

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
The N.S.S. and its Work—The Editor - - -	385
The Decline of Devotional Literature—Mimnermus	387
Beethoven and the Revolution—H. George Farmer	388
Pilgrimage—Jack Lindsay - - -	389
Some Real and Alleged Atheists—J. M. Wheeler -	390
N.S.S. Conference - - - - -	394
Woman in Soviet Russia—F. G. Cooper - - -	397

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

## Views and Opinions

### The N.S.S. and its Work

In one sense, even though it be a narrow one, my notes this week are concerned with domestic matters, although they would not be dealt with here unless they had a fundamentally wider application. I must, however, commence with a personal note. On Whit-Sunday the Annual Conference re-elected me, for the twentieth time, President of the National Secular Society. If I am again elected next year I shall, therefore, have achieved my majority. That will also mark about forty-six years service in the Free-thought movement. It will also complete over thirty-eight years writing in this paper—only one week during that period being without at least one article from my pen. It is not for me to say whether that work has been of importance or not, but I can truthfully say two things. One is that I have always given of my best, and that no one has ever given more of himself to the Society or taken less from it.

The speeches made in electing me President were by request, commendably brief. But the Presidency is an honour I value very highly, although I can say with truth that I never sought it, and have never taken steps to retain it, save those of doing my best for the movement. I have never made any pretence of self-sacrifice in holding the post, of working for Freethought, or in writing for this paper instead of going into the market and offering my pen or my voice to any possible purchaser. I have done the things I have done because I liked doing them, and because they suited my humour. No man should use such a term as "self-sacrifice" in such circumstances. I do not like even such a word as "work." The late J. M. Robertson once asked me how I got through my weekly work. I replied that I didn't work, I detested work, I just functioned. And that is the unvarnished truth. I have sacrificed nothing for Freethought. It gave me the chance of self-realization, the chance of doing what I wished to do. I have occupied myself

in doing what I liked doing. And for what more could any man ask?

Finally, to clear these personal things out of the way. The Presidency of the N.S.S. is an unpaid office. I hope it will remain so. It ought to remain so, and so long as it is such an office it will secure that the President, whether man or woman, will give the movement his, or her, best. It is, indeed, not wholly bad that a reform movement shall be poor in the possession of the world's goods. If it can secure sufficient to carry on its work efficiently it is enough. Movements are generally purest when they are poorest, and in other circumstances they are likely to attract undesirable characters. They may also develop that most horrible of all infectious complaints—the blight of "respectability." I have seen many a one-time useful man or woman, and many movements that held the potentiality of good in them, sink into utter uselessness as a consequence of this disease. When a man writes or speaks with one eye on a patron, and with both ears open to hear with dread the first words of censure, his value is reduced almost to vanishing point. No man can be honest to his public unless he is first of all honest to himself.

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### Sheep and Goats

What now of the N.S.S. itself? I joined the Society in 1890, and between then and now King Death has seen to it that a great change of personnel should take place. I think the character of the membership remains the same, although it is a penalty that one pays for living to see gradually one's earlier friends drop off, until one is left like an old tree standing almost alone in the middle of an expanse where chiefly new shoots flourish. But withal, newcomers are apt, in some degree, to misunderstand the purposes of the organization they have joined unless a reminder is now and again given them. I think the 1935 Conference will have served a useful purpose in doing this. There is no question of decreased loyalty, or of weakened devotion to Freethought among its members; it is simply a matter of quite clearly realizing the essential function of the National Secular Society, and the part it plays, and has always played, in the work of reform.

When a man (it will perhaps help to a clearer understanding if the issue is put in a personal form) takes up the work of a reformer he will, if he is open-eyed and clear of vision, make up his mind on one point. Does he desire to be in the front *and remain there*? Is it his aim to lead, or is he content to one day follow? Is he satisfied to be in front with the few or to be behind with the crowd? That is the choice that is ultimately, consciously or unconsciously, made by all—either to be in front with the few or to be behind with the many. The one certain thing is that one cannot be in front with a crowd. No matter how great the success which is achieved at any stage that



issue remains constant. We may pride ourselves on the degree to which we have urged others to advance, but the very impetus given to others, the degree to which an advance has been achieved, means, unless we are to sink back into the crowd, that we retain the position in front with the few. A fruitful advance must point the way to a still further advance, and there is nothing more pitiful than to see a leader fail to rise to this perception, and the Radical lose himself in the Conservative. It is at this juncture that man discovers—or those who watch him discover—whether he is crowd-minded or not. If he is crowd-minded, if his aim is, or if it becomes, that of creating a horde of like-minded individuals that will supply the essential condition for the creation of a "respectable" or a fashionable body, the function of leadership is given up. He is a sheep leading sheep, and is at the head only because someone must occupy that position. But if he is a real reformer, aiming not at the removal of this or that injustice, but to be ever pressing forward to greater and greater conquests, then his lot is always with the few. The numbers do not matter. The delight in "mass mentality" or in "mass-movements" is not his. It is, in fact, this mass mentality, common to all classes of society from the university to the elementary school, from Park Lane to Whitechapel, from the throne to the working man's club, which is one of the chief things he will have to fight at every attempt to move forward. It represents the lower phase of the human expression of the herd-instinct, in which men and women express themselves on the level of a superior type of sheep, instead of voicing their instincts on the higher level of a sublimated, conscious and serviceable loyalty to clearly considered principles.

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#### Politics and the N.S.S.

We are not and never have been a political party with mere political aims, and with whom the securing of a large and obedient membership is of primary importance. Our business is not to capture votes, but to create convictions. I am not tilting against the need for capturing votes, the utility of politics, or the benefits of a political campaign. To a genuinely scientific sociologist—one who wishes to bring real science into his sociology—the politically-minded person has his place and his utility. I am merely trying to establish the distinction between political work and the function of the N.S.S., or in other words, the distinction between the teacher and the politician. And experience teaches quite clearly that for one who is cut out for the task of the teacher, there are a score who are by nature fitted for politics. But the politician is not, as such, the maker or the moulder of opinion. He lives, mentally, from hand to mouth in a region where compromise and short views are inescapable if not essential. The tricks, the shifts, the readiness to sink opinion or to hide conviction in order to capture the following of the crowd—whether educated or uneducated, have been the characteristics of the politician in all ages and without regard to party. The politician asks, "What do the people want?" The teacher asks, "What do they need?" And the distinction is vital. One appeals to the passions of the moment, to the desire for immediate gain, to that most short-sighted and least productive individual the "hard-headed and practical man." It was this frame of mind that "won the war"—and came near ruining the world. The teacher makes his appeal directly to the intelligence of his hearers or readers; and, as a consequence he is always appealing to the comparative few. But they are the few upon whom the impulse to reform, the inspiration to lead mankind to greater heights, rests.

#### Our Work

It is this work that the N.S.S. has consistently done throughout the whole of its history. It made its direct attack on religion because it was religion and the religious type of mind that served as the buttress and bulwark of all sorts of institutions that had outlived their utility or were essentially bad in themselves. In this way it directed attention to a feature of our lives that the ordinary politician dared not openly attack. But it did this work as preparatory to the remodelling of social institutions and to establish the affirmation that forms of government and social institutions were essentially experimental in their nature, to be upheld only so long as they ministered to the progressiveness and happiness of the people. It did this so well, that I do not know of a single important social movement during the last century and a half that has not either originated in or has grown to strength largely as a consequence of the redirection of public opinion by Freethinking activity. Nor must it be forgotten that the work of the N.S.S. is not merely distinctive, it is a work that no other existing organization in this country is likely to do. That work will certainly not be furthered by the Society spending its energies over fields already covered by other organizations.

That, I think, indicates the essential nature of the work of the N.S.S. It is a liberative and educational work. This was expressed in the Executive's Report by the statement that our work consisted in the socialization of human effort. Completely how that effort is to be applied is not the work of the N.S.S., although it is highly probable, almost certain, that every member of the Society has some definite opinions on this point, and does his or her share to bring their ideals into actual operation. If it is said that this liberative work is not enough, I quite agree with the statement. No one has ever claimed that it was; but then we are not engaged in building up a new sect, and most of us find scope outside the Society for work which may help to the realization of particular social reforms. If it is said that this kind of liberative work offers no great attraction to many, I again agree, and have indicated this type by dividing people into the political and the teaching kind. But the really politically useful are those who are willing to attend to those who teach. How to tackle a problem is always essential to a successful solution.

And even though we were living in those far-off days when we may hope to see religious beliefs quite extinguished, the Freethinking aspect of an organization such as the N.S.S. remains. For this is not concerned with the attack on religion only; it joins issue on the power of authority in all matters of opinion, whether concerned with religion or not. History and present conditions show that the right to freedom of thought and speech, and even of movement, may be denied in the name of non-religion as well as in that of religion. There will always be those who cling to what is established, and who will fail to see that the absolute free play of opinion is essential to social progress. One is indeed looking very far into the future to visualize a time when it will no longer be necessary to take a stand against the coercive power of the established order, and to assert the principle of intellectual diversity and liberty as amongst the most valuable of the social forces. The time when that kind of propaganda will be unnecessary is so far removed as hardly to be worth talking about.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

After all, is our idea of God anything more than personified incomprehensibility?

"Philosophical Reflections," Lichtenberg.



## The Decline of Devotional Literature

"The creed of Christendom is gradually melting away like a Northern iceberg into Southern seas."

G. W. Foote.

"Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man!"

Matthew Arnold.

"Of the making of books there is no end," wrote the old-world scribe many centuries ago. To-day, we hear much of the output of books, of the glut of the literary market, when volumes are almost given away to promote the inflated circulation of newspapers. With all the hustle and activity of authors and publishers, however, there is one department of literature which shows a very definite falling-off. During the past sixty years a great and continuous decline has taken place in the production and quality of religious books. To what is this decline due? There are several reasons; the first, and the most potent, being the growing indifference of the huge reading public to religion itself.

In his day, Macaulay noted the singular periodic manner in which the English public took up questions of religion and morality. "Exeter Hall," he wrote, "sends up its annual bray." In the present strenuous days, John Bull no longer remembers that he has a soul to save. Indeed, he is very largely indifferent as to whether he has a soul or not. Meanwhile he reads novels, mostly devoted to sex matters, and newspapers, over-loaded with mischievous rubbish. Another reason for the decline in devotional books is the lower mentality of the clergy. Religion no longer attracts the best minds. There are no longer any great, outstanding ecclesiastics, and it certainly cannot be said that the many Christian churches show much intellect in the production of religious books. Not for present-day clergymen are the rolling harmonies of Jeremy Taylor, the subtle cadences of Milton, the austere utterances of Newman. They cannot even echo the simple, homely language of Baxter or Bunyan. There is not an original idea in their books. Everything is twenty-second hand, threadbare and mouldy, and the paucity of the written word emphasizes only too well the emptiness of their heads.

Yet another cause of the decline of religious literature is the growth of Freethought. The ordinary man is no longer content to be blindly led by the priest, be he an archbishop or a curate. The force of religion has spent itself. It no longer inspires, it no longer interests the bright young "Intellectuals" of our day.

The decline began well over half a century ago. About that time there was a real and unmistakable interest in devotional literature. The Rev. J. R. Macduff rivalled the best-selling novelists in popularity. The sale of his works was to be reckoned in hundreds of thousands. He was, indeed, the Charles Dickens of the Churches. For years Dean Goulburn's books had an annual sale of many thousands of copies, and Bishop Oxenden's works were equally popular. Newman Hall's publications ran into a sale of millions. Spurgeon's weekly sermons sold like hot-rolls, and Joseph Parker had hosts of admirers who bought his books eagerly. Bulky family Bibles, with blank pages for births, marriages, and deaths, were considered almost a necessity in most homes. Indeed, in looking through the old publishers' catalogues, one is surprised at the enormous number of works of a religious nature. Familiar as household words a generation or so ago, how many of these publications are known even by name to the present generation? The greater part of the lengthy reign of Queen Victoria was, beyond question, a golden age for publishers of religious books, and for the clergy themselves.

Not only was there a constant demand for the works of individual authors, but for such libraries as "The Biblical Cabinet," "Sacred Classics," "The Christian Family Library," and many other series. A belated series was the issue of "Christian Novels," which sought to unite piety and pleasure, a most unusual combination. The taste for such books has gone for ever. Nor is it to be supposed that fresh life could be given to works like Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, or Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, both of which served a purely temporary purpose, and having served it, have passed from men's minds. In the many volumes on the lengthy period of Nineteenth Century literature which have appeared, no mention is made of numberless religious works, once "thick as leaves in Vallambrosa." These devotional books were once thought to be indispensable in hundreds of thousands of sheltered homes. The circumstance is highly significant, and illustrates with startling clearness the changed attitude of the huge reading public towards religion and religious literature.

The real meaning of this extraordinary change in national opinion is that the Christian Superstition is at last crumbling. Everything eventually crumbles which is not true. Never was there so little religion, never so much Secularism, as at the present day. Never have men attended churches and chapels so little; never have they attended meetings for purely social service so assiduously. Christianity is in the melting-pot after twenty centuries, and Secularism is permeating everywhere. Even Luclic farmers are withholding the "sacred tenths" from the indignant and voracious clergy. The Christian Religion no longer satisfies. No faith can satisfy which is found out. Men, nowadays, no longer accept upon mere trust the religious ideas of their very remote and very ignorant ancestors. Based on fables, supported by dead men's money, trading on ignorance, the Christian priests find the conscience of the race steadily rising above their abracadabras. Theology, however liberal and attenuated it may be, has not yet reached the lowest level of Freethought, nor can it ever do so, until it ceases to be theology and becomes simple Secularism. For any purpose connected with the real welfare of the people, the Christian Religion might as well be dead and buried, and it will be when the people see the truth. As Matthew Arnold sings in his magnificent lines on *Dover Beach* :—

"The sea of faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled;  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating to the breath  
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear,  
And naked shingles of the world."

MIMNERMUS.

The Pope put his foot on the neck of kings, but Calvin and his cohort crushed the whole human race under their heels in the name of the Lord of Hosts.

*The Poet at the Breakfast Table.*

I own I cannot see so plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with a mouse. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed.—Darwin.



## Beethoven and the Revolution

"That rare genius,  
The great artist,  
The good man."—*Countess Theresa.*

How true are Emerson's words, that "man is only half himself; the other half is his expression." As he points out, "no man can quite emancipate himself from his age and country, or produce a model in which the education, the religion, the politics, usages, and arts of his times shall have no share." What man does we may say is "one half." How he does it, the "other half." A savage might have the genius or inspiration of a Beethoven, but he lacks the means of expression which the culture of the age determined for the latter. And so in the study of individuals of certain epochs. By taking into consideration the social conditions and general culture which go to make up this "other half" of Emerson's, we are led to a better understanding of the internalism of Bach, the ingeniously pious trend of Handel, and the revolt of Beethoven.

The eminent Wagnerian, Francis Hueffer, has said of Berlioz, that if the "mighty Hector" had not known Shakespeare, and if he had not taken an Irish wife, he would certainly not have been Berlioz. I know this "if" is altogether irrelevant. Still, I am tempted to say, after Hueffer, that had there been no French Revolution there would have been no Beethoven.

It was during his brief sojourn at the Court of the Elector, Max Franz, that Beethoven became influenced by the ideas of the revolution. In these days, the cultivation of the various forms of art lay mainly under the patronage of the aristocracies, a circumstance which forced both Mozart and Haydn into the service of a princely master. There was little or no life for art outside the courts. Even Beethoven had to submit to serve a wealthy patron. But his youth fell in a period of social unrest. The breezes of the revolution swept even the courts, and Beethoven was smitten with the *Zeit Geist*. When the revolution sent a wave up the Rhine, the Elector's glittering court at Cologne vanished. Beethoven, of a nature proud and passionate, felt with the masses in the great uprising, and the passing of the court at Cologne was the last glimpse we have of him as the servant of the courts. With the watchwords of the revolution on his lips, he now disdained to court the favours of the great and wealthy, and was the first great musician to attempt to subsist independently of direct social patronage.

Essentially a son of the revolution, Beethoven's music is but a reflex of it. He was the first musician to respond to the literary and social fermentation of his time, through whom it found its first adequate musical expression. In truth, he was almost dominated by the revolution. It is the key that unlocks all, and reveals the fundamental principles of his whole life. The humanitarian ideals, the reverence for nature, and the sceptical philosophies which arose with the revolution, all found their correlative in his music. In him the artist and revolutionary are inseparably united.

The humanitarian enthusiasm which, starting from Rousseau, had gradually penetrated European thought, developed in Beethoven into quite an ecstatic faith, and found an outlet in his many acts of benevolence. "My greatest felicity," he says, "is in working for others." Mankind was sacred to him. Traces of his exalted humanitarian views may be seen in his only opera, *Fidelio*, and in such songs as *Die Liebe des Nächsten* (Love of our Neighbours), and *Das Glück der Freund* (The Joy of Friendship).

Similarly, the doctrine of reverence for nature found an expression in Beethoven's work. He wished to be counted "a scholar of the glorious school of nature." From daybreak until the evening he wandered in the woods, and his visits to the country he looked forward to "with the delight of a child." The *Pastoral Symphony*, and the cantata *Meeresstille und Glückliche Fahrt* (Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage), we owe to his sentimental appreciation of nature.

In politics, Beethoven was a staunch Republican, and made no secret of it. He raved over Plato's *Republic*. Oulibicheff tells us how he considered it the model for all governments to establish in every quarter of the globe; this was a fixed idea which dominated him all his life, and on which he would never brook the least contradiction. The *Eroica Symphony*, No. 9—*Alle Menschen werden Brüder* (All Men become brothers),<sup>1</sup> and such songs as *Der Freie Mann* (The Free Man), were the direct outcome of his fervent political views.

When Napoleon emerged from the French Revolution, Beethoven hailed him with acclamation, for he thought the First Consul had no other intention than to establish the republic of Plato in France. His feverish admiration led him to compose the *Eroica* in honour of the illustrious Corsican, and, just as the work was completed, came the news that his idol had accepted the purple and crown. Beethoven was furious, and in great passion tore the dedicatory page from the score, dashing it to the ground, exclaiming, "He is no better than the rest! He will trample the 'Rights of Man' under his feet."

Kings and princes, as such, were not imposing objects in the eyes of Beethoven. Addressing Bettina, Goethe's "child," he says: "I write nothing about our monarchs, for the newspapers give you every information on that subject. . . . Kings and princes can indeed create professors and privy councillors, and confer titles and decorations, but they cannot create great men—spirits that soar above the base turmoil of this world." Then he goes on to speak of Goethe, whom he regarded as "the most precious jewel in the German nation." But it grieved him to see the poet bowing low before the Austrian Court. Beethoven relates how, on one occasion, he and the author of *Faust* met the Imperial Family of Austria on the promenade. Goethe, courtier-like, insisted on standing aside for their majesties to pass; and, despite the entreaties of Beethoven, refused to move. "I," writes Beethoven, "pressed down my hat more firmly on my head, buttoned up my coat, and, crossing my hands behind me, I made my way through the thickest of the crowd. Princes and courtiers made a lane for me; Archduke Rudolph took off his hat, and the Empress bowed to me first. . . . To my infinite amusement I saw the procession defile past Goethe, who stood aside with his hat off, bowing profoundly. I afterwards took him sharply to task for this, and upbraided him with all his sins." Yet, *roloric* as he was, Sir George Grove assures us he lived on absolute equality with the very best aristocracy in Vienna. "I only hope," he says, "that I shall not be accused of being bribed; to be at court, and yet no courtier! After that, what is not credible?" Prince Lichnowsky attempted to persuade him, rather too patronisingly, to play to some friends, and was answered, "What you are, you are by accident of birth. I am what I am, through my own exertions." A correspondent, rather obsequious, was dismissed with: "To the devil with your 'Gracious Sir'!" It greatly

<sup>1</sup> This was composed in 1823, when the debates against slavery were going on in Parliament. Beethoven used to take home the *Allgemeine Zeitung* to read Lord Brougham's speeches.



distressed him that one man should humble himself to another. Yet his customary answer to the salutation, "How goes it?" was, "As well as a poor musician can."

Doubtless his grand independent spirit was the cause of his conflict with "Papa" Haydn. It was, as Grove says, the Old World and the New—De Brézé and Mirabeau. The punctilious Haydn, slave to the conventional, was shocked at the innovating heretic who had "swallowed the formulas" of the day. The character of the old master is faithfully reflected in his oratorio, *The Creation*, which was the butt for many of Beethoven's jests. And surely we can forgive him, since even Schiller went so far as to call it "unmeaning hodge-podge." Haydn had his revenge. He nicknamed Beethoven the "Great Mogul," and called him an Atheist. As for the latter, he was probably not far wrong. The personal *bon Dieu* of Haydn's faith certainly had no place with Beethoven, for he professed no formal religion, as Sir George Grove tells us. Schindler, Beethoven's friend, says the master inclined to Deism. Sir George Macfarren is content with designating him a Freethinker. Even Joseph Bennett admits that "he subscribed to no creed," but lived "a philosophic Pagan . . . in open revolt against all accepted dogmas."

(Reprinted.)

H. GEORGE FARMER.

(To be concluded)

## Pilgrimage

(Concluded from page 372)

SAMUEL seemed to wake from his daze. "No, no," he said, shaking his head. "No, no."

"What do you mean?"

"It gets me," he said huskily. "I feel the other way to you about it. I don't know so much about this faith you jest mentioned. I guess I never been a Bible-student. But I'm coming round. Them fellers in there have done more to me than a tentful of evangelists screaming their heads off."

"I might have expected it of you." Bitterness surged into her voice, as if she were accusing him of a supreme betrayal. "You just pick up with whatever's wrong, to spite and shame me."

He shook his head. "It gets me this time."

She turned to the guide. "Can't anything be done about it?"

"They've sent for the Governor of Bethlehem. He'll judge about the picture and the curtain. Then they'll all have to give in, till next time. But he won't come for a while. He'll wait till they cool off."

The guide chattered on, flashing his teeth.

"It reminds me of that meeting of shareholders," said Samuel meditatively, "when we was amalgamating the Union and the Eagle." Jim Applin, he up and he spoke out: "I don't say how there's been dirty work going on, but somebody stands to an illegal profit from this manoeuvre." Then there was a howdydo. O Lordie!"

"You put on this vulgarity," said his wife, with a note of wailing. "You do it to spite me. You know I can stand and forgive anything but what's vulgar."

Samuel shook his head and contemplated the unlit cigar, which he was holding in his hand.

Mollified by his apparently saddened demeanour, his wife went on in business-like tones, "Now we're going to the Franciscan Monastery. We can have a good view of the Hills of Moab. It was there the Moabites used to live."

"I'm not going," said Samuel abstractedly. "You go."

"You're going with me—"

"I'm not," he said, and his voice was so unwontedly harsh and final that she stopped short and gave him a quick look. Very seldom had he spoken like that before; but when he had, she had been sorry for interfering.

"Very well then," she said, after a painful effort to catch his rebellious eye. "I'll go alone and pick you up later."

Samuel gave no answer. He waited till she had gone out with the guide, then he strolled back to the chapel-stairs, and gingerly descending, peeped into the room. It was all still going on. It seemed as if it couldn't keep going on, and yet it was. How did they do it? The faces of the priests, purified from customary grossness, by passionate frenzy, by aching possessive greed for God, were unchanged, unchangeable.

"It gets me," murmured Samuel to himself. "These fellers have got it. It's like they had a dagger right through their stomachs and all their insides dropping out, and yet they won't let go, they're getting more alive every minute. Lordie!" He was worried that his wife would return or that some other tourist would barge in. He wanted to keep the sight all his own. "Jim Applin'd get the hang of it," he thought, "but not any parson I ever met, nor any woman neither. They got their hands on the goods, and they just won't let go, not if you crack 'em on the knuckles till doomsday."

The sight exhilarated but troubled him. He kept peeping in. Surely they wouldn't be able to keep it up! He went for a breath of air towards the door of the Church and encountered a soldier who was entering.

"Going to join the lads below?"

The soldier, whose dull handsome face looked waxenly over-washed despite the streaks of dust, eyed him suspiciously. "Yes," he said at last, stopping.

"Have a cigar," said Samuel, holding out his hand with the cigar in it. "It's good. Smell it."

The man took the cigar with some awkward thanks and put it in a front-pocket of his khaki-tunic.

"The monk-oes are still holding out," said Samuel.

Something roused the soldier, and his face twisted. "I hate the b——," he said in a dull hissing voice. "I'd like to put me bayonet in 'em. They've no more religion than pigs."

Samuel sighed wearily. "Don't you be so hard on pigs, me lad. You're young yet."

The soldier went to move on. "I've got to take down a message from the Gov'ner."

"Wait a bit," said Samuel with an earnestness that detained the reluctant youth. "Look here, me lad. I been tied to my wife's apron-strings ever since I left New York. I jest got to break loose for an hour or two. But I wouldn't give one of them Jerusalem-dagoes the satisfaction of selling me dirty photographs or taking me to his auntie. I want a night-out with some good clean lads like you's. I seen a bit of the world, and it's made me kind of soft-hearted towards old England. It's you and us that are the only white-men left, and we better get on with knowing one another. When you off duty?"

"Seven o'clock to-night," said the soldier grudgingly, after a good look at Samuel.

"Meet you at the Jaffa Gate," said Samuel. "Bring a pal or two. We'll have a real white man's evening together. I jest got to. I'll put the blood-hound off me track, and I'll meet you lads. All costs on me. I reckon I had more time to make a few dollars than you had yet."

The soldier still looked at him with a mixture of loorishness and distrust. "It's kind of you, mister,"



he said, finally concluding in Samuel's favour. "I'll be there with a friend of mine."

"Good on you," said Samuel, and slapped him on the back. The soldier went on into the Chapel.

Samuel stood for a while watching. Then he tiptoed back and descended the steps. The soldier with the message was muttering with the officer. The priests were still staring at one another with taut maniacal rage, ignoring the line of British soldiery as if it were an inanimate barrier. Their silence had about it the effect of a shriek, a strangled shriek.

Samuel felt it coming over him. Agonizedly he tiptoed back into the Church, afraid he'd slip and roll with a crash into the packed Chapel. Then he waddled towards the outer door. He was shaking helplessly. His fat sides heaved and rumbled. At last he reached the door and leant against it. The bubbles swelled up painfully within him, burst out noiselessly from his fat creased face, and cascaded into the dusty sunlit square.

"O Lordie!" he sobbed, pressing his pudgy hands against his ribs and staring out on the square. He shook his head weakly and tried to hold back the laughter. It was paining him, but he couldn't stop. It surged up and out, and yet it couldn't break into the tremendous pean of noise that he desired. It racked him noiselessly, making at moments odd sobbing lubbles, but never getting out free and tempestuously hearty.

"O Lordie," he sobbed. "O Lordie."

JACK LINDSAY.

## Some Real and Alleged Atheists

(Concluded from page 316)

At the suggestion of his friend and fellow-Atheist Lalande, Pierre Sylvain Maréchal compiled a Dictionary of Atheists, to which Lalande added a supplement, in which he states that he is prouder of his Atheism than of his scientific attainments, and that, although at the age of nineteen he thought with the rest of the world that the heavens prove the existence of God, he now sees in them nothing beyond matter and motion. The *Dictionnaire des Athées* has often been ridiculed for its debaptising so many Christians to insert them in its catalogue. Thus we find in it most of the Fathers—Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Sts. Chrysostom and Augustus! Luther, Melancthon, Pascal, Bossuet, Jurien and Fenelon! our own Locke, Newton, Berkeley, Clarke, Cudworth, Hall, and Sherlocke—nay, even Paul of Tarsus, John the Evangelist, and Jesus Christ! The name of God the Father ought to have been added to complete the list of notorious Atheists!

It is only fair to Maréchal to note that one of the purposes of his collection was to point out how many even of the supporters of theology had rendered themselves liable to the charge, and allowed some glimpse of philosophy to stand out in contradiction to their superstition. Pascal is included for saying that we neither know the nature nor the existence of God, and that reason is unable to demonstrate the being of a God. Jesus Christ is included, apparently in joke, for saying, "Take eat; this is my body." The remark is appended that to make bread into God is going further in materialism than Spinoza. In short, the *Dictionnaire des Athées* is not to be taken too seriously. We find the word OR (gold) included for the purpose of introducing some lines declaring that most of the world treats gold as God.

Many of the names most unjustly entitled Atheists in Maréchal's work are copied from previous Atheo-

graphers. Father Hardouin, the Jesuit, had stigmatised Jansenius, Malebranche, Quesnal, Pascal, Nicole, and others as Atheists. The Protestant Reimann, in his *History of Atheism*, had enlarged his list with the names of many Catholics, as Bembo, Bellarmine, Malebranche, Leo X., Father Sanchez, etc. Buddens enumerates a number whose Atheism is doubtful. Indeed, it may be said there is hardly a single philosopher of ancient or modern times who has shown any originality of thought who has not been accused of Atheism by one of the atheographers, Garasse, Mersenne, Voetius, Kortholt, Calver, Parker, Struve, and Jenkin Philipps.

In England, Shelley was one of the first openly to accept the name of Atheist. The Atheism of James Mill, of Bentham and Grote, though often suspected, was scarcely known in their own lifetime. A proof of how slowly the *odium theologicum* passes away in England may be found in the fact that many of the most astute Atheistic productions have been published anonymously or under pseudonyms. I may mention the *Inquiry into the Influence of Natural Religion*, by Bentham and Grote; the examinations of Mr. Gillespie's argument *a priori* by "Antitheos," "Aliquis," and "T.S.B."; the astute examination of the Rev. B. Godwin's lectures on Atheism, published at Bradford; and the examination of Theism, by "Physicus." A hundred years after the death of Hume, an able lady writer thinks it necessary, in criticizing the design argument, to call herself by the pseudonym of "H. Larrenny." Of those who have followed Shelley in proclaiming their Atheism several have come to prefer some other designation. This was the case with Richard Carlile. Charles Southwell argued that it was absurd for anyone to call himself an Atheist, since it meant but the negation of nothing. Atheism was impossible because Theism was unthinkable. Mr. Holyoake, who has refuted Paley and written the *Trial of Theism*, prefers the designation of Secularist. Professor Huxley has coined for himself the name Agnostic, a term accepted by Leslie Stephen, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and other followers of Spencer and Darwin. John Stuart Mill, despite the dubious character of his posthumous essay on Theism, would probably have accepted the designation of Agnostic, and the same may be said of Lord Amberley and Professor Clifford, though we think the last would not have refused the more definite appellation of Atheist. The position expressed in the lines, "I say not that there is no God, but that I know not," is the one adopted by almost all who profess and call themselves Atheists. Some there are who, looking upon the idea of God as the foundation of all superstition and slavery, say with Proudhon, "*Dieu c'est le mal*." Men like Bakounine may rather be called anti-theists than Atheists. They do not so much question the existence as the authority of God. Many of the French Freethinkers frankly call themselves Atheists; nor is the term refused by scientists such as Hovelacque, Letourneau, and Lefevre. Caro considers Renan, Taine, and Vacherot as representing three types of opposition to Theism. Comte declared that the heavens declared only the glory of Kepler and of Newton, and it is not easy to see how the confinement of attention to phenomena can be reconciled with Theism. None the less, his Atheism has been questioned, and his followers—Littré, Lafitte, Bourdet, Wybouroff, Blignières, Bridges, Beesley, Kaines, Congreve, and Harrison—prefer the designation of Positivists.

In Italy, many are ready to recite their creed in the words of the poet Guerini: "Primo di tutto, dicco, che non credo in Dio"—"First of all, I say I do not believe in God." In Germany, Büchner, Schläger, Specht, Vogt, Moleschott, and Czolbe, though pro-



perly called Materialists, do not object to a name which has been applied not only to Feuerbach, Strauss, and Schopenhauer, but to Fichte, Schelling, Krause, and Hegel.

As the odium attached to the term Atheist slowly dwindles, we may expect to find less heed given to its repudiation. A very large number who refuse the appellation only do so because they so cordially agree with M. Buzot when he refused an article on the existence of God sent to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the ground that "the question lacked actuality."

(Reprinted.)

J. M. WHEELER.

## Acid Drops

The approach to an understanding with the Prince of Wales—hardly likely to have been made without official sanction—comes as a very apt commentary on the "Never again" slogan, during the war, which was worked so hard that even the King changed his name from Wettin to Windsor in order to show how complete the break of relations with Germany was. We are entitled to make this comment since the *Freethinker* stood almost alone in protesting against such absurd extravagances. We have paid the price for the "Never again," and atrocity propagandists in the creation of the present brutalized and barbaric Germany, and in the ruined state of the world. The basis of permanent peace must rest upon the cultivation of personal good-feeling, and not upon that of "parity" in arms. If in addition to arrangements for British ex-soldiers visiting Germany and German ex-soldiers visiting Britain, a general agreement between them—never mind the Governments—that there should be no more war, that might well give the Governments on both sides pause.

The more things change the more they remain the same. Here is an excerpt from the *Birmingham Post* for June 11, 1885:—

In view of the approaching General Election, the Rector of Ardwick-le-Street, Doncaster, was asked whether the Church (National) schools of the parish would be available for Liberal meetings, and this is his reply: "I have long ceased to be surprised at any piece of Radical impertinence; nevertheless, I should have thought that common sense, if not self-respect, would have prevented you from asking to obtain the use of Church schools in which Mr. Shirley and his satraps have not hesitated to attack and misrepresent the established Church. You ask 'whether the Church school in this parish will be available for Liberal meetings.' I do not hesitate to reply, Certainly not. 'It is presumed, of course,' you add, 'that the same treatment will be accorded to both the great political parties of the State.' Well, as far as I am concerned, you may once and for ever disabuse your mind of any such absurd presumption. On the grounds that I should entertain an honest man where I should refuse admission to a thief, I shall lend my rooms, if required, to the Conservatives, and refuse the use of them to Radicals, as I can only associate the latter with bribery and plunder. Indeed, I should almost as soon think of allowing Bradlaugh to occupy my pulpit as Mr. Shirley to hold a meeting in my schools."

Different names, different parties, but the same people and the same things. Human nature in its reactions alters very little from age to age.

How much the Church is out of touch with the people is once again proved by the Convocation at Canterbury affirming its right to refuse to marry a divorced person even if that person is innocent. This kind of thing is part and parcel of "true" Christianity, for it is based entirely on "Our Lord," that great champion—though he never married himself—of "indissoluble marriage." And, of course, the Church has every right to be consistent on the matter. Fortunately the people, at least most of those concerned on the question, are not likely to be

deterred from doing what they wish by any teaching of "Our Lord." They quite rightly declare that, if he lived at all, he died many centuries ago, and his opinions with him; and they refuse to be dominated by ignorance and stupidity even if backed up by his magic name. And in this they are supported not only by the State, but by other Bishops of the same Church as that to which His Grace of Canterbury belongs; which surely makes it all farcical—at least to outsiders like ourselves.

It certainly is to the credit of the Bishop of Birmingham that "he had come to the conclusion that the State ought to enlarge the grounds of divorce. Desertion, cruelty, insanity, drunkenness and imprisonment for murder, under specified conditions, ought to be adequate reasons for divorce." We don't know how many times this has been said in these columns—it is one of the common-places of Secularism; but, however belated, we are glad to see that some members of the Church are beginning to understand the abominable cruelty of refusing people a divorce when by every human right they are entitled to it. On this question of divorce, we say that, whatever was said or not said by "Our Lord," or whatever he meant or did not mean, the Church will be compelled to do what the people want and need. It has had to toe the line in other things; it will toe the line in this.

But there is one passage in the debate at the Convocation which we must not let slip. It seems that to support his case, Dr. Barnes had come to the conclusion that "the crucial verses in St. Mark with regard to divorce were unhistorical, and that the whole passage must be regarded as the outcome of a confused and inaccurate tradition." This pregnant truth upset the Bishop of Gloucester, who "did not accept the Bishop of Birmingham's suggestion that the greater part of the words of the synoptic gospels did not come from Our Lord." It must have been truly delightful to see our Bishops wrangling as to whether "Our Lord" did or did not use the beautiful words attributed to him in the Gospels. We venture to say that believers in the Divine Inspiration of the New Testament and the historicity of "Our Lord" will give Bishop Barnes a very wide berth. But "what the devil did he want in that galley?"

The Catholic papers can always rely on Lourdes as "news." If nothing else worth recording happens, there's always the blessed pilgrims and St. Bernadette and "Our Lady"—though unfortunately "cures" are few and far between. Most of them—those that are used to prove to the credulous believers that Lourdes does cure, for example—are anything between twenty and forty years old. But for sheer "bilge," one must read accounts of the pilgrimage by Catholic converts, who are almost always *plus royaliste que le roi*. The latest example is Mr. W. R. Titterton, who, falling over himself in his enthusiasm, writes that "you would not be surprised, not really surprised, if at any moment you saw Our Blessed Lady in this City of Hers." Mr. Titterton evidently expected to see "Our Blessed Lady," and no doubt was ready to indulge in the usual Catholic grovel for the dear young thing. It is such a pity that he will be disappointed.

But how does he explain his co-believer, Miss Marian Thompson, who was actually in Lourdes waiting either to be cured or hoping to see "Our Blessed Lady," when she heard that Miss Grace Moore, the famous Prima Donna, was going to sing in London. She "immediately packed her bag," left Lourdes, its pilgrims, "cures," masses, grotto, holy priests, the daily groveling, and enthusiasts like Mr. Titterton, to hear a mere opera singer. It's enough to make "Our Lady" thoroughly angry and St. Bernadette either turn in her grave or come specially down from heaven in disgust. Miss Thompson will have, we are sure, some unpleasant surprise in the future—though she may think, in secret, that hearing Miss Moore will be worth it.

Really, we do not understand the complaint of Bishop Cohan of Cork. In a sermon, the other day, he declared that "every thoughtful person in Ireland at present in some ways regrets the condition of things." In the same



breath he added, "We are nearly all Catholics in Ireland." Does this prove that in an almost all-Catholic State, things can actually go wrong? That, to use the Bishop's own words, "great sufferings and trials have to be borne by a vast number of people"? If so, then what earthly use is it to be Catholic? Perhaps, as some little bird once whispered to us, the peculiar brand of Roman Catholicism in Ireland makes for neither peace, nor progress, nor happiness. But, in that case, how can one explain the so-called "unity" of the Church?

Speaking on the Reformation a week or so ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury said—among other rather disquieting admissions—that, "any fair-minded man would agree that during large portions of that long movement, stress was laid upon doctrines which had little relevance to what was moving in the minds and thoughts of men to-day." We should think that was pretty obvious; for some of the "doctrines" of the Reformers were about the last word in hopeless stupidity. But the Archbishop was particularly pleased that stress would be laid on these doctrines as little as possible, and that "it was proposed to concentrate the commemoration on gratitude for the possession of the English Bible." This in spite of his own admission that "in multitudes of young people there had been growing a great disquiet as to whether the Bible was all they had thought it to be when they were young."

Now the Archbishop must have said all this with his tongue in his cheek. He knows quite well that the Bible he was speaking about, the Authorized Version, is thoroughly discredited even in his own Church. Not only are parts of it wrongly translated, deliberately in the interests of his own sect of Christianity, but other parts are contrary to the acknowledged findings of science; and that no "apologetics" can possibly reconcile the facts of history and the childish "wonders" of the Bible. Let the Archbishop come out to those who have some understanding of science and art, and attempt to prove that the Bible is true in faith and in fact; that it is all God's Inspired Word. We need hardly say that it would be truly a miracle if he succeeded. The Bible, except as an archaic curiosity, is *dead* to all thinking people.

Although many thousands of people, mostly natives, were killed at that well-known "visitation" from God—an earthquake—at Quetta, yet "not a single nun or pupil at the convent school has been injured." This shows the advantage of belonging to God's own religion and the risks one runs in not doing so. At the same time, we understand that the Catholic Church at Quetta was destroyed. This surely must prove that even God has to chastise the faithful sometimes. At least how else can one explain its destruction?

The annual procession from the Church of SS. Anselm and Cecilia, Kingsway, stopped at the statue of Sir Thomas More, a few days ago, and prayed for the conversion of England. We wish some Catholic would tell us, if the prayers are *not* answered, or if England obstinately refuses to be converted, what deductions an unbeliever can draw? Does it mean that More never heard the prayers or that "Our Lord" is not strong enough to convert England or what? Alas, we do not expect any answer.

Definitions of Christianity vary, but we may rely upon well-paid professionals not under-rating the virtues of their creed. The Rev. D. W. Langridge of Brighton, for instance, asks "What is Christianity?" and unctuously answers his own question thus "Morality is at stake, and decency; Freedom is at stake, liberty and conscience, the family honour, and above all, peace." We can only say that if Christianity is the only hope of honour, liberty, and the rest, we have an exceedingly poor example when we consider how Christianity has betrayed Peace. But perhaps we misunderstand. Perhaps the "stake" is mainly in Mr. Langridge's mind; the stake has been Christianity's chief reward of those who stood for liberty in the world's history.

The Rev. W. A. Guthrie, who, we are informed, is a prominent educationist in Edinburgh, hits the nail on the head. Speaking at a General Assembly of the Church of Scotland he said:—

The Roman Catholic schools were really sectarian schools provided out of the public purse. The Church that wanted schools exclusively for its own children should be called on to provide them out of its own funds.

These ideas will command the support of Freethinkers if they are applied to all religious sects, but we have a suspicion that this is not precisely what the speaker wants. It may be that a friendly feeling for the home product should have preference.

In a book written by Mr. Beverley Baxter, the author tells us of his meeting with the late Horatio Bottomley in the closing days of that public man's life. Copy was apparently wanted, and we are told that after Bottomley had come out of gaol he was

an old man, with colourless, sagging cheeks and lustreless eyes . . . his clothes drooping about his shrunken body.

"I could write you" (said Bottomley) "a powerful article on how I discovered God in prison." There was no eagerness or resonance in his voice, just weary words from a weary mind.

A humbug to the last! Bottomley professed to have found God when the war commenced, and the gullible British public accepted all his fantastic nonsense. Finding God in prison was an attempt at the same game.

Discontented tithe payers will be pleased to know that crops have been blessed by Canon J. L. Kyle, Vicar of Faceby-in-Cleveland.

Full marks must be given to the *Manchester Guardian's* reporter for the following graphic and descriptive writing about the Trooping of the Colours:—

The quality of the drill, of course, was pluperfect, as one would expect from picked detachments of the Guards, and one might shut one's eyes and still feel one's blood quickened by the rhythmic crash and thud of nearly six hundred men presenting arms.

That is really what these parades are intended for. These expensive circus performances have their advertising uses.

A speaker at our recent Conference referred incidentally to the fact that religion is much older than war. We are often assured by opponents that there are no races however benighted and besotted, who do not possess some sort of religion. If this is true, it adds further proof of the unwillingness of religious peoples to prevent or abstain from war. Prof. Scott Elliot, in a chapter on "War and Iron," in his book *Prehistoric Man*, suggests that before the Bronze Age, war can scarcely be said to have existed. Writing of the discovery of copper, he says: "Immediately afterwards there is clear evidence of serious, pitiless and disastrous warfare." Christian Pacifists weaken their advocacy of peace when they ignore the proofs that throughout the ages religion has often caused wars, and has always blessed wars, but has never prevented them.

A simple-minded minister, the Rev. Percy Austin of Leeds, asks, "Why was the preaching of that simple gospel so conspicuous a failure, even when Jesus Himself was the preacher, while later apostolic preaching with its supposedly false accretions 'turned the world upside down?'" We advise Mr. Austin to study his history. Neither the "simple gospel," nor the correctly described "accretions" made the Christian religion triumphant. Constantine was probably never "converted" to Christianity, but he "adopted" it for reasons wholly unconnected with its truth or virtues. If the United States had "adopted" instead of persecuting Mormonism, Americans may have been polygamists (theoretically as well as practically) by this time.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"THERSITES."—Thanks. Shall appear. Pleased to have your opinion of the value of the *Freethinker*.

H. SPENCE.—Obliged for reference. Your note comes like a voice from the past. Hope you are well.

J. SHINE.—Thanks for letter. But when we said that Mr. Cohen needs a private secretary, we were expressing a desire without at all seeing any way in which it could be realized. The plain fact is that Mr. Cohen is at present doing far more than he ought to do, and the amount of routine work he has to do prevents his doing work of a more valuable character. That is really a very extravagant way to live, but financial considerations prevent its being altered.

H. SILVESTER.—We shall watch carefully the articles. Hope you are having a good time by the sea. It may be curious, but we are really enjoying the summer. We dislike the heat above all things, and usually have a far better time from October to May, than from May to October. What we shall do in the next world the Devil only knows.

P. PATTERSON.—We would suggest your attaching yourself to the local branch. That will bring you into touch with the movement.

E. H. HASSELL.—You are right. It is a case of the heart running away with the head. Your attitude must at least have opened the minds of some. Glad you like the *Letters to the Lord*, and have already found it so useful.

AUSTIN FORBES.—There is no use that we can see in continuing the discussion, since your letter merely repeats the same things as the one already published. Your only new sentence, "Freethought may be alright if both sides practice it," only exhibits the same misunderstanding in another form. The reverse of that would be, one imagines, "Intolerance is all right if both sides practice it." If you are right, we can only repeat that this is not the freethought of the N.S.S. or the *Freethinker*.

G. WALLACE.—Yes we quite remember the fight at Stockton in the old days. It was the only row in which we ever lost anything—in that instance, our hat. Glad to hear from you again after so long, and also that you have not lost touch with the *Freethinker*. What loyal friends this paper makes—and keeps!

At the Demonstration held in the Picture House, Manchester, on June 9, a member of the audience found himself wearing the wrong coat when he arrived home. If the other attendant who found another man's coat in place of his own will apply to Mr. C. McCall, 50 Stamford Street, Old Trafford, Manchester, an exchange of coats will be effected.

For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—D. Fisher, 38.

G. WILLIAMS.—The talk of the Jews dominating anything today, either finance or revolutions, is just bigotted ignorance. We question whether any intelligent person can speak in that way who is not trying deliberately to mislead. The Jews do contribute a great proportion of eminent individuals to many walks of life, but this, as we have so often pointed out, is a consequence of the age-long persecution by Christians. The proportion weakens wherever the Jews are enjoying anything like civil and social liberty.

S. SAMPSON.—The bulk of Bradlaugh's supporters were drawn from the better-educated working-class, and the bulk of the supporters of Freethought are to-day drawn from the same class. The "mob" as such never contribute to advanced movements. But the mob is not a class at all, it is a type, and it is found, as we have so often said, in all classes of society. The worst of it is that when the "upper classes" wish to disturb public meetings they do it by inciting the "lower" ones to do so.

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Roseth, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

The Annual Report of the N.S.S. Executive, which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*, is to be issued immediately as a pamphlet. We think that the present position of affairs makes the statement of the aims of the N.S.S. of importance, and we would like to see it distributed as widely as possible. We therefore suggest that, as a method of helping the Society, small parcels should be taken by all who are desirous of advancing the Free-thought Cause. The pamphlet will cover sixteen pages, including a statement of the "Principles and Objects," and will be supplied in packets of twelve post free for one shilling, and in parcels of twenty-five for 2s. post free. We bespeak a good demand for the Report.

Mr. W. R. Hemingway writes:—

Congratulation on *Letters to the Lord*. It seems to me to occupy a distinctive, even a solitary place in our literature. It is simple and deadly; perhaps one ought to say that it is deadly because of its simplicity. But you have scored a distinct hit in one of the most difficult forms of literary composition. This and the *Letters to a Country Vicar* ought to be enough to settle any believer whose mind is open to new ideas.

But the best compliment to the author was on the envelope containing the above. It ran:—

To M. Voltaire,  
c/o Chapman Cohen.

A great compliment, even if open to the charge of great exaggeration.

The following letter was addressed by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst to the N.S.S.:—

Sir,—I recently heard a speech by the leader of the Freethinkers in Belgium broadcasted from Brussels, which I thought was excellent, but it was not in the international programmes published here. Therefore, I presume it was left out by intent. I wrote to the B.B.C. suggesting that as they give so much time to the Church, both to services and to its dignitaries, they should invite a member of the Secularists to speak. I received the following reply:—

"The matter to which you refer is continually before those who arrange our programmes, and our object it to allot time roughly in proportion to the interest taken by our listeners."

The answer is for you to mobilize some of your members to demand it, and I hope you will do so.

We hope that our readers will follow the advice given, even though we have not the faintest expectation that the B.B.C. will act honestly in the matter. But if they add to the letters sent direct to the B.B.C. protests in local papers all over the country, something may happen. It was actually the efforts made by readers of the *Freethinker*, in the shape of letters to the press that led the way to the protests against the action of the B.B.C. with regard to its selection of subjects, just as we were the first to suggest to publicists of standing that they should refuse to speak for the B.B.C. so long as the censorship



was in operation. Some few, a very few, have done as suggested, but the bulk still appear to value publicity and a fee higher than their self-respect.

The trouble is that with its present leaders the B.B.C. simply cannot be honest where intellectual and religious issues are concerned. If letters are sent they lie about the number received and the nature of their contents. If they were forced by public pressure to allow Free-thought to be heard, they would select someone who is not exactly a Christian, but who will refrain from expressing the Free-thought attitude to religion in general and to Christianity in particular. It is quite certain that, even though the B.B.C. were forced to permit someone—not a Christian—to speak before the microphone, it would be one who would be recognized as a representative of Free-thought by the Free-thinkers of this country.

One need not mince matters, but the National Secular Society is the only representative organization of the fighting Free-thinkers of this country, and it is for them to say who shall speak in their name, not for the B.B.C. to select some dilettante, half and half, milk and water non-Christian, and then say that it has given every opinion a hearing in proportion to the interest taken by its listeners. A real Free-thought address over the microphone would command one of the largest possible body of listeners. But the B.B.C. will continue the policy it has followed—that of evasion, dishonesty, and doing what it can to protect Christianity as much as it can from criticism.

But even though the B.B.C. were to invite a real Free-thinker to speak, there still remains the question of the censorship. The paper must be submitted to the B.B.C. for approval. And it is sheer humbug on the part of any selected speaker to say that his paper was not altered "very much," nor even at all. So long as the censorship exists, it makes no difference whether the B.B.C. does the censoring, or whether the writer of the paper censors his own essay so as to keep out anything to which the B.B.C. might object. The only honest way to fight a censorship is not to submit to it. It is idle, even contemptible to say that one does not believe in a censorship and then take a hand in its administration. No man invited by the B.B.C. to speak on Free-thought should consent to submit what he has to say for the approval of the B.B.C. If the man selected is responsible and representative, he should be trusted to have sufficient intelligence to draft his own case in his own way. At present no one knows whether what a man broadcasts is what he would say were the censorship not in existence. Think of it, a man speaking in the name of anti-Christian Free-thinking delivering a speech which has been censored by a committee of parsons, or of those who have avowed that it is their purpose to prevent the disintegration of Christianity! Shades of Bradlaugh and common-sense!

We are pleased to say that Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy* is selling steadily, and there is every likelihood of a new edition soon being required. Now that the clergy are so anxious to exploit the feeling against war, we cannot think of anything better, which shows so decisively what was the attitude of the clergy during the last war. If it were only a case of the clergy having seen the error of their ways, the circulation of this book would not be necessary. But it is not that; if war broke out, to be accompanied by the usual war mania, the clergy would play the same part then that they have played in every other war. It is this that gives the book its significance and its importance.

In a review of that very interesting publication *The March of Man*, in our issue of May 26, the name of the general editor was wrongly printed as L. Lawson. It should have read "Dawson." The publishers, The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, also informs us that the work (price 52s. 6d.) can be secured on the instalment

system. This is at the rate of 5s. down and six monthly payments of 8s. 6d. each. Further particulars can be obtained from the publishers.

The West Ham and West London Branches (N.S.S.) have arranged a joint outing to Epping Forest on Sunday, June 30, to which all Free-thinkers and friends are invited. The West London party will travel from Liverpool Street Station (L.N.E.R.) by the 11.20 train. Book to Loughton, cheap ticket 1s. 5d. return. The West Ham contingent will pick up the same train at Stratford Station at 11.30 a.m. Cheap ticket 1s. return. Lunch will be carried and tea is arranged for 4.30 p.m., at the "Roserville," High Beach. Given fine weather the combined effort should result in a very enjoyable day.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Birkenhead for two weeks commencing to-day, June 23. The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate and meetings will be held each evening. Naturally we hope there will be questions and discussion at all meetings, also we hope the better type of Christian in Birkenhead will see that their case is not entrusted to rowdies. Pioneer Press literature will be on sale at all meetings.

## National Secular Society

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

#### MORNING SESSION

WITH a sharp rap from the historic hammer the President opened the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society in the Victoria Hotel, Deansgate, Manchester, on Whit-Sunday morning, June 9, at 10.30. The roll call was answered by the following delegates of Branches:

Ashington, W. A. Williams; Birmingham, Miss L. B. Holland; Bethnal Green, Mrs. C. McCall; Bradford, Mrs. Bulmer and Mrs. Revitt; Bolton, H. Hankin, F. Maughan and W. H. Sisson; Blackburn, J. Clayton; Birkenhead, W. Fletcher and W. P. Spann; Chester-le-Street, J. T. Brighton; Chester, G. Whitehead; Glasgow, Mrs. J. D. Macdonald and Mrs. M. Whitefield; Hants and Dorset, L. M. Werrey Easterbrook; Liverpool, J. V. Shortt, W. McKelvie, W. L. Owen, and J. J. McManas; Manchester, Councillor G. Hall and W. Collins; Newcastle-on-Tyne, F. B. Carlton; Nelson, Miss K. F. Brocklehurst; North London, R. E. Ressler; North Shields, W. T. Paine; Plymouth, W. J. W. Easterbrook and H. H. Hick; Pontypridd, J. Entwistle; Swansea, J. Marsh; South London, Mrs. H. B. Grant; South Shields, Mr. C. McCall; Sunderland, W. Blaney; Stockport, G. Burgess, J. Bryan and J. Clark; Seaham, D. Fisher; Tees-Side, C. H. Black; West London, E. C. Saphin, G. Bedborough, H. J. Savory and C. Tuson; West Ham, H. S. Wisheart; Wembley, Mr. T. N. Brighton.

With a large number of private members present the Conference chamber was more than comfortably filled.

Referring to the minutes of the last Conference, Mr. Shortt (Liverpool) said it was not correct that he had supported the amendment concerning the B.B.C. The Chairman said the minute would be corrected, the minutes were then taken as read.

The President suggested that Motion 2, dealing with the Executive's Report on the proposed revision of the Principles and Objects should be adjourned until after luncheon. Agreed.

The President then read the Executive's Annual Report. Mr. Collins (Manchester) moved its acceptance, Mr. Shortt (Liverpool) seconded, adding that the Report be published as usual.

Arising from the report Mr. D. Fisher said Tithe did not stand in the same relation as rates or taxes.



The President explained that ultimately tithe took on the form of a tax. Dr. Carmichael (Liverpool) thought the report a very important one dealing with important matters, and the decision to publish it should serve a useful purpose in propaganda.

Mr. J. T. Brighton suggested that mining royalties should be coupled with tithe in the report. The suggestion was accepted. Miss Moore said she was not against royalties but tithes, because the Church obtained tithe just because it is a Church. The President said the points might all be met by stressing the wealth behind the Church.

Mr. E. E. Stafford thought the reference to Fascism as pantomimic should be deleted, as it gave the impression that we do not hold Fascism as a serious menace. The President said there was no desire to advertise Fascism, we fought the spirit of despotism in every form.

Mr. S. Cohen supported Mr. Stafford and moved that the word "pantomimic" be deleted. The Motion was seconded, put and lost, six only voting for it.

After some further discussion the Report was finally put and adopted, with instructions that it be printed and circulated to members.

The Financial Report was moved by Mr. Tuson (West London) and seconded by Mr. C. McCall. Mr. S. Cohen thought we should not have money invested in War Stock. The President pointed out that the term War Stock was merely a name now, and was not being used for war purposes; money distributed by the Government for dividends or interest came from one common fund without regard for the description of the Stock. Mr. S. Cohen asked if the investment could not be described by some other name, such as Government Stock. The President said to do that would be inaccurate and misleading.

Messrs. Shortt and L. Owen were in agreement with Mr. S. Cohen, who moved that a committee be appointed to find other investments for the Society's funds. The motion was seconded and put to the vote, and lost.

Mrs. M. Whitefield's enquiries as to who were the Trustees, and how were they appointed, were answered by the President.

The next motion: "That Mr. Chapman Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S." stood in the name of South London, West London, Manchester, Liverpool, West Ham, Chester-le-Street, Birkenhead, Burnley, Swansea, and North London Branches. Councillor George Hall took the Chair, and in a few well chosen words introduced the Motion, which was then moved by Mr. W. Collins (Manchester), seconded by Mr. H. H. Hick (Plymouth) and carried with a warmth of affection and loyalty that was very pronounced.

On returning to the Chair, Mr. Cohen thanked the Conference for electing him as President for the twentieth time. They were twenty of the usual years of stress and strain which confront a movement like ours. During the period of his Presidency the strength and dignity of the N.S.S. had been well maintained, and he was justified in saying that the Society was in a stronger position to-day than when he was first elected. He assured them that he held the honour of President of the N.S.S. greater than all others.

The motion: "That Mr. R. H. Rosetti be appointed Secretary," was moved on behalf of the Executive by the President, who paid a tribute to the manner in which the secretarial duties were carried out. Mr. G. Bedborough seconded, and the Motion was carried.

The President introduced the nomination of Mr. C. G. Quinton as Treasurer. Mr. Quinton had very many years of service to his credit, his interest and enthusiasm for the N.S.S. remained unabated, he was a member of the Executive, which had every confi-

dence in him. Mr. J. T. Brighton moved that Mr. C. G. Quinton be re-elected as Treasurer. Mr. C. Tuson seconded, and the Motion was carried.

Councillor Hall moved that Messrs. Theobald & Co. be re-elected as Auditors, the Motion was seconded by Mr. Elstob, and carried.

Mr. H. Hick suggested that the nominations for the Executive as contained on the Agenda should be taken as a whole, and he moved the election as they stood. Mr. Ready seconded, and the Motion was put and carried.

The President then moved the following Motion on behalf of the Executive:—

10. Motion by the Executive:—

"That, Branches of the N.S.S. shall have liberty to co-operate with outside organizations for specific purposes, provided that the purposes to be achieved by the co-operation fall within the avowed policy of the Society, but such co-operation shall not extend to affiliation or complete identification with other organizations."

The President said there was nothing in the rules of the Society on either co-operation or affiliation. There was a difference between the meaning of each word, and while we could co-operate for a specific purpose, affiliation meant something more than that. We could co-operate with the Churches, say, for secular education, but we could not affiliate with them.

The N.S.S. Executive had always been ready to co-operate with any Society which tended to promote any of the objects for the furtherance of which the N.S.S. existed. But this co-operation must be conditioned by two considerations. First, the co-operation of the N.S.S. must not be used for the furtherance of objects with which we as a Society were not in agreement, and second, the N.S.S. must insist on not being kept in the background while our help, financial and moral, was being utilized.

Mr. Planders suggested as an amendment that the words "affiliation or" be deleted. He was almost in agreement with the President, but the inability to affiliate might tend to restrict the usefulness of co-operation, and might even prevent a useful society coming into existence. Mrs. Whitefield seconded the amendment. Her Branch had already affiliated with the Worker's Educational Society, and it had enabled them to do what co-operation would not. Mr. Brighton said that affiliation meant becoming a part of another organization, and co-operation should be on strictly specific points. Miss Moore supported the amendment. She did not agree with the opinion that by affiliation a society lost its identity. She also questioned whether the Society had the right to call Branches to order in this matter.

The President pointed out that it was for the Conference to say what rights Branches possessed, and in all cases a Branch must conduct its business within the principles of the Society as a whole. In answer to an enquiry as to what were the relations of the Society to such bodies as the Secular Education League, the President said these were separate bodies to which the Executive gave its support, but the members of the Committee of such bodies were appointed or elected by the bodies themselves. The Executive had no desire to interfere with the autonomy of the Branches, but it was the duty of the Executive to interfere whenever it found a Branch stepping outside the general rules of the Society. The right to co-operate with any organization for the purpose of furthering the objects of the Society was not questioned and was not at issue. That had always been the rule of practice. On the amendment being put, it was lost by a large majority. The original resolution was then put to the vote and carried, with the insertion of the words "the N.S.S. and all its Branches" in the first line of the Motion.



## AFTERNOON SESSION

## On the reassembling of the Conference

## Motion 11 :—

"That in furtherance of the principle of the substitution of arbitration for war, this Conference is of opinion that some form of international control over the manufacture of arms should be adopted which would lead to the institution of courts of international arbitration with power to decide such issues as may arise between nations."

was then moved by Mr. Bedborough and seconded by Mr. J. Marsh (Swansea). Mr. Bedborough stressed the importance of placing the manufacture of arms under international control, and thought that if this were done courts of international arbitration would be easier to create, and would develop almost automatically. Mr. Bayard Simmons suggested that the motion might well end at the word "adopted." The mover and seconder having agreed to this the motion was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

## Motion 12 by West Ham Branch :—

(a) "That, in order to promote the complete Secularization of the State, and to curb the spirit of Militarism, Freethinkers should do all that lies in their power to secure the abolition of military displays and religious ceremonies at all National, Parliamentary, and Civic functions."

(b) "That, in view of the distorted views of history, science, and religion which obtain in many books at present selected for use in public schools, greater care should be paid by those in authority to secure the selection of books which shall give impartial views of all disputed questions."

(c) "That in view of the danger to democracy arising from the secrecy maintained in the conduct of national and international affairs, this Conference calls upon all Freethinkers to do whatever lies in their power to obviate the dangers arising from this, which paves the way for panic and extravagance in times of crisis."

Mr. Wishart spoke to the three motions as one in a brief but interesting speech. Mr. Shortt seconded motion (a); Mr. Easterbrook (Hants and Dorset) (b); and Mr. Brighton (c), and all three on being put were carried unanimously.

On the Report of the Committee on the revised "Principles and Objects," the President suggested that after the report had been formally accepted, it might save time if the question of the general adoption of the report was decided, it being understood that this left the way open to amendments being moved and discussed. If the revised "Principles" were not generally acceptable, it was no use discussing details. This was agreed to and the Motion that the Report of the Committee as a whole be adopted was then put to the meeting, and on a show of hands declared carried. A card vote was demanded, and on this being taken the revised Principles and Objects were carried by a large majority. The majority was nearly four to one.

The following is the revised "Principles and Objects" as suggested by the Committee :—

"Secularism affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement; it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

"Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that the free criticism of all institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

"Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

"Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted

to religious organizations; it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man."

Mr. Hicks moved and Mrs. Grant seconded that the words in the third clause, "and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind" be deleted, and that they substitute the old reading, "and regards happiness as man's proper aim and utility as his moral guide."

Mr. Bayard Simmons spoke against the amendment as he considered the word "utility" was objectionable to some schools of thought, and he thought it unnecessary to handicap themselves.

The amendment was lost.

Mr. Fisher thought that in the second clause the "equal freedom of speech and publication" should be replaced by "equal freedom of thought, action, speech and publication."

The President thought that there was little to be gained by the addition of the word "action," and its meaning might easily be misunderstood.

Mr. G. Hall thought that the word Atheism should have appeared in the Principles, and that the word religion should be substituted for supernaturalism. No motion was submitted.

It was moved, seconded and carried that the words "liberty belongs of right to all and that" be inserted after the words "it affirms that" in the second line of the second clause.

Motion 13 by North Western Area, was moved by Mr. Flanders :—

"That this Conference calls attention to the action of the Established and other Churches in using the question of raising the school-leaving age as a bargaining issue by which to gain increased support for sectarian schools, and emphasizes the fact that so long as religion is taught in State-aided schools, this obstruction to educational reform will continue, and calls upon all friends of educational advance to press upon candidates at municipal and parliamentary elections the need for restricting education to purely secular subjects."

He said he wished to call the attention of the movement as a whole to what he considered was one of the most practical tasks at the present time. There was a very serious struggle ahead on this practical issue, and they ought to be making preparations in advance.

There was ample proof that the Churches were using their political influence to hinder this much needed reform in order to obtain concessions from the Government with regard to their own schools and to establish greater religious influence in the State schools. A very active campaign against this ought to be carried on. Mr. Rossler (North London) seconded, Messrs. Fisher, Brighton and Wishart supported, and the Motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. E. Egerton Stafford moved :—

"That, in view of the gravity of the present World-situation, this Conference instructs the Executive to institute a campaign against war and Fascism, or to join anti-war and anti-Fascistic Movements in United Front Campaigns against War and Fascism."

He considered that Fascism was likely to come to England, unless we were alert, and that the present Government was moving in the direction of Fascism. He considered the "Leave it alone" attitude a mistake. There was once a time when Hitler was not so strong as he now is. He suggested that the N.S.S. should carry on an active campaign against War and Fascism through the agency of leaflets and pamphlets. He regarded Fascism as the last move of Capitalism, and it should be fought with all our might.



Mr. S. Cohen seconded. Wherever Fascism had been established the same brutality had been shown. The Society must do more. He too thought the N.S.S. should be doing something of a more definite character. Mrs. Whitefield said that the motion implied that the Society had been inactive in opposing War and Fascism, whereas it has been definitely active. Freethought was a set of ideas, an attitude, and the promulgation of that attitude was perhaps the best practical work open to them. This was the only resolution that the delegates had been instructed by the Glasgow Branch definitely to oppose.

Dr. Carmichael opposed the Motion. Fascism included in its philosophy direct opposition to Freethought. It was part of the philosophy of Freethought to oppose tyranny of that sort. He would agree with the Motion if they (the N.S.S.) had not already instituted a campaign against it. He was rather disturbed by the "united front campaign." What were the methods proposed? Was the campaign for opposing Fascism based on the Freethought principle, or on some other? If they could feel assured that the method proposed to fight Fascism would not inveigle them into politics primarily, it would clarify the situation, but he had grave doubts that it would lead them into that very thing.

Mr. Flanders thought if they rejected the Motion it would give rise to misunderstandings. It carried, as printed, several ambiguities. It inferred that nothing was being done by the N.S.S. to combat war, it invited us to join something without that something being specifically named, and if carried as printed it might give rise to misunderstandings.

The President pointed to the terms of the resolution. More sympathy with it would have been forthcoming if the wording had been to instruct the Executive to *continue* its campaign against war and against Fascism and other forms of dictatorship, and had strongly urged upon Freethinkers and all Freethinking organizations to take whatever steps were possible against any attempt to limit freedom of thought. They would continue to fight for freedom for other movements as well as their own. They were not like the well-known Roman Catholic, who said, "We demand liberty on your principles, and refuse it on ours." The Society could not well work with any body of people who, while enlisting our support against a specific threat to freedom of thought, were using that support to suppress opinions and propaganda to which they were opposed. They wanted freedom for Fascists, freedom for Roman Catholics, and if they did not want freedom for their opponents they were not fit to have it themselves.

It was moved, seconded and carried that the Conference pass to the next business.

Motion by West London and North London Branches:—

"That future cards of membership shall contain the Principles and Objects and Immediate Practical Objects of the Society."

So much time had been spent on discussing the above resolutions that only a few minutes could be devoted to each of the following.

Motion 16 (a) advising the formation of a juvenile section of the Secular Society, and (b) Affirming that in view of the growth of dictatorships the importance of guarding freedom of discussion, both by West London Branch were passed. Motion 17, by C. E. Saphin advising association with the League of Nations Union was also passed. Motion 18, by C. Tuson, recommending an extensive open-air campaign, with the special object of checking religious influence in elections, was passed without discussion.

Motion 19, by J. V. Shortt, suggesting that the hostility of the N.S.S. platform should not extend to

those who advocated the suppression of any form of thought, with an addendum by the Birkenhead Branch that those who opposed freedom of discussion should be excluded from the Society, gave rise to longer discussion. The movers of the resolution and the addendum laid stress on the abuse of the freedom permitted on the Freethought platform, and Mr. Ready said that in his own Branch they had to face a proposal from one of the Committee that the Branch should affiliate with the Communist Party. The President pointed out that this last instance supplied an illustration of the importance of Branches seeing that men elected to posts in a Branch should be those who had been a member for some time, and who could be trusted in a position of responsibility. But he advised the Conference to avoid all signs of heresy-hunting, and the cultivation of the spirit of an Inquisitor. He thought the Conference might well be satisfied with having ventilated the matter, and for the present, at least, let the matter rest where it was. This was agreed with, and Motions 20, 21, and 22 were passed without discussion.

The President in bringing the Conference to a close thanked the Manchester Branch for their hospitable and effective work in arranging for the comfort and convenience of the Conference. He concluded, "Behind our movement there are numbers of good, earnest, stout-hearted men and women who work steadily away year after year, and whose only payment they are ever likely to get is to see benefits measured out to others as the result of their labours."

## Woman in Soviet Russia

(Concluded from page 362)

In the rural districts the patriarchal marriage prevailed, a form which even ordinary literature designates as everlasting slavery for the woman; the folk-songs of the country describe the marriage of a Russian peasant woman as imprisonment with hard labour, life with a hated man very often, premature old age, hatred from the mother-in-law, and not infrequently indecent molestation by the father-in-law. "Love your wife as your soul and shake her like a pear tree"—such is the wisdom produced by centuries of the patriarchal peasant family, that family life whose elimination is deplored alike by the priests, the politicians, and the profiteers of modern democracies.

The childhood of nearly all the great Russian writers who came from the peasantry or working-class offers a dreary picture; in their own homes they found as a rule neither love nor joy. Hence the frequent flight from their homes, their vagabond lives, and the inevitable wanderlust generated by such an environment. The famous poet Nekrassov has sung of his mother's hard and sad life; Dostoevsky dwells upon the joyless lives of poor, hard-working people, and among the moderns we have that sombre record of the Russian workers turned soldiers, "And Quiet Flows the Don," all of them depicting the sombre, brutal and dismal lives of Russian workers under Tsarism. This marriage, based on the enslavement of women, on the exploitation of children, on misery and bitter tears, has indeed been destroyed by the Revolution. The soil has been prepared for a new and cleaner conception of marriage and the family, a conception cleansed and purified from the hypocrisy, chicanery and fraud of the Christian faith.

In many lands on this globe of ours there exists a formal prohibition of prostitution, but it is merely a tribute paid to hypocrisy. A state of affairs pro-



duced and maintained by the existing social conditions cannot be abolished by legislation. The laws of the U.S.A. prohibited the manufacture, importation, or sale of intoxicants; the result of that legislative unreason is notorious—such an increase in vice, drunkenness, moral turpitude and crime of every sort, that the Government was compelled, in deference to public clamour, to repeal the fanatical Volstead Act with its consequent Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, an Act inspired by what the Australians contemptuously term the spirit of wowsers. Prostitution flourishes in the old democracies in spite of prohibition: unemployment and private profits are stronger than the law, for they subjugate all laws to themselves.

In the land of the godless there is no prostitution, not because it is forbidden by law, but because there is neither unemployment nor private gain. A girl does not sell her body if she have money and a secure position. Nobody can open a brothel in Russia to-day, any more than he can a factory with wage slaves. In the Soviet Union woman is not a purchasable commodity nor yet a chattel, which means that millions of women in Socialist Russia have that family life which was denied them by Tsarist Russia. No unemployment, no private profits—this fact fundamentally alters all relations in marriage and the family. A girl or young woman does not need to marry the first eligible man who presents himself merely in order not to become a burden on her parents, and probably end in starvation. Now she is free to choose a man after her own heart, just as the young men choose their wives. In the Soviet Union there is no marriage problem as we know it in other countries. The Soviet Government has no need to be anxious about a declining birth-rate, for that rate is higher than in any other civilized country in the world. In Russia to-day a child is not just a hungry mouth, but a desired member of society. The offices which register marriages are not idle, and the number of marriages recorded is much higher than in Tsarist times. And the family in the land of Socialism? Any sunny day spent in a culture park will show us the Soviet family—the husband with his wife and children enjoying the amenities provided by a Government which is in truth a Government of the people, by the people, for the people, despite the flood of untruth which flows from the Press and pulpit of other countries. In the Soviet Union the family not only exists; it thrives and flourishes in an atmosphere of independent freedom, but it is not the old-time family. It is a community resting on entirely different foundations from those of the Philistine family, which in most cases is based on deception and hypocrisy. The Soviet family still has before it many problems to solve, for it is a new sort of community, one which the world has not seen before, but about which philosophers have speculated throughout recorded time, from Plato to Wells. It is still in course of construction. It is making its own laws and is seeking for new and better forms. Lively discussions are going on as to the future of the family: faults and errors are pointed out, new suggestions made. The positive historical elements of the old family are critically valued, and the forms based on slavery rejected. Relations between the various members of the family are changed. The parts played by the husband, the wife, the parents, the children and the old people differ fundamentally from the old ones. Everything is not yet clear, but one thing is certain—the main thing: the foundation of the Soviet family stands firm, for it is the security of its social existence. Neither man nor wife, nor children nor old people, are threatened with unem-

ployment, and none is economically dependent on another. The wife has no need to fear her husband, or to be obedient to him, merely because she is his wife. The children are not compelled to display blind obedience towards their parents in the best Christian tradition. The mother need have no fear that her husband and the father of her children will desert her, leaving her helpless in a charitable world. Neither priests nor police interfere in family affairs, prating about duty and obedience; the human family in Soviet Russia has taken on a higher value than that bestowed upon it by Christianity.

The absurd Oriental fable on which Christianity is based records that certain wise men came from the East, led by a star of which astronomy has no record, to do homage to a Child in a stable. So be it: but to those among us who have not renounced the faculty of thought, it is worthy of reflection that other wise men who came from the East set up a star in the sky of humanity—the Soviet star of freedom which guides the destinies of the inhabitants of one sixth of the territory of this earth.

F. G. COOPER.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Anti-Semitism."

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.45, Sunday, June 23, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. 8.0, Tuesday, June 25, Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, Mr. L. Ebury. 8.0, Friday, June 28, Manor Street, Clapham High Street, Mr. C. Tuson.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, June 23, Mr. L. Ebury. 8.0, Highbury Corner, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, June 24, Mr. L. Ebury. Mornington Crescent, 8.0, Wednesday, June 26, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Wood and Bryant. 7.30, Wednesdays, Messrs. Evans and Tuson. 7.30, Thursdays, Messrs. Saphin and Wood. Current *Freethinker* on sale at the Kiosk.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. C. Tuson.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) Branch N.S.S. (Birkenhead Park Entrance): 7.30, Sunday, June 23, Mr. G. Whitehead. Birkenhead Haymarket, 7.30, Monday, June 24, Tuesday, June 25, Friday, June 28 and Saturday, June 29, Mr. G. Whitehead. Well Lane, Rock Ferry, 7.30, Wednesday, June 26, Thursday, June 27, Mr. G. Whitehead.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (The Market): 3.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (President Liverpool Branch N.S.S.)—"Good—Christ" 7.0, "God—Almighty."

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, June 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

EASINGTON (Lane): 8.0, Wednesday, June 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HIGHAM: 7.30, Monday, June 24, Mr. J. Clayton.

HUNCOAT: 7.30, Wednesday, June 26, Mr. J. Clayton.

PADIHAM (Near Station): 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, June 23, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, June 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

WORSTHORNE: 7.30, Friday, June 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

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.

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