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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Dean Inge and Jesus Christ—The Editor</i> - - -	817
<i>The Bleak Age—W. Mann</i> - - -	819
<i>Sneezing Superstitions—J. M. Wheeler</i> - - -	820
<i>My Brother's Keeper—Ignotus</i> - - -	821
<i>Any Old Bones—H. Culner</i> - - -	826
<i>Holy Water—Hadad</i> - - -	827
<i>Honour is Satisfied—T.H.E.</i> - - -	828
<i>Secularism and Social Credit—H. C. Munro</i> - - -	829

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

Views and Opinions

Dean Inge and Jesus Christ

I HAVE always marvelled at the way in which avowed followers of Jesus Christ impeach either his intelligence or his honesty. His very orthodox followers believe he was God himself. The less orthodox fall short of this, but hold that he was at least representative of God, and that he was the world's greatest teacher. And both hold that his mission on earth was to deliver a message, and that this message was of supreme importance to mankind. To make the confusion greater, this God-man or man-God had his message written down so that what he had to say should be on record for ever and ever. Yet the one thing about which his followers have been constantly quarrelling is just what was meant by the teachings of this wonder of the world.

It will be admitted that the first duty of a teacher is to make himself understood in such a way that there shall be no mistake about his teaching. A teacher in any school who taught the earth was round in such a way that half of his pupils believed it to be flat, and the rest had divided opinions, would find himself out of work in a very little time. He might be excused if occasionally his pupils misunderstood him. On a different level it is quite common for a man who sets out to reform the world being misunderstood, but still the rule holds good. A good teacher, whether of children or of adults must have the capacity for making himself understood. But when a God sets out to deliver a message to mankind, what he says should be absolutely free from ambiguity. He stands outside the category of those who make blunders. Yet, if we are to listen to the followers of Jesus, the one thing he could not do was to make himself understood. Christians have always claimed that their Master was the greatest figure in the world. All they succeed in doing is to prove that he is the world's worst teacher.

* * *

Jesus and ME

In the *Sunday Chronicle* for December 9, Dean Inge tries to explain to the world, "What Jesus Really

Taught," and, as usual, what he says may be summed up by saying that what Jesus really taught is what he would have taught if he had had the benefit of being coached by Dean Inge. It is certain that the Jesus that Dean Inge follows, and the follower that Jesus has in Dean Inge are in cordial agreement. But whether Jesus has learned from Dean Inge, or Dean Inge has learned from Jesus is a matter on which one may have doubts. The identity of outlook of both these great men is remarkable.

In this respect Dean Inge does not differ materially from other followers of Jesus. For example. Mr. George Lansbury is a very sincere believer in Jesus Christ. But Mr. Lansbury is a very convinced Socialist, and he firmly believes that Jesus was, at least in spirit, a good Socialist, and, I imagine, he believes that if Jesus were here, he would be a member of the Labour Party. He also finds the basis of his Socialism in the teachings of Jesus. Dean Inge, on the other hand, is a very strong opponent of Socialism, and has very little faith in the working classes. So his Jesus has no sympathy whatever with the Socialist programme. Jesus, he would admit, had sympathy with the working classes, much as a decent sort of land-owner would sympathize with the misery of his people. But he says quite plainly that the notion of Jesus being a "proletarian" is "pure nonsense." In this I agree with him. I do not agree with those who say that Jesus Christ was a proletarian or an aristocrat, a Socialist or a Conservative. I do not agree with those who say he was a good man, or with those who say he was a bad one. I do not even agree with those who say he was just a man. I say he was never that. He was just a god and never anything but a God. Just one of the thousands of gods whose worship has driven the world half insane. Neither Mr. Lansbury nor Dean Inge will agree with me here. They insist he was a great teacher, and in trying to do so they make him out to be the world's most muddled teacher, because he was unable to make himself clear to those whom he came to teach. A trained journalist might not have said exactly what Jesus said, but he would at least have helped him to be clearly understood, when he did say it.

* * *

Jesus as an Aristocrat

Having disposed of Jesus the Proletarian as "pure nonsense," Dean Inge presents us with some nonsense of his own. Mr. Lansbury plumps for a working class Jesus. Dean Inge, who is by birth and training one of the "upper circles" as strongly insists that Jesus was, if not a member of the aristocracy, at least he was a member of the "respectable classes." From some unknown source Dean Inge has discovered that Jesus "belonged to a class of well-educated and independent yeomen—small tradesmen, and fishermen." It is probable that in the East a couple of thousand years ago there were few occupations lower

in the social scale than a small tradesman or a fisherman, and I am surprised that, having taken the plunge, the Dean did not picture the relatives of Jesus as owning a fleet of steam-tractors and a large number of chain stores. I can quite see that Jesus *must* have been an educated man, because I cannot conceive Dean Inge, ever calling himself one of His followers, unless he felt assured of this. All the same, ordinary folk will wonder where Dean Inge got this curious information about the education and social standing of Jesus. Certainly there is nothing in the New Testament to show that Jesus was better educated than the "proletariat" around him. He accepted *all* their superstitions, he was ignorant of things that were well understood in centres of Greek and Roman culture, and he shows no trace of the culture that was possessed by the educated classes of Athens, Rome, or Alexandria. Jesus as an educated member of the yecman class is, as they say on the films, "One up on me."

But what is the real teaching of Jesus? Dean Inge is not so clear as one would wish, but he is clear on one point. This is that whatever the teaching of Jesus was, he was right, *even if he were wrong*. Of course, he does not put it thus plainly. After a lifetime in the pulpit one could not expect it; but he does say that Jesus, like other prophets, spoke of "a day of the Lord, some "miraculous, tremendous intervention (of God) in the future." But this intervention did not happen, although Jesus said it was coming, and the early Church looked for it, and some Christians are still looking for it. Was Jesus wrong, then? Not a bit of it, says the Dean, "Since this expectation was a pure delusion it cannot have been the essential part of his messages." That is quite clear. This great teacher believed in something that was a pure delusion. But he was not wrong, because, although he foretold an event that never happened, it is clear that it formed no part of his message. By dismissing every case in which Jesus was clearly wrong, we manage to prove that he was always right. I have a suspicion that Dean Inge has been studying the sporting columns of one of the newspapers, for I think that is the method the prophets of these papers adopt. They count all their winners and forget all their losers. In this way they pile up a splendid record. The Dean has retired from the Church, but there is clearly one other occupation open to him.

The Dean does not stop here. He says that this prophecy, this "delusion" of Jesus, cannot be essential, because if it were the Church could never have survived the exposure. I have a feeling that Dean Inge must have written that passage with his tongue in his cheek. For no man knows better than he how many doctrines the Church has taught and afterwards surrendered. What has become of the literal inspiration of the Bible, special creation, witchcraft, a literal hell, and scores of other teachings? The Dean's principle may be applied here. When the Church can no longer teach a doctrine as true, it discovers that it is not essential. And it finds it is not true, when it no longer pays to preach it. Candidly, I do not find much difference between this and the Dean's attitude towards new knowledge. He sees the red light a little earlier than do some of his duller brethren. That is all.

* * *

Ringing the Changes

I now come to a more serious matter. The actual teaching of Jesus, says Dean Inge, is this:—

Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all *else that you need* shall be added unto you. . . . He abolishes all distinctions of class, race, sect and sex.

I have italicized four words, because these have been stuck into the text by the Dean. The text follows the exhortation to take no thought for the morrow, but to trust in God to feed and clothe you as he feeds and clothes the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Evidently the Dean would not like to back up the words as used, so he inserts, "all that you need" then if you do not get anything it is because you do not need it, and if you think otherwise you are setting yourself against God.

But the distortion is much worse in the case of the use of "righteousness." Dean Inge would have his readers believe that "Righteousness" as used in the Bible is "moral rectitude." But the Dean must know that in religion it means nothing of the kind. It means no more than, to use a common phrase "getting right with God," and it is no more peculiar to Christianity than it is to any other religion. In the religious sense a man is acting righteously, if a Jew, when he does not eat pork, if a Catholic, when he does not eat meat on Friday, if a Mohammedan, when he says his allotted prayers per day. It is a ritualistic qualification, and the man who is acting "righteously" may be pursuing a line of conduct that would qualify him for prison. It would be interesting if Dean Inge were to attempt to justify his use of the term "Righteousness," but I do not think he will—certainly not in these columns.

* * *

Just a Parson

The common line of the present-day parson is to argue that Jesus led the way in any reform that happens to be in favour. But Dean Inge does not claim that Jesus did anything but aim at purifying the inner man. Progress, he says must come from within. The way is, evidently, not to clear away the slums, but to change the heart of the slum-landlord; and we must end war by purifying the heart of the arms' racketeer. The idea that children born in brutalizing circumstances will probably grow up brutalized is a mistake. The belief that the individual and the environment are aspects of the same fact, and that conduct is a product of these two factors is absurd. The right line was laid down by Jesus, and he did this so plainly that in 1934 a dignity of the Church is puzzling out what that line was.

Dean Inge is as brilliant when he says that Jesus abolished problems of class, sect and sex and race by ignoring them. What a tip for Geneva! If the League wishes to end the idiotic racial problem, or the tribalism that is figuring all over the world as an enlightened nationalism, if they wish to end the conflict of sex, the proper method is that of Jesus, let them ignore it. What a message of hope for politicians!

But is it original with Jesus? I think not. There were Micawbers before Jesus, and there were Micawbers after him. The divine trust that something will turn up is the stand-by of all mentally lazy people, and if that is really the essence of the Christian method of reform, it does explain the ineffectiveness of the Christian Church.

Two things emerge from this article of the Dean's. First the very common teaching that whatever Jesus said or did must be right. If it does not sound right, if experience has even shown it to be wrong, then we must conclude that Jesus did not mean what he said, and we must revise his meaning from time to time, until we make it agree with what we know to be true. That is a very common method, but I think the Dean might have hit on something more original. There is not a gutter evangelist who has not preached the principle of interpretation adopted by Dean Inge,

and has been called some very hard names in consequence.

The other thing that emerges is quite as obvious. In some directions Dean Inge has the deserved reputation of an able man. But one cannot touch pitch and remain undefiled. One cannot uphold primitive superstitions in a civilized age and yet remain intellectually decent. And when Dean Inge tries to defend religion he shows that he, in that sphere, is just a parson, after all. A cruel thing to say, but a necessary one.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Bleak Age

THE well-known historians of the working-class movements of the nineteenth century, Mr. J. L. Hammond and his wife, Barbara Hammond, have just published another addition to their studies of the same century, under the title *The Bleak Age* (Longmans Green, 3s. 6d.). This is a reconstructed and revised part of a longer work *The Age of the Chartists*, published in 1930; the present work is written: "in order to put into compact form the chapters that seemed to have a special bearing on our modern problem." It serves another purpose also, and that is to contrast the condition of the mass of the workers under Pagan and Christian rule.

The secret of the power of ancient Rome "was its ability to satisfy and attach the races and classes that came under its rule." It was a willing servitude and men were always proud of being citizens of Rome. As the authors observe:—

We know from such books as those of Dill, Reid, and Professor Rostovzeff how stimulating and various an enjoyment of life was organized in the cities of the Empire, how great an importance was given to public beauty; how lavishly the rich, and even the middle classes, spent their money on theatres, baths, libraries, and temples; how widely, as Greenidge put it, the supply to the poor of what we call luxuries was deemed an obligation of wealth. The civilization of that Empire is known as Græco-Roman just because it kept this Greek tradition and spread it under different forms all over the Western world.

One of the first uses to which a rich man thought of putting his wealth was to adorn his city or to make an endowment that would associate his name and memory with its renown and the happiness and gratitude of its citizens; he would build a theatre or racecourse, or he would set aside a sum of money for education or for providing baths for the poor or for the slaves. He believed with Bacon that "riches are for spending and spending for honour and good actions." (J. L. & Barbara Hammond, *The Bleak Age*, pp. 13-15.)

There is also an important difference as regards the wealthy of the ancient world and the wealthy in Chartist times: "whereas in the nineteenth century the argument runs that there is no capital without the rich, no production without capital, and no wages without production, Lucian put it that the rich had to toil that the poor might have baths, shows, and everything else, to their hearts' content. That is, whereas the modern economist put it that the poor man is indebted to the rich for his livelihood, the ancient moralist said that he was indebted to the rich for his luxuries." (p. 17). And further: "The Roman Empire depended on its power to satisfy the social imagination of its subjects, and it lasted as long as that power lasted." The wealthy Roman was glad to see the poorer classes enjoy themselves in the communal life of the towns and cities; there were cases in which they had actually

impoverished themselves to provide necessities and amusements for the poorer citizens.

What had Christianity to do with recreations or amusements? They were actually regarded as wiles of the devil to ensnare men's souls by drawing their thoughts away from religion. The genuine Christianity of the Gospels has never tolerated them. There is no play, or fun and laughter. Jesus wept, but there is no record that he ever laughed, or even smiled.

Under Christian rule nothing was done for the recreation, or even the improvement of the masses. They were regarded as so much cattle, and as a means of creating wealth, and there the employer's interest ended. It is said that Wesley with his evangelical Revival averted from England the Revolution which took place in France. However that may be, it is certain that he taught obedience to the ruling powers, and concentrated men's thoughts on heaven instead of their life on earth. As the Hammonds observe:—

Wesley was proud, it will be remembered, that the Methodists abstained from "reading plays, romances, or books of humour, from singing innocent songs, or talking in a gay diverting manner." He said that to educate a child you must break his will, and when he drew up the rules for his school at Kingswood he said that he allowed no time for play, because he who plays as a boy will play when he is a man. If a man puts play outside his life, he surrenders tastes and pleasures that are an essential part of human history; the source of much of the beauty, the grace, the power, and the virtue, that distinguish higher from lower forms of character and intelligence. A man or a society may make that sacrifice for a particular object. . . . But to serve this purpose an ascetic life must be the choice of the man who leads it. When an ascetic life is thrust on others, it deprives them of opportunities for satisfying their imagination in which mankind has found light and inspiration, and puts nothing in their place. (*The Bleak Age*, p. 61.)

In fact, the position of the workers was pitiable in the extreme. Not only did their rulers and masters neglect to provide them with recreations or amusements, but they were not allowed to provide any for themselves. No places of amusement, no public libraries, no museums, were allowed to open on Sundays; the only day of leisure the workers had—there was no early closing, or half-day Saturdays then, and the hours of work were much longer—when it was proposed to throw open the Botanical Gardens at Leeds on Sundays, as that was the only day when the working classes could enjoy them. The *Leeds Mercury* declared:—

It would be a wretched exchange to draw the poor of England out of their Churches, Chapels, Sunday-schools and quiet homes into public exhibitions and places of amusement on the Lord's Day. The "quiet homes" in which the poor of Leeds were invited to spend their happy Sundays included a good many houses of the kind described by Mr. Robert Baker in his Sanitary Report, where fourteen people lay ill of typhus, without a single bed in the place.

Leeds was not peculiar in this respect. At Liverpool we read "on Sundays . . . all the public-houses are opened, and all the public walks, cemeteries and zoological and botanical gardens, where the people might amuse themselves innocently, are closed . . . the cemeteries are opened to the public every day of the week except Sunday." (*The Bleak Age*, p. 66.)

It was the same in Manchester; a French observer named Bruet writes: "The observance of the Sunday in England is rigorously enforced by Church and State. There is only one exception; the dram shops. All shops must be closed, all places of innocent amusement or instruction, such as Botanical Gardens or

Museums, must be rigorously shut, but the folding doors of the gin palace may open to any man who pushes his foot against them."¹

And what did the great industrial lords do with the wealth created out of the misery of the workers? We know what use the Pagans made of theirs. The wealthy Christian employed his in creating new territorial families with mansions and estates in the country. "Private splendour was as much a mark of the early industrial age as public meanness; the elegance of the great house as the gloom of the new town. The great house symbolized the pride the great lord took in his place in the national life. The mansion, with its libraries, galleries, parks, reflected the atmosphere of authority, of history, of taste and manners, of a life active, spacious, and delightful."² All for his private use and enjoyment.

The men of the governing class, of the type of Sidmouth and Castlereagh would argue that Life for the mass of men and women must inevitably be hard, bleak, and painful. But to begin reforming is dangerous, you never know where it will end:—

Keep, therefore, what you have: an unreformed Parliament, unreformed Church, a landed aristocracy maintained by the Corn Laws. Use these institutions to make disobedience terrible to those who are tempted into it. But keep temptation out of their way. Do not let any disturbing or stimulating influence reach this subject population. Puff down the cheap press; shut up agitators; leave the poor ignorant, or if you must teach them give them only such an education as will put the fear of God and of the magistrates into their hearts. . . . This school, strongly represented among politicians, churchmen, and magistrates, in the first twenty years of the century, had a powerful influence on the life of the times. It sought to crush the cheap press and popular propaganda by imposing heavy stamp duties on all periodicals and books, and Sidmouth would have liked to suppress all reading-rooms. (*The Bleak Age*. p. 35.)

That was the position arrived at nearly two thousand years after, it is said, the angels appeared and announced the arrival of the saviour of the world. If they had announced the arrival of an evil spirit, the result—including the Dark Ages, and down to the Great War—could hardly have been worse. Another saviour like that and we are done for.

W. MANN.

Sneezing Superstitions

"And when Elisha was come into the house, behold the child was dead. . . . Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro, and went up and stretched himself upon him; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes."² *Kings* iv. 32-35.

G. W. FOOTE many years ago, in a Christmas mood, wrote an article on "Noses," in which he showed that the nose had played an important part in the religious history of the world. I have collected a few more instances of what is really a prominent feature of early religion—the identification of soul and breath, and their consequent connexion with sneezing. This belief is so widely extended and so deeply rooted that few superstitions serve so well to illustrate the puerile character of the early faith which lies at the foundations of modern religion.

The habit of smelling, sniffing and touching noses is amongst early peoples as well established a method of communion as kissing. It is to be met with in many places. The 91st chapter of the Egyptian Ritual of the Dead is entitled "Of

not Allowing a Person's Soul to be Sniffed out of him in the Under World." We are told in Genesis ii. 7, that when God created man he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The Hebrew word translated "soul," *Nephesh*, comes from a root signifying "to breathe." So when Jesus gave his disciples the holy spirit he breathed on them (John xx. 22). The first sign of life in the man made by Prometheus was a sneeze.

The involuntary character of sneezing made it considered as of a supernatural character. In Vienna gentlemen in a *café* will take off their hats and say, "God be with you." Germans say, "Health," and formerly the expression was "God help." Montaigne refers to the custom, and some French people still say, "*Dieu vous benisse*," when they hear sneezing. In Ireland Paddy will say, "God bless your honour," or "Long life to your honour." Jews say, "Good life"; and Samoans, "Life to you."

The Parsees say a prayer after sneezing. In Bengal they salaam to the person who sneezes; and, should a Hindu chance to sneeze when performing his ablutions in the Ganges, he makes gestures very similar to those of a Catholic when he dips his fingers in holy water. Having touched his forehead, nose, chin, and cheeks with the tip of his finger, he recommences his prayers from the very beginning, and will do so as often as they are interrupted by a sternutation.

St. Augustine, in his work, *On the Doctrine of Christ*, says: "When the ancients were getting up in the morning, if they chanced to sneeze while putting on their shoes, they immediately went back to bed again, in order that they might get up more auspiciously, and to escape the misfortunes which were likely to occur from that cause."

Sometimes a sneeze was deemed favourable. While the Athenian general, Themistocles, was offering sacrifice for the propitiation of the gods, it happened that three beautiful captives were brought him; at the same time the fire on the altar was burning brightly, when a sneeze happened on the right hand. Thereupon Euphrantides, the soothsayer, embraced him and predicted a victory, which was afterwards obtained—that of Salamis.

We also read that at the time Xenophon was addressing his army of ten thousand, and while speaking of that favour from the gods which a righteous cause entitled them to hope for against a perjured enemy, someone sneezed. Immediately the general voice addressed ejaculations to protecting Jupiter, whose omen it was supposed to be. A sacrifice to the gods was proposed, a universal shout declared approbation, and the whole army in one chorus sang the *Pæan*.

The Romans thought even more of this superstition than the Greeks. It was by no means a trivial or meaningless compliment among them to ejaculate, "*Salve!*" when one of the company sneezed. It was a requirement of polite life. Even the stern Emperor Tiberius was punctillious in complying with it, and required those about him to do so likewise.

Catullus, the Roman lyric poet, in *The Nuptials of Peleus and Thetis*, gives the following:—

The God of Love who stood to hear him,
The God of Love was always near him,
Pleased and tickled with the sound,
Sneezed aloud, and all around
The Little Loves, that waited by,
Bowed, and bless'd the augury.

It was commonly believed that Cupid sneezed whenever a beautiful girl was born, and the most acceptable compliment a Roman masher could lisp and drawl to his lady-love was, "Love has sneezed for you!"

¹ *Ibid.* p. 66.

² *Ibid.* p. 128.

Calabar negroes, when a child sneezes, will say, "Far from you," with a gesture as if throwing off some evil. Here the object seems plainly to be to keep foreign or evil spirits from entering. But in other cases it is likely that there was some idea of evil influences being able to operate on the part of the life which had made its exit at the sternutation. In the case of disease the sneeze may be taken as a sign of the departure of the evil spirits, as in the case of the child restored by Elisha. Josephus tells us that he saw a Jew named Eleazer, curing demoniacs by drawing out the demons through their nostrils with a magic ring.

Connected with sneezing superstitions are a host of others concerning whooping cough, into which I have not space to enter. It should also be remembered that the fact that sneezing does accompany some dangerous disorders, as well as being a frequent attendant of colds and impaired vitality, must have largely contributed to perpetuate the custom. The historian, Sagonius, tells us that in the time of Gregory the Great (A.D. 558) there raged throughout Italy a malignant pestilence, which infected the air to such a degree that they who had the misfortune to gape or sneeze fell dead on the spot. To avert the effects of the tainted atmosphere, it became customary on these occurrences to utter an ejaculatory prayer. Among the Poles, to smell a flower growing in a churchyard is believed to destroy the sense of smell. The idea, of course, is of transference of the qualities of the dead—an idea which has led to many superstitions.

In Theodore Irving's *Conquest of Florida* it is told how Hernando de Soto, the Conquistador, in 1512 was received by the Cacique Guachora, and, on finding that the Floridians had the same custom of salutation on sneezing, remarked: "Do you not see that all the world is one?" Indeed, the general prevalence of this custom alone would go far to show that the human mind, dealing with the same facts, works out similar beliefs according to its state of culture, and irrespective of contact with other peoples.

Mr. Gerald Massey says in his *Natural Genesis* (i. 83): "It is common for people to take a pinch of snuff to cause a sneeze for the expulsion of headache, and in this connexion the British custom of placing on the dead a plateful of snuff is most remarkable. If a pinch of snuff were efficacious in expelling the bad spirit, stuffiness or pain, by means of a sneeze, then a plateful of snuff laid on the breathing-place—the bosom of the dead—was typically intended in relation to the breathing of the future life, and wishing well or well-wishing."

In Irish wakes it was a custom to place a dish of snuff on the corpse, each of the wakers partaking of a hearty pinch. After this they would challenge each other to fight, sing, or dance, the idea evidently being that the spirit of the departed had entered into the partakers of the snuff.

Tobacco snuff is, of course, modern in Ireland, but I think it possible some other powder or dust may have been used before, as analogous customs have been found in other parts.* Indeed, it has been conjectured that the use of all condiments may have originally been connected with some such superstitions.

We get an early association with smelling as an indication of desire in the Pacific Islands, where it is the belief that, when a man sneezes, he is thinking of his wife; when a woman sneezes, she is thinking of her husband; therefore, they deem it fitting to say:

* Mr. Hartland considers "it represents the more archaic consumption of food or drink on the corpse." My idea is that anything causing sternutation might come in vogue as a demonstration of the truth of the notion that the qualities of the departed could be transferred.

"Ofa!" (Love!). The custom of perforating the cartilage of the nostrils, or, as sailors called it, "sprit-sail-yarding the nose," is allied to this belief.

An early superstition is that preserved by the Xosa Kaffirs, who, when a man sneezes, hold that his ancestral spirit is trying to speak. Mr. Massey says (*Natural Genesis* i. 84): "It was a common belief that no idiot could sneeze, and that there was no surety like a sneeze for a newborn child having a soul." British "howdies," or nurses, held the child to be under the fairy spell until it showed signs of spirit by sneezing. "God sain the bairn," said an old nurse when the little one sneezed at last: "it's no a warlock." The ancestral soul has descended. The Maoris of New Zealand had a singular baptismal ceremony called Iri-rohi. On the eighth day the child was taken to the side of a stream, with the family greenstones hung about it. The list of the child's ancestors was repeated by the priest, and, when the child sneezed, the name then being uttered was the one selected by the child itself, or the ancestral spirit manifesting through it. Then the child was sprinkled or immersed in the river (*Thomson's Story of New Zealand*, i. 119).

We still have some sneezing superstitions, as evidenced in the Lancashire folk-rhyme:—
Sneeze on a Monday, you sneeze for danger;
Sneeze on a Tuesday, you kiss a stranger;
Sneeze on a Wednesday, you sneeze for a letter;
Sneeze on a Thursday for something better;
Sneeze on a Friday, you sneeze for sorrow;
Sneeze on a Saturday, you see your sweetheart to-morrow;
Sneeze on a Sunday, your safety seek,
The Devil will chase you the rest of the week!

These same rhymes are given in *The Folk-lore of Philadelphia*, by H. Phillips.

(Reprinted.)

J. M. WHEELER.

My Brother's Keeper

DR. SCOTT LIDGETT, in his recent speech about the union of the different Methodist bodies in England, stated that statesmen had tried all their political, social and economic remedies, but all these had failed; and the salvation of the country now depended upon a great spiritual revival.

If Dr. Lidgett were a closer student of sociology he would find that there are several political, social and economic remedies which never have been tried, though for many years Freethinkers and Humanists have been urging statesmen to try them. The people generally have, of course, been gulled into putting their trust in the wrong kind of statesmen. They have not exercised their individual rights of thinking or acting for themselves. They have been terrorized by supernatural menaces, and allowed themselves to be subjected, and their opinions to be subordinated to successive sets of rulers who have in turn subordinated their personal views to those of the leaders of the great ecclesiastical corporations.

Of course, this Methodist Union, like the Scottish Presbyterian Union of 1929 has been achieved under royal patronage and with royal congratulations. The Throne is as much the victim of supernaturalism as are our statesmen. There is a comical side to the identification of Royalty with these ecclesiastical changes. In England the King and Royal Family are Episcopalian; in Scotland they are Presbyterians. Nevertheless, avid as every Protestant sect is for the benediction of the Crown, that benediction is procurable for sects that are neither Episcopalian nor Presbyterian.

Alas, this is all superficial. Protestantism is, in substance, still honeycombed and comprises denomi-

nations with irreconcilable tenets. In the Church of England itself there are many members who approximate much more in their beliefs to Roman Catholicism than to Protestantism. The Church of Scotland has now decided to confer with Lambeth as to a possible union between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, and this decision has evoked considerable disapprobation from many eminent and influential Scottish Presbyterians; who are aghast at the facility with which some of their brethren can calmly contemplate a coquetting with sacerdotalism. They point to the growing power of the Anglo-Catholics in England, and shudder at the possibility of compounding with the dictation of Rome.

The Scottish advocates of discussion with Lambeth on the other hand argue that there is a powerful majority in the Church of England which is "evangelical," and which in essentials differs not at all from the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists in doctrine; and if union between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism can be achieved with the adjustment of a common ritual and system of Government, such a mass of Low Church opinion will eventuate that it will be able to extrude the noisy minority which is prepared to acknowledge Papal authority.

The fundamental reason for all these movements towards a reunion of Christendom lies in the fact that the brigadiers of the Black Army have come to realize that if they do not all hang together they will hang separately. The shrinking of congregations is frankly attributed to divisions among Protestants. Rome alone makes any progress because of her indivisibility; and she makes progress not only with the illiterate and semi-literate but with the intellectuals. Every now and then we read of some Protestant Professor at one of the Universities being "received" into the Church of Rome. Where a need for supernatural support is felt, Rome appeals to the logical mind.

The consciousness of such a need in the case of any person is traceable to the work of the dope of traditionalism. This is an influence which the purely conventional mind cannot escape. It secured its hold very early in the history of religion—indeed from the time when Cain put the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The scriptural record suggests that the correct answer to the question was in the affirmative. And down the ages we have seen theological instruction in the belief that no man can safely be left to the direction of his own morals—nay, that he is entirely lost and damned if he does not embrace a belief in a supernatural being, and if he does not obediently submit himself to the deliverances of that being, as fully expounded and construed by a body of fellow-men who claim to be in His confidence. This belief has, by a large acceptance, cramped and stunted individual development and militated against originality and detachment in individual thought.

Christianity is still in the grip of primitivism. Its conceptions of sociology are puerile and rudimentary. The ethicists of Freethought have long outgrown that stage. But the emancipation of those who have for so long acknowledged and acted in conformity with the claims of clericalism must necessarily be a gradual process. Rome was not built in a day. Neither will the "great city" of humanity visualized by Walt Whitman be built in a day. Yet in the last thirty years more has been done to make its foundations sure than in the century that preceded them. Wherefore let the advocates of Freethought take courage and be comforted.

Every sane, normal and reasonably instructed and intelligent human being has no temptation to the main things against which the clerics fulminate. Such a being has only disgust for and aversion towards the manners of the swine trough and the morals of the barnyard in human society. But Mrs. Grundy and the Rev. Nosey Parkers would find their occupations gone if they acknowledged that much uncleanness had departed from human relationships. They must still smudge the white—even if they cannot make it black altogether! And so the bigoted pulpiteers go on flogging a dead horse. Beauty is always for them merely a skin-deep mask, and joy is always suspect that does not receive its sanction from Church or Chapel.

It has been burned into the jaundiced and atrophied minds of the clergy that they indeed, by supernatural appointment are *par excellence* their brothers' keepers. They prescribe for us what we are to eat and drink and wherewithal we are to be clothed. They dictate to us how we are to spend our time, what we are to read and what we are to write. They choose for us our recreations and amusements. Social habits and public entertainments must also receive their imprimatur before they can be regarded as "proper." Their growing concern nowadays is that an increasing number of rebels merely laugh at the crack of the hangman's whip. You may fool some of the people all the time; you may fool all the people some of the time; but you cannot fool all the people all the time. The point we are driving at is illustrated by a passage in the sermon of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland at Dryburgh on Sir Walter Scott, when he unnecessarily attacked several modern authors whose conventions differed from those displayed in the works of Sir Walter. Of course one looks for differences and changes in ideas after more than a century! But the Moderator stated that modern writers were obtruding and justifying and commending sordid things and teaching that "men can live as they choose." The suggestion, of course, is that the perusal of such writings will induce men to choose in life things that are selfish, undesirable, illicit and sensually indulgent. And this in face of the proved fact that people brought up in wholesome secular environment choose the good and wholesome life! Who are more responsible for the system of education and the environmental influences that have made any human beings susceptible to the lure of sensual temptations than the clerics? In the large output of books and magazines just now, there is after all only a negligible minority that can be stamped as pandering to evil passions. No one is more hostile to the broadcasting of pornographic writings than the Freethinker. He has proved this by his repeated but unheeded demand for the expurgation of the Old Testament. From that source many pure-minded adolescents have been grievously defiled.

Dr. Scott Lidgett and the Scottish Moderator pose as super-keepers of their brethren, and of their brethren's "consciences." Would it not be a grand scheme to adopt the Freethinker's solution of a humanistic state of society in which each "brother" was enabled by the congenial exercise of his own faculties to keep himself? Aha, there's the rub! Upon what main sources do these reverend gentlemen's respective ecclesiastical bodies depend for monetary support?

To awe the mob and keep them under,
The ancients told their tales of wonder.

And continually the same tales are being pitched to-day. Ecclesiastics have for many centuries had the say as to how much knowledge the mass of the people were to be allowed. When that knowledge

began to encroach upon or threatened "the faith," the flow of knowledge had to be stopped. If the common herd lost their ignorance there was the danger of their losing their awe and fear also. Secular Education is therefore the very devil. There are holy things that according to the clergy must be accepted without question—things to which reason must be subordinated. The intellectual rebels who deny that proposition grow daily in number, and show man that he can walk without mental crutches; that he can self-reliantly achieve his own emancipation. This is the cause of the apprehensions entertained by priests and parsons everywhere, and by their wealthy constituents, who naturally hold that as they pay the piper they are entitled to call the tune! And these are the words of the tune:—

God Bless the Boss and his relations,
And keep us in our proper stations.

IGNOTUS.

Acid Drops

Vice-Admiral Taylor, M.P. for Paddington, asked the Prime Minister whether the Government would take steps to "inaugurate" a two minutes' silence immediately following the King's speech on Christmas Day. We suggest the proper plan would be to follow the example set by Hitlerism, which compels people to tune-in for certain speeches by Hitler, and imprisons those who tune-in to anything else while the speech is being delivered. We think the best plan would be to compel everyone to listen, to remain standing while the speech is being read, and to be severely punished if anything frivolous is engaged in for one hour before and after the speech. In order to set an example, and bearing in mind that the King's speech has become an annual event, we also suggest that as a token of appreciation, Admiral Taylor should be compelled to observe complete silence in between the King's Christmas speeches.

Capital punishment, says the *Christian World* is an offence to the Christian Conscience. We like that expression; it means so much, even though the "much" is very different from the conclusion it wishes its friends to draw. For if history and daily experience—which is history in the making—teach anything, it is the lesson that the Christian conscience can agree with anything and can apologize for anything, and find that anything agrees with "true Christianity." It was agreeable to the Christian Conscience to burn at the stake, and to make the occasion a public holiday. All sorts of tortures of people accused of trivial offences never caused the Christian Conscience the slightest uneasiness. The hanging of a boy or a young girl for stealing property to the value of five shillings, left the Christian Conscience undisturbed. The killing and maiming of thousands of young children in the factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire, for the sake of gain, also left the Christian Conscience unruffled. We like that phrase, "the Christian Conscience," it is so like "un-English," and "Kingly" and "Queenly," and "innate properties," and "racial characteristics," and the score or so of similar phrases with which complacent ignorance nourishes itself upon the delusion that it is saying something profound.

Dr. A. C. Hill writes in the *Christian World*, that the ways of God are past finding out, and, therefore, "we are still able to believe that all things work together for good." That conclusion evidently belongs to the group of "blessed words" we have just given. For what Dr. Hill means—assuming that he meant anything at all when he wrote the words—is that we can continue to believe definite things about God so long as we do not

know anything about him. With one qualification we find ourselves in complete agreement with Dr. Hill. This qualification is that to every sensible person a belief should rest upon something we know. Probably to this Dr. Hill might reply—in line with those who believe certain things to be "un-English" or "against nature," etc., that to have any ground in fact for what one believes, is definitely "untheological," or even "anti-religious." In that case he would have us on the hip.

The question, "What is God?" naturally leads to "Where is God?" The answer to this used to be, Heaven; but we have it on the authority of Dean Inge that "Heaven" is no more than a geographical expression. It does not mean a place, it does not mean anywhere. So it is worth while learning on the authority of a Toronto parson, who in the course of a rhapsodical letter to a local paper, apropos of the marriage of the lady whom our papers called the Princess Marina (there does not appear to be any such person) that "God lives with our Royal Family." That being the case, those who wish to write to God should not have much difficulty in getting their communication delivered. And as many peoples, including the Israelites, used to carry their gods round with them, it may be that our Royal Family have returned to this ancient custom.

The New York correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* claims that 16,000,000 signatures were obtained in one day against "salacious" films, in the United States. If the Film Industry does not fall into line with the Roman Catholic bishops' wishes on the matter, the "Hierarchy" will ask the people "to remain away from all and every motion picture for the period of at least a week." A week! But why only a week? Why not for ever? Surely staying away from a "salacious" picture for a week is no excuse for seeing them ever afterwards? The whole question really resides in a true definition of "salacious," and that definition need not be Roman Catholic. Any censorship by Rome is something which should not be tolerated. Whether she would like to bring in the rack and the stake again as well as burning books or films by the common hangman, we do not know. But her judgment, in view of the way in which some of the greatest masterpieces of literature have been put on the *Index*, should be reserved entirely for her own believers. It is sheer impudence to force what one of her bishops thinks may or may not be right on other people.

A pious reviewer of Mr. St. John Ervine's *God's Soldier: General Booth*, says, "it is an irony and rather a sad irony, that the activities undertaken on behalf of the destitute and outcast have done infinitely more to commend the Salvation Army to public recognition than the faith and evangelism of the founders. It is the works and not the faith which are commended." That must be obvious to anybody who studies the teaching and methods of the Salvation Army. So long as its battle-cry was "Blood and Fire," so long was it subject to the ridicule and, in some cases, the violence of many people. But, as soon as the public became convinced it was out to help the poor irrespective of the saving Grace of Jesus, the Army at once became respectable, tolerated and assisted. Whether the outcast and the destitute really are helped is another story.

But in writing about the life of its founder, Mr. Ervine has said a great deal very unpalatable to believers in the tale that goes round of the love and mercy and beauty of the saintly Salvation Army. The early converts were inspired by Booth and his wife, who were of the well-known brand of religious fanaticism but, at least, passionately sincere. The Army is now run "by ordinary methods of administration and organization common to big business enterprises." Of course, the Salvation Army is nothing more, and has been for years nothing more than a business; with the advantage that charity appeals can be made to the public to give money for

nothing instead of its issuing shares like other business companies. This is most unfair competition, but it is done in the name of Jesus; and the aforementioned reviewer bluntly declares that "the real work has not been done at all." The real work really means bringing the people to Christ. Has the Salvation Army done that? Or has it not, in this age of disbelief, utterly failed?

Sir Henry Slessor, the well known Judge—who manages to reconcile a passionate belief in both Socialism and Anglo-Catholic Christianity—addressing a branch of the Church Union, the other day, emphasized some of the difficulties the Church had to face. "Attacks," he declared, "from the side of science, historical criticism, and psychology, had challenged not only Christian doctrine, but Christian morals . . . In England, Secularism was menacing the Church to an extent scarcely realized by many devout Christians." Sir Henry spoke to great purpose on the same doleful note and his hearers must have been wondering what he would suggest to knock Secularism out of the ring and bring the people back to Jesus. The remedy was for Christians to be neither optimists nor pessimists, but to be realists. The Church Union was to settle down to consider how best to convert its fellow countrymen; co-operation, not compromise, was to be the watchword; and membership of the Union was to be augmented. This shows how even a brilliant judge, when talking about Christianity, can reach the level of, let us say, the Bishop of London.

According to a Roman Catholic journal, Catholics are bound to believe in the "apparitions" at Lourdes, but are not actually bound to believe in the miraculous cures performed there. However, it claims, "it would be extremely rash to deny the reality of the miracles upon which the Church bases her claim," and considers the evidence for many is "overwhelming"; the reason being that "those who have studied these cures carefully are far more likely to be correct than a mere outsider. . . . In addition a little humility is required and a lot of common sense." It would take a great deal of common sense to believe that advanced cases of cancer, pronounced absolutely incurable by competent (and non-Catholic) specialists were immediately cured by one dip at Lourdes. Miracles of that sort, whether vouched for by the Church or not, never did and never could happen.

One hundred thousand women listened to Archbishop Downey in the rain at the Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne. What a magnificent example of shrewd psychology this shows on the part of the Church. Though actually in the management of the Church, women are not allowed to take part, they have always been given certain jobs, and are made to believe that they are always doing God's will. By keeping the women on its side, the Church knows it will also have a good supply of men. Listen to the Archbishop:

Never, perhaps, has woman been called upon to play a more vital part in shaping the destinies of mankind than at the present moment. . . . In this age there rings the challenge, "Who shall find a Valiant Woman?" And by this is not meant an Esther, a Judith or a Joan of Arc, but the valiant woman of the Scriptures. . . . It is for the Catholic woman to prove herself to be the true leaven of Society. . . . The future of the Church in Australia is safe in her keeping.

The last lines are the key ones, of course. Few Catholic men read Freethought literature anyway, but even fewer Catholic women do; and one can add that nearly all religions are safe in most women's hands. Emotion can never be a substitute for reason.

It is amusing to find that the stupid old method of proving "the credibility of the New Testament as historical records" is once again revived by a Catholic journal. It will be remembered that it consists of pointing out that Thucydides' *History*, written in the fifth

century B.C., and regarded as authentic and reliable, is not referred to till 300 years afterwards, and the manuscripts are from 400 to 1600 years later. The manuscripts we have of Livy were written at least 300 years after his death; and nearly all we know of Solon was written by Plutarch some 500 years after Solon's death. Yet no one doubts the "credibility" of these writers, and many others whose works have come down to us through manuscripts written centuries after their death. Of course, no one doubts that the New Testament was written, and that copies exist. But that is not the point. It is the history of God Almighty, the Creator of the Universe, born of a Virgin on this earth, performing miracles, put to death and coming to life three days after his burial, which is not credible, and never could be proved credible, either. If Thucydides, or Livy, or Plutarch, had told a similar tale, and there was not a scrap of evidence given outside their pages for it, would anybody believe them? Would not their stories be laughed at?

General Lushington (of the Aldershot Lushingtons) received the shock of his life last week. The proprietor of some dance hall tremblingly asked for a licence to allow him to hold a dance there on December 25. "What!" thundered the General, literally horrified. "Run a dance on Christmas Day!" The terrified proprietor, pale with fright, gently murmured, that the Day was one of rejoicing. The General indignantly refused the blasphemous application, and shouted: "There are all the other days of the year on which to dance." What a God-send General Lushington would have been for Butler and his *Hudibras*! But how do these people manage to get on the bench?

The Rev. M. Soper is still entertaining listeners of the B.B.C. with his experiences in answering questions on Tower Hill. Needless to say, some of these questions, as reported by him, are the essence of fatuity; but he has had to face the one about the actual existence of Jesus. He apologized to his hearers, last Sunday, for mentioning such an absurdity, and then proceeded to give the "proofs" that Jesus must have lived—proofs which have been reiterated for years by the most illiterate of the Christian Evidence Society's lecturers. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, simply could not have invented the story; while outside the Gospels, Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentions him. So there can be no possible doubt whatever that the miracle-mongering Jesus was born of a virgin, met and was carried about by a devil, was put to death exactly as recorded, and finally, rose from the grave, followed by a large crowd of Jewish "saints," who also had risen in public debate from death. It is a pity that Mr. Soper cannot meet a Freethinker who knows the myth theory. He might not find it quite so easy as "getting the message over" the wireless—which cannot reply.

Fifty Years Ago

DEAN SWIFT AND THE APOSTLES' CREED

I BELIEVE in King George the Second, the greatest monarch between heaven and earth and in Sir Robert Walpole, his only Minister, our Lord, who was begotten by Barret the attorney, born of Mrs. Walpole, of Houghton, accused of corruption, convicted, expelled and imprisoned. He went down into Norfolk; the third year he came up again, he ascended into the administration and sitteth at the head of the Treasury, from whence he shall pay all those who shall vote as they are commanded. I believe in Horace's Treaty, the sanctity of the Bishops, the independency of the Lords, the integrity of the Commons, restitution from Spain, resurrection of credit, and peace everlasting. Amen.

The "Freethinker," December 28, 1884.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

SPENCER M. DE GOLIER (Bradford, U.S.A.)—Thanks for good wishes. We greatly appreciate your constant endeavours in the interests of Freethought.

W. G. MEALOR.—We should have been greatly surprised and disheartened had Christian critics been pleased with Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*. The last thing they wish to see is an anthology of what the clergy said during the war. Thanks for cutting. It is hard work for nations at war to keep the "hate" at full pressure. Hence the necessity for a Minister of Propaganda.

W. HASTINGS.—We suppose the explanation of much that you say is that the Christian really has no case against modern Freethought. The more intelligent and the more honest of Christians realize this, and so steer clear of debates.

R. JOHNSON.—We are pleased to see the interest aroused by the meetings held in Stockton and district. If Christians wish to see their religion defended in public discussion, and they can get a really good man to represent them, a debate might be arranged.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Cardiff Branch N.S.S., 108.

H. EDWARDS.—The regret you feel of not knowing the *Freethinker* earlier may be mitigated by the reflection of the years of reading it that may lie before you.

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

For Provincial Freethinkers and friends wishing to attend the Annual Dinner on Saturday evening, January 26, in the Holborn Restaurant, London, we can announce the following excursions to London on that day. By L.M.S. Railway, Manchester (London Road) 10s.; Birmingham (New Street), 6s. 6d.; Coventry, 5s. 6d.; Wolverhampton, 7s.; Liverpool (Lime Street), 16s.; Sheffield, 14s.; Derby, 12s. 6d. By L.N.E.R. line, Nottingham (Victoria), 7s.; Leicester (Central), 5s. 6d.; Rugby, 5s. Return fares are quoted, and in all cases return times are round about midnight. Actual times and further particulars, if required, may be had from the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

We should like application to be made for tickets as early as possible. The sooner an approximate estimate of the number of diners can be formed, the easier it is to make the necessary arrangements. Tickets may be obtained from either the Pioneer Press or the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

The Manchester Branch will open the second half of the Winter Session on Sunday, January 6, 1935, when a

Demonstration "For Freethought and Freedom," will be held in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, commencing at 7.0 p.m. (doors open at 6.30 p.m.). The speakers are Messrs. Owen and Shortt (Liverpool) J. Clayton (Burnley), F. E. Monks (Manchester) and J. Wingate (Perth)—the Chair will be taken by the President of the Branch—Mr. S. Cohen. There will be a number of reserved seats at 6d., and tickets can be obtained from the Secretary (Mr. W. Collins, 4 The Bungalows, Hayfield). Advertising slips have been printed, and all who can assist in their distribution should apply to the Secretary.

It is probable that ninety per cent of wireless users go to continental stations for their Sunday entertainment, and of this number the larger proportion use Luxemburg. But combination of commercial interests and sabbatarian bigotry has at length succeeded in keeping the name of Luxemburg out of the British papers. Newspaper proprietors have agreed to do this, and even the *Sunday Referee* which, for a time, held out against the Association, has now given way. One complaint against the Luxemburg station is that it advertises on Sunday, and another is that it compels either all newspaper people to spend more, or gives an advantage to the few that care to advertise.

The result of this campaign against Sunday advertising is instructive. The *Referee*, which has a millionaire behind it, has found the cost too heavy, and has had to come to heel. The boycott in this country is carried on very quietly, as most mean things are with us, but it is almost sleepless in its activities. Perhaps the incident will enable some people to realize the kind of fight that this journal has been carrying on for over half a century. Without ever being able to pay its way even with the most economic expenditure, without funds to advertise it, subjected to a persistent and almost national boycott, only those behind the scenes know the constant labour, anxiety, and sacrifice required to keep a journal such as the *Freethinker* in existence. It has always been dependent upon its friends for its circulation, and for help when occasion demanded it. We hope that those who wish to see this paper enjoy a larger circulation and an increased influence will bear this in mind when reflecting on how each may do something for the grand old Cause. There are large numbers of people who would become subscribers, if they were only canvassed. We suggest this as the task for 1935.

A friend gave to the Blackburn Branch a wireless set for the benefit of its funds. The set was made the occasion of a raffle, and the winning ticket was drawn by a Birmingham friend. The Branch desires to thank all who assisted in the effort.

Members of the National Secular Society are reminded that all subscriptions fall due on January 1. The subscription to the Society is purely nominal; each member is left to give as much as his means or his inclinations advise. But the extent of the Society's propaganda involves a very heavy loss each year, and it is well not to eat up the capital of the Society more rapidly than is absolutely unavoidable.

MAN'S HEREDITY

The blood of man has flowed out of the past, and it is changed with the dross of the past. At one time the reptiles filled every kind of habitat and lived every kind of life. Later the mammals, with their more highly organized bodies, repeated everything the reptiles had done before them, with not the vaguest hint of an original adaptation. Their blood flows in our arteries. Because behaviour clings to the traditions of the past, many generations of men, despite the perfection of their brains, can lead lives of sentimentality and credulity, and can murder exactly in the manner of the dinosaurs who clawed each other into the grave over forty million years ago.—J. H. Bradley, "*The Parade of the Living*," p. 240.

Any Old Bones!

II.

BEFORE touching upon the relics of the Holy Apostles, a word must be said about those of the Blessed Virgin. As the Roman Catholic Church, when it came into power, could find no more evidence for her existence than it could for the existence of Jesus—or about as much or as little—it promptly proceeded to manufacture it. Some “inspired” writer claimed that the reason why her burial place was never known was because the angels carried her body to heaven, and the date given is August 15—the date of the festival of the Assumption. So that her bones have never been displayed. But there were abundant relics in spite of that, and Calvin is just as contemptuous of them as of the other holy relics. He says:—

In order to have at least something belonging to her, the Church sought to indemnify itself for the absence of other relics with the possession of her hair and her milk. The hair is shown in several churches at Rome, and at Salvatierra in Spain, at Maçon, St. Flour, Cluny, Nevers and many other towns. With regard to the milk, there is not, perhaps, a town, a convent, or nunnery, where it is not shown in large or small quantities. Indeed, had the Virgin been a wet-nurse her whole life, or a dairy, she could not have produced more than is shown as hers in various parts. How they obtained all this milk they do not say, and it is superfluous here to remark that there is no foundation in the Gospels for these foolish and blasphemous extravagances.

Calvin did not give the names of the churches which showed the Virgin's milk to the faithful; but there are vials filled with it in several churches at Rome, at Venice in the Church of St. Mark, at Aix in Provence, in the Church of the Celestins at Avignon, St. Anthony at Padua, and a host of others. Needless to say these vials have produced the usual crop of absurd stories about the wonderful miracles performed by the relics.

A chemise worn by Mary is exhibited at Chartres, and another at Aix-la-Chapelle; and the Jesuit Father Goujon affirms that in his day even more intimate things were shown. The Virgin's girdle is on view at Prato, another at Montserrat, a slipper at St. Jacquême, and a shoe at St. Flour. Twenty gowns, most of them of the most costly texture and beauty are also on view in various churches. The dress-making establishments in Bethlehem or Nazareth in Mary's day could thus be proved to have been at least the equal of similar marvels of luxury in Paris or London nowadays.

In Rome are four actual images of her painted by St. Luke—one of which the great artist used to keep always with him, it was so precious. It is only fair to remark that Calvin asks, “by what right do they call Luke a painter? St. Paul calls him a physician.”

As for St. Joseph, a pair of his shoes are kept in Aix-la-Chapelle. But his most celebrated relic is said by D'Aubigné to be his “*han*,” i.e., “the sound or groan which issues from the chest of a man when he makes an effort, and which St. Joseph emitted when he was splitting a log of wood. It is preserved in a bottle at a place called Concaiverny, near Blois, in France.” This enclosing of a sound in a bottle should provide Mr. Belloc with one of his striking essays to prove the priority of the Church in preserving sound before Edison invented the phonograph. Perhaps, however, he doesn't know about it yet.

Needless to say, the Church has also kept relics of angels. “It is said,” says the editor of Calvin's *Treatise*, “that as late as 1784, at St. Michael in

Brittany, a Swiss was selling feathers from the archangel Michael's wings, and that he found purchasers for his wares”; and at Carcasonne are shown Michael's falchion and his shield. He used these in his combat with Satan.

Colin de Plancy, in his *Dictionary of Relics*, says that two of the silver pieces for which Judas betrayed Our Lord are preserved in the Church of the Annunciation at Florence, one in the Church of St. John of the Lateran, and another in that of the Holy Cross at Rome. Of course, the other pieces are in various churches in France and Italy.

The head of St. John the Baptist seems to be divided into various parts. The face is in Amiens; the top, with some of the back, used to be at Rhodes; the brains, at Nogent le Rotrou; a jaw, at St. John of the Lateran; and a part of the ear at St. Flour in Auvergne; other bits are in various other places. But at St. Sylvester in Rome can be seen “the whole and real head of St. John the Baptist”; and there are many other complete heads. It would take too long to detail where the body (which, in any case, had been burnt by Pagans) and parts of it, can be found. Dozens of fingers have been preserved—the finger, be it noted, which pointed out Jesus, and which in consequence simply could *not* be burnt. At Avignon can be seen the sword with which he was beheaded, and even the sheet then spread under him. Calvin thinks the story of the sheet “absurd.” The bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul can be found in the churches in Rome bearing their names. St. Sylvester divided these bodies so that each church could have both Saints. St. John of the Lateran has, however, the heads. At Trèves are several bones of the Apostles. In Geneva used to be the brains of St. Peter. Unfortunately, Calvin examined this precious relic and found it was only a bit of pumice stone—though before this, it must have been responsible for as many miraculous cures as Lourdes. At Salvatierra could be seen St. Peter's slipper; and at Rome, his episcopal chair and chasuble. Calvin takes pains to show that there was no chasubles in Peter's day, and his arguments must have duly impressed his followers. He thinks that “the least objectionable” of St. Peter's relics is his staff—though as one is at Cologne, and the other at Trèves, it was difficult to affirm which was genuine.

As for the other apostles, Toulouse has the honour of having the bodies of six of them, namely, of St. James the Major, St. Andrew, St. James the Minor, St. Philip, St. Simeon and St. Jude. Padua has the body of St. Mathias; Salerno, of St. Matthew; Orconna, of St. Thomas; and Naples, of St. Bartholomew. Here again the Churches are in dispute; for at Amalfi is another body of St. Andrew; St. Philip and St. James the Minor have duplicates in Rome, while St. Simeon and St. Jude are genuinely represented in the Church of St. Peter. St. Bartholomew appears again in Rome and also in Pisa. Skin diseases are miraculously cured by the one in Pisa, so probably that is the only true one. St. Matthew, being celebrated as the author of an inspired Gospel, would never have been content with just one body. Two more are at Rome and a third in Trèves. Bits of the apostles are found in various places, particularly bones. But a full list would fill columns of this journal, and must therefore be omitted. As the body of St. John disappeared immediately after it was deposited in the grave, it cannot be produced as a relic. But the cup from which he had to drink poison by order of Domitian is in Bologna; and another at St. John of the Lateran.

Though St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin, is not honoured in the four “inspired” gospels, her life

and adventures are well known to the Church; so one of her whole bodies is in Apt in Provence, and another at Notre Dame de l'Isle at Lyons. One head is in Trèves, another at Duren near Cologne, and a third in Thuringia. And further relics can be found in a hundred other places.

Lazarus has also three genuine bodies—at Marseilles, Autun and Avalon. A law-suit, at immense expense between Autun and Avalon, did not settle which of the two had the genuine body. Mary Magdalene, in spite of her great reputation, could not manage more than two bodies, one at Auxerre and another at St. Maximin, in Provence.

It may be as well to add that, according to the Jesuit writer Ribadeneira, the Jews seized Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Marcella, Maximin, Celdonius (whose sight was restored by Jesus), and Joseph of Arimathea, and launched them on the sea in a vessel without helm, oars or sails. It reached Marseilles and Lazarus became first bishop of that town. Joseph of Arimathea went to England, Martha entered a convent, and Mary, after preaching in Provence, retired to St. Beaume, to weep and lament over her sins. Another story is related of Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced Jesus in the side. He was (of course) struck blind, but rubbed his eyes with the blood on his spear, and immediately regained his sight; he was converted and became a monk in Cappadocia. If it is pointed out that neither the Gospels nor the early historians mention Longinus, nor were there any Christian monasteries in his day, the answer is that all these things, being miracles, really happened.

St. Stephen's body is complete in Rome, though his head is at Arles, and his bones in three hundred places. The Church has even canonized the numerous stones which killed him. The Carmelite monks find some of them of great assistance for women in labour; but the Dominican monks, who claimed the same virtue for a rib of St. Margarita which had been stolen from them, raised a great outcry about the stones not being genuine. It is very gratifying to learn that the Carmelites won the day.

There is a great number of relics belonging to the Holy Innocents—too long to enumerate here. St. Sebastian, whose remains were exceptionally favourable for curing the plague, has several bodies and numerous heads in various churches. St. Anthony was equally lucky. St. Peter, as a married man, had a daughter whose name was Petronilla, and her relics cure fevers. Several of her genuine bodies and other remains also are in evidence.

Of course, relics are not always confined to persons or things belonging to them. Fig trees and almond trees and many other trees, so long as some saint looked at them, or touched them, or planted them, are objects of veneration. In the Holy land is actually conserved the fig-tree cursed by Jesus. Even the Burning Bush of Moses is venerated as well as some apples not destroyed in the destruction of Sodom. Noah's Ark could have been seen on Mount Ararat (and is now, I understand); and nuns manufacture crosses from its wood. The celebrated rod of Aaron can be still seen in St. John of the Lateran at Rome—though a number of other churches also possess it. And speaking of another Old Testament hero, it should be noted that Adam's head is buried exactly under Calvary, near Jerusalem. In Ceylon there is the well known imprint of his foot. It was recognized as Adam's because of its length—just over a yard.

As for the miraculous "hosts," a word must be said about them. The one at Dijon still has the drops

of blood which spurted out when a Jew pierced it with a knife. In fact, there is a phial filled with this blood. Grève and Brussels both have similar hosts. Many others can be found all possessing drops of blood as a result of having been pierced by Jews. It seems to have been a favourite occupation of that race in medieval times. Considering the penalties attached to this particular "profanity," one cannot help wondering whether the Jews were quite as mad as the Christians make them out to be.

The subject of relics is a very fascinating one, and could be continued, but I am not writing a thesis. That there are still people who believe in their authenticity in such an age as ours is one of the strongest confirmations of the power of superstition. That these people can be made to grovel and abase themselves is surely a disgrace to the reason of that noble animal, man. But reason and faith can never really combine. One must conquer the other. Let us hope, for the sake of mankind, it will always be reason that prevails.

H. CUTNER.

Holy Water

IN my childhood I thought I knew all there was to be known about holy water, but later travel taught me how little I really knew. The kind I had experience with, was of the local brand, or of my own religious world only, which cured bodily and mental ailments, corrected physical defects, warded off evil spirits, and protected against lightning, storm, fire, famine, flood, pestilence, and other disasters. Some water was more potent than others, or better for certain purposes, according to the shrine at which it was blessed or the peculiar sanctity of the blesser; but more efficient was that blessed at Rome by the "Vicar of God on Earth," and best of all was that coming from the tiny spring at Lourdes, where the "Mother of God" appeared on eighteen occasions to the little illiterate peasant girl. So sacred has this spot in the foothills of the Pyrenes become, and so strong the worship of the sainted Bernadette, that in ten years, the time of the forthcoming centenary celebration of the apparitions, the emotional urge of the devout may desire the Holy See to move again to Gaul: this time to erect its temples and palaces about Massabielle.

We now move on to Egypt, where the Nile has always been considered sacred, for on it alone has depended the fertility of the land. In the old days it was considered a God, and to-day the natives believe that its waters come from God, and, with immunity, they scoop up the murky water to drink, even while scrubbing their donkeys, camels and their own dusky hides.

To these natives and to all Mahomedans the water from the purling well, Zemzem, at the Kaabah at Mecca is the most precious of all, and fortunate is the man who possesses a phial of it to aid him in life, and to have sprinkled on his shroud at his death.

Up to now we have been dealing with waters that exert their influence in this life; but in India, the land of metaphysical fog, which the credulous call "the Mother of Mystery," we begin to know what real holy water is, affecting not only the present, but the past and future as well; and this beneficent fluid comes from the cow, water that has touched the body of the spiritual teachers, and the water of the Ganges.

The metaphysics of the Hindu pronounces that life, the finite experience of the soul, is a curse due originally to rebellion of parts of the infinite soul in desire for individuality. The soul is doomed to wander (samsara) in continued reincarnations from body to

body until release (moksha) from the original sin and acquired acts or works (karma) brings about nirvana which is re-absorption into the infinite spirit, Brahma.

Nirvana can be attained through yoga, a mental and oxygen intoxication arrived at through fixation of thought and over-oxygenation through forced breathing; through sacrifice and mutilation; and through the use of holy water from the already-mentioned sources.

All products of the cow are sacred: milk, fæces and urine, and are applied copiously internally as well as externally for bodily maladies as well as spiritual troubles, and were it not for the sad depravity of it all an element of humour could be had from the vignette of a devotee, bowl in hand, patiently following the good beast, wherever it listeth to wander, until it is prepared to part with its wonder-working fluid.

Owing to the holiness of the guru or religious leader, water touching his body has great potency, and the malodorous water of the washing of his body and feet is paid for lavishly and lapped up with gusto. Gurus travelling abroad deplore the fact that such sluicing is no longer of profit to them.

But the laurels for all that is perfect in holy water most go to Mother Ganges, known also as the goddess Ganga. She can perform any miracle, but the greatest miracle is that she does not kill all of the countless thousands who bathe in and partake of her sewage-saturated, germ-laden body at that most mystical and fanatical of all cities—Benares. Sterilize the water and the god and the good would depart at once from it.

Some day impoverished nations may exploit these rich sources of revenue by placing their liquid panaceas on the market. What glowing prospectuses could be printed, and what fat dividends paid!

HADAD.

Honour is Satisfied

It is a doctrine that meets with much acceptance that when Freethought comes in at the door, the soul-qualities fly out by the window. There is ambiguity about the term "soul-qualities," so much so that secularists might as well save time by accepting the proposition. They could hardly be accused of sinning against the light. The term, however, is generally used to mean the higher faculties of man, such as the taste for music and literature, and even the love of beauty. Before me lies a copy of the *Observer*, in which a book-reviewer states that a certain author "can love both reason and beauty together." The fact that such a phrase can be penned shows how firm is the belief that the finer emotions of mankind are linked up in some subtle way with supernaturalism, and generally, with a special type of supernaturalism.

Darwin pored over Earthworms and Crustaceans, and confessed that his concentration on this and like subjects had affected his liking for poetry. Ever since, it has been considered as demonstrated by the spiritually full that man's finer qualities all spring from his belief in the wonderful adventures once upon a time of a certain Old Jewish Firm. To strengthen the thesis, it is pointed out that it is the Freethinker who leads the chorus against the Old School Tie, and the singing of hymns at Football Matches, and who bombards the free libraries for books by Strachey and other de-bunkers. The graceless Freethinker doesn't usually buy a *Har Cry* when shoved under his nose, and thus showing his sympathy for people who are "doing a lot of good" by preaching what they honestly believe at street corners. It is the Free-

thinker again who is so devoid of good form as to bellow out his beliefs in and out of season. Hear him in a third-class railway carriage trying to convince his dear old grandmother that there isn't any Hell. He has no nicety of touch this fellow; he has been known to joke even about Jesus. This, of course, is not freedom, but licence. In all books of etiquette it is laid down that dumbness on religion when it happens to be irreligion is the hall-mark of a gentleman. There can be little doubt that when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are, or is, exorcised from the human system, good form goes with them. Good form and godliness walk hand in hand with feelings that must on no account be hurt. For the most part the partners walk in a reverential calm, but every now and again they feel it necessary to be loudly insistent that they are indeed the salt of the earth.

Ingersoll, despite his lack of essential ingredients was admittedly a good husband, a good father, and a good companion in a miserable mundane kind of way. But one incident alone is sufficient to show his lack of the finer perceptions. Once when in St. Paul's Cathedral a guide explained to him the mysteries of the tomb of Wellington. It was pointed out that the body had first been enveloped in a shell, then in a lead casing, and then in an oak coffin. These were surrounded with enormous masses of marble, and over all was a bronze equestrian statue. Altogether (the guide pointed out) a very considerable tonnage. "Well," said Ingersoll, "I guess they've got him all right."

Now that is just the kind of remark that Ingersoll would make. A man without a soul is incapable of recognizing a magnificent weight, even when he sees one. It is as meaningless to him as a beautiful hole in the ground. Miles of bunting in the primary colours fail to evoke the correct æsthetic response in such a man. He is without spirituality, and therefore mentally and artistically a ragamuffin.

Years ago I remember meeting in a Newcastle street, an hour or two before noon, a young man and woman I knew well. "You're abroad rather early," I said, interrogatively. "Well, you see," was the reply, "we've been getting married." Freethinkers both, of course. Such casualness can only exist in conjunction with spiritual blindness. Given a hearty belief in a Saviour God, and instead of such deplorable symptoms there would have been evinced in them a passion to array themselves in fine raiment, to parade longly and ostentatiously, to ceremonialize and exhibitionize. In these directions go taste, refinement and decorum to-day in this our England. But Religion had departed from this unfortunate pair, and with the dam all the pretty chicks had departed too in one fell swoop. Nothing is left for them of the Vision Splendid. True, it is possible there remained a little private joy in their hearts that (in their worldliness) they rated rather highly. It was their own great adventure, they had their own little plans, their secrets. Miserable little secrets, perhaps, but their own. Poor fools, they were rejecting the realities, the banners, the trumpets, even the tintinnalulation of the bells!

I lately read an account of a *marriage-de-luxe*, wherein the entire spiritual wealth of Europe came to a great burgeoning. Here was taste indeed linked to both caution and correctitude. Every precaution taken so that the marriage was a real marriage, and not a highly unpleasant alternative. It was a dual ceremony. Ceremony Number One was conducted by a Grade One ecclesiastic of our own Church, the Church that is, of Henry VIII., the man with a bunch of wives and Defender of the Faith to boot. Ceremony Number Two was conducted by a prelate of the

Orthodox Greek Church. Now the Orthodox Greek Church is in danger of being overlooked in England. It is a vintage Church; it bears the unmistakable marks of Divinity. Any Member of the Church of Rome knows what these are. It is ancient; it preaches with acceptance to millions; its doctrines are mysterious and subtle; it has a keen and praiseworthy nose for a heresy. If Belloc and Chesterton had been born within its orbit, what Romance they would have found in its vaults and cloisters, how clear would have been its evidences, how thrilling its ceremonies! How History would seem to have been seen niggardly in its praises, and, whilst inspecting its dingy and murky corridors, how often would bushes have been mistaken for bears and bears for bushes. There but for the grace of God go they and many others, the unlucky devotees of a mis-directed Church.

It was in the *Daily Express* that I saw the details of this ceremony, and in a matter of this kind, and a few others, what the *Daily Express* says, goes. It was the Archbishop Germanos, Metropolitan of Thyateria, who officiated at ceremony Number Two, assisted by no less a personage than the Great Archimandrite Constantinidis. The Archimandrite first put the participants through a betrothal ceremony, this being necessary in the eyes of the divinely-guided Greek Church, but not necessary in the eyes of the divinely-guided Canterbury. In the betrothal ceremony, excellent business was done with a couple of rings "changing them from one hand to the other three times" out of compliment, plainly, to the Triune God. They were then pronounced betrothed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the marriage proper could then go forward. It is puzzling to the non-spiritual why the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in the presence of such excellent, studious and prayerful gentlemen like Canterbury and Germanos couldn't give them the same degree of enlightenment on what constitutes a marriage. Although they will agree on what constitutes good form (except on a few points concerning ecclesiastical precedence) such surely important matters as to whether there is a hell and if so, who is going there, and what is it like, remain still doubtful. This to some people is even a small question compared with whether a cohabitation is in the divine sight, sacred or profane. And yet these excellent theologians pore over the tomes elaborating the Queen of the Sciences, and arrive at no agreement on the points that really matter. Why are they so forsaken?

After the betrothal the marriage galloped withal. The service was in Greek and was correspondingly impressive. The ceremony of the Two Golden Crowns took the place of that of the Rings. The Greek may have failed to impress some of the congregation "in striking uniforms and court dress," but the Two Golden Crowns would have impressed the veriest clod. The two Crowns were held over the heads of the bride and bridegroom and then waved over their heads. Three times. Once for the Father, once for the Son and once for the Holy Ghost. Then the story of the marriage at Cana was read, and the teetotallers present shivered from head to foot. "Of course," you can hear them saying, "the Son of God was very young then." Then a cup of wine was taken from the table. The man touched it three times with his lips (once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Ghost). The woman did the same. The clergy and the bride and the bridegroom then moved three times round the table (once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Ghost). The bridesmaids held tapers, the deacons candles, and supporters behind the bride

and the bridegroom held the crowns over their heads. There is one point of comparative agreement amongst the students of Theology (the Queen of the Sciences) that if you give God plenty of candles, crowns and three-timeses, he is as happy as a sandboy.

And so at long last the time came for the Archbishop of Germanos to utter a few impressive words. We know, from the principles just elaborated, that these would have poetry, simplicity, grace, humanity, in short, they would be spiritual. He said to the bridegroom:—

"Be thou magnified, oh bridegroom, like Abraham, and be blessed like Isaac, and be fruitful like Jacob."

He said to the bride:—

"Be thou magnified like Sarah, rejoice like Rebecca, and fruitful like Rachael."

These be resonant words indeed, worthy of a mighty Creed. There was once a man, by name George William Foote, who in such circumstances with a hundred words to say, would have spontaneously uttered phrases redolent with beauty and meaning, words so appropriate and so wise that they would have remained in the memories of the young pair to the end of their lives, and would have been forgotten by few of those privileged to hear them. But then Foote, like Ingersoll, had no soul—and as for Good Form!

I can see the shade of Ingersoll hovering round the Palace. "What do you think of that, Bob?"

"Well I guess those young people have got fixed up all right!"

T.H.H.

Secularism and Social Credit

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

THE pages of history attest to the validity of that affirmation. And what "interest" is it to-day that continually strives to curtail individual liberty?

It is a popular belief that we are living in a democratic State. In common with many other popular beliefs, it is a survival from a state of affairs that existed to some extent at one time, but can scarcely be said to exist now. A perusal of Lord Hewart's excellent book, *The New Despotism*, will show how little the people are ruled by their elected representatives, and how much the high Permanent Officials of the State have assumed, and how they are increasingly assuming, the role of legislators and administrators.

As every student of the structure of modern Government knows, the Treasury holds the reins over all other Government Departments; and in practice the "Treasury" simply means the Head Officials of the Treasury. Those officials work in close co-operation with the "City," and the Treasury and the "City" are dovetailed to such an extent that it is impossible to say where the activities of one begins, and the activities of the other ends. The Bank of England is the controlling centre of the "City."

Let us be clear on that point: the Bank of England is a power behind and above the political government.

Let us now consider industry: since industry is largely in the hands of large joint-stock companies, the owners of industry must be the shareholders in the various companies. That is a simple fact, yet how many fail to appreciate its implications? How many thoughtlessly assume that "ownership" necessarily implies control?

The shareholders are technically represented by the Board of Directors; yet the shareholders have as much—or as little—control over the concern which they "own," as has the ordinary citizen over the Government which

"represents" him. Industry is run by paid managers, and those managers must operate within a field the boundaries of which are determined by the credit policy initiated by the Central Bank. By easing or restricting credit facilities the Bank can and does control industry; no matter how efficiently an industry is being conducted, the banks have the power to crush it; no matter how slackly a concern is being run, the banks can "nurse" it by supplying credit on generous terms.

In short, an examination of our politico-economic structure will show that power, power vast and uncontrolled, has passed into the hands of the Central Bank. That fact cannot be denied even by the bankers themselves, *vide* the Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna, Chairman of the Midland Bank, "... they who control the credit of the nation, direct the policy of Governments, and hold in the hollow of their hands the destiny of the people."

The theories of psychology and the facts of history both demonstrate that authority will ever endeavour, not only to maintain, but also to extend and intensify, its own authority. It sees its own good as the ultimate and only good, and will seek to silence all criticism, and render impotent all attempts at control on the part of those over whom authority is exercised. The evolution of society has passed power into the hands of the bankers, whether they did anything to manoeuvre into a suitable position or not; and owing to the highly centralized nature of contemporary society, and owing to the fact that a fair measure of economic security is an essential condition to individual freedom, the bankers wield power over the life of every individual in the community.

If that were all, it would be bad enough. But what are we to say when we are told that there is a defect in the monetary system through which that control is made effective? Here indeed we have the key to present-day world developments.

Because even although the banker had not his mind so saturated with preconceived notions that he is unable to examine the monetary system impartially, even then, he has an instinctive objection to correcting the defect in that system, since to correct the defect would inevitably give the individual economic freedom coupled to ever-increasing leisure. Then should we have an increasing demand for physical, intellectual, and cultural betterment upon the part of a people able to make their demands effective; and that would mean the beginning of the end of all tyrannies. The banking system cannot correct the defect within itself without rescinding its own power, and *that* it is disinclined to do.

Because of that defect in the economic basis of society, fissures and cracks are appearing in the superstructure; and progressive interferences with the liberties of the individual which we see taking place are but the desperate efforts of financial authority to hold together a system that is in process of disintegration. Authority does everything to check social dissolution, everything—but remove the cause of it. And as a consequence, an emotional atmosphere of repression is generated which is favourable to the development of a hundred and one petty tyrannies. Surely this is a matter which Secularism must consider of urgent importance?

The nature of the defect in the monetary system cannot be adequately dealt with in a small article, but the reader is referred to the writings of Major C. H. Douglas. There he will find a complete exposition of the matter, and there also will he find an exposition of the plan which would provide a remedy.

Briefly, the defect in the monetary system operates in such a way that total incomes distributed by industry within any given period of time are never sufficient to buy the goods against which those incomes are issued. The result is a shortage of purchasing power in the existing financial-economic system.

And the remedy—the Social Credit proposal—is to supply everyone with additional purchasing power apart from and in addition to the income he receives from industry. The money to supply this additional purchasing power would not come out of savings or taxation, but would be created for the purpose, and issued with suitable checks to prevent inflation. The extent to which overall purchasing power could be thus

increased is limited only by the productive capacity of the community.

Every lover of freedom would do well to give those matters serious consideration. The New Slavery is on the threshold. And when we are completely in bondage, it will be too late to fight.

H. C. MUNRO.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
THE ART OF LIVING

SIR,—Will you permit me to congratulate the writer of the above articles, firstly for his subject, and secondly for his aim. If he keeps quality in view in preference to quantity he will be on safe ground, and this will be sufficient inspiration in his survey, but do not let him forget his Freethought angle when dealing with *things* controlled by *money*. Let him ask who controls the money? And when he has found the answer (if he does not know it already) let him go on his way rejoicing and writing on a subject that would not be acceptable to nine out of ten London periodicals. He should also take in his stride the regular occurrence of 150 deaths and 4,000 injured each week in the United Kingdom. Who wants speed? Is it the wicked Freethinker who must amass a great fortune to prove that he has been successful in the beastly scramble condoned by the virtuous Christian? Even the late G. W. Foote had the audacity to leave about £1,000 when he died. Speed will be found linked up with the control of money by the financial hierarchy; speed for those lower down is only another form of bread and circuses for those who never knew anything about the art of living. Miss Gertrude Jekyll in her book, *Old English Household Life*, has the following: "The road was a kind of world in itself, full of personal incident and human story. Now nearly all this is swept away; much that went by road is now carried by rail, and the roads are rendered offensive and unsightly by the petrol traffic and its needs. Our roadsides, formerly beautiful with wild flowers and grasses are now defiled with heaps of rank-smelling tarred stones and collections of empty tar barrels, the roads themselves are offensive with a half-stifling reek of tar, and their edges are harshly defined by a pitiless line of cement blocks. So much for our modern improvements; everything for haste and hurry—nothing for peace and quiet enjoyment and use of life. Surely there was truth in the mouth of the wise man who said we were 'progressing backward.'"

Christianity must take the responsibility for the mess, for as we know the number of Atheists and Freethinkers is negligible. And it is ironical that your Catholic (ahem) taste allows a series of articles on the matter which is vitally important to *all* human beings. Apologies for the length of this note; have boiled it down as much as possible.

C-DE-B.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON,

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Messrs. W. B. Collins and E. Gee. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Gee and Tason. *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, Calpham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. W. Kent (Author of *London for Everyman*, etc.)—"Dickens and His 'Life of Our Lord.'"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0 Olaf Stapledon—"Humanism and Superhumanism."

(Continued on page 631.)

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(Continued from page 630.)

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4) : 8.0, Monday, December 31, Mr. P. Goldman—"Women and Crime."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, W. D. Collins—"The Early History of Man."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Cinema, entrance in Lorn Street) : 7.0, Wm. J. Paul (Neston)—"Storm over Europe—The Death Struggle of Violence."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Mrs. M. Whitefield—"Toward a Better World." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Amy Capenerhurst—"Afoot in Switzerland." Illustrated by Lantern Slides taken by Amy and Leon Capenerhurst.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema) : 7.0, Demonstration by local speakers.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, Laygate) : 7.0, Friday, December 28, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Free-will or Determinism."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street) : 7.0, Mr. Robson—"Why I am not a Christian."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEK.

General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

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

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

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

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

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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