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

Views and Opinions

Our Standard of Value

An interesting and unconsciously significant article by Sir Percival Phillips appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* for April 24. The subject of the article was "Fascist Italy," and it claimed for Italy that Mussolini had made that country a "First-class Power." I am not now disputing the accuracy of the description—neither am I endorsing it—it is simply noted as a claim that throws a flood of light upon quite a number of things, individual and social, national and cultural. I may take, to begin with, a few of the principal passages from Sir Percival's article, which help to an understanding of the moral I draw, and would like my readers to draw; and I would also observe that although the citations are a little "scrappy," all may take my word that they in no wise distort the author's general attitude. Sir Percival points out that the information available to the Italian,

is limited in scope by a discriminating dictatorship. The local press is re-tuned daily by the policy of the Government. News and comments from abroad are shaped by a censorship that admits of no individual freedom of expression. Consequently he (the Italian) looks at Europe with eyes other than his own. His views on international questions frequently lack the proper perspective, even allowing for extreme nationalism, and at times they are quite fantastic. The docility with which he responds to official suggestion is frequently disconcerting to foreigners, who are sincere friends of Italy.

That is, the Italian is kept in a state of complete ignorance concerning matters on which every citizen should be encouraged to obtain the fullest information. Of the general situation Sir Percival says that the citizen,

is only too well aware that the present crisis in foreign relations has had a serious reaction on commerce and finance. Business which was already suffering from severe restrictions on the export and

import trade, has experienced a further set-back. . . . The cost of living has risen ominously. . . . The man in the street . . . cannot contemplate the immediate future with any degree of cheerfulness. Only the Army appears to be a first-class going concern. . . . The mobilization depots are seething with activity as the remainder of the 1911 class arrive to go back into uniform, and the armament factories have been reopened. . . . The civilian-turned soldier was thrust hurriedly into cotton clothing . . . inadequate against a winter wind. Many were at first without overcoats, and pneumonia was the result. Hardships of this kind are cheerfully borne in wartime, but the man in the street could see no apparent justification for them. His depression was reflected, to some extent, in the men themselves and their relatives, although skilfully camouflaged by farewell scenes of enthusiasm. . . . Students went through Messina with bugles calling the population to the quay. . . . Mussolini has made Italy once more a First-class Power.

* * *

A First Class Power

The picture is so far incomplete since it takes no account of the general terrorism that prevails, of the large number of people in prison, sent there after a travesty of a trial, and for daring to have opinions of their own, of the number of women who are also suffering harsh imprisonment for no other offence than that their men-folk have escaped from Italy and will not come back to be imprisoned or executed. To many thousands of Italians abroad Italy no longer represents a home; it is a potential prison which would be converted into an actuality if they were rash enough to return.

So one is left wondering what it is that has converted Italy into a first-class power. Evidently this claim does not rest on the contentment or the freedom of the people. It does not rest on the existence of an increase in the number of happy homes, or on the established right of every man and woman to express an opinion on the conduct of the Government under which they live, or to agitate for reforms which they think desirable. It does not rest on a free press, on free speech, or on freedom of movement. It does not take into account the fact whether there now exists in Italy a larger number of eminent men of letters, or more men of science, or greater philosophers than used to be there. Italy is a first-class power because it has increased the size of its army, its navy, and its air-force. It has not a bigger brain, but it has a bigger fist. It can be a bigger bully towards nations weaker than itself, and offers a greater attraction to nations that are larger than itself, or whose "mailed fist" is of a size to command respect—of the wrong kind. And when Italy has gained a control over Abyssinia—or annexed it—which may happen as that country has conveniently made raids on Italian territory—Italy will then have a greater degree

of first-classness than it has at present. It will, at all events, make Italy more self-supporting—by having annexed lands which it does not now possess.

* * *

Christianity and Civilization

Now this term "A First-Class Power" is quite in order. It is in use all over the "civilized" world. Every nation would like to be counted a first-class power, and at present there seems only one way of a nation becoming so. France, Britain, Italy, America, for example, are first-class powers. Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway are second or third-rate powers. The classification is universal and is accepted. Statesmen proclaim the qualification with pride, and the vast majority of individuals count it as so much to their glory that they are subjects of a first-class power. The chief boast of Mussolini and Hitler is that each has made his country a first-class power.

What is it that determines whether a particular nation deserves to be ranked as a first-class power? It is evidently not quality, nor ability. Both of these things are individual, and in the estimate of first-classness, the individual seems left out of sight. No one will say that if one were to take a thousand Dutchmen, a thousand Switzers, a thousand Englishmen, a thousand Italians, and so forth, that man for man the individuals who came from a second-class nation were less intelligent or less estimable than those who came from a first-class one. No one will claim that the quality of first-classness can apply to height, or to the number of individuals that exist per square mile of a given country. The great artist, the great writer, the great thinker, the great character, does not of necessity belong to a first-class nation. It might even be found that in the history of the world, from the days of ancient Athens, it is the small nations that have done some of the world's best work. A large thing is not of necessity a good thing. Size bears no exact relation to quality, nor physical strength to intellectual power. What is it, then, that constitutes a first-class power?

* * *

The Criterion of Greatness

Looking at the world as it is, it would appear that the qualities that constitute first-classness in the moral code of nations is the ability to use brute force and the possession of a great extent of territory. Italy has become a first-class power because it has increased its military strength, or if that strength may be doubted, then let us say, since it has had a larger army and has threatened the world with the power of the mailed fist. Germany was a first-class power in 1914; it became a second-class one when the Treaty of Versailles said that it should not have a large army, or a large navy, and would no longer be able to threaten war on other people. It is now being admitted to the rank of a first-class power, since it has torn up the treaty and turned Germany into an armed camp. Over twenty-five years ago Japan was only a second-class power in the estimate of the Christian nations of the world. Then it went to war with Russia. Japan showed the Christian world that it had guns and could use them, it had battleships and could use them. Japan beat Russia, and the Christian powers said, "Lo, now that you can kill as we can, now that you can fight as we can, now thou art indeed one of the great powers of the world, and may stand on an equality with us." Twenty years ago Italy was not a first-class power. To-day it has achieved that position in virtue of its military strength. But will anyone say that the Italy of to-day is a better Italy in all that makes for a civilized humanity than

it was a generation ago? Is the first-class Germany of to-day a better Germany, morally or intellectually than it was a generation ago?

A first-class power, an admittedly great nation, is, then, one that has a preponderance of brute force at its disposal, or has acquired by conquest a considerable area of territory. There is no other mark that I can see. Apply this to individuals and we at once perceive its grotesque character. It would have made the marauding robber chief a greater man than Chaucer. It would have placed the pirate of Elizabeth's day in the first-class and Shakespeare in the second or third-class. And that, indeed, is what it did. It would make the bully swaggering down the street first-class, and the decently behaved citizen an individual of the second grade. The power to take, the power to hold, the power to threaten and punish all who protest against taking and holding, these are the marks which a Christian civilization has decided is the hall mark of a first-class power.

* * *

Our Need for a Revaluation

In a few days we shall be celebrating the momentous fact in the history of civilization, that George the Fifth has been upon the throne of Britain for twenty-five years. His greatness has been proclaimed in terms of the number of his subjects, and in the fact of his ruling over a sixth of the earth's surface. We are promised a review of a fleet, which will represent the largest display of battleships that the world has ever seen. The processions will provide a liberal display of fighting men who will man the ships and form the fighting battalions. Enough money will be blown away in powder and spent in illuminations to provide many, many thousands of houses for those now living in hovels. We shall give the world the lesson that we are a first-class power, and what we have we hold. And the spectators will, in terms of their education, admit that we are a mighty people—a people at the side of whom the Dutchmen, the Swede, the Norwegian, are only second-class, for they cannot fight the wars we can fight, they cannot put into the field the armies, or place upon the seas fleets such as can the first-class powers of the civilized world.

And yet it remains a solid truth that none of these things lead to a greatness that has lasting value to the world. We might possess a fleet and an air-force and an army that could impose its will on all men, we might lord it over the entire surface of the earth, and yet remain in all that constitutes real human greatness an essentially little people, and our littleness would be in the exact proportion that we forced others to our will, and made their weakness the measure of our strength. We must, if we would be truly great, alter our standards of value, and bring up a new generation to an appreciation of these better standards. To preach peace while we glorify all that belongs to war and leads to war is to deny in practice what we preach in words. Our ethical standard of national greatness is still that of the jungle. We not merely use the "mailed fist," we glory in its use, and rank nations as great or small as they are able to force war on the world. As Spencer said many years ago, we have two religions: one a religion of peace, the other a religion of brute force. But our chief homage is paid to the latter. It is blazoned forth on our monuments and in our public ceremonies. We shall not be really civilized until, in the words of Moncure Conway, we regard a uniform as something of which we ought to be ashamed and a battlefield as a degradation.

A Doubting Dean

"Not a fantastical fool of them all shall flout me out of my calling."—*Shakespeare*.

"Is not religion a cloak?"—*Swift*.

THE Christian Church has contained in its fold many great men. Some of them were sincere believers in the doctrines they preached. Others were Christians from force of circumstances, or held to the doctrines for the material gain which has ever been no considerable bait with which to catch men. To which class did Jonathan Swift belong? Would he have remained a Christian had actual deaneries and possible bishoprics, with their alluring emoluments, had no existence? Should we have found him among the Scotch Covenanters on the field of battle, or being "butchered to make a Roman holiday," at Smithfield, had his birth placed him in different circumstances?

His biographers, including Doctor Johnson, Scott, and Thackeray, all describe Swift as religious, and the general opinion agrees with them. One hesitates to enter the lists against such eminent men, but a candid opinion compels us to say that we believe that Swift was a Christian only in name; that he remained in the Church for the same reason that prompted Judas, in the legendary story, to sell his master. In fact, Swift was one of the most irreligious of men. Compared to him, Paine and Voltaire were saints, for these great Freethinkers had at heart that passionate enthusiasm for humanity, that love of their fellow-men, which was entirely absent in Swift. The author of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Tale of a Tub* was intellectually incapable of being a Christian, and emotionally incapable of loving his fellow-creatures. *The Tale of a Tub* is one of the most tremendous indictments of the Christian Religion, from the purely intellectual side, that has ever been given to the world. *Gulliver's Travels* expresses such a scorn of the human race, with its Lilliputian bitterness, and its Brobdignagian coarseness, that its author was physically and constitutionally incapable of sympathizing with a religion which claims to be a gospel of love.

Voltaire, a most excellent judge, regarded *The Tale of a Tub* as casting ridicule on all forms of the Christian faith. The man who wrote that satirical book was perfectly aware of the logical inferences of his propositions. The bishops who advised Queen Anne, when they counselled her not to appoint Dean Swift to a bishopric, were not without sagacity. There can be no doubt that Queen Anne and Voltaire were both right when, from their very different points of view, they regarded Swift's literary work as anti-Christian, even iconoclastic.

Swift was irreligious, and a life-long dissembler. He could be coarser than Rabelais, and more profane than Voltaire. Men have been tortured and burnt alive for treating sacred subjects less offensively than Swift treats the rite of the "Holy Communion." Consider the facts of his life. He was brought up in the household of the epicurean Sir William Temple, and educated in the library of an avowed Freethinker. Why Swift took "holy orders," except for the money and position, it is difficult to say. He put the cassock on for a living, but he was nearly choked by its bands. Swift was the boon companion of Pope, and a friend of the Freethinking Bolingbroke. He chose deliberately these Sceptics as the closest friends of his life, and the recipients of his confidence and affection. It is not difficult to imagine him joining in many a profane argument and blasphemous joke over Pope's portrait, or Bolingbroke's burgundy. It is significant, nay, almost conclusive as to the insincerity of Swift's

religion, that he advised John Gay, the wildest of the wits about town, to turn parson and look for a seat on the episcopal bench.

The paper Swift left behind him, entitled *Thoughts on Religion*, is merely a set of excuses for not professing disbelief. He himself said of his own sermons, quite truthfully, that he preached pamphlets. They have no special Christian characteristics, and might have been preached from the steps of a Mohammedan mosque as well as from the pulpit of a Christian place of worship. There is no cant, for Swift was too great and too proud for that cowardly and sorry device. Tried even by the materialistic standard of the eighteenth century, his sermons are singularly secular. The following amusing passage from Swift's sermon on the fate of Eutychus, who fell out of a window whilst listening to the Apostle Paul preaching, will illustrate our meaning:—

The accident which happened to this young man in the text hath not been sufficient to discourage his successors; but because the preachers now in the world, however they may exceed Saint Paul in the art of setting men to sleep, do extremely fall short of him in the working of miracles; therefore men are become so cautious as to choose more safe and convenient stations and postures for taking their repose without hazard of their persons, and, upon the whole matter, choose rather to entrust their destruction to a miracle than their safety.

But, perhaps, the surest indication of Swift's real irreligion is given in the very striking verses on the Day of Judgment, which were not published till after his death. They were sent by my Lord Chesterfield in a letter to Voltaire; but everybody now knows the biting lines:—

"Ye who in divers sects were shammed,
And came to see each other damned,
(For so folk told you; but they knew
No more of Jove's designs than you),
The world's mad business now is o'er,
And Jove resents such pranks no more.
'I to such blockheads set my wit?
I damn such fools? Go, go, you're bit!'"

The eye which can perceive sincere religion in these caustic and vigorous lines would regard Montaigne as a Methodist, and Rabelais as an honest Romanist. It is, of course, true that in ecclesiastical and theological controversy Swift professed to be "on the side of the angels," for outwardly he was loyal enough to his employers. For the Deists of his time, such as Asgill, Collins, and Toland, he expressed contempt. He refers to "that quality of their voluminous writings which the poverty of the English language compels me to call their style." In his famous and sinister argument upon the inconveniences which would result from the total abolition of the Christian Religion, he drenches his opponents with vitriol. But it is all purely dialectical fencing. Swift's polemic was aimed at guarding the property of the Church, of which he was a paid official; just as a counsel will argue for whichever side pays him his retaining fee. If Swift's sword was sharp, it was a double-edged weapon, as may be seen by the sardonic climax of his iconoclastic pamphlet:—

To conclude: whatever some may think of the great advantage to trade by this favourite scheme, I do very much apprehend that in six months after the Act is passed for the extirpation of the Gospel, the Bank and East India stock may fall at least one per cent. And since this is fifty times more than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason why we should be at so great a loss for the sake of destroying it.

This is typical of the man who had previously declared that "this mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade." Remember, Swift knew re-

ligion from the inside. When face to face with death, he let the mask slip from his features, and we see for a fleeting moment the real man. When he wrote his own epitaph, he absolutely disdained any religious allusion whatever. A dignified pillar of a great Church, he refused to permit any pietistic platitudes upon his tombstone. A stately worldliness, an appeal to the memory of his fellow men, but not one syllable of all the gods of all the mythologies. Listen to the arresting words:—

Here lies the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of this Cathedral Church, where fierce rage can tear the heart no more. Go, traveller, and imitate, if you can, an earnest, manly champion of freedom.

The original is in Latin, and the dates were the only additions. His allusion to his fight for freedom is genuine, for he fought for the liberty of Ireland.

Voltaire and Renan, and many others, left the Christian Church, and chose the road to mental freedom. Swift stayed in the Church, and failed in his ambition. In spite of a life-long servitude, he was a bitterly disappointed man. He had to be content with a petty deanery, when his ambition was at least a bishopric. The fierce rage, of which he wrote as lacerating his heart, was intensified by loss of preferment. He had prostituted his great and splendid genius for a mere handful of silver. After a lifetime of dissembling and posturing he died, to quote his own painful words, "like a poisoned rat in a hole."

MIMNERMUS.

Friar Bacon's Secret

KING DAVID must have been close on seventy years old when he died, for then his reign, which began in his thirtieth year, had lasted forty years. (2 Sam. v. 4; 1 Kings ii. 10, 11). He is supposed to have been in a declining way many months before his death. During this period, his faithful attendants suggested that a young virgin should be procured to lie with him, and thus to give him the pleasing warmth that his failing organs could but inadequately supply. David, who had no small knowledge of the delights which the daughters of Eve are in the habit of affording to the sons of Adam, quickly perceived the wisdom of this suggestion. Thereupon, with laudable diligence, "they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coast of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the King, and the damsel was very fair, and she cherished the King." (1 Kings i. 1-4). Readers of Zola can never forget the romance between the aged physician and his youthful niece. This ended tragically, but still it left behind it a lusty souvenir in a little cot. The affair of David and Abishag finished in sheer futility, or something worse. The climate and the customs of her land make it extremely probable that she was not more than twelve or thirteen years of age* when she was procured for the purpose of couching with the King. If what David says of himself in the seventh verse of his thirty-eighth Psalm is true, then, even a woman as intrepid as Doll Tearsheet would have turned pale at the prospect of sharing his couch. Yet it was to such a goat that they brought so young a girl! The account goes on to tell us that "the King knew her

* Twelve or fourteen is the age at which, according to the uncanonical evangelists Mary conceived Jesus. See Hofmann's *Das Leben Jesu nach den Apocryphen*. Leipzig, 1851, p. 52. At Tiberias there are Jewish mothers aged eleven, and fathers aged thirteen. Raumer's *Palästina*, Leipzig, 1860, p. 142.

not." This circumstance is what was hardly needed to be told; but we are thankful to have been spared any further details.

Some very interesting remarks upon the affair of David and Abishag may be found in the Commentary of the late Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.A.S., M.R.I.A., etc., etc., sometime President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. Under the caption: "Friar Bacon's method of restoring and strengthening the Natural Heat," Dr. Clarke gives within inverted commas a closely printed column of mysterious lore full of double meanings. Among other things we are told that this famous remedy

will very much *recreate an old man*, and change him to a kind of youth. . . . For this heat does help the palsical, it restores and preserves the wasted strength of the native heat, and causes it to flourish in all its members, and gently revives the aged.

At the end of the quotation, Dr. Clarke says:—

All this correct and enigmatical description is intended simply to point out that very medicine recommended by the Jewish physicians [sic] to restore and invigorate the dying king. I could show the bearing of every sentence [Oh, Adam], but I must leave something to the good sense of my readers. By attending to the words in *italics*, the sense will be more easily discovered.

Dr. Clarke was in his sixty-ninth year when he put the final strokes to his 1 and 2 Chronicles. He would not be much, if any, younger, when he did the same thing to his 1 and 2 Kings, the Chronicles being immediately preceded by the Kings. Little wonder if elderly Methodists who felt tempted to repeat the pleasing experiment which he had so learnedly described, murmured prayerfully the well known lines:—

"Adam's likeness now efface
Stamp thine own image in its place."

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

"Letters to the Lord"

(From a Forthcoming Book by Chapman Cohen)

MY DEAR LORD,

Among us mortals there is a saying that a cat may look at a King, and in the following letters, I am taking this as affording justification for a creature directly addressing his alleged creator. It may be said in reply that a subject may not approach a King whenever and in what way he pleases. A King must be approached through his ministers or ambassadors; and similarly the formal approach to you might be through one of those individuals who claim to be your official representatives. But there are many thousands of these, and they are so divided in what they say about you—what you are, where you are, what you do and why you do it—that pardonable scepticism is created concerning the reliability of what *any* of them have to say. They not only deny the right of each other to speak in your name, but the same person will say one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow, and threaten with your anger those who dare to question their contradictions and illogicalities.

The situation is the more perplexing inasmuch as it is through these representatives that we have the most authoritative—I may say the only authoritative—information concerning you. What is called the "light of nature" can never give a man more than inferential information concerning either your wishes or your existence. It is "revelation" alone that can be definite and final, and that revelation it is claimed you have given to one set of believers alone.

When, therefore, we find the clergy of this solitary revelation undecided and contradictory concerning your wishes, and even your nature, it is not surprising if many have given up belief in this revelation, and have even been led to doubt whether you really exist. It is from this latter point of view that these letters are written. I am assuming your existence the better to depict the state of mind of millions of educated men and women throughout the civilized world. If these doubts were only mine, they might be set aside; but they are not individual, they are general. Moreover, they are becoming more definite and more insistent as the world develops in mental and moral stature.

I am aware that letters of the kind I am writing are not common. But there are precedents. A former editor of the *Freethinker* once wrote a series of letters to Jesus Christ; there have been issued letters to the Devil; and in France, where they do these things boldly, and with greater wit than is common in this country, I have it in my mind that there were published some letters to the Holy Ghost. I am, therefore, emboldened to complete the series by writing some letters to yourself, the remaining member of this celestial-infernal combination.

I am quite prepared to find that when these letters are published, some of your followers will raise a cry of "blasphemy," and will urge that the letters be suppressed and their author punished. I hope you will not be prejudiced by that cry. It is common to all ages to suppress criticisms of established beliefs, and you will remember that when your son came to earth he was charged with blasphemy and put to death. I am satisfied, therefore, that although your clergy may shout blasphemy, and invoke your anger, you will do nothing. So far as you are concerned you will neither punish nor reward.

It is puzzling to know why, if you do nothing, your agents should invoke your name to threaten punishment, for it is they who advise me always to lay my troubles before you. But they accompany this advice with the information that laying my difficulties before you will be of no avail unless I do so with a "believing heart." That gives me pause. How can I honestly cry "Oh Lord, help thou my unbelief," if I have to believe in you before I say it? How can I ask you to remove my doubts if I must get rid of my doubts before you will do so? If you will only remove my doubts after I have got rid of them, the position seems hopeless. If you really do make this the condition of replying to those who petition you, it would seem that you are in the position of a doctor who announces that he can only cure patients who will get rid of all their complaints before consulting him.

It is true that your representatives publish to the world—much in the manner of a vendor of quack medicines—testimonies from a number of people who say that you have answered their questions and that your answers have been quite satisfactory. At present, and without entering on any criticism of these statements, I will only say that their questions are not my questions, and even if they were the answers would certainly not satisfy me. Indeed, the conduct of those who claim that you have answered them and satisfied them merely gives rise to new problems and new questions. They have, they say, humbled themselves before you, they have confessed their unworthiness and their sinfulness, and at the same time they have showered upon you the most fulsome flattery and the most uncritical praise. I do not like to think that you wish men thus to grovel before you, and I have certainly small respect for those who do so, even if you did. Until I get proof

to the contrary, my dear Lord, I prefer to think of you as not being so easily fooled with phrases, or as possessing so insatiable an appetite for sugary phrases as your avowed followers assume.

I may be told, I think it certain I shall be told, that in these letters I am too critical. I do not understand the phrase. How can anyone be too critical? Criticism may be wise or foolish, good or bad, sound or unsound, but whatever it is it remains criticism. A thing cannot be too much like itself. I really am not more critical than the most servile of your followers. It is as much an act of criticism when they praise as it is when I blame. It is as much criticism to set out to justify "the ways of God to men," as it is to question whether these ways are all they might be. The religious statement that the "heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork" is as truly criticism as to say:—

There is a creator called God,
And his ways are remarkably odd.

The *Freethinker* does not criticize you more than does the Christian; he simply offers a different kind of criticism.

I venture to suggest that those who denounce adverse criticism of yourself, and threaten with punishment any who offer it, are impeaching your character under the guise of friendship. The best of men do not resent criticism, and even lesser ones shrink from calling for the protection of policemen against it. There is only one way of showing oneself above unworthy criticism, and that is by not resenting it. If criticism is undeserved, in the long run it redounds to the injury of those who offer it; if it is deserved, suppression only serves to make its sting the more deadly. And I may be permitted to call your attention to the fact that it is the intended favourable criticism of your followers that has given you the greatest trouble. The criticism of your non-worshippers has generally been justified by events. I shall have to offer evidence of this in a later letter.

In all sincerity I may also point out that I have a special and a personal claim upon your attention. Hitherto I have troubled you far less than those who profess to be your followers. I have never wearied you with prayers, either on my own behalf or on behalf of others. I have never wasted your time or strained your patience in this way. I have never prayed myself, or invited others to combine in a mass attack on you in the shape of a week of united prayer. I have never insulted you by assuming that you were likely to be more impressed by a massed howl than by separate voices. I have taken it for granted that if you are what your followers say you are, it is holding you up to public ridicule to call a meeting, and under the guise of praise slyly insinuate that more rain was needed, or you had sent too much, or that the King was ill, and would you attend to the matter of his cure. This kind of thing always struck me as an insidious attack on your good-nature or your intelligence. You know what the weather is like, you know when the King is ill. You know all these things, and it is stupid to remind you of things you already know. To say one moment that you do all things for the best, and the next to suggest ways in which you might manage them a little better, and to trust you will not see through the trick, is to credit you with very limited intelligence. I have never been a professed admirer of yours, but neither have I been a detractor by insinuation.

Another claim to a hearing I may put forward is that these are the first genuinely honest letters that have ever been addressed to you. But they start with a difficulty. I have no certainty that they will ever reach you. I do not know where to address

them. Once upon a time I might have addressed them to heaven, for it was said you dwelt there, and heaven was then as localizable as is Paris or New York to-day. It was believed that people went to heaven, usually after they were dead, but sometimes before, as in the case of Elijah. Your son, or yourself, once performed the journey in both directions, coming from heaven to earth, and afterwards going from earth to heaven. To certain favoured individuals a sight of heaven has been vouchsafed with yourself sitting on a great white throne, and multitudes of sexless angels blowing trumpets and singing your praises.

But this was in pre-Copernican days, before the world had gone back to the astronomy of the ancient Greeks. Now some of your most prominent representatives on earth flatly deny that heaven is a place that anyone can visit as one might visit Timbuctoo. They say heaven is a state—a mental or a spiritual state. Dean Inge says in set terms that modern astronomy leaves no room for a geographical heaven. He appears to imagine that "heaven" is no more than a figure of speech, and that the description given it by some of your "inspired" messengers are no more than flights of the imagination.

My dear Lord, it is quite clear that I cannot address letters to a figure of speech or to a mental state. And if I were to take a chance and address them to just "God," it is likely that this might inspire some irreverent official to return them marked "address not known." I think I ought not to incite post-office blasphemy in this way.

You will appreciate my difficulty. With many thousands of men in this country who claim to have been "called" to where they are, there is not one of them who can give me a definite address. To make the situation still more confusing these representatives of yours erect buildings which they call the "House of God," and where they invite people to come and be with you for stated periods. But when I enquire into the matter I find that these are little better than what the police call "accommodation addresses." Worse than this, I find that each group of your followers assures me that no direct communication can be had with you in any "House of God" but their own. Each sect issues the warning against expecting to get into direct touch with you save through them.

In this state of uncertainty I must just take a chance, publish these letters, and trust that some attendant angel will call your attention to them. But even this hope rests on slender foundations; for I do not know that angels can read. We read of many things in heaven—trumpets and harps and gold and rubies and sapphires and alabaster, but we have no mention of books being used as objects of regular use. No one has ever in their visions of heaven seen an angel reclining on a cloud reading a book. So, again, I must trust to chance. A friend has been defined as one who sees you are informed of all the nasty things your enemies say about you. Well, you have Enoch with you who is distinctly called your friend.

Let us hope that he will call to your attention the only straightforward letters ever addressed to you; and let us hope also that some unmistakable answer may be forthcoming.

If you reply, may I beg two favours? The first is that you will not do so in the manner in which your followers say you have often replied to unpleasing criticisms—that is, in the form of an earthquake, or an epidemic, or a war. If I may believe those who claim to know all about you, your replies to man's questioning have been very numerous but terribly promiscuous. Your replies have often killed or

maimed many people who have given you no offence, and left unscathed those who roused your anger. That sort of reply lacks discrimination and causes the ungodly to smile. When the Church is struck by lightning and the brothel escapes injury the wicked are inclined to sneer; when the tempest destroys the crops of the honest farmer, and so helps to fill the pockets of the "operator," who makes a fortune out of the necessities of the eaters of corn and all who must have it for food, your providence seems of a very "chancy" nature. Please, please, leave epidemics, wars, tempests, and earthquakes out of your reply.

The second favour I have to ask you is that if a reply is sent, do not commission any of the clergy who declare they are your mouthpiece to put your answer into words. I have had a lengthy and varied experience with the clergy of different denominations, and I can assure you—if you are not already acquainted with the fact—that they are really not equal to the task. Either they do not reply to the questions that are put to them, or they reply in a manner that on analysis depicts you as either a criminal or a fool. You are made to do things of which a criminal would be ashamed, or to formulate plans that a child might better. They leave the poor puzzled enquirer more puzzled than ever. It may be that some of your representatives are intelligent enough to answer the questions that are put to them, but in that case I fancy they are intelligent enough to know that they have no answer to make, and so remain silent.

I am quite sure that if you could listen to the sermons your clergy preach week after week, or to the kind of apologies they make for what they say you do, you would say that you deserve the pity of man instead of man deserving your forgiveness. If you could get a recording angel to devote a single Sunday to giving you a fair summary of what the clergy say about you, I feel sure you would appreciate one of our earthly sayings, "Save me from my friends."

Yours in all sincerity,

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Acid Drops

The occurrence of Easter has revived the discussion concerning the desirability of fixing the date of Easter. As the registration of a natural event—the revival of vegetation—that is absurd. You cannot give a definite date to the beginning of an event which is determined by seasonal and astronomical changes. And the same reason makes it absurd to give to the commemoration of the death of an individual, a movable date. When an individual dies he dies on a particular date, and the recurrence of the date is the day of its commemoration. As at present fixed Easter gives rise to reflections that are, to a Christian, very inconvenient, for it gives the game away concerning Jesus Christ as an historical character. Christians have affixed a date for the birth of Jesus, because that is determined by the Sun, and other Sun-gods were born on December 25, and there is a fashion with Gods as with many other things.

But, save a God, who ever had his birthday determined by the position of the Sun in the heavens? And who but a God ever had his death-day fixed by the phases of the moon? A human being may be born on any date, but once dead, he remains dead, and the anniversary of his death occurs on the same date, whether the moon be new or at the full. The date of his death does not occur at any time between March 22 and April 25. There may be some doubt as to the date on which a certain historical character died, but if we are in doubt, we do not go to a text-book of astronomy to settle the matter. To fix a date in that fashion is—well, moonshine. It carries

mythology written all over it. It is only Gods that get born and die and get resurrected in the manner attributed to the gospel Jesus.

The Christian religion was originally based on the belief that Jesus was a God. To-day it is the Freethinker who asserts that he really was a God, and it is the advanced Christian who is trying his damndest to prove that he was a man. But the man who knows and understands the facts of the case will not have it. He knows that Jesus Christ was a God and nothing but a God. He belongs to the region of mythology, not to the domain of history. A being who gets born without a father, dies on a movable date, and is raised from the dead on another movable date, dates which are fixed by the position of the sun in the heavens, and by the phases of the moon, is not and never was a man. We stand for the divinity of Jesus. He was born a God, he died a God, he remains a God. The Christian religion is built upon the belief that Jesus Christ was God. We must see that Christians do not turn him into a man. It is not easy for a king to become a subject; it is a sheer impossibility for a God to become nothing more than a man.

Although our newspapers have rightly protested against the suppression of all independent papers in Germany, it is curious to note that little or nothing is said about a similar state of things in Italy. There no paper or periodical may be published which does not support Mussolini, secret trial and conviction, with no publication of sentence, obtains, and a special Fascist guard mans the frontier to prevent Italians leaving the country without permission. These are the normal, the inevitable accompaniments of a Fascist regime, and it is as well that people in this country should realize it. The difference between Mussolini and Hitler is that one is a strong man—although not nearly so strong as the legend portrays him, and the other is a mere empty-headed puppet.

The widely-circulated legend that the preaching of religion in Soviet Russia was forbidden, and that all the Churches had been closed, having worn itself out, the English papers reported that on Sunday last (the Russian Easter) all the Churches in Moscow (36) were "crowded to suffocation." The statement was also made that the congregations were made up mostly of elderly people. That one would expect to be the case. In this country, it is admitted that if children are not taught Christianity before they are old enough to criticize, much the same result would follow, and it has evidently worked out on the same lines in Russia.

The truth about the Churches in Russia is that they could always be in use so long as the people wished it. But it was left to the people of each district to determine whether they wished a Church to be open or not, and the result was evidently determined by the demand. Where they were not required they were put to other and better purposes than religious ones. But there is no State-support for religion in Russia, and it was the withdrawal of this, together with the better education of the people, and the very active anti-religious propaganda that has left religion almost entirely in the hands of elderly people.

The B.B.C. sermons continue to deserve all that their worst critics say against them. Dr. Leslie Church preached in St. Martin's, and from thence bored all who were listening-in on Sunday evening. Dr. Church's choicest wit found utterance in an "improving" tale of a little girl who played in the street. "I am a beacon," she said, "No one can cross the street without me." It was surely Elisha, not Belisha who performed the first safe crossing—not of a mere street, but actually of a river. Elisha just waved Elijah's Mantle over the stream and made a perfectly safe road across (1 Kings ii. 14), later in the same chapter, visiting a kind of beacon, called Beth-El; there it was that the street-children, called Beth-El, there it was that the street-children, laughing at his funny old beacon, were devoured by a

female bear. Let us hope Mr. Belisha won't imitate Elisha, for the *British Weekly* tells us that a "rippling sound of laughter" came over the wireless as Dr. Church narrated his "beacon" story.

Attacks are being made on Germany on account of Hitler and his crew—or rather the crew and Hitler—being anti-religious. They are nothing of the kind. So far as the charge is true, they are merely anti-Christian. But they are all profoundly religious. The intolerance displayed, the want of faith to those outside their own party, the cruelty shown to opponents, are all qualities that have been associated with religion in all ages, and none have displayed these more signally than have followers of the Christian religion.

A number of dissenting preachers have been sent to prison in Germany, and while the congregations are permitted to pray for them, they are not allowed to mention them by name. We imagine that Hitler thinks that if the parsons are not mentioned by name the Lord will probably bless the Hitlerite parson thinking he is answering the prayers of the dissentients. Hitler may, being a Roman Catholic, believe that the Lord is not mocked. On the other hand he evidently believes that he may be fooled.

While we are on the subject, we may say we have often felt that a manual of prayer ought to be issued, which would lay down rules for those who wish to pray. For our prayers are often general when they should be precise, and precise when it would be just as well to be general. Take, for example, the prayers for rain. Rain when it is wanted for a particular place and a particular time. But instead of the prayer asking for rain to be on such and such fields, and within so many days, and in such and such quantities, what we get is a general prayer for rain, and the Lord in reply sends the rain to the wrong place, and in wrong quantities, and when it is too late to do what it was wanted for.

Or take another example. In the House of Commons we have a chaplain who offers up a daily prayer, in which the Lord is asked to endow the members with wisdom and understanding. What is God to make of a prayer of this general description? If he gives all the members an equal extra dose of wisdom and understanding he leaves them relatively the same. The foolish are just as foolish in relation to the wise. If the chaplain's prayer is to do any good and God is really to help, he should be given more precise information. Thus: "Oh Lord, we pray that thou wilt endow the member for . . . with more wisdom than he now has; that thou wilt lower the self-esteem of the Minister for . . .; that thou wilt make the Minister far more particular about the truth . . .; that thou wilt do thy best to make the member for . . . think less about himself and more about our suffering country; and that thou wilt lead all members to speak the truth, whether it stands in the way of their getting a public post or not." Now if these things were done it would be possible for the chaplain to report progress on certain dates, and inform the House of the extent to which the prayers had been granted. As it is, no one can be sure of what happens, or whether anything happens at all.

The Rev. L. Sale-Harrison (author of *The Remarkable Jew*) has written a book called *God's Monument of Prophecy*, a book about Palestine. It is a Remarkable Monument too. It is said that monuments were mostly made of heavy stones to prevent inconvenient corpses resurrecting to haunt those who murdered them. A very large section of that indispensable "Bible Handbook" is devoted to "Unfulfilled Prophecies and Broken Promises." Needless to say, Mr. Sale-Harrison attempts no answer to the unanswerable indictment therein contained. While preachers continue to glorify the Mother Shipton side of their religion, Freethinkers ought to realize that this aspect of our propaganda is by no means to be ignored in dealing with Christians, even in these "Scientific Days."

How extraordinary is the conceit of Christian apologists. "A London Journalist" has written a booklet *Britain Without God*, which contains the same sort of nonsense one usually meets with in pious attacks on Secularism. It tells of a Russian Atheist who "spoke for ninety minutes," in Moscow, "attacking the Christian faith." Discussion was admittedly allowed, and "a typical village priest" was allowed five minutes' opposition. The story goes on: "He ascended the platform and addressed the audience: 'Brother and Sisters, Christ is Risen.'" No more. It was enough. Those simple straight from the heart words completely converted Russia? Well, not exactly that, but it proves, says the *British Weekly*, "that the heart of the Russian peasant still remains believing." O Yeah, as the Movie Hero would say.

There is trouble in Scotland. The Balloch Presbyterians are up in arms against Sunday excursions, Sunday motoring, and Sunday cycling. But above all they are highly indignant at what is called "the loathsome" proposals still further to encourage Sunday excursions and Sunday games. What the Presbytery is in favour of is the "loathsome" encouragement to people to stop in their dwellings in Glasgow and elsewhere, or to go to Church and listen to the "loathsome" sermons of fundamentally ignorant parsons. But we suppose that anything is loathsome to a Presbyterian which interferes with a form of religion that has as great a right to the title of "loathsome" as anything with which we are acquainted.

In the course of an inquest, held in Birmingham, it transpired that a woman who had died from cancer had been treated in a Christian Science Home for Cancer. She had trusted in God, and the medical evidence was to the effect that such confidence in the deity is not to be depended on. The woman died, and Professor Haswell Wilson, pathologist at the Birmingham University gave it as his opinion that medical care would have cured the woman had it been "taken in time." The Coroner asked why could not Christian Science be combined with medical attention? But, how in the name of all that is reasonable, can the two methods be combined? One either trusts in God to cure or one does not. Does the Coroner mean that God is only to be trusted when there is a doctor to keep an eye on him? Christian Science is very absurd, but it is not so absurd as trusting to God to cure a patient and having a doctor on hand to do the work. We quite appreciate the Coroner's difficulty. He dare not say that medical attendance is not necessary, and he dare not say that one can safely leave anything to God. So he ends in making himself and his religion both very ridiculous.

We care very little for discussions about what well-known men believe. Some of the greatest of men have held the most absurd opinions, and some very commonplace characters sensible ones. But men are very sleep-like, and to most individuals a united bleat appears to show a tremendous amount of strength. This is true of a great many forms of opinion, but it is very, very true where religion is concerned.

So we only note the comment of a writer in the *Two Worlds*, on the religious opinions of Edison, for one reason. The writer cites from Henry Ford, whose statement on such a matter we should take with the greatest reserve, that Edison believed "the essential individual survived death." On this comes the comment, "This exonerates Edison from the stigma of Agnosticism from the age of thirty-one years." "The stigma of Agnosticism!" is just an example of religious impudence, and we fancy it has slipped in without the editor noticing it. We have ourselves no love for so vague and for such a misapplied term as Agnosticism, but the religious impertinence underlying the expression here is plain. As a matter of fact Edison, until his death was a member of and subscriber to an American Freethought Society. The *Two World's* writer should make certain of his facts.

Easter never passes without one of our national newspapers, terribly anxious to save the soul of England, rehashing the story of Jesus in some way. Nothing arouses the sympathy and religion of pious people so much as an account of the trial and crucifixion—as if these "events" were not just as mythical as the speeches "invented" by John; oceans of tears must have been shed over the hero Jesus and millions of howls uttered against the wicked Jews, the villains of the piece. That these rehashes are to the taste of some readers is shown by the letter of one correspondent to his paper. He says, "Many times have I read the story of the trial of Jesus, but never has it been so simply or so beautifully expressed as in your article." But surely this is a blasphemous indictment against the Inspired Word of God? Has a mere journalist beaten the accounts given by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—accounts he it remembered—dictated to the Holy Writers by God himself?

What happens in a country predominantly Catholic to "propagandists" of other religions is shown in a recent case in Canada. Twelve members of the International Bible Students' Association "were found guilty of violating the Lord's Day Act, and of acting in a manner likely to cause a disturbance of the public peace." They had "gathered outside the parish church of Ste. Rose, Quebec, distributing pamphlets to the people after Mass and stopped the people to discuss religious beliefs." The students appealed to the Quebec Superior Court, but their appeals were dismissed. The whole forms a beautiful picture of Christian unity and peace; and proves once again how these Christians love one another.

A writer in the *Methodist Recorder* is exercised about the rather stale "problem" of why ordinary sensible human beings prefer to go for a walk or stay at home instead of going to church. Mr. J. C. Gibbs will offend the clergy without shedding much light on the so-called problem, by believing that men stay away from church because "there has been in the church such a vagueness." We are afraid Mr. Gibbs is barking up the wrong tree. The less vague the religion, the less anyone of ordinary intelligence will patronize it. As Oscar Wilde said, "To be intelligible is to be found out," and there is such a thing as "explaining away" when parsons cease to be vague.

The Rev. Walter Carey asked, on a recent Sunday evening, "Does anybody really want the Crucified today?" The question would be easy to answer if only the people were left alone and not perpetually bombarded by the story of the "crucified" all the year round. As it is they have to be bullied into accepting the story of Jesus with its crude mythology, its ridiculous devils and hell, its absurd miracles and mostly impossible ethics. Mr. Carey thinks he knows "some of the motives that may be drawing you to Jesus on the Cross." One of them is, "you may be sinners needing the pardon of the Precious Blood." Another, "many of you want a better land and know it is Jesus who will show you the way to it." Still another, "Many of you are suffering, and like to think of the Crucified as your companion." And it is this kind of nonsense that finds a ready market in these days of science and discovery!

Professor Findlay, who writes regularly in the *British Weekly*, had also an Easter article in the *Methodist Recorder*, on that never-ending problem of how far Judas Iscariot should be blamed for "betraying" the Incarnate God, who had come to earth for the purpose of being betrayed. The only redeeming feature of the whole story is its untruth. If God could condemn his Only Son to death, He would be an inhuman murderer. As to Judas, he can only be condemned because he accepted thirty shillings to "identify" an agitator far better known to everybody than Pontius Pilate or Judas himself. It was like asking the curate of Stiffkey to identify the Bishop of London.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- H. A. KEMP.—Thanks for cutting. The article is of a very mixed quality, but does not call for special notice in these columns.
- L. HINE.—We already send free copies of the *Freethinker* to a number of public libraries, but are always ready to add to the list.
- T. MARTIN.—There cannot be, in the nature of the case, contemporary evidence of the reality of the New Testament miracles. All that could be produced is evidence of a belief in them; and that kind of evidence exists with all miracles. It is really the existence of a mental state that exists, not a proof of an historical happening.
- H. C. LEV'S *History of the Inquisition in Spain* is published by Macmillan & Co., in four volumes. There is no cheap edition of it that we know.
- DR. NOYES (U.S.A.).—Your letter reminds one—if the reminder is necessary—that the religious crank flourishes in all countries and in all climes. When not too persistent they afford material for amusement.
- FOR DISTRIBUTING THE *Freethinker*.—G. F. H. McCluskey, 18, 11d.
- F. MARSCHAL.—Many thanks for new subscriber.
- B. CHINNER.—Paper and literature forwarded to address sent. Thanks.
- C. H. CLEAVER.—Paper being sent for four weeks. Thanks.
- FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—“Well-Wisher.” £5.
- H. WOOD.—Thanks for addresses. Shall be very pleased to meet you whenever occasion offers.
- W. G. JONES.—Sorry, but not quite up to standard.
- 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.
- 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

Now that Easter has gone we are reminded that a little over a month will bring us to the date of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference at Manchester. Manchester is very central, and for that reason we hope to see a goodly number of members present, in addition to those who attend as delegates from the different areas. Some very interesting topics are likely to come before the Conference, and the proposed revision of the Principles and Objects should receive a careful consideration. The decision, whichever way it goes, ought to be as representative as possible.

There will be many cheap excursions, by both train and motor-bus, and this will make attendance economically easier. Full particulars will be announced later. But those who intend being at Manchester on Whit-Sunday, and require hotel or other accommodation, should write as soon as possible to the General Secretary, stating just what kind of accommodation they require, and for how long.

Congratulations to our old friend and colleague, Arthur B. Moss, who will achieve the age of 80 on May 8. Mr. Moss has, ever since he was barely out of his teens, been working for the cause of Freethought by tongue and pen, and by any other means that presented themselves. He held for many years a post under the old London School Board, and was member of the Camberwell

Borough Council for a lengthy period. In both capacities, unlike so many who occupy public positions, he never forgot or hid the fact that he was a Freethinker. And that meant much more in those times than it does to-day. Mr. Moss's services to Freethought have thus been continuous and without self-seeking. We feel sure that Freethinkers all over the country wish to associate themselves with the congratulations it is our privilege to offer.

The *Star* of a recent date, contained the report of an interview with Mr. Moss, which gave a brief sketch of his life, with an account of his lengthy experience of the London theatre, and his reminiscences of famous actors. It mentioned his experience as a journalist, the plays and sketches he has written, and his political work. But strangely enough it never mentioned his life-long service in the cause of militant Freethought. But the *Star* has a habit of forgetfulness where Freethought is concerned. Perhaps that is because it has so many non-Christians on the staff who are afraid of being found out. We have often said that if we were the proprietor of a newspaper from which we wished to keep out Freethought, we would staff it with unbelievers of the timid and respectable type. They would be certain to keep a very vigilant watch lest they be accused of being what they were.

We print elsewhere a letter from an Australian correspondent informing us of the death of the widow and daughter, under distressing circumstances, of the late Joseph Symes. The latter will be a well-known and respected name to the older generation of Freethinkers. He was born in England, and served in the Methodist ministry. He became a Freethinker, and for years lectured in all parts of England. Then he settled in Melbourne, and for many years conducted a vigorous and uncompromising propaganda, running a Freethought paper, and publishing many pamphlets. He returned to England and resumed lecturing here, but died after about two years' residence. His wife—who was much younger than himself—then returned to Australia with her daughter. We have heard but little of them since, and now the news comes to remind us that the courage of the father has been inherited by the daughter. The latter lost her life in trying to save her mother from a terrible death. We have no other particulars than these contained in the letter received, but should be glad to have any that are available.

Some time ago we referred at length to the prosecution of the Rev. Victor Rahard, an ex-Roman Catholic priest, of Montreal, for blasphemy. Mr. Rahard was accused of posting placards on the door of his own Church attacking the Roman Church. The case has been dragging on, but it has now been brought to at least a temporary end by Mr. Rahard being sentenced to pay a fine of £20, or in default, one month's imprisonment. At the request of Mr. Rahard, his trial was without a jury.

One of the principal posters displayed by Mr. Rahard ran:—

Judas sold Christ only once—Roman priests sell him every day, even three times. Judas repented and threw the money away. The Roman priests do not repent, they keep the money.

The Judge held that this language was calculated to cause a breach of the peace, since it was offensive to Roman Catholics. Religion, particularly the Roman Catholic religion, has its pretty much its own way in Montreal, and has methods of achieving its ends in various ways. The Judge has given Mr. Rahard permission to appeal on both points of fact and of law. We understand that an appeal will be made.

The Executive of the N.S.S. has engaged Mr. G. Whitehead for a summer lecturing campaign, which will cover as much country as possible between Plymouth and Glasgow. Commencing to-day (Sunday, May 5), Mr. Whitehead will be in the Finchley district of London for a week, where meetings will be held each evening. The following week Mr. Whitehead will be in Bolton. The expenses of the campaign will be borne by the National Secular Society.

The speaker to-day (May 5) at the Failsworth Secular Sunday School is Mr. J. Clayton. He will lecture in the afternoon at 2.45, on "Pioneers," and in the evening, at 6.30, on "Some Modern Gods." Admission will be free, and Mr. Clayton, who is well known to Lancashire audiences, should have good meetings.

Most of the London Branches will begin open-air work to-day (May 5), and announcements will be found in the Lecture Notices column. There is plenty of work to be done, and as usual, the stalwarts will make every effort to do it, but the work can be made more easy and enjoyable with the help of the many; and it is hoped that unattached saints will introduce themselves to the officials conducting the meetings, with the view of joining up and giving a hand.

The Leading Religion of India

II.

THE third member of the Hindu trinity of gods is Siva, who symbolizes the destructive and reparative powers of Nature. All the successive phenomena of life are his handiwork, and he keeps watch and ward over birth, childhood, maturity and decay. Unlike Vishnu, he has no embodiments, but his presence is made manifest in Nature's ceaseless transformations. He creates life and he brings to death and the tropical diseases so fatal to humanity, he ordains. Serenely indifferent to human suffering as stern Nature ever shows herself to be, Siva as her controller proves himself equally unconcerned. Yet, inconsistently enough, the devotee assumes that his severities may be softened by prostration and prayer, while a few even strive to secure some share at least in the god's power of dispensation of good or evil.

The worshippers of this grim god seek his favour through penance, meditation, self-mortification, fasting, bodily mutilation, semi-starvation and other austerities. By a prolonged pursuit of such practices a persevering soutri may ultimately obtain the power to perform miracles and even constrain the very gods to obey his commands. Devotee communities are common in India. There are Dervishes who wander, sometimes stark naked throughout the land, and these pious fanatics are almost invariably the worshippers of Siva. Myriads of animals are sacrificed in his temples, and it is suspected that Siva long appreciated human offerings. Indeed, as Hinduism spread among the savage peoples of India, Vishnu appears to have absorbed the humaner attributes of the aboriginal deities, while their cruel and bloody rites with their attendant goblins, ghosts and demons became part of the cult of Siva and the minor gods who served him.

In addition to the great gods, there are countless lesser deities. Animism and corpse-worship constantly intermingle. Practically every striking event in life is personified by some supernatural being. Adoration of the elemental energies of Nature is thinly veiled in the rites and ceremonies of numerous anthropomorphic divinities. Sun, moon and stars, majestic mountains, the flowing rivers and the rushing wind are all bowed before as the manifestations of divine power. Sages and saints, renowned warriors and martyrs to some sacred cause, all possess their crowds of local worshippers. In every district of agricultural India the distinguished dead are still being raised to the rank of gods. Even the supreme deities themselves appear to have arisen in this manner. After long and dispassionate observation, Sir A. C. Lyall concluded that "the practice of turning wonderful men into gods goes on incessantly in

India—that the habit of ascribing divine possession to remarkable personages has been for ages almost universal among primitive races and superstitious peoples, and consequently that a very large number of the gods of Hinduism have been developed, so to speak, out of humanity. . . . We can, I think, trace a series of beliefs which support this conjecture. There is first the general worship of the dead or ghosts which is found among all the primitive races of India; then comes the particular worship of dead men who have been famous; then the worship of these men as local gods; and lastly, the recognition of these local gods as forms or appearances of the supreme gods of Hinduism."

The aboriginal races who dwell in the hill and jungle regions, as they become slowly assimilated to more civilized surroundings, are absorbed within the Hindu communion. Closer contact with a superior people is accompanied with many changes, both in custom and belief. All aliens are welcomed who seem willing to embrace the Hindu faith. And once they accept the creed, and conform to its rules, the Brahmans will complete their conversion.

Although the concepts of the cultured differ widely in some respects from those of the crowd the motives of praise and prayer are everywhere the same. The gods are thanked for past services and are propitiated for favours to come. Also, the pious and reflective Hindu meditates over post-mortem problems. For the soul is destined to pass after death through many punitive and purifying experiences within the bodies of lower animals and then through higher modes of existence until, at long last, the cleansed soul is embraced within the bosom of the Supreme Being. This theory is essentially that of Buddhist philosophy in which sensation ceases in blessed Nirvana. Still, it is doubtful whether speculations concerning the spirits' post-mortem experiences play a part so important in Hinduism as that encountered in Christianity and other religions. Practically the mass of the Hindu people are mainly concerned with the benefits conferred and the pains inflicted by the gods in ordinary daily life. Yet, even so, the thoughtful Hindu with melancholy passivity, anticipates the time when his soul shall be released from all sensation and absorbed within the universal spirit from which all things have emerged and finally return.

There exist various schools of Hindu philosophy, and these range from a highly attenuated idealism to that of an almost scientific realism in which the simultaneous and successive aspects of phenomena are regarded as the strivings of the blind forces of Nature. So diverse are the doctrines of the rival cults that they present an almost bewildering conflict of thought. In truth, Hinduism includes in its communion a base occupied by the rudest customs and beliefs which gradually ascends to a summit of the most refined transcendental philosophy.

Many practices are sanctioned and sometimes applauded in India which seem repugnant to the untravelled European. Most of these date back to days remote, probably to centuries long antecedent to the Aryan or Caucasian entry into India. Nevertheless, in contemporary Hinduism the symbol of the great god Siva remains the *linga* or *phallus*. And as one of our leading authorities reminds us, three only of the twelve most important *linga* shrines exist outside the distinctively Aryan regions. Indeed, Muir notes that "the early traditions associate the establishment of *lingas* in India with Aryan saints and worthies."

Dr. Rivers again, in his study of the Todas, noted that veneration and worship of the genital organs is by no means universal with the Indian forest tribes. The Todas themselves seem to have migrated from Malabar, yet phallic worship forms no part of their

religion. In summing up the available evidence, Crooke concludes that: "On the whole the facts seem to indicate that, though the cult may have prevailed among some of the indigenous tribes, it was not confined to them, and that in the form in which it now appears, its extension was largely due to the Aryans."

Judging from the Baroda Census Report, 1901, the compilers were shocked to discover that orthodox Hindus believe that every sort of sin may be atoned for by means of appointed penances, with suitable gifts to the Brahmans, through whose agency crimes or misdemeanours may even become merits. This leads, we are told, "to the monstrous belief that evil deeds, of whatever enormity, can be atoned for and expiated by money." Yet, some assert that pecuniary arrangements of this character have long been customary in the Roman Catholic Church itself.

Religious reformers have constantly appeared in India, and cultured natives have been profoundly influenced by Western science, philosophy and scepticism. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the influence exercised by John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Bain and Tyndall, over the minds of educated Indians was very great. To-day, the most intelligent members of the Nationalist Party are Freethinkers. Nor have they forgotten the days when Charles Bradlaugh was their revered and trusted representative in the British Parliament.

Among the many modernist movements of latter-day India is that of Brahma Somaj, which manifests marked deistic tendencies. The faintly discerned divinity of this school is regarded as a benevolent power, whose majesty is displayed in his, or its works. Another humanitarian and deistic cult is known as the Arya Samaj, whose guide is the Vedas, and who adore their divinity as the disseminator of all truth, and the creator and sustainer of the cosmos. Whether the doctrines of these and other theistic sects will make any permanent impression on the minds of the multitude is very uncertain as a craving for the belief in manlike gods is almost universal. Whether a shadowy deism or pantheism will ultimately displace polytheism remains a very open question. Still, present-time tendencies suggest an increasing purification of religion. Again, some novel message may be preached by some spell-binding personality, whose mastery of the emotions of an intensely sensitive people may divert religious sentiment along entirely unforeseen paths.

If the future of Hinduism depended upon the policy of India's educated classes there can be little question that its evolution would proceed along progressive and rationalistic lines. Unfortunately, the intelligent section of the population is very small. The immense mass of the Indian people are engaged in agriculture, and the peasantry in all countries are notoriously ignorant and superstitious. Rural India, as a whole, is constantly engaged in a hard struggle for bare subsistence, while it remains strongly traditional and conservative in its ideas. It is also indifferent to sectarian and even political controversies, which are chiefly confined to the urban communities. It therefore seems fair to conclude that while a cultivated Hindu minority is willing to welcome the science and philosophy of the West, and becomes more latitudinarian in its principles and beliefs, the agrarian population cleaves to the older forms of the faith which furnish facilities for the worship of ancestral divinities, the observance of the customary rites of animism, and the other modes of ritual and belief so far essential to the religious life of unenlightened humanity.

T. F. PALMER.

How Did Life Begin?

WE wonder how many times this question has been asked N.S.S. lecturers and other propagandists, usually in triumph as if indicating the downfall of Atheism.

The reply is, that we do not know sufficient to answer it, but we do know enough to speculate on it. We know, for instance, that life is always found indissolubly associated with material conditions, undergoes changes as they change, and can be quickened, slowed down or even destroyed by changes in the environment. We are thus led to believe that life is a function of matter at a complex stage, just as we interpret the ability of the anemone to distinguish between food and paper in terms of its chemical mechanism, and we conclude that as there was once a time—in the Azoic rock—when there was no life, we must look for its origin in non-living conditions.

Such, at least, is the verdict of biologists, not in their capacity as good Atheist citizens, but as the spokesmen of biological science. J. S. Huxley voices the general belief that "there has not only been an evolution of all living beings from one common ancestor, but of all life from non-life," and "there is every reason to suppose, and no reason to doubt, that life, which we know to be composed of the same material elements, and to work by the same energy as non-living matter, actually arose from it." [Essays.] This view is admitted even by Sir O. Lodge, one of the remaining anti-Materialists, who says "the evolution of live creatures from inorganic material must be accepted as inevitable," "from some points of view." [Beyond Physics.]

Where, when and how, then, did life begin? "Don't talk to me about the amœba," says our opponent, "for that gives your case away. It is definitely alive; I see a sudden transition to amœba, where hitherto there was none. The origin of life represents a new 'creative level.' Where is your half-way stage between life and non-life? Show me a fusion, an evolution, not an act of creation which indicates an intervening Deity."

Now it is possible to push this half-way stage craze too far; where, e.g., is half-way between the letters P and Q? Nevertheless, just as anthropologists have found forms between man and ape, indicating no absolute distinction between the two, so have bacteriologists discovered forms equally significant as between living and non-living, in no-man's-land, to use T. H. Huxley's expression.

The familiar anatomical case of Java Man has a parallel in the bacteriophage, investigated first by D'Herelle. Some Comparative Anatomists indulged in futile controversy over pithecanthropus, futile because their arguments were based on the notion of absolute distinction between man and ape. Differences also exist, and are discussed in Haldane's *Fact and Faith*, about the bacteriophage.

It was once supposed that as big fleas had little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em, therefore little fleas must have been lesser fleas and so *ad infinitum*. This is now seen to be impossible, because while the bacillus is the flea's flea, and the bacteriophage the bacillus' flea, there cannot be any flea for the bacteriophage, for it would reach the dimensions of an atom, and atoms do not behave like fleas.

The fact that the bacteriophage multiplies leads D'Herelle to conclude that it is to be classed as an

¹ Not two or more, it seems. Structural molecules are asymmetrical, and of the two possible types only one occurs in living nature. An alternative would be that one ancestor overpowered its rivals, and hands down its own molecular features. See *Fact and Faith*.

organism; the fact that it survives heat and other attacks usually fatal to organisms, persuades Bordet and others that it is *not* alive; the American geneticist Muller compares it to a gene (unit of heredity); Haldane regards it as a step beyond the enzyme on the road to life.

If then we delve beyond the limits prescribed by protoplasm, we may find lower rudiments of life in molecular organizations, and the future task of chemistry—to make life in the lab.—becomes nearer and nearer.

The old theory of spores as accounting for the origin of life does not solve the problem, but merely shifts it to another planet, but apart from that, investigators deem it certain that life has actually evolved from inanimate matter on *this* planet, and some, like Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, Dr. E. J. Allen and the late Sir E. Sharpey-Schafer, who died a few weeks ago, even hold that life may be evolving to-day.

Prof. Bantner leads a school which believes life to have begun with enzymes, and J. B. Haldane's theory is that "the first living or half-living things were probably large molecules synthesized under the influence of the sun's radiation, and only capable of reproduction in the particularly favourable medium in which they originated."

Scientists may differ for years on the matter, thereby affording Mr. Chesterton much petty amusement, but the final outcome of their investigations will leave a demonstrated fact, which no doubt will add greatly to the discomfiture of Mr. Chesterton's spiritual descendants.

G. H. TAYLOR.

A Barbarous Relic

I.

A HISTORY of Corporal Punishment would astonish the world. It would involve consideration of the theory of punishment generally; the rights of individuals; the limits of authority; the practice of Government; the relation of the person to the community; slave-holding; education; the whole ethical problem of goodness, and the supreme form of physical infliction—death, with the methods of execution, lesser and capital.

Fragments unearthed at Nineveh and Babylon, in Crete, Egypt, Mexico and other places, show that corporal punishment was practised thousands of years ago. Apparently no ancient civilizations managed to exist without it. To that extent we may deem those civilizations defective.

For many centuries the Jews practised scourging without any doubts of its rightness and efficacy. In the Bible it is always mentioned with approval. Wives, children, slaves, servants, and misdemeanants could be beaten.

Hebrew proverbs and poetry speak of corporal punishment frequently, the references being understandable by all, and apparently agreeable, except to those who received the stripes. They were expected to think it was for their good.

Hebrew philosophy went farther, and said that he who administered chastisement was doing the duty enjoined by God and religion; that natural suffering was a dispensation from God: the relationship of a loving father and his children.

In Turkey and Asia Minor the bastinado was in common use for ages, as the rod and whip and knotted rope were in Greece and Rome.

Whenever one hear enthusiasts speaking with admiration of life in the ancient Mediterranean and

Asiatic States, one must remember they refer only to free-men of wealth and high birth. The ordinary man is entitled to doubt when he remembers the slave basis, especially if he knows the enormous amount of physical suffering wantonly inflicted at those periods.

Wars; blood sports; slavery; revenge; harshness to children, inferiors and prisoners; torturing and burning, and savage punishments seemed to go together to make life hideous for all except a favoured few.

II.

Unfortunately, medieval Europe took to itself the worst in the classical era it overthrew. Whereas the ancient world beat with whips, Europe in the middle ages flogged with scorpions.

If as much ingenuity, expense and trouble had been bestowed on beneficent efforts as were on designing implements to harass and torment human beings, the world to-day might be a tolerable place in which to live.

The death penalty for a vast number of offences, often by slow and shudderingly revolting methods, also frequently for offences which we recognize as trivial, forgivable, or meriting light expiation, or not now regarded as sins at all, went side by side with mutilation, outlawry, burning, deprivation, ostracism, starvation, and an orgy of variations in the scope and horror of inflicting bodily suffering. One marvels at the mentality of those responsible for such devilry, with a temptation to indict the whole of medieval Europe as a collection of monsters.

The expenditure of ingenuity and effort upon the infliction of pain, if directed toward prevention and reformation, might have left the twentieth century with fewer problems to settle. We have an immensely long road to travel before we can justly call ourselves civilized.

III.

The historic relics are gruesome objects. The galleys, stocks, pillory, whipping-post, ducking-stool, brank, cat-o'-nine-tails, knout, tawse, rack, thumb-screws, boot, birch, wheel, triangle, stripes, lashing, whipping behind a cart-tail, *peine forte et dure*, branding, ear-cropping and nose-slitting are some of them, with their apotheoses: the stake, axe and block, and halter.

It is a diabolical list. Whatever we may think of our penal code, we may draw some satisfaction from contemplating the instruments and methods of punishment we no longer use.

Strange was the slowness with which they were abolished. Most of them lingered into the seventeenth, many into the eighteenth, and some into the nineteenth centuries, as did public executions.

Formal abolition of slavery effected a great diminution in the usage of beating, which had become a habit, requiring much persuasion before it was regarded as wrong as well as ineffective.

The right of the individual to preserve his body as well as mind intact, unmolested and unpained, was established only after a mighty struggle, which is still doubtfully won, any more than is liberty of thought, speech, worship or leisure.

IV.

In the Navy and Army flogging lingered long, as in the merchant service. The records of those three reek with stripes to the extent of bloodshed.

Grimly humorous Captain Marryat exposes the method in "The Old Navy," describing the capture of a French ship.

The Captain says:—

"If she's not mine in half an hour, I'll flog each mother's son."

and:—

"You've done your duty handsomely, each man stood to his gun;

If you hadn't, you villains, as sure as day, I'd have flogged each mother's son!"

Experts and authorities spoke with no uncertain voice, to say that a ship would be unworkable and a regiment unmanageable, unless the sailors and soldiers were beaten within an inch of their lives. This was the considered opinion of the great Duke of Wellington.

To this day the Army sergeant carries a cane. A century ago and back it was no ornament. It was a real weapon, used frequently and heavily upon the bodies of privates.

Last of all, recruits and boys in Army and Navy were freed from the tyranny of perpetual blows, but the Services remain efficient, equally with merchant ships manned by unflogged crews.

George Canning has left us a semi-humorous poem on Mrs. Brownrigg. In the eighteenth century:—

"She whipped two female 'prentices to death,
And hid them in the coal-hole."

Chaucer makes our host of the "Tabard Inn" say of his wife:—

"By Goddes boones! whan I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me forth the grete clobbered staves,
And crieth, "Sley the dogges everyone!
And breke of them the bak and eek the bone!"

So were apprentices beaten long after journeymen escaped unscathed. Ships' boys were flogged when adult sailors remained untouched. Long after grown-up people escaped the cruelties of corporal punishment they still were visited upon children.

In the old school at Abingdon is a master's desk with a ring at the side whereto boys could be tied when birched.

Martin Luther records that his father beat him till the blood came. A living autobiographer remembers being lashed at school with a whip—in the end of the nineteenth century—till he was unable to remove his pants for a week.

So one could go up and down the centuries collecting evidence that the beating of children was regarded as correct and proper and good for them, even after it had been discarded for adults.

Carlyle animadverted upon his teachers who thought the mind could be stimulated by blows upon the muscular integument.

The law allows magistrates to order child misdemeanants to be birched. Everyone who has had dealings with children knows the uselessness of birching. It leaves sullen resentment in the child's mind, and goes far toward making him a lifelong criminal.

V.

The thousand and one ways of inflicting pain and misery upon criminals and offenders have been abandoned as useless or wicked, cruel or demoralizing. The spirit of the age is against any such practices.

With few exceptions, only in schools is corporal punishment sanctioned and used. There it is indefensible.

It is time the same freedom was extended to children as has been to their elders. No grown person will permit himself to be physically assaulted. Even the law will not, save in special cases. The sanctity of the adult's body is hedged round by numerous statutes and regulations. Animals are similarly guarded; to thrash a horse or dog calls forth much indignation, and may lead to fine or imprisonment.

Therefore such protection should be afforded

children. It would be well if the law formally and definitely forbade children to be struck under any pretext whatever, thus putting them on a level of justice with men, women, freed slaves, lunatics, and domestic animals.

Of all living creatures the child is the only one that can be beaten with impunity. This should not be.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHOLOGY

SIR,—Were it not for the concluding portion of Mr. Wood's letter, I should not have spent time or space replying to it. I can only say that if his "replies" to John M. Robertson, published and unpublished, are anything like the numerous letters I have read of his during the past twenty years or so, I am not surprised that they have been more or less ignored. Anyone who, at this time of day, believes that there really was a God born in Palestine about 1900 years ago, a God performing "miracles," who "rose" after he had been put to death, and "flew" up to Heaven, is surely beyond argument.

I was careful to show, and gave reasons for showing, that Freethought was independent of a belief in the historicity of "Jesus of Nazareth"; as, if he were a God, he could not have been born; and if he were a man, he was just like other men; and I said, "It is not Freethought which cares very much one way or another on the matter." Mr. Wood from this implies that I and Freethought "are not concerned to discover the truth about the historicity of Jesus. . . . There have been Freethinkers who did care very much about truth." Mr. Wood must know quite well that I am as concerned for "truth" as he is; and that taking a passage from its context, and giving it a meaning which is not mine, is an example of flagrant dishonesty which could hardly be beaten by even the Christian Evidence Society.

H. CUTNER.

SIR,—It seems to me that the problem of the historicity of the Gospel Jesus has clearly *two* issues, a mythological and a historical; which is not realized widely enough, I think. Now so far as the controversy between Christianity and Freethinkers is concerned, the only relevant issue is the mythological one. This says: if we knew long ago that logically there is no difference between Jahve ("God") of Christian mythology and say Zeus or Wotan, etc., of other mythologies, then the problem of the *historicity of Jahve's* ("God's") *son* or of the historicity of "miracles" as signs conferred by *him* on the devotees, automatically becomes thereby meaningless (A. B. Russell: *What I Believe*. Kegan Paul, 1933, p. 13). Any argument maintaining the historicity of myths implies contradictions.

As to the historical issue, i.e., whether there existed a certain man, called Jesus, who *talked* and *was talked* about in the extraordinary New Testament way, that matters to the history (of religions) and not to the *principles* of Freethought. What really matters to a Freethinker is, I think, the fact that all maintaining of the *historicity of a divine* Jesus is a wallowing in contradictions.

Nevertheless Christians are deliberately confusing the purely mythological issue with the historical one. Why? The best reason, to my opinion, was given by a Swedish theologian, Dr. Gulin, in a public lecture here (November 16, 1933), when he proved that the many contradictions are *essential* to Christian faith, and without them it would *cease* to be interesting and *stimulating* to its believers!

Riga, Latvia.

G. S. SMELTERS.

SIR,—The controversy over the origins of Christianity shows a lack of broad-mindedness on the part of both the historic and mythic adherents. Perhaps even more obvious on the side of the latter. The former admit a

large amount of myth in Christianity, but the latter go out of their way to deny any historic basis for the Christian Gospels. Surely the number of historic Messiahs from Bar Cochbar to Prophet Wroec would justify them in allowing the possibility, nay, probability, of one more. After all, the personality of Jesus was just accidental to the foundation of Christianity, in much the same way as the existence, say, of Lenin, was to the foundation of Bolshevism. The movement which sprang up spontaneously from the mixture of thought in the Hellenistic East would have existed and thrived whether "A" had been a leader, or whether "A" had never been born. Spengler's historical thesis on the beginning of the Magian culture would probably be very useful in the search for Christian origins. It is certainly supported by the independent researches of Couchoud in his *Book of Revelation*. It is easier to explain the Ebionite faction by the historical theory, and the early Church evidently believed Jesus was more man than the present gospels admit. Traenius says that Jesus died at the age of fifty, and Epiphanius (I think it is), says that Pandera was his father. I personally find no difficulty in reconciling the two theories of origin on the lines of Spengler, by saying that Christianity was destined, but Jesus was accidental.

JOHN II. SHAW.

P.S.—To avoid misunderstanding, I add that "destined" does not mean anything Supernatural. Spengler is a Materialist. The growth of a child to manhood is destined, but measles would be accidental.

CHRISTIANS AND FREETHINKERS

SIR,—In your comment on my letter to the *Christian World* (that "young and old will never learn the facts from the churches") you seem to have overlooked the fact that the journal that published it is a well-accredited organ of the Free Churches. I may add that the writer has been a church-member for sixty years; and that what he has learned as to the faults, as well as the virtues of the churches of Christendom, has been mainly from the writings and speeches of Christians.

I claim to have been a free thinker and a free writer and speaker for nearly all my adult life; and have seldom found my frankness resented by my fellow-Christians, most of whom realize that acknowledgement of faults and imperfections (corporate, as well as individual) leads to progress.

There is, of course, unconscious bias in us all; but much of this may be removed by willingness to learn from one another. And I hope and pray that the time will soon come when all Christians will be Freethinkers; and all Freethinkers will be Christians.

G. F. WATES.

MRS. JOSEPH SYMES

SIR,—Many readers of the *Freethinker* will still remember the late Mr. Joseph Symes, who spent several years in this country as a Freethought lecturer, and who subsequently died in England. It is with much regret that I have to report the deaths of his widow and daughter, Stella Bradlaugh Symes.

Miss Symes lost her life in an heroic, but fruitless attempt to rescue her mother from the burning villa in which they had resided together for some time.

With hearty congratulations upon your exceptionally able advocacy of Freethought.

Australia.

MAY LORD.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 26, 1935

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Clifton, Wood, Silvester, W. J. W. Easterbrook, Ebury, Preece, L. M. W. Easterbrook, Saphin, Mrs. Quinton, Jur., Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and confirmed. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to North London, West London, Stockport, Nelson, Bradford Branches, and the Parent Society. Progress in arrangement of Mr. Whitehead's Summer Tour was reported. Correspondence and reports were dealt with from Glasgow, Swansea, Manchester, North East Federation of N.S.S. Branches, Messrs. Brighton and Clayton. The Annual Balance Sheet was presented, examined, and accepted. Details concerning the Annual Conference, including motions for the Agenda were noted, and the Secretary instructed. The date of meeting for the Agenda Committee was fixed. The meeting then closed.

The next meeting of the Executive will take place on Friday, May 31.

R. H. ROSETTI.

General Secretary.

Obituary

ARTHUR DAVIES

THE remains of Arthur Davies were interred in the picturesque cemetery at Tunbridge Wells on Thursday, April 25. Death took place on April 22, as the result of cancer at the age of 40. A Freethinker practically all his life, he retained his interest in the movement and was loyal to his opinions to the very end. Suffering considerable pain, and with the knowledge that death was approaching, he repeated a previous wish for a Secular funeral, which thanks to the persistency of two surviving brothers, was duly carried out. A Secular Service was conducted at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John Katz, B.A.—"World Religions and World Chaos."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. R. T. Bryant—A Lecture.

NORTH FINCHLEY (Tally Ho Corner): 7.0, Sunday, May 5, and Monday, May 6, at 7.30, Mr. Whitehead will lecture. Church End, Finchley, Nether Street, 7.30, Tuesday, May 7, Mr. Whitehead. Further announcements at meetings.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, May 5, A Lecture. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. Tuson. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, May 6, Mr. Ebury. Mornington Crescent, 8.0, Wednesday, May 8, Mr. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Sunday, May 5, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, May 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Stonhouse Street, Clapham High Street, 8.0, Friday, May 10, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. Ebury—A Lecture.

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.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt—A Lecture.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, May 4, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, May 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HETTON: 7.30, Tuesday, May 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

MIDDLESBROUGH (The Subway): 7.0, Thursday, May 9, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BURNLEY MARKET, 7.45, Tuesday, May 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

READ, 7.45, Wednesday, May 8, Mr. J. Clayton.

RAWTENSTALL, 7.45, Thursday, May 9, Mr. J. Clayton.

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THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

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