Pioneers are ever prophets. Swinburne saw and sang "A vision of spring in midwinter," and long before, Shelley asked the question: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Happy are the pioneers who can fix their gaze on the promise of the future. For them the darkest night is jewelled with the brightest of stars. For them there is a budding to-morrow in every midnight, and for them there is nothing irrevocable, for their eyes are ever looking on the fairer horizons towards which mankind is travelling.

MIMNERMUS.

James Thomson (B.V.)

(NOVEMBER 23, 1834—JUNE 3, 1882)

I.

JAMES THOMSON, poet, essayist, satirist and critic, was born a century ago, on November 23, 1834, at Port Glasgow. His work, in all that he undertook, is personal; for "B.V.," as he later called himself (after Shelley and Novalis) was a genius; and genius is always unique, even in its affinities. No serious and informed critic has questioned the fact of Thomson's genius; it was admitted, during Thomson's lifetime, even by so rancorous a mental adversary as the Reverend Brewin Grant, Bradlaugh's now almost-forgotten, but once-famous, adversary; it is admitted, in our own time, by so whole-souled an opponent of Thomson's scheme-of-things as Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

B.V.'s contemporaries, William Sharp, Philip Bourke Marston, W. M. Rossetti, J. W. Barrs, William Maccall, Bertram Dobell, G. W. Foote, "Saladin," all of whom had the honour of knowing the great artist personally, are unanimous. "George Eliot," Swinburne, J. M. Robertson, H. S. Salt, agree. No sane critic will dispute so unvarying and Catholic a verdict; which unquestionably stands a century after the poet's birth, and which, I am convinced, will stand while we humans—or some of us—rejoice in poetry and satire. B.V. is securely and unalterably enthroned amongst the Immortals.

Thomson's life-history has been written in considerable detail by H. S. Salt. This Life, while a noble and balanced account, seems to me—and here I agree with the exceptionally sane and easy Walter Lewin—to err in being over-sombre. It paints B.V. as *essentially* gloomy and hypochondriacal. A corrective lies in the reminiscences of many who knew him well; notably Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, G. W. Foote, Bertram Dobell. Interesting too are the recollections of William Maccall, forgotten poet and individualist, the friend of Thomas Carlyle. To me the most poignant writing about B.V. is an account by "Saladin" (W. Stewart Ross) of a meeting with him a week or two before he died.

All those who knew the poet personally agree as to B.V.'s loveableness and humanism. In to-day's phrase he was "one of the best."

Life, or, as the purblind pious call it still, I suppose, "Divine Providence," was horribly scurvy to Thomson. From his father he inherited a tendency to dipsomania; he himself was haunted all his life by melancholia. It is no mere imagining that lies beneath that unforgettable key-phrase in the final section of *The City of Dreadful Night*; "the 'Melencolia' that transcends all wit." The girl whom "B.V." adored, to whom he had given his whole soul, died in her youth; again he seems never to have possessed enough money to make life seem a trifle easier.

Withal, he was a joyous pal to his friends, who all loved him for his shining gentleness; an unflinching loyalist to what he held to be true; an astounding conversationalist; an exquisite wit.

If accounts with "Divine Providence" could be squared, the balance would lie—a heavy balance, too—in "B.V.'s" favour. "Divine Providence" owes him reparation and many apologies. To the outer world, that picks-up its knowledge of men and things from shilling handbooks and derivative encyclopædias, "B.V." is known merely as the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, the parrot-phrase concerning which is that it is "the finest pessimistic poem in the language," the parrot-phrases concerning its writer being that he was "a pessimist" and "a shy genius." These particular stale statements are true only "as far as they go"; and they do not go far.

B.V.'s poetry is only part of his literary work; some of his prose is so "shocking" to the unnumbered hosts of the Philistines that it is scarcely polite to mention the fact that he wrote prose at all. But the truth is that, from the view-point of craftsmanship, "B.V.'s" prose-writings are as good as his verse.

I do not pretend to agree with J. M. Robertson's view that Thomson was essentially a proseman rather than a poet. Excellent as Robertson is as an analytical critic, his occasional fault of priggishness shows heavily when he writes concerning "B.V."

But Robertson is right in his assertion that the poet's prose never fails in technical perfection. It never does; though B.V. has at least a dozen styles, he is master of them all. His prose is invariably as facile as Marlowe's blank verse. Even as a journalist he is a stylist. He was incapable of bad pen-work. Some of his writing in prose is hack-work, but even that is distinguished. All that I am saying here, be it noted, is merely an extension of the statement that "B.V." was a genius.

His literary loves were many, and—once again—they were all distinguished; Dante, Rabelais, Balzac, Goethe, Heine, Meredith—a gallery of greatness that reveals part of the poet's mind-range. Other of Thomson's literary loves I shall mention presently. His

especial love, a love where from loyally he never dreams of wavering, is Percy Bysshe Shelley, whom he understood as few men are capable of understanding him.

The man who loves with equal devotion and sympathy—which together spell understanding—both Dante and Rabelais has a great and noble mind; whatsoever may chance to be the external events of his life. That profound and exquisite saying, "To know all is to pardon all," applies in an unique and absolute way to "B.V."

Noble, loyal, generous, uncompromising, a fatal flaw in the artist's make-up, the man's equipment, a flaw due mainly—almost, entirely, indeed, so far as one can judge—to mental inheritance, caused "B.V." break after break with his intimates. At times he became "impossible"; even so, his friends always longed for his "return"; so tragic and so loveable was he. It was neither his fault, this fatal waywardness, nor theirs. It was his personal, and almost permanent, misfortune. This is clear from his record. He understood—the real soul in him—and honoured accordingly the dark Fates.

Externally B.V.'s life was uneventful. It is all in Salt's very-easily-accessible life of him. His father was originally a jolly, roystering sea-captain, who caught a fatal chill in a terrible storm, during which he could not change into dry clothes for days; became permanently rheumatic; took to alcoholic solace; had a paralytic stroke; and ended as a peevish, useless, dependent invalid.

The poet's mother was a kindly, gentle, religious woman of the forgotten Irvingite sect; Irvingism being one of the innumerable semi-mystic, wholly-irrational, inspirational minor cults that are especially dear to impressionable women.

Thomson drew his mysticism and romanticism from his mother; his geniality and good-fellowship from his father. Genius—to me, anyway—is a mystery; for its source remains unknown, and its effects are incalculable; so it were idle here to speculate about the origin of "B.V.'s" share in that priceless heritage.

The poet began his education at the Caledonian Orphan Asylum; then he was transferred to the Chelsea Military Asylum, whence he "graduated"—if the word be here permissible—as an army school-master, being stationed first in Ireland, at the Curragh Camp, where, by the way, he first met Bradlaugh, and later at Aldershot. For a minor breach of discipline he was discharged from the Army, when Bradlaugh found him a job as a lawyer's clerk, and took him to live in his own household, then at Tottenham. Later, Thomson was on both the clerical and literary staffs of *The National Reformer*. He quarrelled with Bradlaugh—it is now no secret; for the history has been printed and unchallenged—over Annie Besant, whom he resented when she, a newcomer to Freethought, supplanted himself, an old and tried friend, as Bradlaugh's right-hand lieutenant. Thereafter "B.V." shifted from one set of cheap "digs." to another, unmothered, untended, forlorn, solitary; a free-lance journalist, too honest to be prosperous, and too unorthodox to be popular. The highlights in this depressing tale of loneliness and neglect are represented by the poet's frequent visits to his staunch and abiding friends, the Barrs of Leicester, who loved the man and appreciated the genius that always flowered within him. Eventually, through no fault of theirs, B.V. broke even with them, and returned to London to die his tragic death.

My dear old friend and editor, "Saladin," maintains that "B.V." committed suicide—or what amounts to suicide—by an act of will. Upon Saladin's staff in the 'eighties was G. Gordon Flaws—Gegeeff—whom he describes as "B.V.'s" *alter ego*;

Flaws spent his time, when his last fatal days began finally to enmesh their poet-victim, in tracking "B.V." from haunt to haunt; that is to say, he sought his lost friend in the Westminster and Pimlico pubs., wherein, thanks to a mysterious Nemesis, Genius sought oblivion. But this time Gegeef sought in vain.

Later I shall have occasion to return to this final tragedy; almost all B.V.'s biographers, I think, tend to lessen a picture of irrevocable doom. The really telling account has been written by "Saladin," whom I shall quote. "Saladin," a fellow-poet and fellow-Scot, was of all men the one capable of a full understanding of Thomson's life; and of a complete sympathy with the dying poet enmeshed in an invisible and unbreakable web woven by the incomprehensibly-occupied hands of Fate. "I find alone Necessity Supreme" is Thomson's statement of faith, in *The City of Dreadful Night*. So, perforce, he accepted his doom as necessary. We are all children of our own philosophy.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

(To be continued.)

Samuel Butler

WHEN the brilliance of Mr. Bernard Shaw first rose above the literary horizon, and began to attract attention, the critics said that it was only a reflection derived from Ibsen and Nietzsche. To which Mr. Shaw replied, in the *Preface* to his play *Major Barbara*: "when I produce plays in which Butler's extraordinarily fresh, free, and future-piercing suggestions have an obvious share, I am met with nothing but vague cacklings about Ibsen and Nietzsche, and am only too thankful they are not about Alfred de Musset and Georges Sand. Really, the English do not deserve to have great men. They allowed Butler to die practically unknown, whilst I, a comparatively insignificant Irish journalist, was leading them by the nose into an advertisement of me which has made my own life a burden." And further, he declared that Butler was "in his own department the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century."

Samuel Butler was born December 4, 1835, at Langar Rectory, near Bingham in Nottinghamshire. His father, the Rev. Thomas Butler, was Rector of Langar-with-Bramston; his grandfather was Dr. Samuel Butler, the famous headmaster of Shrewsbury School, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield. Butler was sent to Shrewsbury, and from there to Cambridge, where he received a classical education. Mr. Festing Jones, Butler's life-long friend and biographer, tells us:—

It had always been taken for granted by Canon and Mrs. Butler that their eldest son was to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and become a clergyman. In common with all his friends and companions Butler had been taught to accept the Christian miracles as self-evident propositions, and to believe in a personal anthropomorphic God. He had at this time never met any one who entertained a doubt on the matter. If he or any of his undergraduate friends had met such a doubter they would have cut him. (Festing Jones: *Samuel Butler*, Vol. I., p. 58.)

It should be remembered that at this time, 1858, the *Vestiges of Creation*, published in 1844, had long before been crushed out under a mountain of hostile criticism; and another year was to elapse before the appearance of *The Origin of Species*. As Butler himself observes: "there was no enemy to the faith which could secure even a languid interest; at no

time, probably in the century could an ordinary observer have detected less sign of coming disturbance." (*Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 59.) The Church was at peace, all seemed secure. It was the lull before the storm. Little did the Church reckon of the tempest which was on the verge of breaking upon it.

Butler had decided to enter the Church as soon as he had taken his degree at Cambridge, which he succeeded in doing, coming out in the first-class honour list of the Classical Tripos of 1858. In the summer of the same year he began to prepare for Orders by going as an amateur lay assistant under the Rev. P. Perring, at St. James's, Piccadilly.

Then a strange thing happened, which shows how sincerely Butler accepted every article of the faith, and must have caused many a smile in future years to the arch-heretic and satirist of the Church. While doing his parish work, he accidentally discovered that one of the boys in his evening class had not been baptized. "Thereupon he made enquiries as to which of the boys had, and which had not been baptized; and was seriously and painfully shocked to find, first, that a large proportion of them were still unbaptized; and secondly, that no one, merely judging by their conduct and character, would ever have been able to separate the sheep from the goats."¹ Fancy believing that baptizing a child would influence its future moral character! But that is only an example of the childish way in which people swallowed these incredible creeds and dogmas at that time.

The effect of this discovery upon Butler was disastrous to his career in the Church. He lost his faith in the efficacy of infant baptism, and declined to be ordained. Any young man to-day who declined to be ordained, on the ground that he did not believe in infant baptism, would be considered quite cranky.

Having thrown up the Church, Butler returned to Cambridge, with the idea of taking pupils, and trying for a fellowship later on. His father, of course, was much upset at the turn of events, and there ensued a long and painful correspondence; but the son was now twenty-two years of age, and could no longer be coerced as of old. Of his father he says: "He never liked me nor I him; from my earliest recollections I can call to mind no time when I did not fear and dislike him." For years, says Butler, "I have never passed a day without thinking of him many times over as the man who was sure to be against me, and who would see the bad side rather than the good of everything I said and did. . . . I have felt that he has always looked upon me as something which he could badger with impunity."² Later on, he assured his son that he had never read one of his books, and that it was probably all the better for him. Butler declares: "My most impacable enemy from childhood has certainly been my father. . . . it would not be easy to say which disliked the other the most." (p. 26.) Butler had good reason for his dislike, for, says Jones: "he was so frequently flogged, ostensibly for trivial or imaginary delinquencies, but really, as it seemed to the victim, because his father was in an irritable mood."³ "It is an awful thing to say," confesses Butler, "but my main feeling on the death of my father was one of unutterable thankfulness." (*Butleriana*, p. 69.)

His brother Tom's relations with his father were, if anything, rather worse, for, records Butler: "My brother hated my father with a fury which it would not be easy to surpass, and my father's feelings towards my brother were not much removed from this. When I was staying at Shrewsbury a few years since,

¹ Festing Jones: *Samuel Butler*, Vol. I., p. 61.

² *Butleriana*. Edited by A. T. Bartholomew, pp. 25-26.

³ Festing Jones: *Samuel Butler*, Vol. I., p. 20.

he said of Tom, 'I don't care about knowing where he is, so long as we hear of his death.' " (*Ibid*, p. 28.) This is hardly the conduct we should expect from a Canon of to-day, but in Victorian times it was quite the correct thing. Thrashing and flogging was the recognized method of training; their wills must be broken while they were young. They were regarded as being endowed with "original sin" inherited from the sin of Adam and Eve, and it must be beaten out of them.

After Butler's flight from London he wished to take up art as a profession, but this proposition did not meet with the approval of his friends, whereupon he decided to emigrate, and set sail for New Zealand in 1859. Arrived there he invested in a sheep farm, and in four and a half years he had done so well that he was worth £8,000. By that time he had come to realize that the life was utterly uncongenial to him, so he sold out and returned to England. Sheep-farming was the only profession at which he ever made enough money to pay his way.

Upon his arrival in England he returned to his former project of adopting art as a profession, and he attended Heatherley's Studio to learn painting. But, as Jones observes: "whether it was painting, philosophy, or literature, he did not approach any of his subjects in a spirit likely to lead to commercial success." For

he still believed that if he honourably did his best, the work must naturally sell. He never made more than a few pounds now and then by selling a picture, and as he never got a publisher to take any of his books till the last year of his life, when Grant Richards took *Erewhon Revisited*, he had to pay for everything he published. (Festing Jones: *Samuel Butler*, Vol. I., p. 223.)

It was at Heatherley's that he became acquainted with Miss Savage, who understood him best, and influenced him most, but there was no love passage between them, at least on Butler's side, only friendship. She would have married him if he had asked her, but he never did.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

A Tribute to Bruno *

I HAVE but a limited acquaintance with the work of historical fiction of Marjorie Bowen. Those stories I have conned in leisure moments indicate a fertile imagination, natural expression of dialogue, a leaning to the *macabre* and the ways of *la bête humaine* in its past manifestations. Only, I lighted on a novel entitled *The Quest of Glory*, which turned on the personality of Vauvenargues, a friend of the philosophical circle of France in the eighteenth century, and introduces, among others, the figure of M. de Voltaire. If drawing here largely on romance, she depicts, with evident respect, a type of high-hearted unbeliever, who, afflicted by calamity and misfortune, meets fate with steadfast courage and constancy.

On a day in February, 1600, when Rome was making festival in honour of the reigning Pope, there was being hurried to his fiery doom for the crime of "heresy," an ex-Dominican monk, named Giordano Bruno. His ideas and writings are familiar to few outside students of philosophical and free inquiry. It is this martyr to the cause whom Marjorie Bowen, in a fresh romance, has made her hero and introduced

to a larger public. The study is written, one may say, with full sense of the issues involved, and a sustained dignity worthy of her theme. Though composed in the objective spirit of art, it leaves an impression that her sympathies are with the heretic rather than with his accusers. The title, taken from Bruno, is significant.

Her story follows the course of Bruno's career, enlivened by fancy. Entering in youth the Dominican Order, an eager student, he becomes acquainted with and accepts the novel views of the Universe advanced by Copernicus. Finding himself in trouble with his superiors from his questioning spirit, he flees his monastery, and wanders from place to place teaching, writing, disputing at the Universities, meeting with opposition, occasionally with agreement. At length, through venturing again into Italy, he falls into the deadly clutch of the Inquisition. Beyond other "errors," the unpardonable sin in the eyes of the Church is put in a talk between the Pope and a Cardinal, which touches on heresy:—

"I heard from Paris," said the Cardinal, glancing from the window at the newly set Obelisk round which crowds, despite the tempest, still gathered. [The Obelisk of Nero, dragged from its place by the Pope's order, and set up near St. Peter's, crowned with a Cross.] "The Nuncio tells me of one of these dangerous men—a certain Dominican, one Frá Jordanus, Felipe Bruno by name, a Nolan. We have kept track of this man, who has been wandering over Europe for many years. Much of his doctrines are questionable and some damnable."

"A monk, and a heretic," cried the Pope; his frail hand knocked at his breast. "How long are we to be plagued, O Lord, how long?" . . . Who is this man, why do you choose this moment to tell me of him, San Severina?"

"It came into my mind when I was considering the great triumph of the Obelisk, and the obstinacy of men in resisting the Church. This Bruno has some influence—he goes from university to university."

"What does he teach?" demanded the Pope.

"Much that is very foolish—that no one will listen to. He denies Aristotle. . . . Truly I do not know, I have never had one of his books in my hands, though he has published many. I have heard that he upholds the Copernican heresy."

The Pope's thin nostrils flared with fury.

"What! He dares to go from one university to another preaching this nonsense, that blasphemy!"

Yes. He asserts that Ptolemy was wrong, that the earth is not fixed as the centre of the universe, nor enveloped in several spheres, but is only one of numerous planets which revolve round the sun.

"The earth is not fixed!" muttered the Pope. "Not the centre of the Universe! This earth upon which stands Rome, where I have set up my Obelisk, not the centre of the Universe!"

It is," murmured the Cardinal, "as foolish as it is blasphemous."

This ironic passage touches the heart of the Roman position, and the import of Bruno's. . . . "I appeal from your verdict to that of posterity." That verdict has been returned; and his monument, raised by international subscription, now stands near where he suffered. But the Church remains, despite this discomfiture, and is active, with arrogant upholders, in our own midst. Not alone so—for the "beast triumphant" is abroad in other guise. Fanatical belief in absolute truth over things that are only matter of opinion; new pseudo-philosophies of the State applied in the style of the Inquisition; silencer of objectors even in such concerns as ways and means of providing daily bread!

* *The Triumphant Beast. A Tribute, A Confession, An Apology*, by Marjorie Bowen. John Lane, The Bodley Head, 7s. 6d.

Against this hydra-headed monster the Libertarian needs to have his loins girt, and all his armour furnished. Meanwhile one can wish our author success for her tribute; that she may be tempted to venture further into a field where ample dramatic materials exist for similar treatment.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

Acid Drops

The refusal of Professor Haldane to deliver the speech doctored by the B.B.C. as his own, and the subsequent resolve of H. G. Wells not to lecture for the B.B.C., because of its censorship, has received a fair amount of notice and support in the press. But it should not be forgotten that the first move in this direction was made by a working-man, who wisely waited until he was in front of the microphone, when he publicly protested against the imposture the B.B.C. was putting on the public by giving him a speech to read that in substance, and in a great deal of the phrasing, was not his own.

But neither the suggestions nor the demands made by the press go far enough. In the main they ask for different shades of opinion to be presented. But the infamy of the B.B.C. does not consist merely of excluding certain shades of opinion. The chief offence, and the chief insult offered to all its speakers is the censorship itself. As we said, when protesting against the travesty of the B.B.C. sketch of Bradlaugh, which presented Bradlaugh as a very "respectable" political reformer, who was almost accidentally engaged in a fight with theology that is now out of date, so long as a man must write a paper which has to pass a censorship, he writes *for the censorship*, and in all essentials becomes one of the censorship committee. To say, as some of the B.B.C. speakers do say, that there is not very much alteration made, is just eye-wash. A man who will stoop to write for the approval of a censor will write nothing to which he thinks the censor is likely to object. He becomes his own censor; and it is idle for him to pretend that he does not wear chains because he himself helps to adjust them. Every form of slavery and of human degradation has always had a number of supporters amongst those who suffered from it.

The only rule on which to work, if the B.B.C. is not to continue its present policy of "doping" the public, is: (1) to see that speakers representing various aspects of every subject are invited to speak. (2) To leave it to the speakers sense of responsibility and self-respect to put his own case as he thinks best. Public men and women who are in the habit of addressing audiences are not likely to need instruction in the art of putting their case. If this policy is not followed, and until it is followed, all publicists who have a proper sense of their own dignity, and who are not in the market—whether the purchase price be cash or publicity, should decline to use the microphone. This would enable the public to detect the real men and women from the tame specimens who humbly submit their papers for the approval, and revision, of Sir John Reith's committee of nonentities. We know this is a drastic proposal, but we have already seen the products of our continuous agitation, and expect still further advances before we finish.

Any reason is good enough for reactionaries. Lord Allen of Hurtwood, a devoted follower of Ramsay MacDonald, tried to freeze the blood of the House of Lords by advancing as one of the reasons for his support of the Sedition Bill, that he had become aware of a plot that had been formed to seize the B.B.C. headquarters. We would never doubt the word of a member of the House of Lords, but we note the connexion between the one man discovery of this plot and the passing of the Sedition Bill. Because Lord Allen has heard of a plot to capture the B.B.C., he believes a Bill ought to pass which will prevent anyone saying to soldiers and sailors

what they may freely say to other people. And we wonder when some of the opponents of the Bill will have the courage to demand that soldiers and sailors shall be treated as grown-up men instead of irresponsible infants?

One day public officials may develop sufficient sense of justice, to say nothing of a display of common sense, to recognize that when elected they represent the whole of the community, and not merely a section. Nonconformist papers are the greatest sinners in this respect, and so exhibit the representatives of what used to be opposition to a State religion, as most anxious to put religious prejudice in front of civic duties. The *Methodist Recorder* publishes the facts that Mayors or Lord Mayors are Methodists, and records such important items that the chief love of the Lord Mayor of Sheffield is the Methodist Sunday School, while the Methodist Mayor of Swindon attributes his success to "the recognition of public worship as a habit of life." The pity of it is that those members of Councils who are not Christians seldom have moral courage enough to protest against this habit of using a position which has nothing to do with religion to advertise religious beliefs. There is no civic position in the country that has any necessary connexion with religion—none save that of the King. His religion is selected for him, and he swears to defend it. But with this exception, all other posts are non-religious, although as with the marriage ceremony, religious ceremonies may accompany them.

We have many times called attention to the quality of Missionary statistics, and the Rev. Albert Brockbank casts some light on the matter. Mr. Brockbank, who has been for many years in India, says there are "many thousands of secret disciples" in that country. That does really explain much. Occult information, or enlightenment, is not subject to ordinary checks, and one can imagine the spiritual satisfaction in knowing that these thousands of secret disciples exist. With their aid the total number of converts can always be raised to quite a satisfactory number.

Father Gardner Day, a young American priest, at the General Convention of the American Church, attacked the Russian Orthodox Church by declaring that "it was pagan and reactionary, and run by a lot of ignorant and dirty priests." This upset religious people in America generally, so Dr. Matthews, the Bishop of New Jersey, made a formal apology to Dr. Bulgakoff, of the Eastern Churches, and referred "to our sorely afflicted brethren in Russia." Whereupon, Dr. Bulgakoff claimed that Fr. Day, who had only been two months in Russia, thought he knew everything about the country—though it would take a long time to study the history of the Russian Church alone. Dr. Bulgakoff added that his Church was divided on the question of Socialism, but that its quarrel with those in control over Russia now was "not over disagreements in the social field or for social reasons, but over religion itself." The question, therefore, was not, for Fr. Day, whether Russian priests were ignorant or dirty, but whether religion itself was of any value; and to this he supplied no answer. He merely drew a red herring across the trail.

What a delightful time theologians have had in proving the existence of God! In Prof. A. E. Taylor's latest book, *Philosophic Studies*, we find that "Anselm's *a priori* argument for the existence of God, an argument specially congenial to theologians for its simplicity and apparent finality was rejected by St. Thomas Aquinas and Kant." But how many Christians could expound either the *a priori* or the *a posteriori* proofs for God? In any case Dr. Temple, the Archbishop of York, has just written what one pious reviewer calls "a superb defence of religion" in *Theism—Nature, Man and God*. In it we find that Dr. Temple is "like Lenin and Marx, a dialectical realist." He strongly supports "dialectics," because "it enables a philosopher to give value and faith as real a place in his description of the universe

as that occupied by the *data* of physics and chemistry." So by using the dialectic method of Marx and Lenin, he arrives, unlike them, at a "creative mind." And therefore by going to the arguments of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jesus, Paul, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant, Marx, Lenin and Temple, we arrive at the real proofs for the existence of God at last.

That Roman Catholic Society, The League of National Life, had a field-day the other week. A fine array of speakers was provided, all violently antagonistic to Birth Control, and they made passionate appeals to the audience to destroy the foul thing. Sterilization and abortion were also attacked, and the League emphasized the "grave moral" situation arising from the indiscriminate use of artificial contraceptives, especially by unmarried persons. Mr. Hilaire Belloc particularly was incensed, especially by the fact that sin was now ignored; and he added that those who—like himself possibly—will not accept the new teaching, may have to face martyrdom. Mr. Belloc need have no fear. Contraceptives will not be forced on everybody. The people who want large families, and are prepared to keep them, can go on producing. And the people who don't, will do their best to keep the numbers down—whatever Catholics may say. Birth-Control has come to stay; and abortion and sterilization by specialists are on their way to legality. It is quite impossible to sweep a rising tide back with a theological broom, and sensible people want sensible reforms unhampered by religion.

Dr. W. B. Selbie asks, "Is God a jealous God, exacting in His demands, always requiring His pound of flesh, and needing to be placated by sacrifices?" Well, that certainly is the idea of all the ages of Faith. Dr. Selbie of course has no such ideal of his own special God. Dr. Selbie's God is the product of long centuries of human progress. But so is the mind of man. It is only the Bibles and religious creeds which stand still. Dr. Selbie, for reasons best known to himself, wants to retain the hopelessly stereotyped Bible and Creeds while rejecting the crude barbarisms for which they stand. He thinks "God is waiting to be gracious." He has "waited" too long; man has passed the "God" stage; man needs the fellowship of man, not the "grace" of "God."

Hardly a week passes but one reads of the lynching of negroes in the United States of America. In the vast majority of cases the lynching is not confined to mere killing, but to obscene mutilation. And further, in many cases the negro is quite innocent. A woman has only to point to an unlucky black man, and the infuriated crowd becomes a mass of wild beasts; and it makes no difference if the woman admits afterwards she was a liar. So long as the victim is black, what does it matter? We are making a note of this, particularly because sometimes it is forgotten that the lynching is done by genuine Protestants as a rule, living in the South where fundamentalism is at its highest and best. Any of these Southern gentlemen would lynch a thousand "niggers" rather than admit the truth of Evolution, or that the Bible was not inspired to the last full-stop by God. We wish Christians would answer two questions: "What has Christianity done to civilize these lynchers? And is it true that in Christ all are one where blacks and whites are concerned?"

The Bishop of Blackburn, in launching a scheme for a new Cathedral in that town, pointed out "that though times were hard in Lancashire, the need for a Cathedral could no longer go unsatisfied," and he added that some of our most glorious Cathedrals were built in exceptionally hard times. We are quite in agreement. No matter how the poor live or how great is their need, money can always be diverted from them to building some new church. Already £22,782 had been collected for this one, and it was considered quite easy to collect the rest—£180,000—in five years. What matters poverty in Blackburn so long as the town gets a Cathedral? Happy town!

The Archbishop of Canterbury declared the other day:—

May I be forgiven if I say that the Church has very little use for the blameless young men with a taste for ceremonial and an interest in ecclesiastical affairs, who would like to be priests—blameless blanks without vitality or capacity for leadership?

Whether the Church had or had not little use for "blameless blanks," that is what it got, and the Archbishop could not deny it. Out of the 40,000 or so clergymen in this country, it would be safe to say that 39,000 were "blameless blanks"—with the emphasis on the "blanks."

The Rev. Dr. James Reid says that "God is seeking us more than we are seeking him." Well, what prevents his finding us? Our address, for example, is quite well known, and if he does not find us the failure is clearly not ours.

The Bishop of Chelmsford says that no one ever changes his religion. When people say they have done so it only means, thinks the Bishop, that they had no religion to change. Probably the Bishop had in his mind the Biblical passage which says, "Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle, yet will his folly not depart from him."

Now that Lloyd George has let out some of the truth about the war, some of our leading journalists are evidently beginning to feel uneasy about the part they played. We note that Mr. James Douglas and a few others are showing some anxiety, probably in fear that some of their readers may reflect upon their part in the "Great War." They now whine that they were not permitted to tell the truth on account of the censorship. But putting on one side the fact that the censorship was made easier by the part they took in doping the public, the main count against these men is not that they did not tell the truth they knew, but they went on circulating as many lies as they could get paid for. Their lying was thus both negative and positive. And when the next war comes we shall see them at their old game. They wrote, and write to order, and no man can do that without making his life a living lie.

The most terrible comment on the Cenotaph proceedings is that while the nation was paying professed homage to the million who died in the war to end war, work on machine guns was suspended for two minutes in Vickers' works at Crayford. The work is so urgent that Sunday labour had to be engaged. They should have been present in Whitehall in their working clothes and with models of the things they were making.

Fifty Years Ago

WE are glad to see that a Hackney jury has had the courage to bring in a verdict of death from vaccination. Of course the coroner and the public vaccinator first brow-beat and then pool-pooled the "twelve men and true." That almost goes without saying. Orthodox medicine (which is as bad as orthodox theology when it forces itself on us by law) says that children *do* not die of vaccination because it is an axiom that they *cannot*. Common-sense, however, judges by the evidence. If a child is perfectly healthy before vaccination, if it breaks out in putrid sores immediately after, and finally dies in convulsions, ordinary people don't want a medical oracle to tell them the cause of death. "Killed by vaccination," says the Hackney jury. Yet men are fined, have their homes broken up, and are sent to prison like common thieves for refusing to submit to this legalized Thuggery. Such a thing is a scandal to civilization. But happily the Democracy is waking up on this question. People are rebelling against the tyranny of "experts." They object to be forcibly dosed with nostrums they detest and made to pay for them into the bargain; and it makes no difference whether the priest or the doctor is the would-be despot.

The "Freethinker," November 16, 1884

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OWING to a breakdown in the composing room, we are obliged to hold over, until next week, several letters and notes on some matters we should like to have seen in this issue.

S. STALEW (N.Z.)—If Mr. Beverley Nichols said that he never knew a gardener who was an Atheist, he was making a quite unwarranted attack on the mentality of gardeners. But Mr. Nichols is a journalist, and with journalists the job is to say something. Accuracy is of small account, and we daresay that Mr. Nichol's acquaintance with gardeners is about as extensive as the acquaintance of the average journalist is with Dukes and Duchesses whom he appears to meet at every street corner.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Lane, 108.

T. SMITH.—Your sympathetic message will be handed on. But why spoil it with a silly commentary? Death need not be a bugbear because it brings grief with it.

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

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Sugar Plums

To-day (November 18) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. The meeting will commence at 6.30.

On Sunday next (November 25) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Stratford, at 7 o'clock, on "The Fight for Freedom of Thought." This is one of the most important questions that has to be faced to-day, and we hear that the meeting is likely to be a lively one. At any rate, we hope that Freethinkers will make the meeting as widely known as possible. Stratford Town Hall is easily reached by tram, train and omnibus from all parts of London. Trams and omnibuses stop outside the door. Admission is free.

Finchley provided a very successful first meeting on Sunday last for Mr. Cohen. The King Edward Hall is a very pleasant lecture hall, and there was a gratifyingly large number of strangers present. It was also pleasant to find a lecture which must have cut across many prejudices and set beliefs. There were a number of questions after the meeting, and these might have continued for a longer time, but the chairman, Mr. Cutner, had to bring the meeting to a close. The thanks of the Executive are due to the ladies and gentlemen who worked so hard to make the meeting a success. Finchley is well worth visiting again.

At Burnley on Sunday last there was a double programme, Mr. J. T. Brighton speaking in the afternoon on "Civilized Savagery," and Dr. Carmichael, in the

evening, with a lantern lecture on "Body and Soul." We are pleased to learn that both meetings were well attended, and that everyone passed a very enjoyable time. The band of Freethinkers in Burnley is a very hard-working body of men and women, and deserves all the support it can get, and all the success it can attain.

Freethinkers wishing to send Christmas greetings to friends are reminded that the Executive of the N.S.S. has prepared a tastefully designed greeting card, suitable for Freethinkers, with a telling quotation from Col. R. G. Ingersoll, as a resolution for the New Year. The card is a folding one, with a floral design on the outside, and the quotation inside, and may be had from the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, or the Offices of the N.S.S., 68 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4., in packets of seven for one shilling, post free, or single copies at twopence each.

Some pious people with the grandiose title of "Board of Catholic Action"—such a name should surely cause those in authority to sit up—are petitioning the Government to censor all films, and not allow the censorship to be in the hands of the present Board of Film Censors, which is far too lax for Catholic opinion. No doubt the Board of Catholic Action would be glad to nominate a few priests—and possibly nuns—for the job, or perhaps take it over themselves. We hope the Film Trade will not allow these impudent busybodies to interfere. Some of us object to all censorship, but if we have to submit to censorships at all, the present one is infinitely better than anything Roman Catholic. We hope Freethinkers will note how priestly influence and priestly action are gradually worming themselves into public affairs. Liberty and toleration are only used by Catholics for the advancement of their own priest-ridden creed. Eternal vigilance should always be our watchwords.

Many of the papers are pointing to the fact that the first distinct check to Hitler has been given by the Protestants of Germany. Quite so, and we should be the last to deny that men will die in defence of their religious beliefs, as men will die in defence of any belief. But it is going a little too rapidly to assume that this check has been given to Hitler because the revolting pastors were worshipping at the shrine of liberty. They are not. They profess themselves warm and sincere supporters of the tyranny of Hitlerism in all other directions. Their position is practical, "Give us the freedom we desire with regard to religion, and we will help to suppress liberty in all other directions." That is the kind of liberty that has always commended itself to the Christian conscience.

CHRISTIANITY AND WOMAN

The emancipation of women . . . owes nothing to organized Christianity. Its true origin is to be sought, as a Catholic historian, Father Augustine Rossler honestly says, in the French Revolution, a pre-dominantly anti-Christian movement. Its first advocates were the Atheistic Marquis de Condorcet and his disciples, the two furies, Theroigne de Mericourt and Olympe de Gouges. It was a pamphlet by the latter, *Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne* (1791), that inspired Mary Wollstonecraft's epoch-making *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Later on the agitation remained mainly in the hands of sceptics—for example, Robert Owen, John Stuart Mill, and George Jacob Holyoake. The Christian leaders everywhere and of all sects—though there were a few exceptions—were on the other side; they could not forget their master, Paul. Nor did they confine themselves to protesting against giving women the vote; they also opposed every other variety of enfranchisement, whether legal, social, or economic. The English bishops, roaring in the House of Lords, were solidly against every proposal to give their wives and daughters the free use of their own money, their own labour, and their own persons.—H. L. Mencken, "Treatise on Right and Wrong," p. 41.

The Failure of Religion

(Continued from page 716)

BEFORE leaving the subject of morality, one further aspect ought to be mentioned. It is that every step forward in the understanding of moral life brings out more clearly the intimate relation between what we know and what we ought to do, between science and morality. A moral code implanted on us from above depends upon nothing but the arbitrary will of the law-giver. What he says is final, and nothing that we know should have the power to interfere with it. But viewing morals according to the theory of naturalism, moral evolution has a close bearing upon scientific knowledge. New discoveries may change our ideas of morals; not that our basic moral feelings, our capacity, if I may use this term, for action of a moral type, in any way changes; but a more enlightened view of the social or individual conditions which that action has hitherto been designed to meet may show us that the same basic feelings would be more profitably expressed through other avenues of conduct. Time forbids me to dwell on this extensive aspect of the subject, but I commend to your interest, in this connexion, the morality of sex, the moral problems involved in patriotism and in war, and the whole subject of criminal law. Little thought will be required to convince us of the inevitable link between science and morality, between understanding and feeling, and to show us how, at the stage of scientific culture, Man's moral progress takes on an added impetus through the power of conscious evolution. An institution, therefore, not based on scientific knowledge, lacks an adequate foundation for moral instruction. It may act as a moral instructor, but only at second-hand; for its inspiration must be drawn from outside, its footsteps guided by scientifically informed persons.

But even if we take the view that religion does in fact fail on these two counts, there remains a third aspect of it to be dealt with, which I have left to the last because it seems to me the most important.

Assuming that neither science nor morality binds religion to life, we are still left with a link at once primitive and powerful; powerful, in fact, precisely because it is so primitive. This link consists in superstition. Superstition is widely spoken of in the Church as if it only existed in certain forms of religion. To the intelligent Freethinker the meaning of superstition is plain. It implies belief in the supernatural as against belief only in the natural, and the particular characters attributed to the supernatural do not seem to him germane to the issue. He sees only bad classification, for instance, in saying that belief in many gods is superstitious, but that a reduction of the number to one remedies the fault; that belief in devils is to be condemned as ignorant, though we may accept angels without loss of intellectual dignity; that we may not pray to God to change the weather without being stigmatized as having a medieval outlook, but that it will be quite respectable for us to ask his assistance in bringing a Parliamentary debate or a Church Congress to a wise decision. To the Freethinker there is no essential distinction between any of these courses of action. All alike imply a divine providence capable of intervening in human affairs, and all, therefore, imply superstition in the only sense in which there appears to be any sense in it, namely, that of belief in the supernatural. In primitive religion the gods were of importance primarily because of their power to affect the course of human life, and all through the ages this has remained the chief link binding them to Man's interest. But for this the Church as an intermediary could never have survived, and to this day she thrives only in propor-

tion as she stresses this, her most important function.

But the embarrassing thing about it, as far as the Church is concerned, is that the appeal to superstition owes its great popularity to the fact that ignorance is more widely diffused than knowledge. Gibbon has pointed out how, in its earlier days, Christianity was essentially a religion for the lower intellectual orders, and we may say without exaggeration that its power to attract the intelligentsia increases only in proportion as it sheds its central doctrines. Fundamentalism is the poorest testimonial to mental capacity, and the existence of first-class brains in the Roman Church is to be satisfactorily explained by the fact that she carries to a fine art the discipline of the growing mind. The Roman Church, easily the ablest psychologist in Christendom, prepares the ground so well in her schools that even the most brilliant minds find it difficult to break from their fetters. There can be no two opinions as to how Roman Catholicism would fare if presented for the first time to adults who had received a modern education. This child tuition, in all denominations, is one of the chief indictments which the Freethinker has to level at the Church. He interprets it to mean that she dare not wait, cannot trust religion to run the gauntlet of a free mind in the full vigour of maturity.

It has already been stated that the essential doctrines of religion are those relating to the supernatural, and that these are not distinguishable from superstitions. It is, of course, possible to believe in the supernatural in such a vague way as to deceive oneself into thinking that the belief is not superstitious but philosophic. Bishop David was, I fancy, involved in some such mental process when he said recently that we should not try to define the indefinable; else we should harm religion. Put into brutally plain language, this meant that we might continue to believe a thing by taking good care never to ask ourselves what it was we believed. But that sort of self-deception cannot go on for long. Sooner or later a man must face up to his beliefs and either honour or disown them; and it is when we come to face up to Christian doctrine that we begin to see its primitive and obsolete character. The fall of Man, the coming of the virgin-born saviour God, his period of preaching and demonstrating through miracles, his sacrificial end, the atonement and salvation through his blood, all form part of a very old story, now familiar to every religious anthropologist. Where once these doctrines were attacked by science for their intrinsic improbability, they are now explained away by the discovery of their origins. Far from being revealed truths they are not even unique in the world. Their roots have been dug up by the labours of such as Sir James Frazer, and are seen to be bedded in the soil of primitive ignorance. Anyone who, reading their history and seeing the company they have kept in the past can yet believe in them is impervious to the force of inference. Moreover, it is not the least important part of the Freethought case that these anthropological researches strike at more than individual creeds and doctrines; they uproot the foundations of religion as such, of all times and places.

This, then, constitutes the destructive part of my thesis. In brief, and put with the utmost candour, it amounts to saying that, according to modern standards of thought, Christianity is a defunct cosmology, an effete morality and an exploded superstition, and that this indictment is substantially true of all religions. Thus it can be said that religion has dropped out of the mainstream of life, more especially in advanced-thinking strata of society. What, therefore remains for the Churches to do? That question will occupy the rest of the discussion. MEDICUS.

(To be concluded.)

The Question of Secular Education

THE other evening I listened to a debate on the above subject, and I could not help wondering at the extraordinary slow progress such a vital reform had made in this country. Here was a solution of all religious difficulties in our State-aided schools, absolutely fair to all sections of the public; yet it was more or less contemptuously rejected by them. And I could not help asking myself why, as I listened to the eloquent lady championing the cause of religion.

For her and for the authorities she quoted, there could be no education without religious instruction. It was not a question of any particular kind of religion. People might disagree about this—but the basic principle was the belief in God; and if some preferred the worship to be in this form and others in that, it really did not matter. The thing was instruction in religion. Simple Bible teaching brought this instruction down to simple terms, there was no need of dogma, nothing in the way of a particular ritual, only belief in God and the truth of the Bible; and on these foundations the rest would inevitably follow.

What struck me listening to the arguments put forward by the religious champion was that here was someone for whom our whole Freethought campaign had utterly failed. Here was a teacher in our State-aided schools, who was obliged to have some qualifications for the post, who had had to study history and science in some degree, yet who believed the "simple" Bible story as if it had never received any criticism whatever. Leave out our own attacks on the authenticity and credibility of the Bible for a moment—what about those of eminent Christians themselves? Modern Churchmen have made mincemeat of the Old Testament. The Higher Criticism has subjected its books to the most drastic analysis, and has relegated many of its stories to the realm of myth and legend. No one surely could go through a library list, or read a literary paper like the *Times Literary Supplement*, without being aware of the almost ceaseless stream of works dealing with religion in general, and the Bible in particular, pouring from the press. Do these teachers of our young ever read them? Are they aware of such a thing as Biblical criticism? Do they actually deceive themselves, and believe that the criticism has proved the inspiration of the Bible, the truth of every story contained in it, including the purely anthropomorphic conception of God as a Person with a wife, a mother and a Son?

I am not dealing with members of the Salvation Army, whose capacity for sheer credulity in religious matters is only equalled by Roman Catholic converts. I am dealing with the instructors of our youth, with people who are supposed to learn and know something of science and history and philosophy; and I find that many of them know literally nothing of these things and seem to be, on the question of religion, exactly where their forerunners were, nearly one hundred years ago. Why is this? Why has the Freethought campaign hardly touched them?

It would be absurd to say that our modern religious teachers know much, or anything at all for that matter, about the *real* Christian attitude towards education. It was Tertullian who said that "after Jesus Christ all curiosity, after the Gospel all inquiry, are unnecessary"; but there will not be many who know that to the early Christians certainly and to many later ones, the Bible and the Revelation of God in Christ were supposed to be all the education necessary in this world. After all, this world was only a

sort of preparatory school for the next; the life of man was comparatively short, and Jesus was surely coming a second time, with or without the trump of the Lord. Of what use was knowledge outside the saving power of Christ? Philosophy, science, history, were vain things beside the Grace of the Lord.

The champions of religion in our schools are now content with a small portion of the day set aside for religious instruction. They are forced to concede that in a work-a-day world secular instruction is necessary. The ability to read and write, to know something about history and geography, to be able to understand what is meant by a Leyden jar or a prism are part of an elementary education without which a modern boy or girl would be almost helpless in the search for work. Our religious teachers dare not insist with Lactantius that any knowledge, not found in the Bible is ridiculous; with Augustine, who rejected not only pagan writing, but all scientific knowledge, that "The unlearned take possession of heaven." Perhaps they have never read a line of Lactantius or St. Augustine or even of Gregory the Great who, hearing that one of his bishops had opened a school, wrote to him that "I hear you have committed the unspeakable crime of teaching profane letters." Real Christianity (or, if preferred, true religion) opposed secular teaching so well that by the thirteenth century—the Golden Age of Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton, as well as the great age of Scholasticism—hardly one monk in one of the largest monasteries in Gaul, could read or write. One can imagine the dense ignorance of the mass of the people all over Europe in such an age.

Things do not seem to have been much better up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the influence of Freethought and the attacks on "revealed" religion by famous Deists weakened, to some extent, Christian influence in schools. Some kind of secular education was found to be necessary after all for the poor, but it was supervised by Christians who were the teachers as well as the governors of most schools. Those great reformers, Bentham, Owen, Place and others did their utmost to promote education among the masses, but organized religion looked upon their interference with horror. When in 1870, the great Education Act was passed, it was attacked by reformers because religious instruction was still retained. It was not the business of the State to teach religion, and on that principle, I, for one, take my stand. That Act, had religious instruction been left out, would have been almost ideal. But it was not, and ever since, the squabbles between Catholics, Roman and Anglican, who want more than simple Bible teaching, and the Nonconformists, who want nothing better, have become more fierce. The Catholics want their own schools to be paid for by the State wherein they can teach children who are to be our future citizens their own worn-out dogmas, with the Secular part of the teaching completely dominated and tainted by their religious beliefs. The Nonconformists are, of course, content, while Jews and other believers or non-believers can, if they wish, take advantage of exemption from religious instruction. The mass of teachers are, however, still dominated by religious belief more or less strongly. Even those who are not believers are afraid of admitting the fact in case it affects their advancement; and the great majority of parents seem to be quite apathetic on the matter.

Thus religion has retained its hold on the schools and a tenacious hold it is. But what astonishes me is to find so many teachers entirely in favour of religious instruction. Their belief is mostly sheer fundamentalism. They teach the story of Adam and Eve, of the Flood, of Elijah and the fiery chariot, of

Jesus walking on water, or being carried about by a Devil, as literal history. The *Encyclopedia Biblica* might never have been compiled as far as they are concerned. They only know of Freethought and Atheism as something to be connoted with drunkenness and blackguardism generally. Moral and ethical culture are impossible without the shining examples given in the Bible. They teach the bloody massacres of Moses, Joshua and David without turning a hair.

There is nothing immoral whatever in the story of Abraham offering up Isaac, with the boy's consent, of course. The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are genuine historical events against all of which these teachers seem never to have read a word. It is in the Bible and that is enough.

This was undoubtedly the attitude of the lady who defended religion so eloquently in the debate to which I have referred. She was cultured and witty, but she was thoroughly religious and proud of being able to say a few words in defence of the faith that was within her. She was a typical example of many teachers all over the country, in whose hands is given the instruction of our young. What are *we* doing about it? Why has our campaign so far failed? Why is it that these people are absolutely unfamiliar with our case for secular education, with our case that Bible ethics and morals are not merely not good enough for the modern generation, but are even harmful?

I need hardly say that Catholics, both Anglo and Roman, have never ceased their campaign for State-aid for their schools. Their journals—like the *Church Times* and the *Universe*—are full of complaints about the way in which the Government is treating them. One eminent Roman Catholic Bishop, last week, wrote very strongly on the matter. He warned the Parliamentary candidate at North Lambeth that unless the Government helped voluntary schools with money he "could not recommend Catholics to vote for the Conservative Party (that is, the National Labour candidate)." Why should the Government, he asks, "find money for farming, shipping and probably for the fishing industry, and not a penny for Catholic Schools?"

I once pointed out, in a local newspaper, that if State money was given to Catholics to teach their religion, Jews, Christian Scientists, Mahommedans, Buddhists, Communists and many other sects and peoples could demand the same right. The priest who answered me said he would not care who else demanded State-aid so long as Catholics received it. The other people could do what they liked, that was their affair, but it was the business of the Holy Church to get money to teach the one true religion on earth. And if the other people were denied it while the Catholics did receive help, it was because they had fought for their rights—as well as for justice.

We know that money spent on religious teaching is sheer waste. The existence of so many sects shows the uncertainty prevailing as to which is God's own religion. Whether parents have the right to teach their own particular beliefs or superstitions to their children is another matter impossible to be gone into here. But as society is at present constituted that right cannot be contested; and, therefore, they should teach their religion themselves or pay other teachers to do it for them. All State-aided schools should be secular. Religion should be rigorously left out. "Simple Bible teaching," if it means teaching it as ancient history, should be rigorously excluded. The children have enough to learn without being taught superstitions as facts.

This is part of the task of Freethought. To talk about it is not enough. Vigorous action is needed. We have to educate not only Parliamentary candidates, but teachers. Our propaganda must reach both, and victory should be our aim and reward.

H. CUTNER.

Faith and Works

IN a world of change, it may with confidence be said that humanistic morality has outstripped religion—which like its author is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Theological casuists, age after age, are put to the task of "adapting" religious belief to new conditions. This involves the jettisoning of several basic articles of doctrine—a process which has now gone so far as to rob the supernatural of reality and definiteness—to introduce a perilous freedom in the profession of the faith—and to give to every individual believer (in the Protestant Churches at any rate) the right to form his or her own conception of the supernatural, without regard to the main tenets upon which religion was originally founded.

Religion is now happening upon its lean years. It had its fat times when it wielded a vengeful authority over witches and heretics; when its representation of the place of eternal punishment was accepted by the mass of the people without question; and when by the everywhere-penetrating methods of inquisition and denunciation it brought sceptics to the stake. Those good old fat days are gone. Not but what there are many who would like to see a restoration of the authoritarian vindictiveness of ecclesiasticism in practice. But people generally have acquired a greater humanity by the discoveries and teachings of humanists, and have also acquired the courage to resist and chase away the bogeys of their dreams. Natural causes have been found for earthquakes, thunderstorms and rainbows; for disease and pain and fear. The ignorance that enabled ecclesiasticism to wax fat and kick is being dispelled, and we are now on a fair way to establish a system of education without any basis of superstition. Secular propaganda and secular reformers have done much; but there is much yet to be done. The optimist may suppose we are at our meridian, but we are still only at the cock-crowing and the morning star.

Faith remains stationary. Works go on. In the evolutionary process stagnation can only mean death. Faith offered to man the specious promise of more abundant life; but its prophecies have been falsified. For more abundant life we need more abundant science, freed from all the atrophying influences of religious belief. Several Christian modernists are at great pains to disclaim dogma and belief in the virgin birth, miracles and the resurrection of the body. But they do adhere to and preach a residuum of faith in the supernatural, in which apparently one may adopt his own fancy of what a future life may be like so long as he confesses that he believes in a God or a First Cause, or a mind behind the Universe or an unknowable somebody who has the direction of the destinies of mankind in his hands—a being of the masculine gender, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Nevertheless, with the advance of woman *the sex* of the Divine Creator and Controller of the Universe may not for ever remain unchallenged. We may possibly find an Almighty Goddess substituted for an Almighty God—a Queen of Queens and a Lady of Ladies! Up to comparatively recent times we have found an unquestioning acceptance of patriarchal rule. But with inevitable changes in the future, we may find it replaced by the matriarchal.

Enthusiasm for the Faith may manifest itself in different forms. Some of these bring into sharp contrast religious and humanistic morality. A report recently appeared in the Press of a boy in Newcastle brought before a Juvenile Court on a charge of stealing 10s. It came out that this boy had exceedingly strong religious predilections, which had led to his stealing from various churches a number of ecclesiastical stage properties and accessories, including vestments, used by him to fit up his room at home as a chapel, in which he conducted worship regularly. It was stated that the boy was untruthful and deceitful, and his offence being proved, the Bench ordered him to be sent to a Training School. No doubt the boy will be enabled to continue his religious practices at the Training School; but for his own sake and for that of the community, it is to be hoped that the kinks in his intellectual make-up will be smoothed out by some common sense instruction as to the observance of the rule of *meum* and *tuum*.

The present writer was acquainted with a solicitor who set up practice in a provincial town in which with the view of cultivating the acquaintance of a more extended social circle, he became a Church office-bearer, and a singer in the Church Choir. He was regular in his attendance at the services, and valued for his interest and share in Church work. In the course of an intimate talk one evening over a pipe the subject of religious belief was raised; and the solicitor frankly declared that he himself had no religious belief at all and would never have bothered himself with any damned Church connexion if he did not believe that he was going to benefit professionally thereby.

Similar instances could be multiplied indefinitely. But one other interesting case also falling within the writer's cognisance may be cited. This was the case of a young man who was extremely religious—strictly punctual in private devotions—and sometimes speaking or praying in public. His aunt, with whom he lived, was mistress of a rural post office. At a tea table he was once heard to boast with repeated chuckles how, when delivering telegrams at a considerable distance from the office, he was often able to extract from the addressees of the telegrams double the amount of the authorized delivery fee by misleading statements as to the distance. Yet that youth was virtually a fundamentalist in his faith. His fervour in prayer was extreme. He was convinced in his belief in a "material" Hell, though he was charitable enough to remark that he was not prepared to denounce as unchristian a believer in Christ who was unable to swallow the actual Lake of Fire which was part of his own creed. It was possible, he said, that the eternal retribution to be meted out to unbelievers might consist of merely physical pain (of some kind) and mental and moral torment.

Where do we find in the Christian Bible or in Christian teaching anywhere, useful help in advancing morality in the individual or in preserving the integration of society? Nowhere. On the contrary, the Christian Faith is, on this matter, a darkener of counsel, and an obstruction to progress as well as being an opponent of justice. And for crude and in-artistic records of revolting pornography, the as yet unexpurgated Christian Bible is hard to beat. If a person wished to acquire an unexpurgated copy of, say, *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, he or she would require to pay several guineas for it; but he or she can procure for a few pence an unexpurgated copy of the so-called "Holy" Bible, containing detailed stories about Noah after the Deluge; Lot and his daughters, and Onan.

Even at its best, the Christians' collection of Sacred Books does not furnish mankind with moral instruction that is not of a most rudimentary kind. This remark applies to the New Testament as well as to the Old. The Humanism of the twentieth century is far in advance of the "morals" suggested by such parables as "The Prodigal Son," and "Lazarus and Dives." The modern psychologist can only regard such distorted representations of ethics, economics and law as the products of illiteracy and ignorance.

It is wholly by secular guides and influences that man is equipped and supported in his further advance to greater heights. *Faith* has been tried over long periods of time and been found wanting. We must now rely upon the *works* of Humanists.

IGNOTUS.

Correspondence

CREDULITY AND SPIRITUALISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In spite of the fact that Mr. Denis P. S. Conan Doyle wishes to close this "discussion," I felt his last letter requires an answer. I am not, however, going to follow him in his crude mixture of vituperation and hysteria. The question is not, what are my "qualifications"? For even if I ventured to assert that I have put something like 25 years to a study of the occult in general, and superstitions like Spiritualism in particular, Mr. Doyle would only get more angry. Nor do I care two hoots what are Mr. Doyle's "qualifications" for questioning me. The point at issue is whether Sir A. Conan Doyle displayed gross credulity in believing that D. D. Home "levitated" himself more than a hundred times. Mr. Doyle says "two army officers and two peers" actually witnessed "the better known instances." This is sheer nonsense, as "the better known instances" were *not* witnessed by "two army officers and two peers." Not that this matters very much, as the *one* instance "witnessed" by Viscount Adare and his two friends has been questioned ever since, and has only convinced Spiritualists. But Sir A. Conan Doyle has declared that Houdini's "physical" illusions could only have been done because Houdini was a materializing medium; and he has also given to an astonished world his invincible belief in fairies as not only actually existing, but also as easily photographed! Credulity surely could go little further than these two instances.

Mr. Doyle is angry also because I ask certain questions in astrology, "none of which," I could answer—when surely the answer was so clearly implied in my article that even Mr. Doyle knows it quite well. And he claims that my "scepticism" is exactly like that of the religious and intolerant fools who refused to look into the telescope of Galileo. I, on the contrary, am prepared to enquire into anything, and my scepticism only comes in when ridiculous claims are made for which there is no evidence—as in Spiritualism. Mr. Doyle can rest assured that I am prepared to defend my views on the platform or in the *Spiritualist* press. The pages of the *Freethinker* can be better utilized in the propagation of Freethought.

H. CUTNER.

TRUTH AND THE WAR

SIR,—We have a prominent supporter of little Bethel, filling the Sunday papers, and proudly at that, with the statement that he did not tell the grim truth to the British public during the war.

The antithesis to the truth is lying. I do not suppose that this politician subscribes to the *Freethinker*, but will the Rev. Wynn, or some Christian who does, explain the "design" of this phenomenon.

W. L. ENGLISH, M.B.

Obituary

GEORGE STEWART

ON Wednesday, November 7, the remains of George Stewart were cremated at Hendon Park Crematorium. The Stewart family was well known in connexion with the old Wood Green Branch of the N.S.S. The father and brother were active workers, and George regularly attended the meetings at Wood Green and Regents Park. As a Post Office official he was held in the highest esteem by colleagues of all ranks, and a glowing tribute to his character was paid at the crematorium by one representing those with whom he had worked and associated. Death took place on November 2, at 57 years of age. A large number of relatives and friends assembled to the last rite, and a Secular address was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

A. R. ORAGE

ON Friday, November 9, the remains of the late A. R. Orage were laid to rest in the churchyard of Hampstead Parish Church. He had a universal reputation in the world of letters, and his editorship of *The New Age*, was a work of love and sincerity. Many writers are in his debt, for he gave advice freely, with the art of a master. In *The New English Weekly*, which he edited later, he concentrated chiefly on "Social Credit," and he, if anyone did, died in harness, and in the cause which he had at heart. To know him was a liberal education, and he will be missed at a time when wisdom is rare and badly needed. He wrote, "The gnosis of man is necessary to the gnosis of God, and God can well look after Himself and bide our time. . . . Religion without humanity is more dangerous than humanity without religion." Over a period of twenty years the present writer found him always cheerful and helpful, and his criticism was the kind that came from a penetrating mind and a disinterestedness that gave it a value. Sympathy is extended to his widow and his two children, and although he has passed on, his life had that quality and influence which will endure for many years to come. As a writer, his aim was to write for the future.—C.G.

MAETERLINCK'S CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CONSIDER the ants. They set out from the *Poncinac*, and they have arrived at the stage in which we find them. How far will they go? Are they at their apogee, or already in their decline. . . . Have they a different future before them? For what are they waiting? Millions of years have passed and have counted for nothing. But what, then, does count for anything? Have they reached their goal, and what is this goal? If the earth, nature, the universe have no goal that we can perceive, why should they have one, and why should we? To be born, to live, to die, and to begin all over again until all things have disappeared; is not this enough? Someone opens his eyes in the night, sees a corner of the earth, an expanse of sea, a few stars, a human face, and closes them again for ever. What cause has he for complaint? And is not this that happens to us? Even though it all lasted but a second, was it not better to have been? What purpose have they served? What purpose do you think we ourselves shall have served when we have reached the summit of the curve? None, save that we shall have permitted a few physical phenomena, which we call spiritual when they occur in our brain, to repeat themselves indefinitely, and to form themselves, at most, into a few different combinations, none of which will lead to anything that has not already been.

Maurice Maeterlinck "The Life of the Ant," p. 178.

To say that the gods come down and incarnate themselves, as they do in India, would avail but to lull human activity to sleep.—Michelet.

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.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12.0, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden—"Character."

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.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Debate. *Affir.*: Mr. F. Hughes (Socialist Christian League). *Neg.*: Mr. L. Ebury (National Secular Society)—"That Socialism is Applied Christianity."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"The Mystery of Cruelty."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, November 19, Mr. Edward Gee—"Freethought in some Mediterranean Lands."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, E. C. Saphin—"God."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

IRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Theatre, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, G. Garrett (Liverpool)—"Religion and the Drama."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street): Blackburn): 3.0 and 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton. Discussion classes are held every Thursday evening at 7.30.

BRADFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street): 7.0, Mr. M. Furguson—"Religion versus Socialism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. J. Glen, Divinity Hall, Edinburgh—"The Teaching of Jesus."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): Chapman Cohen—"The Fight for Freedom of Thought."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, Dr. C. H. Ross Carmichael (Liverpool)—"Doctor and Witch-doctor."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Club Hall, Newton Street): 7.0, Tuesday, November 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 7.30, Mr. Allan Flanders—"The Fear of Hell."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0—A Woman.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Hall, Haygate): 7.15, Friday, November 16, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON I.L.P. Hall, Yarm Lane): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street, Sunderland): 7.0, Mr. B. O'Connell—"Do We Need Religion?"

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of enquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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