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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>The Creed of Haziness—The Editor</i>	- 209
<i>Bierce the Bohemian—Mimmermus</i>	- 210
<i>Christianity and Mythology—H. Cutner</i>	- 211
<i>The Bilge of Beverley—G. H. Taylor</i>	- 213
<i>Secularists and War—George Bedborough</i>	- 213
<i>The Book Shop—C-de-B.</i>	- 214
<i>The Extension of Geographical Discovery—T. F. Palmer</i>	218
<i>The Power of Faith—Ignotus</i>	- 219
<i>The Fall of Reason—J. Reeves</i>	- 220
<i>Ingersoll's Advice to Parents—Robert G. Ingersoll</i>	- 221

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

Views and Opinions

The Creed of Haziness

WHATEVER was the exact date at which Christianity began, and quite apart from the question of whether or not it represented a body of doctrines new to the world, there is no question whatever that when we first meet with Christianity it appears as a definite body of doctrines. I do not mean by this that all who called themselves Christians were agreed upon what the essential doctrines were. On that subject Christians as a whole have never been in agreement. What I mean is that to each different body of believers what they accepted as Christianity was definite and precise. They had no doubt as to what they meant by "Christian doctrines," and it was the very definiteness of their belief that created and accentuated differences. So that while, on the one hand, quarrels between Christians forced them to define more sharply the beliefs that divided them, the divisions that existed led them to place the greater importance upon those who were banded together upon exhibiting exact uniformity of belief.

This definiteness of doctrine remained so long as Christendom was divided into only Christian sects. There was no common enemy whose strength was enough to drive them together for mutual defence or for the purpose of making a common attack. But, mainly as a consequence of the growth of a new knowledge of nature, Christendom began to exhibit frames of mind that were decidedly anti-Christian in their character and influence. The development of the various sciences, the influence of comparative mythology, and the influence of the industrial developments of the world, developed frames of thought which drive Christians together for mutual protection. Hence the attempt to find some common ground for all Christians, and a marked tendency to state Christianity in such indefinite terms that no one could be sure as to what it really was. The climax of absurdity was reached in recent times when Christianity was declared to be synonymous with decency of life

and character, so that it became quite common to hear avowed Atheists spoken of as "real Christians" without their knowing it.

* * *

A Tenuous Faith

I have for so long been emphasizing the consideration that the surest indication of the decay of Christianity is its amorphous character, that it is at least interesting, to me, to find this same point stressed in a leading article in the *Christian World* for March 28, by a Doctor of Divinity, Arthur C. Hill. Perhaps Dr. Hill has been reading the *Freethinker*, for this paper manages to exert an influence in a great many unexpected places. Consider the following:—

The trouble is that to-day Christianity of the liberal kind can scarcely be either attacked or defended with effect, and it cannot be defended because it cannot be attacked. You cannot fight with a balloon, a feather-bed, a jelly-fish or whatever else may be thought of as soft, yielding plastic, having no sharp lines or corners.

How often has it been pointed out in these columns that the value of a word lies in its definiteness, in what it excludes as well as in what it includes; and that when men expand such words as Christianity or religion until it means nothing in particular, and almost everything in general, they are exhibiting either moral cowardice, or mental haziness, or probably a mixture of both. The man who says to two people in a serious dispute, "Well, perhaps you are both right," is not showing a liberal mind, he is exhibiting himself as either a coward or a fool. When Dr. Hill says, "If a thing is said to be everything, it ceases to be anything. For effective work in the world there must be distinction, separation, the effort to define, to mark off a set of ideas as distinct from the vague generalizings of a multitude of men," it sounds like an excerpt from pp. 32-3 of my *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*.

Or take this description of the habit our present-day theologians have of clinging to the skirts of some well-known scientists, who by ignoring a great deal of their science and attenuating a great deal of their religion decide that by making religion sufficiently unintelligible and science sufficiently unthinkable, religion may be found to have a solid basis in science.

Almost pathetic is the eagerness with which our leaders have welcomed certain recent changes in physical theory. These changes, connected with famous names in science, have seemed to offer a breathing space to the tired defenders of tottering doctrines, and I suppose that every preacher must now interlard his discourse with references to Einstein, Whitehead, Eddington and Jeans.

The situation is rather more than pathetic, it is contemptible. To find a religion that only the other day claimed to lay down laws for science, and which openly denounced the teachings of science on the sole ground

that they were hostile to religion, now fawning on any scientist who will tell them that if they will stress the present ignorance of science on some things, in order to show its affinity to the permanent ignorance of religion on everything, a reconciliation between religion and science will be affected, is simply ridiculous. It is an indication that Christianity is reaching a stage at which it can neither live honestly nor die with dignity. Here and there have been religions that have met an honourable death by forcible suppression. But it does not look as though Christianity will ever meet with so dignified an end. It looks like continuing an existence by all sorts of dishonourable tricks and twists of language and theory, until such time that even these are no longer of avail, and it passes as imperceptably as the last traces of summer's mist disappears before the heat of the rising sun.

* *

Christianity and Conduct

Here is another echo of the teaching of the *Freethinker*, which may well be taken to indicate its influence with those who may loudly, sometimes too loudly, protest that they know it not:—

Neither can we reduce the faith to obedience to certain rules of good social conduct and say that whoever is kind to his neighbour, tolerant towards the opinions of others, and merciful to the weak, is bound to be a Christian. He is not. He may be a Buddhist, an Atheist, or a Nordic philosopher. There is no point in this insistence that all good men are inevitably Christian. If they are, then Christianity as a religion ceases to have any specific reason for its existence and the world would presumably be just as well off without it. . . . It is not a question of tax-paying, law-obeying, business integrity, marital fidelity, or what not. All these qualities may be found in multitudes of decent people who have no relation with any sort of religion, with many of our own countrymen who have refused all sorts of contact with any form of Christianity. . . . And in justice to them we must admit it without thereby suggesting any sort of moral disapproval of their conduct, which may be as good as, or better than, our own. They are not Christians because they do not believe in Christianity, either through conscious repudiation of the history as false, of the doctrines as untrue, of the moral teachings as inconvenient or irrational. And we must accept their verdict for themselves. Plainly, then, Christianity is not a mere method of living. It is not kindness, or goodwill, or honesty, or fidelity, or anything of the kind.

* * *

Christianity and Morals

Now I like this because it clears away all the humbugging rubbish about all good men being Christians at heart, or true Christians, or real Christians, and the untruthful nonsense that timid non-Christians talk when they say they are not objecting to genuine Christianity, or to those who really try to carry out the teachings of Jesus. There is no greater reason for associating the name of Jesus with the qualities named by Dr. Hill than there is for associating them with the name of Martin Tupper. But the frame of mind indicted by Dr. Hill, the procrastinating timid character, the moral weakness and intellectual insincerity indicated by the disinclination to face clear issues, has a very close connexion with historic Christianity. One cannot pursue the policy of the Christian Church generation after generation without developing some very undesirable types of character. Judging Dr. Hill from what he has written, I am inclined to say that he would probably admit this, although I do not think he realizes that, if he admits it, he would be endorsing one of the greatest indictments of the influence of Christianity it is possible to frame.

The truth is, of course, that Christianity was not at all concerned with good conduct as such. There is no indication in the earlier Christian centuries that anything else was aimed at than a brotherhood of believers, each obeying the rules of his order. Nor is there any evidence that the non-Christian world ever saw in the Christians, examples of the social and ethical virtues, or that Christians themselves ever expected such recognition. One may challenge religious apologists to prove that any period of Christian history, morality, as such, was the main concern of Christian teachers, or a conspicuous quality in the lives of their followers. Ethics as an independent science never had a part in Christian theology; it did exist as such with the Greeks, but the Greeks had no sacred scriptures to cripple their intellects, and no priesthood of sufficient standing to make freedom of speculation a crime. And when Christians, within recent times, began to place some value upon morality as a social force, the impulse to do this came, not from the religious, but from the sceptical side of life.

All Freethinkers will, therefore, agree with Dr. Hill that a man is not a Christian because he exhibits in his own life an all-round excellence of character. But there are such persons as Christians, and it is when he comes to this that, writing as a Christian, he falls into the same vagueness of expression that he rightly condemns in his brother-believers. But an examination of this I must hold over until next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Bierce the Bohemian

“‘A fellow of infinite jest,’ of most excellent fancy.”
Shakespeare.

“Laughter, holding both its sides.”—*Milton*.

AMBROSE BIERCE, soldier, author, satirist, is better known in the United States than in England, although, for a time, he presented a picturesque figure in Fleet Street. In those far-off Victorian days, Bierce's mordant pen attracted many readers to the *London Figaro* and other periodicals. His rare talent was shabbily represented in more literary circles by stray books which are the joy of discriminating collectors, but in America he achieved the glory of a handsome collected edition in twelve volumes. It was well and happily done, for as a story-teller he rivals Maupassant, Poe, and Kipling. For humour he has, with reason, been credited by competent critics with being the finest satirist since Jonathan Swift, a rare compliment indeed.

Bierce's career is in all respects truly remarkable. When over seventy years of age the unsubduable old veteran left the bright lights of San Francisco to fight with the ragged regiments of General Villa in Mexico. A generation earlier he had fought in the American Civil War in the Federal Army, rising from a common soldier to the rank of major. At the close of the Civil War he wondered whether to devote his life to military or to literary pursuits. He decided to be an author, and made a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic that has lasted to the present day.

Why Bierce's books were not as popular as those by Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, and Jerome K. Jerome, is a mystery. That he is as funny as any of them is plain. If his humour was not appreciated by the British public to the extent of those others, it may be because he chose to strew his pages with caustic comments on religion. The proper study of mankind is man, and possibly the only burlesque that causes the mouth of the general public to broaden to a smile must also concern nature, and not the alleged super-

natural. Bierce deserved a place beside the other humorists, mainly because his work was of a rarer quality than theirs. Two of his books, written under the pen-name of "Dod Grile," bore titles, *The Fiend's Delight*, and *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull*. They revealed a mordant satire that is absolutely unique, and they were as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat. The title-page of *The Fiend's Delight* was provocative. It was ornamented with a line-drawing showing a sooty devil toasting a very fat baby at a large fire, whilst the accompanying letter-press reminded the reader that every day one should do a worthy action. Another facet of Bierce's brilliant genius was revealed in the book, *In the Midst of Life*, a series of very powerful short stories largely concerned with military episodes in the American Civil War, some of which for bare horror outdid Sheridan Lefanu and other masters of the Macabre.

Discussing Bierce's works, Gertrude Atherton said that he had the most realistic imagination of any of his contemporaries. This quality overflowed in his sardonic humour. Here are a few examples taken at random from his writings :

I once knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker—as he had need to be.

If a jackass were to describe the deity, he would represent him with long ears and a tail. Man's ideal is the higher and truer; he pictures him as somewhat resembling a man.

In calling a man a hog, it is the man who gets angry, but it is the hog who is insulted. Men are always taking up the quarrels of others.

Camels and Christians receive their burdens kneeling.

It is wicked to cheat on Sundays. The law recognizes this truth, and shuts up the shops.

Most people have no more definite idea of liberty than that it consists in being compelled by law to do as they like.

To pick out passages haphazard is not doing anything like justice to a brilliant and forceful writer. Not only does a jest's prosperity lie in the ear of him who hears it, but it has its life in an atmosphere of its own, and there are few plants so tender in the transplanting. Whilst publishers always pretend to seek for talent, one cannot help regretting the inadequate attention that Ambrose Bierce received at the hands of publishers on this side of "the herring pond." Of course, discriminating readers ultimately found out his works, but that the larger reading public should not have had a fuller opportunity of testing what he had written was unsatisfactory.

The function of a laugh-maker is far too often underestimated by serious people. The man who grins at you through a horse-collar, and sets you laughing back at him, does you a service, did you but know it. The physiological and psychological value of laughter has not so far been correctly appraised. Although eminent physicians bestow a certain mild patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor and subordinate place in the pharmacopœia, few will dispute that the humorists are actually benefactors of society. The great Rabelais, himself a doctor as well as an incomparable humorist, declared that laughter is the peculiar property of man. We tend to lose sight of this great truth, and this generation is, in this respect, far less wise than our forefathers, who knew how to laugh heartily. The man that has no music in his mind is not only uncultured, but discontented. Just as certainly the man who only laughs

half-heartedly and apologetically is only half a man. For it is only by brave and gay hearts that the best work of the world is done :—

"Of all the hearts' springs none are purer
Than the springs of the fountains of mirth.
He that sounds them has pierced the heart's hollows,
The places where tears are and sleep;
For the foam-flakes that dance in life's shallows
Are wrung from life's deep."

MIMNERMUS.

Christianity and Mythology

A REPLY TO MR. H. G. WOOD

It is quite refreshing to find a Christian so very solicitous for the welfare of Freethought as is Mr. Wood. I can assure him those of us who are in the movement will do their best to see it does not "depart from the solid foundation of truth and scholarship." I can assure him also that if the theories associated with the names of Dupuis, Volney, Robert Taylor, J. M. Robertson, W. B. Smith, and Arthur Drews, are all proved to be founded on "ignorance and prejudice," Freethought can still stand supreme in science, history, and philosophy. Freethought does not depend on the non-historicity of Jesus. If such a person ever lived, he was just a man, born like other men, and as liable to error, ignorance and stupidity as are all men. It is not Freethought which cares very much one way or another on the matter. It is Christianity to which a real Jesus Christ, as pictured in the Gospels, is necessary. Prove that this God-man or Man-God is a myth just like Osiris, or Jupiter, or Krishna, and Christianity has received a staggering blow from which it is quite impossible to recover. Hence such anxiety as Mr. Wood always shows in the letters and reviews on the question he has written for over two decades. He knows that a mythical Jesus—a Jesus only a little better conceived as an imaginary character than Aladdin—would knock the bottom out of the huge imposture of Christianity. Fancy keeping up such immense organizations as the various Christian Churches, building thousands of churches, chapels and temples, and printing millions of books, to say nothing of delivering an enormous number of sermons and exhortations, every year, all to and for a myth! It is fantastic.

Now, the real question is not whether John M. Robertson was right or wrong in his "central theses." The real question is whether the Jesus of Nazareth depicted in the Gospels (and by the Gospels I mean Apocryphal ones as well as the "canonical" ones), really lived. Did he? Was there a Son of the Living God, or God Himself, born of a virgin, performing numerous miracles, tried and crucified under Pontius Pilate, who rose from the dead and flew up to heaven, actually in Palestine at the beginning of our era? I can only say that if there is no "God"—and I do not believe there is—there could have been no such figure; and, conversely, if there is a God, anything could have happened. Even Aladdin and his wonderful lamp are conceivable to a devout Theist.

On the other hand, there is the Neo-Unitarian position, one to which quite a number of reverent Rationalists and Agnostics, and even some Atheists, adhere. You take away all the miracles, most of the "marvellous" parables and ethical teachings, you dissolve hell and the devil (or devils) into mistaken ideas, you give up the Virgin Birth, Incarnation, Resurrection and Ascension—you can also give up the Trial and Crucifixion—and the residue gives you the real Jesus, that Unique Personality which has stirred the world for centuries. For me the subtraction of everything that has made Jesus, the Jesus

of Mr. Wood, for example, leaves just *nothing at all*. Robertson could not conceal his contempt for the people who took up this position, and he quite rightly refused to discuss it seriously. What he did was to show not only the mythical elements which make up the Gospel story—elements universal at the time, as they could be applied to so many gods and sons of gods—but to show how these stories came into being and why they persisted. Mr. Wood says, "he had some ground for complaint that the central theses on which he challenged criticism were evaded and ignored." It seems a pity that he did not take up the challenge himself while Robertson was alive. He had plenty of time to do it. But Mr. Wood goes further. Scholars "shirked public discussion of his theses," because discussion with Robertson "was apt to be involved in a fog of petty detail." But one has only to look at the books Christian disputants did publish against Robertson to see how they moved heaven and earth to catch him making a wrong statement on "some petty detail." It formed one of the grounds of his complaint. How many of them attempted to deal with his case on broad and general lines? I am always reminded, in this connexion, of Dr. Lightfoot setting out to prove that *Supernatural Religion* was not worth the paper it was printed on, and instead of taking up the two great questions dealt with so thoroughly by its author, miracles and the Resurrection, spent almost the whole of his time in showing that Cassels was no scholar or that he got mixed up with his Greek tenses. And this from a "great" scholar! Mr. Wood says "the mythological solution of the problems of Jesus and the New Testament" show no prospect of being accepted "in scientific circles." Robertson used to call this way of settling the subject "bluster." What does Mr. Wood mean by "scientific circles"? General Eva Booth and Gypsy Smith? Mr. Arnold Lunn and the Pope? I think Mr. Wood could well have afforded the space devoted to pious hopes for keeping Free-thought clean from the contaminating influence of "ignorance and prejudice," to have given us the names of, say, twelve of the people concerned in the "scientific circles," with the titles of the books they have devoted to a reasoned discussion—as apart from bluster—of the myth-problem. We could then have seen upon what grounds they base their decision to reject the mythological solution.

As for the "Pre-Christian cult of Jesus," Robertson gave, in his books, detailed reasons for his belief. The evidence, supplemented by Drews and W. B. Smith, has convinced me that he was absolutely right. It has not convinced Mr. Wood. Well, what about it? Every reader has a right to his opinion; but because Mr. Wood is quite sure Robertson is wrong, that does not prove him so. In *Jesus and Judas* is the passage:—

If the reader, cowed by the truculent negations of some of the anti-mythologists, should reply that there is no documentary ground for the hypothesis of a pre-Christian Jesus-cult, let him be assured that he has been deceived. There are grounds in Jewish lore as well as in the book of Zechariah for the conviction that an ancient Jesus-cult underlies the legend of the admittedly unhistorical Joshua of the Old Testament. And these grounds are never examined by the defenders of the historicity of the gospel Jesus. Neither Jewish nor Christian commentators latterly face the fact that in Jewish "Talmudic" tradition there was a "Jesus, the Prince of the Presence," and a rite of "The Week of the Son," called by some "The Week of Jesus, the Son."

And this brings me to the Talmud, "the latest survey of the evidence," with which it appears I am quite unacquainted. Mr. Wood must really not flatter him-

self too far. I do not consider Dr. Klausner any authority at all—except for being able to translate the bastard Aramaic-Hebrew of the Talmud into modern Hebrew. His "evidence" on what it says about Jeshu, or Yeshu'a or Jesus Ben Pandira, or Ben Pantlira, or Ben Stada, or Satda, or whatever he is called, is utterly valueless. I invite Mr. Wood to tell me what *dates* are given to "Jeshua" something or other—100 B.C. or 100 A.D.—and to quote Klausner's quotations from the Talmud in support; and then to reconcile these dates with that attributed to "Jesus" of Nazareth. There is nothing in literature quite so hopelessly confused about "Jesus" than the Talmud; and no wonder, seeing that it was compiled about five or six hundred years after the supposed events.

As to Justin, I am sorry I attributed words used by Justin to Trypho; but the argument is not one bit altered through this "petty detail." Justin distinctly declares that his "Christ"—the Christ he was arguing with Trypho about—was called "Helper and Redeemer, the power of whose name even the demons do fear; and at this day, when they are exercised in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, they are overcome." That is, it is the Jesus Christ crucified under Pontius Pilate, and not some vague Christ, who is the Messiah. Trypho says, "But Christ—if he has indeed been born and exists anywhere—is unknown." He does not say or imply here that Jesus was born but Christ was not. He throws overboard the whole story. Now, I do not say I *know* Trypho spoke like that or thought like that in his time. But the fact that Justin reports it coming from a Jew is remarkable; and whatever else he makes Trypho say later in the dialogues does not really matter. There would have been no particular point in presenting a Jew who denied Jesus was the Messiah in or about 160 A.D. Most Jews did so then, and almost all do so now. The point which is so striking is that Trypho says that "Christ," if he were born even, is unknown. No wonder Mr. Wood and his fellow believers get more than angry when they think of the cussedness of the Jews in so consistently rejecting Jesus the Messiah. The Jews are indeed the living witnesses of the falsity of the whole Christian fable.

Mr. Wood takes me to task about my remarks on the so-called "Q" document; and says it ill-becomes me "to scoff" at it, seeing that Mr. Robertson believed in some kind of "Q." My own reading is that he believed in many "Q" documents. One of them was the Mystery Play, from which were taken the dramatic scenes of the Trial and Crucifixion; and there were various *Logia*. Mr. Wood had a splendid chance of showing that these "Q" writings were not the "strictly scientific" one or ones so devoutly believed in by our Christian apologists and semi-Rationalists like Dr. Conybeare. Though it may hurt Mr. Wood to say it, I can assure him I am not altogether "ignorant of the history and present position of the literary criticism of the gospels." Quite probably I have read all that Mr. Wood himself has read on the subject. But I am not too ready to accept everything that is so beautifully produced for me by Christian apologists. I am not inclined to accept them at their own valuation as "authorities." The "Q" document is sometimes even "Q" documents, and how many of them have been "scientifically discovered" I leave to Mr. Wood to decide.

In any case, the priority of Mark, even were it established, would not prove the historical existence of Jesus, or Christ, or the two conjoined. But it is *not* established. Robertson's fine appendix to *Jesus and Judas* proves that up to the hilt, and it has not, so far as I know, ever been seriously rebutted. I in-

vite the reader to study it, and, indeed, the whole book. A more lucid and learned demolition of the twin myths it deals with I have not come across. (Incidentally, my memory played me false; for Robertson does deal therein with Trypho and Justin.)

Finally, I trust Mr. Wood will take heart. He can rest assured I shall do my best to show that the only rational explanation of Christianity is the "Christ-myth." But, if he has the Truth, nothing that I say can prevail.

H. CUTNER.

The Bilge of Beverley

"Even if you are that silliest and most pitiable specimen, an Atheist, you will benefit by reading the Gospels. Whatever you may wish to write . . . a business report, a love letter, or a description of a Test Match." (Beverley Nichols, *Sunday Chronicle*, March 24.)

But I must begin with a confession. Until a few minutes ago I thought Beverley Nichols was a young woman, of a particularly weak type. This impression was not removed after seeing a special picture of Beverley in a bowler. It was formed by an occasional glance at some of the weekly, or rather, weakly, yard and a half he manages for the *Sunday Chronicle*, in whatever time he has left after spending a hectic week running into duchesses at street corners, and dropping across film stars over a cup of tea.

I am not specially biassed against the *Sunday Chronicle*: it is as reliable as any other paper for cricket and football scores. And the masterly extract which prefaces my remarks is culled from Mr. Nichols' latest meanderings, the main gist of which is, that he is confined to bed with flu, and has been reading the Bible, as a result of which combination he is feeling like I.

It will be courteous to presume from his remarks about "that pitiable specimen, an Atheist," that Beverley has had much personal experience of Atheists, has thoroughly acquainted himself with their position at first hand, has fortified himself with all the arguments against it, and as a result of extensive researches has satisfied himself that God exists, and that the Bible is his work, quite independently of any notions artificially inculcated when he was a child.

All of this is a very creditable performance, which must have taken up not a little of his time, thereby occasioning great disappointment to a swarm of exotic actresses and turned unknowns, who seek to waylay him at every turn.

Having cast out "pitiable specimens" like H. G. Wells, Prof. Levy, Haldane, Huxley, Russell, G. E. Moore, etc., Mr. Nichols now moves in a circle of his own, far above these contemptibles. At the same time, however, he is magnanimous enough to hold out a sovereign pity for these sorry folk, and in a fatherly way advises them to read the Bible.

If, then, literary midgets like Wells, Shaw, Powys, Mamin, etc., want to attain the heavenly heights of Mr. Nichols, they must read the Gospels. What the Gospels have done for Beverley may be seen in the remarkable English of the second sentence quoted at the head of these remarks. Such is, of course, the prerogative of the Sunday press. It is far too good to be allowed in an ordinary Council School.

Therefore, reader, before you write your next business report, or describe your next Test Match, or compose your next love letter, don't fail to look up your Gospel. And if by continued perseverance you can finally write a sentence that isn't, you will have placed your foot on the bottom rung of the ladder that leads to the bilge of Beverley.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Secularists and War

OUR readers are familiar with the views of the present editor of the *Freethinker*, as expressed in these columns, and in the book, *War, Civilization and the Churches*, as well as in an earlier pamphlet called *War and Civilization*. Mr. G. W. Foote, founder of the *Freethinker*, wrote *The Shadow of the Sword*, an admirably concise and convincing pamphlet for the Humanitarian League, denouncing War. But indeed it has always been one of the aims of the National Secular Society to PROMOTE PEACE. We do not think that aim will ever cease.

The following are extracts from JOTTINGS by Charles Bradlaugh, which appeared in the *National Reformer* on the dates appended:—

I am glad to see that the Bolton Branch of the N.S.S. has published a protest against the invasion of the Soudan, and the wholesale slaughter of unfortunate men whose only offence against us is that they are in arms in defence of their own country. I hope that other branches will also protest. I have protested from the first against our Egyptian policy. I saw its grave perils. In 1875 England commenced to meddle in Egypt by paying £4,000,000 to the insolvent Khedive. When in 1876 I was bitterly assailed by the Tories and received no support from the Liberals, it was only by the Freethinkers and Radicals that I was supported. I protested when England helped Ismael to borrow more money. I protested against the Dual Control and the financial misdeeds of Mr. Cave, Mr. Rivers and Mr. Goschen. I protested against the interference in dethroning Ismael and replacing him by Tewfik. I protested against our most insane opposition to Arabi, and the unjustifiable despatch of our fleet and troops to Alexandria. I protested against the murderous bombardment and subsequent invasion. I protested against the employment of Professor Palmer to bribe Arabs to betray their own country and against English officers being hired out as Hicks and Baker were in the Soudan, and I still protest against the horrible murders without any declaration of war, without any excuse except the rescue of troops who had gone into the Soudan independent of our authority. I protest against the loss of English blood and treasure in a fight against we know not whom for no real or justifiable reason unless it be that in the interest of the Egyptian bondholders we desire to keep Tewfik on the throne of Egypt, or intend ourselves to accept the responsibilities of Egyptian Government.

(*National Reformer*, March 30, 1884.)

The Archbishop of Canterbury has concocted the following touching prayer: "For Our Soldiers and Sailors in Egypt and South Africa," and has desired his Clergy to use it. "O Almighty God, King of all Kings and Governor of all things, that sittest on Thy Throne, judging right; We commend to Thy Fatherly Goodness the men who through the perils of war are serving this nation, beseeching Thee to take into Thy Hands both them and the Cause wherein their Country sends them. Be Thon their Tower of Strength, that armed with Thy Defence they may be protected through all dangers to glorify Thee who art the only Giver of Victory."

If the "Almighty Lord" "God" judges rightly very few of the men who are "serving the nation," will see its shores again. The "Cause wherein this country sends them," is one of brutal and cowardly aggression, and unprovoked invasion of uttermost unrighteousness. It is nothing to us if the Archbishop of Canterbury blasphemes his God by asking for His sympathy with national crime, but it must be rather trying for the moral folk in the churches.

(*National Reformer*, November 30, 1884.)

In South Africa, our curses on the Zulus have come home to roost. The Boers whom Sir Bartle Frere praised as a people with Pentateuchal instincts for a land of promise are now denounced by Sir Bartle's friends and disciples as a bloodthirsty and treacherous freebooting race. They, at any rate, can reply that they are no worse than their English critics, and have as much right as we to steal the black man's land. Both Dutch and English, in turn, impartially attack the African, civilizing him rapidly by means of explosive bullet, dynamite and other sources of Christian civilization.

(*National Reformer*, December 28, 1884.)

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The Book Shop

VIVID impressions of the external world appear to the young, and if chance makes such impressions memorable by the beauty of the objects seen, they endure for a lifetime. There was a country lane down which we walked to school; on one side a crystal brook washed the foot of a flowery bank facing the south. The bank was a naturalist's paradise, and its priceless beauty is now remembered after the flight of many seasons. There have been, and will be, many more tardy schoolboys walking down that lane, and they too will see and perhaps remember pleasant pictures at the dawn of consciousness. In the Freethought movement there are youthful additions made to its strength; more substantial mental fare than they have been accustomed to will be placed before them, and now, having arrived at the door of my purpose, a knock is given and we enter. What to old writers is old and well-known is not known to youth, and this must be remembered when we turn to those authors not affected by age; they were, through the breadth of Freethought, a revelation to us: they can be no less to young men and young women who have forsaken the sterile paths of supernaturalism. This, my apology, for frequent contact with the old writers; new light comes in the re-visit, and with Schiller we may say, "We lay many a book aside which we do not understand, but perhaps in a few years we shall understand it better." Still, with truth, he could have omitted the negative from this statement, which will be found at the conclusion of his *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical*. If Einstein caught light bending, we shall for youth occasionally capture the illustrious ancients for mutual aid.

In the last but one series of the "Book Shop," mention was made of Whitman. Casually a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* came our way. It is good clinking verse, free from metaphysical fal-de-rals, a trifle despondent, but xxxii. shall be put together with a brief extract from *Song of Myself* just to show similarity. Here is A. E. Housman touching the ephemeral:—

From far, from eve and morning
And you twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

Now—for a breath I tarry
Nor yet disperse apart—
Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters
I take my endless way.

And now Whitman dealing with the same subject in three lines:—

Listener up there! What have you to confide to me?
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a
minute longer.)

These two men, by their written thoughts, live "in the noble weather of their own minds," as Thornton Wilder phrases it; and what is noble weather if it be not free thought and free speech? And just to touch modernity we quote good company for this paragraph. "Pretence is a pain in the neck to anybody." You may or may not be surprised to learn that this is Mac West's contribution to thought, surfeited with the artificial world. This world can put that in its pipe and smoke it.

C-de-B. has learned, and it is passed on for your delight, that aeroplanes carry, from Holland to England, loads of that deliciously scented flower, white lilac. Even in madness, as in some philosophies, commonsense keeps breaking through.

Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought, by Chapman Cohen, has been reviewed in the *Freethinker*, but that fact shall not deny my tribute to its excellence. In reading this book one must keep mentally alert, and that in

itself is salutary and bracing. Read slowly, it reveals a precision in the use of words, clarity of thought, and a masterly handling of facts. The book is a first-class companion to *Materialism Re-stated*, and alike in its brevity. It can be studied with profit by the Christian, the Nothingarian, and the Freethinker; there is no quarter given to loose thinking, and the particular use of "forthright" on page 46 would have rejoiced the hearts of William Morris and Ingersoll. The student, frequently confronted with a quagmire of words labelled mysticism, new thought and neo-philosophy, etc., will now be fully armed if he has absorbed the ideas of this book. Helpful in a great degree are the following snippets from page 113:—

Let anyone who wishes to study the philosophy of science, and not merely fill his head with the not very valuable knowledge about the age of the earth, or the distance of the stars—information that one may well leave on one's bookshelves to consult when necessary—get the fact into his head that all we know or can think of ever knowing is based on experience, and he will save himself from many pitfalls. And along with that let him get hold of two other things. . . . The first is that all thinking, all cognition, and re-cognition, must be expressed in terms of likeness and difference. . . . The second thing to bear in mind follows from the starting point that our world is a world of experience. Some experience must lie at the foundation of all we think or believe.

In our own volume of Locke is an underlining:—

For no definitions that I know, no suppositions of any sect, are of force enough to destroy constant experience; and perhaps it is the affectation of knowing beyond what we perceive that makes so much useless dispute and noise in the world.

The chief word in that sentence of unique criticism is "affectation"; it brings down to the ground all the fowl from their perches in literary and economic and superstitious hen-roosts. Mr. Cohen deserves our thanks for this volume; it is well for us to be frequently reminded that many words are either blobs of meaningless print or noises from the throat. "If," he writes, "people had only cultivated this habit of splitting hairs a great many split heads would have been saved, and a great many of our social troubles would never have existed." Gustave Flaubert, replying to Sainte-Beuve's criticism of Salammbô, wrote: "If call stones blue, it is because blue is the precise word, believe me." May our editor long retain the energy to prod us (with a smile) out of our somnolence, and, in the words of Alexander and Mo, help us to "disentangle" ourselves.

C-DE-B.

Acid Drops

Father Vincent McNabb, in the course of an address on "Marriage"—and being a celibate priest, he is bound to know all about it—said that "The best present you can give a child is not a mechanical toy, but a brother or sister." What a pity these priests and nuns do not themselves take to heart this advice. They seem rather too anxious for other people to take the advice and the responsibility. Crowds of people would perhaps like to increase their families, but they are not always able to bring up a large number of children decently. Moreover, these priests never will face the question: Can an unemployed working man or one who has nothing but the dole, bring up a large family? If not, Father McNabb's advice—except to the wealthy—is nonsense.

In a work written by several people called *Faith that Illuminates*, Mr. T. S. Eliot, who is a thorough believer, discourses on "Religion and Literature." He notices what has been observed by others before, and that is, how secular or indeed atheistic, many of our great writers are becoming. "Fielding, Dickens and Thackeray," says a reviewer, "took the Faith, in its contemporary version for granted, and omitted it from their picture. George Eliot, Meredith and Hardy doubted, worried about, or contested, the Faith. Contemporary novelists as a class, have never heard of the Christian Faith, or

treat it as an anachronism. . . . A future age, if it reads Galsworthy or Arnold Bennett, might suppose that belief in the Gospel had ceased to exist in the twentieth century." We are pleased to note the admission. Whether Mr. Eliot has any remedy we don't know, but it would certainly be interesting if he could convince our modern novelists that Christianity—whether that of General Booth or the Pope does not matter—is true. Could there be a more hopeless task?

It is wonderful how confidently Catholics can explain God. One pious editor, having to reply to a puzzled reader, does so in this fashion:—

God is omniscient, and therefore knows all things. But it is equally true that God does not exist in time, and there is no succession in his knowledge. There is no yesterday or tomorrow for God. In that sense it is true to say that God did not know "beforehand" of the Fall of Man. But God knows always in His Eternal Existence of all that happens in this world.

That disposes of the text in the Epistle of John, that "God knoweth all things"—unless knoweth *all* things does not mean knoweth *all* things. But in any case, anyone who wants God carefully described, tabulated, his knowledge and capacity judged, should apply to a Roman Catholic priest. Any query about God will be answered unhesitatingly.

Mr. de Valera said in a broadcast, the other day: "Since the coming of St. Patrick, 1,500 years ago, Ireland has been a Catholic nation. All the ruthless attempts made down through the centuries to force her from this allegiance have not shaken her faith. She remains a Catholic nation." This is almost, if not quite, true. The return of Cardinal MacRory from Australia was marked by huge crowds waiting for hours to see the procession. A photograph of the square of Collins Barracks, Dublin, shows thousands of Irish soldiers grovelling on their knees, with officers also grovelling before a Catholic priest. The people, as the Cardinal passed, fell "on their knees," and prayed for his blessing. Mr. de Valera and his ministers drove in state through Dublin to the Pro-Cathedral, where Archbishop Byrne presided at Mass; and many other Masses were celebrated elsewhere. Ireland is Catholic all right, but are there many other countries in the world which can beat her for crass superstition and religious fear? *And grovelling?*

In an excellent article on "London University and Indian Students," in the University Supplement to *Time and Tide* of March 16, we read: "Christian societies in Colleges make friendly approaches to the Indian student, but as a rule the Indian is not much flattered by this." This is highly entertaining. God devised the Garden and the Snake and Original Sin and an ingenious Scheme of Salvation for the Human Race (to which the Indians belong) and all the Indians do is to sniff. How odd of God to make the Indians! Is it to be wondered at that "the activities of the Indian student in London are closely watched"?

The Rev. John Bevan boldly attacks the Christian doctrine of "The Fall." He objects to man being blamed for being in the environment in which he finds himself. "Since the Fall has always had the notion of human culpability inherent in it, there is nothing, in my judgment to be said in favour of it as an article of religious faith." Mr. Bevan's liberty to say these things was bought by the agony and deaths of many heretics. We wonder how many generations will pass before ALL the Christian dogmas receive similar treatment from ALL human beings. Mr. Bevan is just one individual brave Christian. No single sect or denomination which has ever inscribed the dogma of the Fall on its banner has yet erased it. Dogmas are endowed!

Father A. Knapp, O.P., is an excellent entertainer when he is exposing spiritualistic humbug. He declares that all spirit photographs are frauds. He gave an imitation "Seance" to the members of the Streatham Catholic

League, claiming that "there was nothing alleged to be produced by spirit aid which could not be reproduced by a clever conjurer." But his conclusion was a very tame and impotent affair, namely:—

We know perfectly well there is Heaven, but it is absurd to think there is a world like that the Spiritualists talk about.

The Spirit world is all that Father Knapp calls it, but the Catholic Heaven is no better than the heaven of the Spiritualists, and the Catholic Hell is worse than "absurd."

The Bishop of Southwark, Dr. R. G. Parsons, is in favour of voluntary sterilization. Now this from a bishop is an admission that the Almighty has bungled his job very badly, and even Atheists would not impute such imperfection in workmanship to God. It is indeed grave impertinence on the part of the worker in the Lord's vineyard, and a criticism of this kind should have a resounding effect in the counting house of heaven where celestial debts and credits are part of the daily doings of mortals.

There seems to be no limit to the marvellous cures performed by Catholic saints after they are dead. Mr. Richeri of San Francisco, had been suffering from cancer for twenty years. Examined by doctors, he was given up as hopeless, and an operation would have been too dangerous. A priest was called to give the Last Sacraments. Mr. Richeri called upon St. John Bosco and immediately after got up, completely cured. The doctors discovered there was no trace of cancer left. This kind of cure is going to endanger seriously that other marvellous specific—Christian Science—which, as is well known, cures by the simple reading of *Science and Health*. What are doctors and hospitals going to do about it? What with Catholic saints, on the one hand, and Mrs. Eddy on the other, it looks as if doctors will soon be on the dole. And as for drug manufacturers their plight may even be more pitiable. The saints be praised!

The Rev. J. D. Jones, a Nonconformist parson, in his *Morning and Evening* admits that "there can be no such thing as a final orthodoxy," but confesses that he is "more than a little disturbed sometimes by the lengths to which some of our advanced men go." Some, indeed, are so advanced that they have given up all the miracles of Jesus, his virgin birth, his trial and crucifixion, his resurrection, and even the gospels as historical documents. On what is left they proudly declare themselves to be true Christians!

Dr. Ernest Mackay, who has just written a book on the Indus civilization, gives a fine description of how men built self-contained flats, underground drains, streets of four lines of traffic, and many other marvels, before the year 3,000 B.C. The puzzled leader-writer of the *Daily Express* asks, "What have the human race been dawdling over for the last 5,000 years?" We can tell him what killed Roman and Greek civilization from, say, 300 A.D. to 1500 A.D., admitted even by pious historians to be the "Dark Ages." It was true Christianity—with its hordes of filthy monks and saints, its salvation by blood and faith, its terrorism through hell and the devil, and its utter repudiation of science and education. And there are many Fundamentalists who would welcome a return to this orthodox barbarism.

A phrase in the *Methodist Recorder*, quoting what the Rev. Ensor Walters said when speaking at King's Cross Mission, indicates fairly well the Secularist case against religion. It says, "In the main part of his speech, Mr. Walters had little to say about public affairs, but much of the Heavenly Father who had the care of people living hard lives." He spoke in a very slummy neighbourhood, and his only recorded reference to any sort of approach to humanity was a silly suggestion "To the men in the gallery," that "if Jesus came He would sit with them." What a Jesus, what a "mission," and what a help to humanity.

Canon Guy Rogers of Birmingham referred to the terrible toll of human lives represented by the fatalities on the road. He rejoiced that some slight reduction has taken place, but "he considered the Church had been singularly lacking in its influence in this sphere." While we should omit the word "singular," we think the condemnation deserved.

Are Christians getting modest at long last? The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, speaking at Nottingham, actually admitted that England is a "Pagan" country. We seem to remember many claims made by the churches that this is a Christian country. If Mr. Weatherhead's view is going to be adopted by pious politicians, we may at least expect that Sabbatarianism and all kinds of compulsory Christianity forced upon a far too patient majority will be recognized now for the Dictatorship it is. If we are a pagan country, let paganism have the same liberty it gives the church-goers. There can be neither sense nor justice in shutting pagans out of pagan entertainments merely to allow Christians the rights pagans are not denying them, of attending as many churches as they desire.

The Bishop of London's queer views about what his God thought about the War continue to intrigue him. God so loved the World-war—but let us quote the latest refinement of our most highly-paid bishop, in the *Sunday Graphic*:—

A Cockney was once very perturbed over the fact that the other side might be praying for victory, too. He took his problem to the parish priest.

"Vicar," he said, "we're praying to win, and the other blokes are probably praying to beat us. What about that? Is God going to be on our side or on theirs?"

This was the great puzzle during the war, but the answer is that God would decide according to justice.

God and the "Cockney" bishop are the only "blokes" we ever heard of who regard the present state of Europe (the direct result of the war) as bearing any relation to "justice." God's "Decision" was, we presume, embodied in the Treaty of Versailles and its companion follies.

A correspondent of Prof. Findlay writes asking his explanation of one of the silliest stories in the history of that super-serious old foggy, Paul the Founder of Christianity. Acts xvi tells the yarn. A fortune-teller, or as we should say to-day, a "Medium" met Paul and his companions, and at once "spotted" them as genuine prophets of God. Paul was flabbergasted. He called on "the spirit" to "Come out of her." He did? But why Paul should upset the apple-cart in order to discredit a lady who was "all for him," is a mystery. Dr. Findlay puts Paul in his proper place, saying "Paul believed that her faculty of thought-reading was the work of an evil spirit," but the Professor knows better. "Modern psychologists would explain the facts in another way." Yes, Professor, and not only MODERN scientists. Hippocrates (B.C. 400) knew what Epilepsy was. He knew its nature, while Jesus (who, as God, had made the disease Himself) and Paul his apostle, believed in demoniacal possession: both these "authorities" actually holding a conversation with the demons we know now to have no existence.

The Rev. Albert Belden, in the *British Weekly*, finds the "incident of the destruction of the Gadarine swine," a "strange" one! Jesus, he says is quite unjustly accused of impropriety in making his "spirits" go into the swine and cause their undeserved death. Mr. Belden mildly exonerates his Saviour by claiming, "It is scarcely fair to hold Jesus responsible for the inefficient herding of the swine." This fattuous nonsense is almost beyond belief, but Mr. Belden outdoes his own foolishness by hinting, as an alternative judgment on his Lord that "it may well be that Jesus thought it worth while

to read the people of those parts a lesson." Mr. Belden's "lessons" are always a monument of puerile ineptitude.

"A sprat to catch a mackerel" is simplicity itself compared with what is going on in St. Alban's Church, Streatham. It appears the Vicar wants more money, not in itself extraordinary. The local "news" heads its story "Church Finance Causes Concern," "Collections drop." As it happens—fortunately, one would be inclined to say—there is a vacant curacy, so less money is needed just as the cash takings drop. Instead of letting well alone, a new Curate is being appointed, who, however will be able to collect more money and thus the expenditure on his salary may produce his salary—and there you are. It sounds like a monkey living on its own tail! (or should we say "tale"?)

A new light on why England is so imperfect. According to Mr. W. H. Bolton, Financial Secretary of the Brotherhood Movement (a job taking a lot of accountancy work, we imagine), says that "Christian England is not governed by a Christian policy." That is all very well, but nobody asked the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London to "govern" England during the War years. The "Government" of that day was not Atheistic. The only two Freethinkers in the Cabinet resigned rather than adopt the warmongering of their Christian colleagues. But the clerics (whose cannibal ravings in favour of bloodshed can be read in *Arms and the Clergy*) are cravenly lying if they suggest that their "policy" was not to drown all decency and humanity in the conduct of a war which inspired Dr. Campbell Morgan to describe it as "compelling the wrath of man to praise Him," and proving that "material ideals" were worse "than that Europe should be baptized in blood in the name of righteousness."

More statistics worth noting for future reference. The *Methodist Recorder* reports that in Bow "the surrounding population numbers 60,000, and of these residents 56,000 are outside places of worship on Sunday evenings. For fifty years, Nonconformist Churches in East London north of the Thames have been closed at the rate of one a year, and in the immediate neighbourhood of Bow Mission ten have been closed in as many years." It must indeed be an attractive gospel—to lure so many people away from the churches where it is preached.

We are not impressed by "homely yarns" which exultantly encourage human ignorance. Maurice Baring tells of a poor Russian peasant child in tears because of a loss. Kind-heartedly he gives the child ten kopecks "whereupon the child lifted up its eyes to God and made the sign of the cross," thanking the implacable skies instead of the human sympathy and the human hand which had given the timely aid. The *British Weekly* tells this story to belittle the obvious friend, in order to glorify superstition. The "moral" is a ghastly one—it must mean that ignorance is encouraged to ignore humanity. God has never given ten kopecks to anybody in all His fabled existence; it is cruelty to suggest that He does so.

The Rev. Ernest H. Jeffs, dismisses as irrelevant the question: "Why Drag in Religion?" All the same, he realizes, and acknowledges with rare candour that "Many people are getting on quite nicely without religion. They are absorbed in worthy occupations, they are inspired by honourable ambitions, they live on a decent level of good conduct and good comradeship, they have an alert social conscience." We regard the compliments as unduly patronizing, and we understand that "The spectacle of the high-minded humanist will continue to perplex" the ineradicable vanity of Christian "superiority." We waste words by saying the obvious thing—some Christians are "not bad." All we feel inclined to reply is that all theology is an attempt to fool mankind. All energy devoted to religion is diverted from potentially useful social effort. Mr. Jeffs' admissions show that sometimes Truth will out—even in a Christian newspaper.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Circulating and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 3s.; Anonymous, 10s.

R. J. JENKINSON.—Very pleased you have derived so much help from *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*. You have to allow for the power of prepossession in many quite able minds, and which prevents their recognizing what are obvious truths to those with a more receptive intelligence.

H. EVETTS.—Thanks. Unless those who are interested in Secular Education get more active than they are, we shall be finding religion more established in the schools than it is now. It is a piece of impertinence of the Derbyshire Education Committee to arrange for lectures on the Bible to the teachers under its control. To talk of those teachers not suffering who did not attend the lectures is just eye-wash. Teachers are, for the most part, very much afraid of permitting their opinions to be known, and may be coerced very easily. Very few of them will stand up against the councils under whom they serve.

W. J. MEALOR.—See "Sugar Plums."

J. MCKENNA.—You are quite correct in thinking that the sentence which stated we were not concerned with the censorship of opinion in Ireland was a "slip of the pen." We have always been, and trust we shall always be concerned with the infringement of human liberty wherever it takes place. But we are pleased that you know our position so well as to read the sentence as it should have read. The Freethought that is not wider than any national boundary is not worth very much.

M. ARMSFRONG.—Pleased to know you so much enjoyed the "splendid" meeting of Sunday last at Stockton. Mr. Cohen will not be lecturing again until the autumn.

"ANONYMOT'S" (Liverpool).—A large number of Mr. Cohen's articles have been reprinted in his three volumes of *Essays in Freethinking*. He hopes to get out a fourth volume this autumn. Glad you find "Views and Opinions" so interesting. There is nothing unusual in a Freethought paper losing money. We do not know any Freethought paper that has ever paid its way. The fifty-four years history that lie behind the *Freethinker* represents an amount of struggle and anxiety that only few can properly appreciate.

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

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

Sugar Plums

We must remind members and Branches of the N.S.S. that resolutions for the Agenda should be in the hands of the Secretary as early as possible. Any member is entitled to send in a resolution. The Conference will be held on Whit-Sunday, at Manchester, and as that is central for all the country, we hope to be able to report a really good attendance of members.

It may be remembered that we quoted from the *Liverpool Echo*, a notice of Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*, in which the book was called a "belated stab at the Churches." Considering the part played by the clergy in the last war, and in previous wars, and their present attitude, the phrase "belated stab" can only be attributed to a dislike to praise the book, as so many other reviews have done. But the interesting thing is that in a recent issue of the *Liverpool Echo* there is a special article dealing with the King's Jubilee, in which are some quotations concerning the late Kaiser, which might well form a page in a new edition of *Arms and the Clergy*. And we hope that a new edition will soon be called for. The book is valuable as an historical record, and for those who do really wish to point out the part the clergy have played in all wars.

There was a fine audience on Sunday night at Stockton to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Do the Dead Live?" The large hall was completely filled, and the address was punctuated with laughter and applause. Mr. Brighton, who has been doing some excellent work in the district, took the chair with much effect. There should be opportunity to build up a good branch at Stockton, and we hope it will be done.

The Manchester Branch will hold its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, April 13, at 3 p.m., in the Turners Restaurant, 7 Clarence Street, Albert Square, and all members are asked to make a special effort to attend. Important business will be transacted.

Mr. W. Collins, writing concerning Mr. Cohen's recent lecture in Manchester, says, that he has watched the steady growth of the meetings, from one hall to another, each larger than the last, and in each case attracting larger audiences. He says he is now looking forward to the time when the Society may "even make a profit on Mr. Cohen's meetings." We hope so too, and for the sake of all concerned, including the Cause. And that might easily be done if all lent a hand to the task. It is, however, gratifying that in both Liverpool and Manchester meetings have steadily increased in both numbers and in interest.

There is a very wide-spread move on foot to secure for the non-provided schools—the old voluntary sectarian schools—a larger measure of financial support than they already have, and also more definite religious instruction in the schools immediately under the control of local governing bodies. It is also possible that they may bid for the support of the Roman Catholic vote by promising further support for the maintenance of their schools. In the circumstances, we are glad to note that our old friend, Mr. Sydney Gimson, spoke as we should have expected him to speak at a meeting of the Leicester Education Committee on a resolution for the adoption of a religious syllabus, Mr. Gimson said:—

In so far as this syllabus will help to secure decent behaviour and good citizenship I am in favour of it, but the connexion between morals and religion is casual and adventitious. Many of the greatest crimes in the world have been committed in the name of religion and by religious people. Also it is doubtful whether the best way to insure a natural preference for decent upright behaviour in our young people is to include definite lessons in the school curriculum.

I am not going to move the rejection of this syllabus, this composite photograph of the opinion of 33 people, nor shall I criticize it in detail. If I did I know that my voice would be like that of John the Baptist, "A voice crying in the wilderness," but the whole thing is a mistake. What has become of the motto of the old Liberation Society? "The Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control." The degenerate descendants of the old Nonconformists seem to have lost all grasp of principle. In a national system of education it is not the business of the State to teach opinion either in religion or politics.

The State should, as far as possible, confine itself to the teaching of ascertained fact, to instilling a love of education into the new generation and helping them to

became good citizens. I shall do myself the honour of voting against the adoption of this syllabus and have a faint hope that a few others will do the same.

We wish that all Freethinkers who are members of Educational bodies were equally frank in voicing their opinions on this subject.

The Swansea Branch N.S.S. has arranged a debate between the Rev. Leon Atkin and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, to take place on Thursday, April 18, in the Central Hall, Orchard Street, Swansea. The subject for debate is "Do the Teachings of Jesus Support the Principles of Socialism?" Prices of admission are 6d., 1s., and reserved seats at 2s., tickets may be obtained from the Branch Secretary, Mr. B. G. Howells, 1 Baptist Well Place, Swansea, or the St. Paul's Church Social Fellowship. The chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m. by Alderman Dan Ewan, J.P.

Reason, the organ of the Rationalist Association of India, reprints a recent article from these columns on Sir Ambrose Fleming and Evolution. This journal appears to be doing some excellent Freethought work in India.

A novel we can recommend is Mr. Eden Phillpott's latest, *The Wife of Elias*, Hutchinson, 7s. 6d. Mr. Phillpott's hand has lost none of its cunning, and his characters in this book have a clarity of outline that makes them real. The author is not afraid (thousands are) of introducing Freethought in his story, besides rewarding the reader with cheerful wisdom instead of so much padding. To the assertion made by a character that "the Christian road is the only practical road," his master replies:—

Once—not now, Bill, Ready-made religion is out of date—a dead thing pretending to be alive. What's the good of it to a man too ignorant to grasp its claim, or a man too educated to admit its claim? We're all agreed that the world's a crazy sort of place, and lacking any plan, but where's the signal-post in sight pointing to a plan.

The Wife of Elias will be an acquisition, and a repayment for the time spent on reading it.

The Extension of Geographical Discovery

EUROPEAN voyages of discovery, east and west, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries initiated many changes in human affairs. In consequence of these undertakings, Western communities receded or advanced, and the more affluent States which for more than 2,000 years had ranged round the Mediterranean declined in power and influence with the extension of geographical knowledge. In the later Middle Ages, the advantageous position of Venice made that Republic the leading trade centre of the world. But after Portugal's fruitful voyages in the Eastern seas; the exploits of Columbus and his successors in their Western adventures and, above all, Magellan's circumnavigation of the earth, a new age emerged. The important German trading centres suffered severely, and it was only in the nineteenth century that Germany began to recover from the blow inflicted in long past years. England, the Low Countries and France, however, soon set forth on maritime adventure, and the foundations of their future triumphs were well and truly laid. For, with the newly-discovered sea-routes at their command, the more northerly communities were almost as well circumstanced for commercial activities as the inhabitants of the Spanish Peninsula.

Despite his Catholicism, the French monarch cynically ignored the Pope's apportionment of the newly-found countries to Spain and Portugal only; while Holland and England, countries that had discarded, or were about to discard all allegiance to Rome, made of it a mockery. Three years after the opening voyage of Columbus, the first of the Tudors, Henry VII. commissioned John Cabot, a Venetian living at Bristol, to seek a route to the Indies through a north-western passage, but the attempt was, of course, abortive.

Nevertheless, Newfoundland was rediscovered, and in 1534, the French sailed along the river St. Lawrence, and subsequently Canada was made a French possession. English voyagers now endeavoured to reach the Indies by a north-eastern channel, and in the reign of Edward VI., an expedition commanded by Sir Hugh Willoughby, and piloted by John Cabot's son, Sebastian, proceeded on this mission. One vessel only succeeded in reaching Archangel, whence the crew appear to have proceeded on land to Moscow, where they were received by the Tsar, Ivan the Terrible. After this failure, all attempts to reach the Far East by a north-eastern passage were abandoned. Still, this expedition led to the later establishment of beneficial commercial intercourse with Russia.

Another north-western exploration was conducted in 1576, when the famous Martin Frobisher voyaged to Greenland and Labrador, and, in a subsequent adventure, discovered the strait which bears his name. Frobisher, like many another celebrated Briton, was a Yorkshireman. He spent his boyhood on the sea and was ever dreaming of the discovery of a north-western channel to Cathay. He won renown as commander of the *Triumph* in the struggle with the Armada, and succumbed to injuries received at the siege of Crozet in 1594.

Humphrey Gilbert was then empowered by Elizabeth to find a sea-route to China by a northern channel, and to annex any discovered territory not already occupied by other European Powers. A colony was established at Newfoundland, but Gilbert and his frigate foundered in the Atlantic in 1583.

City merchants furnished another expedition in 1588, with Davis in command, and in his various voyages he sounded several channels running westward, and high hopes abounded of the gaining of a northerly route to the Far Eastern East. He sailed through what is now called Davis Strait, but his anticipations were naturally unrealized. Twenty years after, Hudson reached Spitzbergen and neared the North Pole, and in a later expedition discovered Hudson Bay as well as Hudson Strait, but he was never seen again. While serving in Holland, Hudson guided the Dutch to the Hudson River, on whose banks New Amsterdam, now New York, was founded. For a time, English expeditions ended with Baffin's voyages, which led to the discovery of Baffin's Land, with several islands situated north of the American mainland.

The Netherlands were also active at this period. The Dutch had revolted from the military and religious despotism of Catholic Spain. They decided in the first instance to avoid the seas traversed by their bitter enemies, and the States General sent Barentz to seek a north-eastern route to the Orient. Cherry Island was sighted, but their search proved abortive and they were perforce compelled to pursue the path prepared by the Portuguese.

As the realms of Spain and Portugal were for the moment united, the insurgent Dutch deemed themselves at liberty to plunder or annex any merchandise or colony flying the Iberian flag. The Dutch buccaneers were so successful that, within half a century,

they had expelled the Portuguese from many of their dearly-prized Eastern possessions. Malacca fell into Dutch hands in 1614, and they thus became masters of the Spice Islands. In 1619, Java, the brightest jewel in Holland's crown, became theirs, and by 1658, Ceylon was taken over as a Dutch possession.

England likewise participated in Eastern exploitation. The English East India Company was formed in the reign of Elizabeth, and this corporation soon persuaded the Dutch to concede a one-third share in the profits, or surplus values, derived from the Spice Islands' trade. But dissensions leading to expulsion and murder soon arose so, to avoid further trouble, the East India Company decided upon confining its attention to India itself. Madras and Bombay were then taken, while the islands decking the Indian Ocean were left to the care of the Dutch, whose ascendancy in the Eastern Seas made them the pioneers in Australian discovery, while the colony they established in South Africa in 1651 remained a Dutch possession until the time of the Napoleonic campaigns, when England annexed this settlement, as Holland was then a French province.

As all her Eastern imports passed through Venetian hands, Britain displayed an anxiety to obtain an overland route to Oriental regions. In the sixteenth century England endeavoured to make terms with Russia for this purpose. Negotiations proved abortive, but they served to induce the Russian ruler, Ivan, to open up relations with India and China himself. The Moscovite State was expanded towards the East, and a wider acquaintance with the Asiatic Continent resulted. But, even then, no one knew whether Siberia was continuous with the American land mass or separated by sea, and Peter the Great, in 1728, despatched Behring—a Dane in the Russian service, who had shown daring and ability in the conflict with Sweden—in order to ascertain the truth. From Kamtschatka he proceeded northwards by sea and sailed, quite unconsciously, within thirty miles of the shores of America in the strait that commemorates his name and fame, while in a later voyage he determined the geographical relations between the northern regions of the Old and New Worlds.

Many are the unrecorded heroisms of individual members of the human family. Nearly a century before Behring's first expedition a Cossack named Deschnev voyaged from the Siberian coast into the Polar Ocean, and proved that the Eastern and Western Continents were unconnected, but his story of this discovery was scouted until it was confirmed by Behring, and the strait revisited and accurately estimated by Captain Cook in 1778.

This, of course, in no way detracts from the sterling merits of Behring, who was ultimately wrecked on the uninhabited island named after him. There he died in 1741, and among the few survivors who escaped was Stellar, a scientist who composed a description of the tragic adventure.

Behring's voyages were unquestionably projected for the furtherance of geographical science and other useful purpose. England and Holland were almost exclusively concerned with commercial interests and advantages. Spain and Portugal, while fully alive to economic values, were also eager to spread their religion. Yet there can be little doubt that all the powers involved were smitten with envy when they noted the immense wealth amassed by the Venetian merchants from their virtual monopoly of the Eastern marts. Few indeed seem to have been inspired by loftier motives than those of self-aggrandisement. Yet the competing interests of the several States served to promote human understanding of the earth's surface with its varied aspects of faunal and floral life. Also,

despite the many unprepossessing motives which animated European adventure, and the powerful spirit of nationalism, even now so pertinaciously prevalent, we must cherish the belief that the day will dawn when an enduring passion for international hospitality and co-operation will exercise a controlling influence in the world of men.

T. F. PALMER.

The Power of the Faith

THERE can be no doubt that religious belief owes its continuance to sentimentality and self-centredness. Trust in the Lord and reliance on his promises, we are assured, means making things all right for the individual believer—in the world that now is, and in that which is to come. When the heart of the pious mother is thrilled by hearing her little toddling son of three say, "Dod is dood"; and when as an aged woman she hears that same child as a stalwart and "successful" man, past middle age, saying the same thing in another form, she is content to pray, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for I have seen the fulfilment of thy promise in giving me that for which I most deeply yearned."

Some time ago a retired doctor, in the course of a reminiscent letter to a great daily paper, wound up with this verdict upon his experiences of life: "God is very, very good." He was an example of the individual who has imbibed the essence of the Gospel at his mother's knee, who has been taught reverently to repeat, "Jesus tender shepherd hear me", "Around the Throne of God in Heaven," and "This night when I lie down to sleep." What is sucked in with one's mother's milk is bound to have a long-enduring influence. In infancy it is impressed upon us that certain words have a peculiarly sacred significance and to utter them "lightly" or "in vain" is to be guilty of a rather abhorrent kind of sin. This aspect of the matter is of peculiar interest when we consider the methods adopted by missionaries abroad. In these columns we lately had given to us a specimen of Genesis in pidgin English, in which the angel with the flaming sword is transfigured into a "big fellah" with a gun. Mark Twain tells of a converted tough who took up work as a Sunday School teacher, and interlarded his instruction with a good many swear words and cusses. But the children were not shocked. The words for them had been depolarized, and were merely part of every day conversation, as commonly used in their particularly rough community. Great is the power of words, which may tell either this way or that way according to the person who uses them or hears them!

What, however, is essential to keep in mind is that many believers find that the Gospel goods do not turn out according to sample. The storm and battle of life engage all the resistive power of the strongest. In the hardest ordeals, the believer is enjoined to throw all his burdens on the Lord. But in many cases the Lord throws them back again, and often with heavier burdens to boot! Still the believer with unquenchable faith cries out, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him!" The old lady who had suffered all the sorrows and privations possible to any human being was able to exclaim: "I've had all that; but thank God I have two teeth still left—one above and one below—and praise the Lord, they are opposite one another!"

Believers are exhorted to find consolation in the words of the sacred song:—

Brief life is here our portion—brief sorrow, short-lived care;
The life that knows no ending—the glorious life is *there!*

What is the present existence but a fleeting term of probation in which believers are to qualify for their eternal rest? They are but wanderers and pilgrims on the earth. Heaven is their home. This world is merely a succession of Sloughs of Despond, Valleys of Humiliation and Vanity Fairs. Oh to be over yonder!

In the writer's early youth—spent in a village—there was a very prevalent and unshaken belief in a material hell, and a personal devil equipped with all the horrific attributes and weapons of legend. Indeed, several of our enthusiastic Methodists had encountered him on lonely roads at night—and, praise to God, had routed him! Thunder was then the voice of God, and lightning the flash of his angry eye. Though it may be doubted whether the lightning was so terrifying as his steady and unwinking, unblinking big eye depicted in some coloured chromo or lithograph in the bedroom, having over it the text: "Thou God see'st me."

No, the meek and gentle Jesus of our earliest days is not adequate to reveal the Heavenly Father to poor stricken human beings. Yet Jesus himself asseverated that he and his Father were one. When a disciple asked him to show them the Father, he rejoined with, "Hast thou been so long time with me, and dost thou not know me, Philip?" The Early Fathers of the Church were at great pains to prove that God loved the world, and that his love was genuine and all embracing, so they sought to identify the man of sorrows with him, and claimed that God yearned with tears for the love of his human creatures. Freethinking philosophers had questioned the existence of God; or they denied the ecclesiastical claims for him if he did exist. Many who did not deny his existence from their experience of their own existence simply concluded that the so-called Father in Heaven could be nothing but an intolerable bully and tyrant. He had almighty power, which he employed to torture, scarify, thwart and persecute the vast majority of the human beings he had created. More than that, he had the effrontery to put upon them the responsibility for their wretched and parlous condition, though he had made them and not they themselves. He had made them black, white, brown, red and yellow, and was the author of the complex of each one physically and mentally. He also made flying lizards the size of big airships, and huge creeping monsters, whose appetites could only be satisfied by devouring a whole villageful of his human creatures. And we have still tigers, wolves, sharks and poisonous snakes, and active little bacilli and disease-bearing insects to keep mankind busy at the task of self-protection. A most commendable creator and universal Father! The retired doctor to whom life had been sweet, who had been so happy in his experience of life, exclaims, "God is very, very good!" By analogy one would expect a crippled stoker, blown up several times in the war, whose only consolation now is a borrowed chew or fill of black twist, or a nip of rum, to exclaim, "God is very, very bad!"

As some sapient commentator remarks: "It all depends on the point of view." The human wrecks in prison or workhouse, whose periods of existence have ever been characterized by kicks and orders to "move on," no doubt have an instinctive aversion from their experience of life to belief in the benevolence and beneficence of the Almighty Power whom believers living in comfortable surroundings worship as "Our Father which art in Heaven."

Scotland's bard said: "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn," and any careful student of the development of industry in our own country will find that the capitalists who were the

biggest slave drivers; for whom tiny children of both sexes toiled from early dawn to dewy eve; who always secured their pound of flesh; were the men most closely identified with the Christian Church. And sweaters and sweated are alike "creatures" of a loving Almighty God! Take him away! He isn't wholesome. He isn't nice to know.

IGNOTUS.

The Fall of Reason

We can now see clearly enough that Greek and Roman mystical philosophy, allied with common superstition—both of which were abundant during classical times, in spite of the admirable scientific work that was done—made a broad and easy way to the establishment of Christianity. The resulting general nescience, combined with the amazing determination to believe in things impossible, and even because they were impossible (*Credo quia impossibile*), involved a great fall of reason. And this has in some degree been repeated during the last two or three decades, a consequence in the main, no doubt, of the highly successful naturalistic and secularistic attack on Supernaturalism and other remnants of primitive and ancient superstition.

The newer state of things in early Christendom was well summarized by Prof. Harnack (*History of Dogma*): "A new world is disclosed for which everything else is given up, and men are ready to sacrifice insight and understanding in order to possess this world with certainty; and in the light which radiates from the world to come, that which in this world appears absurd becomes wisdom and wisdom folly."

It has been interestingly pointed out that, though reason fell, reasoning did not, and that the latter was often acute enough in the Dark and Middle Ages. We can even detect a certain degree of ratiocination in the contentions of the Early Fathers (e.g., Augustine and Lactantius) that there would be no antipodal peoples because no such race was mentioned in the Scriptures among the descendants of Adam, and because on the Day of Judgment such people would be unable to see the Lord descending through the air. Again, Aquinas at a latter date sought, among other things, to justify everlasting punishment in hell by the argument that, if there were not some people in eternal and infinite agony, the happiness of God would be incomplete, just as perfect whiteness would be impossible if it were not contrasted with perfect blackness. But the premises being vacuous the conclusions were necessarily so.

Passing by the well nigh incredible irrationality of the "Age of Faith," it might have been expected that the religious reformers would have been more rational. But we can hardly say that they were. Not only did Luther and Melancthon denounce Copernicus in the name of the Bible, but the former made bitter attacks on reason, calling it "a pretty harlot," in whose eyes he admitted that the pre-suppositions of Christianity were absurd. And early Protestants in general were as completely dominated by gross superstitions, such as demonology and witchery, as were Roman Catholics.

In view of these facts and considerations we conclude that the present revolt against reason as the criterion of objective truth is a mere recrudescence of ancient and medieval irrationality. The great failure seems to be the inability to grasp the fact that reasoning, to be of any value, must have as its basis ascertained, natural knowledge. Otherwise it may lead anywhere, as it did with the Neo-Platonists, who, as

Jowett stated (*Dialogues of Plato*), evolved a method which enabled them to read any meaning into any words.

We have to recognize further that power of mind in itself is not sufficient safeguard against erroneous conclusions. It is generally agreed, on anthropological evidence, that there has been very little, if any, increase in brain power or fundamental intelligence since "Modern Man" appeared some 20,000 years ago. Yet for the greater part of the time since that event, practically all men believed in a thousand fictions, from magic to transubstantiation, and apparently, until quite recently, no one thought of testing whether any of them were real or not. The power and tendency to do this evidently comes only from the slowly developing attitude of investigation, consequent on the mental training and knowledge gained from education, including, of course, study or self-education. This conclusion is congruous with the definition given (in very similar terms) by two leading educationists, Sir John Adams and Holman, viz., "the development of young persons by the communication and manipulation of knowledge."

J. REEVES.

Ingersoll's Advice to Parents

KEEP CHILDREN OUT OF CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Nothing is more outrageous than to take advantage of the helplessness of childhood to sow in the brain the seeds of error.

SHOULD parents who are infidels, unbelievers, or Atheists send their children to Sunday schools and churches to give them the benefit of Christian education?

Parents who do not believe the Bible to be an inspired book should not teach their children that it is. They should be absolutely honest. Hypocrisy is not a virtue, and, as a rule, lies are less valuable than facts.

An unbeliever should not allow the mind of his child to be deformed, stunted, and shrivelled by superstition. He should not allow the child's imagination to be polluted. Nothing is more outrageous than to take advantage of the helplessness of childhood to imprison the soul in the dungeon of fear, to teach dimpled infancy the infamous dogma of eternal pain—filling life with the glow and glare of hell.

No unbeliever should allow his child to be tortured in the orthodox inquisitions. He should defend the mind from attack as he would the body. He should recognize the rights of the soul. In the orthodox Sunday schools children are taught that it is a duty to believe, that evidence is not essential, that faith is independent of facts, and that religion is superior to reason. They are taught not to use their natural sense, not to tell what they really think, not to entertain a doubt, not to ask wicked questions, but to accept and believe what their teachers say. In this way the minds of the children are invaded, corrupted, and conquered. Would an educated man send his child to a school in which Newton's statement in regard to the attraction of gravitation was denied; in which the law of falling bodies, as given by Galileo, was ridiculed; Kepler's three laws declared to be idiotic, and the rotary motion of the earth held to be utterly absurd?

Why, then, should an intelligent man allow his child to be taught the geology and astronomy of the Bible? Children should be taught to seek the truth—to be honest, kind, generous, merciful, and just. They should be taught to love liberty and to live to the ideal.

Why, then, should an unbeliever, an Infidel, send his child to an orthodox Sunday school, where he is taught that he has no right to seek for the truth, no right to be mentally honest, and that he will be damned for an honest doubt; where he is taught that God was ferocious, revengeful, heartless as a wild beast; that he drowned millions of his children; that he ordered wars of exter-

mination, and told his soldiers to kill gray-haired and trembling age, mothers and children, and to assassinate with the sword of war the babes unborn?

Why should an unbeliever in the Bible send his child to an orthodox Sunday school, where he is taught that God was in favour of slavery, and told the Jews to buy of the heathen, and that they should be their bondmen and bondwomen for ever—where he is taught that God upheld polygamy and the degradation of women?

Why should an "unbeliever," who believes in the uniformity of nature—in the unbroken and unbreakable chain of cause and effect—allow his child to be taught that miracles have been performed; that men have gone bodily to heaven; that millions have been miraculously fed with manna and quails; that fire has refused to burn the clothes and flesh of men; that iron has been made to float; that the earth and moon have been stopped, and that the earth has not only been stopped, but made to turn the other way; that devils inhabit the bodies of men and women; that diseases have been cured with words; and that the dead, with a touch, have been made to live again?

The thoughtful man knows that there is not the slightest evidence that these miracles ever were performed. Why should he allow his children to be stuffed with these foolish and impossible falsehoods? Why should he give his lambs to the care and keeping of the wolves and hyenas of superstition?

Children should be taught only what somebody knows. Guesses should not be palmed off on them as demonstrated facts. If a Christian lived in Constantinople he would not send his children to the mosque to be taught that Mohammed was a prophet of God and that the Koran is an inspired book. Why? Because he does not believe in Mohammed or the Koran. That is reason enough. So an Agnostic, living in New York, should not allow his children to be taught that the Bible is an inspired book. I use the word "Agnostic" because I prefer it to the word "Atheist." As a matter of fact no one knows that God exists, and no one knows that God does not exist. To my mind there is no evidence that God exists—that this world is governed by a being of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power—but I do not pretend to know. What I do insist upon is that children should not be poisoned, should not be taken advantage of, that they should be treated fairly, honestly; that they should be allowed to develop from the inside instead of being crammed from the outside; that they should be taught to reason, not to believe; to think, to investigate, and to use their senses, their minds.

Would a Catholic send his children to school to be taught that Catholicism is superstition and that science is the only saviour of mankind?

Why, then, should a free and sensible believer in science, in the naturalness of the universe, send his child to a Catholic school?

Nothing could be more irrational, foolish, and absurd.

My advice to all Agnostics is to keep their children from the orthodox Sunday schools, from the orthodox churches, from the poison of the pulpits.

Teach your children the facts you know. If you do not know, say so. Be as honest as you are ignorant. Do all you can to develop their minds to the end that they may live useful and happy lives.

Strangle the serpent of superstition that crawls and hisses about the cradle. Keep your children from the augurs, the soothsayers, the medicine-men, the priests of the supernatural. Tell them that all religions have been made by folks and that all the "sacred books" were written by ignorant men.

Teach them that the world is natural. Teach them to be absolutely honest. Do not send them where they will contract diseases of the mind—the leprosy of the soul. Let us do all we can to make them intelligent.

(Reprint.)

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

Long life has been promised by the Bible to those who honour their fathers and their mothers. But in no Christian country has any insurance company ever thought it good business to offer them specially low rates.—*Quodam*.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THE AGENT PROVOCATEUR

SIR.—You are right as usual ("Acid Drops," *Freethinker*, March 24). To entrap or to betray is poisonous and despicable, as has just been said by one of the judges. But it is depressing to note what an outcry arises when the articulate and powerful (such as motorists) are involved; while the helpless, and especially, the young, are left at the mercy of the police, and the dangerous laws on solicitation—and nobody sits up, or takes notice!

Clarence Darrow, the great American lawyer, wrote "when it comes to the criminal courts . . . lives are sacrificed and hopes destroyed." "The methods of the criminal courts are hundreds of years old, and their corruptions a thousand years older than that" (*The Story of My Life*, p. 332) "Everything has altered and improved . . . but the law and its administration have stood, defying time and all the intellectual changes of our day and age" (p. 430). Justice will not be achieved until we get a *rational* moral code.

"TAB CAN."

[We are pleased to note that the Berkshire police have announced that they will do what they can to warn motorists. But the temptation to make cases will be strong with many. It would be interesting to have figures as to how many "catches" are placed to the credit of individual police cars. It is also worth noting that one magistrate declared openly that the testimony of the police as to the rate at which the offending motorist was travelling was conclusive. The word of a policeman thus becomes "sacred," for the first time in English Law.—Ed.]

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 29, 1935

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Hornibrook, A. C. Rosetti, Wood, Silvester, Ebury, Preece, Sandys, Saphin, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to the Sunderland, Manchester, Tees-Side, Blackburn, Plymouth, Chester-le-Street, South Shields, South London, and West London Branches, and the Parent Society. Reports and correspondence were dealt with from West London, Bethnal Green, National Peace Council, Messrs. Brighton and Whitehead. In accordance with the votes of the Branches it was declared the Annual Conference will be held this year in Manchester. The date of the next Annual Dinner was fixed for January 25, 1936. The Executive expressed its condolence with the relatives of the late Mr. H. Jessop, and the Secretary was instructed to convey the meeting's sincere wishes for the complete recovery of Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook. Messrs. Saphin and Clifton were elected to serve as an Agenda Committee with the President and Secretary.

The Meeting then closed.

The next Meeting of the Executive will be held on April 26.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Our civilized world is nothing but a great masquerade. You meet therein knights, monks, soldiers, doctors, priests, philosophers, lawyers—who else does one not meet? They are not, however, what they represent themselves to be. They wear masks under which mostly are hidden money-speculators.—*Schopenhauer*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0, Sunday, April 7, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, April 8, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. E. Gee. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Gee and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park Gates, and literature to order.

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Gerald Heard—"Neo-Quakerism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Lord Snell, C.B.E.—"The Conflict of Eastern and Western Civilization."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, A Lecture.

BRADFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. E. Allen—A Lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. K. D. Hunt (Read)—"The Influence of Environment."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street): 6.0, April 14, Annual General Meeting. Members please note.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance—"Emilia Galotti," by Lessing.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Board Room, Transport Buildings, Islington, Liverpool, Islington entrance): 7.0, Annual General Meeting—Members Only.

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Bizacta Hall, Newton Street): 7.0, Tuesday, April 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Creation of the Creation Story."

STOCKTON: 7.0, Thursday, April 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. Brighton—"Divinity and Disease."

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

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

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

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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