

# THE FREETHINKER

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

**Views and Opinions**

**Propaganda in the Schools**

It is to be regretted that at a time when it is essential representative institutions should stand as high as possible in the public estimation, the House of Commons gave to the world the exhibition of solemn stupidity it did in connexion with the case of the Manchester school child. A little girl of thirteen years of age, in a school in one of the poorest and grimmest parts of a city that cannot be described as a vision of beauty, wrote an essay on the subject of "My Native Country." The essay received five marks out of a possible ten. In the essay she described England as "the finest country in the world," an expression probably derived from the teacher who is said to hold very strong (Tory?) views on the subject. In itself the thing might have passed unnoticed. That form of infantile mentality which regards "my father" as knowing more than any other man in the world, or "My mother" as being better than any other in the world, etc., etc., is common to the childish mind, whether belonging to bodies of eight or eighty years of age.

But a school inspector, who turned out to be a rather Conservative kind of a man, on looking through the papers remarked that one didn't usually get the sentiment expressed so strongly nowadays. The teacher, with the "strong views" entered into a discussion and the Inspector to close the conversation asked the sensible question, "Did not the old-fashioned Imperialism in the past sometimes lead to war?" The matter might have ended here, probably would have done, but the governess reported this aspersions on Imperialism (our Imperialism, not that of other countries, which has admittedly led to war) to the Vicar, the Vicar reported it to the Minister for Education, and when the Minister was not inclined, after inquiry, to serve up the Inspector's head on a charger, incited the Conservative Member, Sir Gerald

Hurst, to raise the matter in the House of Commons. And the matter was debated with a ponderous stupidity that could not have been more injurious to the House had it been deliberately staged by a committee formed of Communists and Fascists. The press also joined in and turned it into a stunt. The child was brought to London to listen to the discussion, and, naturally, wondered what it was all about. Now it is all quiet, and the teacher and the vicar, will probably feel that they have done their best to stop children in a Manchester slum school growing up with the idea that there are other countries that can even be considered as good as theirs. At least in that school the sentiment will not be tolerated.

Sensible people might have dismissed the whole subject with a reflection on the rather poor quality of mind which so often has the training of the young, and which so often fails to take the quite good sentiment of affection for local surroundings as a jumping-off point for creating a healthy sense of values, instead of using it to effect a hardening of childish superstitions. But just as one may use an article by James Douglas, a sermon by the Bishop of London, an essay on the philosophy of science by Professor Jeans, an article on biological science by G. B. Shaw, or a lecture on Church history by G. K. Chesterton, for the purpose of drawing therefrom a significance unsuspected by the authors, so this case of the Manchester slum school has its interesting side.

\* \* \*

**Patriotism**

I think that most of those who have an intelligent interest in the real health of the country are a little suspicious of the type of person who goes round smacking himself on the chest, declaring that this is the finest country in the world, with the obvious implication, "I am one of the finest fellows on earth." For by hard experience we know that in the majority of cases the sentiment covers no real appreciation of the qualities that make England great, and on which Englishmen may honestly pride themselves. It is not accompanied by a regard for English rights and privileges, and they are the last to pay attention to the warning that English liberties are being nibbled at here and there, or to take their part in the fight for making drastic improvements in the country's well-being. Try to arouse the interest of this class, and one is often met with, "Where is there a better country than this one?" and while one pauses at this exhibition of childish impotence, the forty or fifty year-old Manchester school-child goes on his way with his infantilism undisturbed. There is no intelligent appreciation of what is really great and good in this country, there is no intelligent attempt to safeguard what we have, or to remove much that ought not to exist. This is the best country in the world, and that is an end to the subject.

Something was said in the House of Commons against using the schools as a means of propaganda. I quite agree with this protest, although I am afraid that the protestors had in view only the kind of teaching to which they objected. But I really do not believe in using the child as an instrument for propaganda of opinions or theories. I object to this when it is being done by Christians, and, I object to it when it is being done by Atheists. I object when it is being done by hide-bound Tories, and so I object to it when it is being done by Socialists or Communists. The favourite word "dope" has no necessary connexion with any particular teaching or doctrine, but it has a very real connexion with the circumstances in which a teaching or a doctrine is given. I am a realist, not a doctrinaire.

Little Maud Mason, like many of her spiritual elders, said this is the finest country in the world. But like many of her spiritual elders—evidently so with her teacher and the vicar—it represented an example of "dope" which took the place of even an attempt at beneficial brain activity. With a change in the major term it is precisely what Mussolini declares all Italian children must be taught. It is what Hitler declares all German children shall be taught; it is what the Soviet say all Russian children must be taught, and many other countries follow suit. The young are told what to believe, just as in very religious homes children are told what they must believe. No Freethinker will agree that with regard to religion beneficial results follow the instruction, and most people in England will agree that, abroad, this kind of instruction helps to breed a foolish and exaggerated nationalism that is fraught with evil for the immediate future. The proposition as a universal one is too obviously ridiculous for discussion. Each country cannot be the finest in the world, not even teachers in Church schools, or vicars who are school managers, or members of parliament cannot make that assertion with a straight face. And if it is said that people *think* their country is the best in the world (which is, again, not universally true) the qualification is really an admission of the need for clearer thought and sounder education.

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#### What Might be Done

It is at this point that a sensible teacher and an educated vicar might, with the help of an intelligent Inspector, have entered into a very useful discussion. The teacher might have taken hold of the childish, and generally healthy sentiment which binds children and adults to their local environment, have pointed out that this is common to people all over the world, and thus have given the local feeling a more rational foundation, while at the same time insinuating a curb on the foolish form which it assumes in so many adults. There would thus have been created the first stages of a feeling opposed to that uninformed egomania which is fast driving the nations of the world to ruin. It might also have been followed—I am assuming that the other children in the class were about the same age as Maud Mason—by a simple lesson in those features in which this country did seem to have adopted better plans than other countries, while recognizing that other countries were, in some respects better off than we are. In this way there could be created the beginnings of a critical appreciation of what is good and bad in human societies, and a toleration of differences that would be both intelligent and beneficial. It might also have been pointed out that the general freedom and other things in which we consider we are better than others have been very hardly won by many brave men and women, and there needs be constant vigilance and activity if these

rights and privileges are not whittled away and destroyed. Under the guidance of intelligent teachers who possessed freedom of action, Maud Mason and her companions might have had their feet set on the path that leads to intelligent and profitable citizenship. The children would have been *educated* instead of being merely *instructed*. Childhood would be used as a preparation for manhood and womanhood instead of being used to perpetuate infancy. In time such a kind of schooling might prevent even Members of Parliament feeling shocked when told that rabid Imperialism and exaggerated nationalism might be a cause of war. A Minister of Education might then have the courage to say, when uneducated teachers and indignant vicars complain that a school Inspector suggests to a teacher what no intelligent adult will deny, that it is quite a wrong policy to take the children and the youth of the country, fill them with ideas, which however sound at bottom, are often false and harmful in the form in which they are developed, and then expect them to become intelligent and useful citizens. He might even have said that with such training it is not surprising that at maturity—physical maturity—such children tend to become either "violent and fanatical revolutionists," or unintelligent vehicles for the transmission of out-worn ideas.

The Minister of Education told the House that he would do nothing to discourage devotion to patriotism or love of country. Neither would I. All I would do would be to educate it. I should aim at a love of country that was based upon an intelligent appreciation of what was best, and a patriotism that was intellectually justifiable. Neither would carry an implied threat to other countries; greatness would be reckoned in terms of human values, not in terms of territory or of the power to enforce one's will upon physically weaker people. The stupid cry of "My country right or wrong," would be sublimated into, "My country when it is right, and when it is wrong it shall be my first duty to set it right." When that spirit is created we might get people really to appreciate the spirit of Nurse Cavall's "Patriotism is not enough," and understand that larger patriotism which recognizes that the well-being of one nation is finally the well-being of all. At present our "patriotism" is too parochial; it is as much out of date as the local patriotisms that once divided England and Scotland, Liverpool and Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, and even villages in remote districts. We are indeed suffering from a parochial mentality which finds itself called upon to grapple with world-problems. Too many of our leaders live in the present and think in the past. There are too many Maud Masons of both sexes and of all ages in the population. Maud Mason confessed she could not understand what the House of Commons discussion was about. But many of those who joined in that discussion were quite at home in the mental world of Maud Mason.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The "Vice Society" have again replenished their coffers, or obtained credit for law expenses, and are about to make another attempt to shut up my shop in Fleet Street. I beg leave to tell them that I shall enlist the whole of my family and every one of the name against them that are inclined to serve for a good bounty, good pay and much glory. I have already a sister in the shop in training to oppose them, and I have another whom I can command as soon as my wife and sister are defeated; by the time they have gone through the family, I hope I shall be prepared to have another struggle with them myself.

Richard Carlile in "The Republican."

## Hymns that Hurt

"A man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion.—O. W. Holmes.

"Being a good citizen means being a civilized man or woman."—G. W. Foote.

A DISTINGUISHED metaphysician once said that literature is but a branch of social science, that he is greatest among authors who appeals to the very widest circle of readers. If this were true, then were the hymn-writers the princes of poets. Is there a church or chapel where their effusions are not sung, or bawled? Is there a tin-tabernacle, or mission tent, from John O'Groats to Land's End but derives morality and intelligence from the lilt of the hymns? We trow not! Recognizing that all who run can read, the Christian Churches have circulated a poetic literature, and kindly provided nothing to read which is beyond the understanding of the stupidest of their audiences. We raise our hats to the clergy as astute, clever showmen; but our genuine admiration is somewhat diluted by the disturbing thought that, after all, they have roped in their audiences because they have never been able to rise above their very modest level of intelligence. The culture of the clergy is largely taken for granted, whereas the plain blunt truth is that the people in the pews are often better informed than the oracles in the pulpits. *Punch*, years ago, hit this off in an amusing picture, depicting a parson on his knees before a sceptic, saying: "Pray, don't mention the name of another foreign author, or I shall have to resign my living."

It is very doubtful if the average hymn has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the music-hall song, about which the clergy pretend to be so indignant. This may well appear a grave indictment, but the hymns which are regarded as being eminently suited for public worship are far too frequently antiquated, unrhythmical, and even nonsensical. Under the soporific influence of religion, the public has been far too ready to accept bombast and bleat as the fine gold of literature, and has hailed a dictionary with the diarrhoea as the quintessence of reverence.

To be quite frank, the hymns used by Churchmen and Nonconformists alike are not really much better than those painfully familiar and disgraceful compositions which are used by Salvationists, Four-Square Gospellers, End-of-the-World Ranters, and other howling Dervishes of our streets and open spaces, and which make educated people almost ashamed of their own species. The charge of sentimentalism is not the only one that can be brought. Some hymns are really brutal in tone and language, written in the worst possible taste, and are full of sanguinary details and a glowing satisfaction which is repulsive. Here are a few samples:—

"There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins."

"Come, let us stand beneath Thy cross;  
So may the blood from out His side  
Fall gently on us drop by drop;  
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified."

"Here I rest, for ever viewing  
Mercy poured in streams of blood."

"By the red wounds streaming  
With thy life-blood gleaming."

"Lift up Thy bleeding hand, O Lord,  
Unseal that cleansing tide."  
"O those limbs, how gaunt their leanness,

Tortured, torn from our uncleanness,  
On these stiff branches weltering."

If we turn from the æsthetic to the purely literary aspect of these hymns, we find some of them bad enough to break a critic's heart. For sheer, downright bathos this triplet is worth noting:—

"Upon the Crucified One look  
And thou shalt read, as in a book,  
What well is worth thy learning."

The solitary attempt at rhyme in the following is sufficient to disqualify an amateur in a limerick competition:—

"Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,  
This is the total sum;  
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,  
Then let Thy mercy come."

The author's reason must have been tottering on its throne when he penned this pious outburst:—

"Faithful Cross, above all other  
One and only Noble Tree,  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit thy peer may be;  
Sweetest word and sweetest iron,  
Sweetest weight is hung on Thee."

But one of the most nonsensical couplet of all occurs in the following:—

"May all these our spirits sate,  
And with love inebriate."

"These," as a reference to the preceding lines in the doggerel show, refer to nails, wounds, vinegar, thorns, and other theatrical properties associated with the drama of the crucifixion. Toplady's "Rock of Ages" is a perfect medley of irrational images and misapplied metaphors. "Cleft rock," "riven side," "to Thy cross I cling," and "to the fountain fly" are examples. The confused imagery drowns the sense in the veriest verbiage.

Another popular favourite, "Hark! Hark! my Soul," has upset even the Christians. Bishop Alexander, who knew something of literature, has said of this gem that "it combines every conceivable violation of every conceivable rule with every conceivable beauty." "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" which is more popular than the latest importation of Jazz, is by no means above criticism. The last line of the chorus is commonplace in expression, and atrocious in rhyme.

There is a frankness of materialism in some of these so-called "spiritual" hymns, which is sufficient to make an undertaker smile:—

"Lord, I believe, Thou hast prepared,  
Unworthy though I be,  
For me a blood-bought free reward,  
A golden harp for me."

And again:—

"Oh! for the pearly gates of heaven,  
Oh! for the golden floor."

These terrible quotations, be it remembered, are from the most distinguished Christian hymn collections, and they are by no means the worst of their class. If any reader wishes his hair turned white, and curled afterwards, let him turn to the pages of the *War Cry*, and other Salvationist publications, where he will find the work of bold versifiers, weak in their mother-tongue, and yet unaffrighted by the awful spectacle of their first "General" in the flamboyant robes of Oxford University.

The Established Church is notoriously weak among the middle and working-classes, and especially among men. Hence we are not surprised at the inclusion of some appeals to the British working-man. Listen to the soprano notes of the clerical syren:—

"Sons of Labour think of Jesus  
As you rest your homes within,  
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary  
In the stable of the inn.  
Think, now, in the sacred story  
Jesus took a humble grade.  
And the Lord of Life and Glory  
Worked with Joseph at his trade."

The enormous popularity of far too many hymns is due to the music:—

"As long as the tune has a right good swing,  
It doesn't much matter what bosh you sing."

And Lewis Carroll's advice to speakers, "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves," is commonly inverted when applied to hymn-writing. Such hymns as have a slight claim to some literary merit are little esteemed by the "groundlings" compared with "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," "The Glory Song," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and similar neurotic and tommyrotic effusions.

To an outsider, hymns would suggest restraint, sobriety, the dignity of reverence, but the McPherson Mission, like the Torrey and Alexander Crusade, the Moody and Sankey Troupe, and the Billy Sunday revivals, amply prove the association of the Christian Religion with hysteria and theatricality. What is worse, all these pious showmen gauged their audiences to a nicety. Their congregations were, perhaps, better dressed, and better schooled than those innocents who listen spellbound to the trombones and tambourines of the Church and Salvation Armies, yet they sung hymns of the most rank and fulsome sentimentality. Christian congregations seem absolutely unable to distinguish between poetry and doggerel, pathos and bathos. Singing their delirious hymns, they are intellectually on a level with their fellow-Christians in Abyssinia. Savages do this one way, and the countrymen of Gipsy Smith and the Bishop of London another, but the nature of the act, and the results, are much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

## Jesus and Josephus

THERE is one infallible name which supporters of the real existence of Jesus never fail to bring up. It is that of the Jewish historian, Josephus. Not that, for the most part, they have ever read him. In the course of many years of controversy on the question, I have met few who have *really* read Josephus. He is known, like Milton, by name; and he is invariably trotted out, as forming the great secular authority for Jesus directly one impeaches the credibility or authenticity of the gospels.

Even Rationalists, particularly those of the reverent variety, or those who are unmistakably pained at any attack on such a good "man" as Jesus, almost fall over themselves in their anxiety to quote Josephus. They, so to speak, move heaven and earth in their hope to prove that Josephus is a thoroughly reliable historian whose evidence must quash the "wild" theories of the non-historical school. Like their Christian brothers, most of them also have never read Josephus—at least, not in bulk. They know the two passages<sup>1</sup> which mention Jesus, and they are not

<sup>1</sup> The first passage is in *Ant.* xviii. 3, 3:—"Now about this time came Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one may call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive what is true with pleasure, and he attracted many Jews and many Greeks. This was the Christ. And when on the accusation of the principle men among us Pilate had condemned him to the cross, they did not desist

in the least disconcerted that one of them refers to him as "the Christ," a "wise man, if indeed one may call him a man"; and that the Prophets foretold that he would appear again after being crucified; and also "a myriad other wonderful things about him." To the reverend Rationalist all this proves incontestably that Jesus was a *man*. Even the Jews, who look upon Josephus as a renegade and a false historian, never fail to quote him in proof of a real Jesus. They have to do so to support the hopelessly confused statements in the Talmud, that there was a Jesus (or Jesuses) somewhere, at some time. But they most heartily refuse to accept Josephus as an authority for their own history—and no wonder. He differs from the Old Testament history of the Jews in hundreds of places. It is a pity that no one can decide which, Josephus or Moses, is right.

Since the attack on the historicity of Jesus has been pressed so thoroughly by Robertson, Drews, and W. B. Smith; and since there are a thousand reasons why even theologians cannot accept altogether the claim that the inspired writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John contain the whole truth and nothing but the truth, a desperate attempt is being made to rehabilitate Josephus. In the past, the Jewish historian was not necessary. God revealed the truth to Matthew and Co., and gave the world the Treasure of the Bible; and God's Holy Word was good enough. Or rather, if it was good enough for Mr. Gladstone—or similar great men—it ought to be good enough for simple Tom, Dick, and Harry.

For example, Dr. Lardner, the famous Unitarian divine, who wrote a number of big volumes giving every reference to Jesus in the early Christian and Pagan writings he could find, declared that "we do not want this suspected testimony which was never quoted by any of our Christian ancestors before Eusebius." Dr. Lardner then proceeds to give some reasons why Josephus's testimony to Jesus could be given up. He pointed out that the early Christian writers who often quote Josephus, like Chrysostom, Photius, Justin, Clements Alexandrinus, and Origen, never quote the suspected passage. Origen, indeed, actually insists that Josephus, while mentioning John the Baptist, did not acknowledge Christ. That these writers never repeat Josephus's wonderful testimony proved to many other writers and thinkers besides Lardner, that it was a rank forgery. Gibbon, whose irony when dealing with the Christian religion has never been surpassed, said that "the passage concerning Jesus Christ was inserted into the text of Josephus between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, and many furnish us with an example of no vulgar forgery." Bishop Warburton declared that the paragraph in question "is a rank forgery and a very stupid one too." The Rev. Dr. Giles, who besides being a drastic critic of Christian records and pretensions, was a fine classical scholar, insisted that, "those who are best acquainted with the character of Josephus, and the style of his writings, have no hesitation in condemning this passage as a forgery, interpolated in the text during the third century by some pious Christian who was scandalized that so famous a writer as Josephus should have taken no notice of the gospels, or of Christ." The Rev. S. Baring-Gould, in his *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, points out that "Justin Martyr would certainly have produced the passage in his apology or in his controversy with Trypho, had it existed in his time." Dean Milman, in a note to his edition of

who had formerly loved him, for he appeared to them on the third day alive again; the divine prophets having foretold both this and a myriad other wonderful things about him; and even now the race of those called Christians after him have not died out."

Gibbon says that the passage is "interpolated with many additional clauses." Farrar, in his famous *Life of Christ*, says, "The single passage in which Josephus alludes to Jesus is interpolated, if not wholly spurious." The ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* said, "That Josephus wrote the whole passage as it now stands no sane critic can believe."

Most of the "biographers" of Jesus take the same standpoint, and they had good reason. No one but a Christian could have written the passage. Only a Christian could have declared that "this was the Christ." Josephus, whatever he was (and is) thought of by his race, was a devout Jew, and it is simply silly to imagine that he could have written that Jesus was the Christ. This is sensed by the angry Dr. Conybeare in his *Historical Christ*, for he says that "the clause 'This was the Christ,' must have run 'This was the so-called Christ.'" When Dr. Conybeare says "must," that settles it. Unfortunately it does not say "so-called"—though it would not have mattered very much if it did.

It seems incredible, in any case, that Josephus could have dealt so briefly with a "Christ" or a "so-called Christ," who did so many wonderful things about which he must have known. He wrote, as has often been pointed out, pages of descriptions devoted to petty robbers and nearly forty chapters to the life of a single King; and yet only a few lines to the great being whom it may not be lawful to call a man.

Then the passage interrupts the narrative. Miss it out and the continuity of the story is not broken. Its presence actually is alien to the chapter, which describes certain calamities that overtook the Jews. It might be argued indeed that no bigger calamity for the Jews than Jesus could be imagined; but Josephus was not to know the future.

The extraordinary thing also is the portrait of Pilate that Josephus has left us elsewhere, and not a line about the remarkable trial and crucifixion which were accompanied by so many unheard-of events. What did Pilate say when the enormous number of saints came out of their graves and walked calmly about Jerusalem? What did he feel when the eclipse took place and the veil of the Temple was rent in twain? And when Jesus flew up to heaven? Josephus is silent about all these things, yet he records all sorts of other happenings, many of which bore one stiff.

There is another passage in Josephus,<sup>2</sup> which Christians (and some Rationalists) bring forward as positive proof that he knew of a real Jesus. With the exception of the clause "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ," it is probably genuine—at least it does not matter one way or another. But nearly all the authorities who deal with the clause reject it also—as indeed they must. To write two big books on the Jews, and devote one line to "Christ," would have been impossible for such an historian as Josephus, considering that "Christ," according to Christians, was easily the biggest figure that ever trod the earth. Moreover, there is still the difficulty of identifying "James," for it is not yet settled whether Jesus did have a brother, a *real* brother, called James. Did Mary then have a large family, or are the words "brothers and sisters" merely used in a theological sense? Moreover, if dates go for anything the primitive church says that James died in 69 A.D., which is seven years after the James of Josephus was stoned to death. Even Whiston, the translator of Josephus,

admits that James, the brother of Jesus, "did not die till long afterwards." In any case, the fact that one long passage is an interpolation makes the other short one at least suspect; and anybody who studies the desperate efforts of the early Christians to find some historical ground for their deity, will also find that fraud and forgery were two of their best champions.

Nowadays, the discussion has become a little more bitter. Most people are not disposed to believe in miracles and the divine life of Jesus merely because the four gospels describing him are accepted by the church as credible and authentic. They believe, if they believe at all, because of "faith," and with these people there can be no argument. But there still remain a large body of men and women, who rejecting the God Jesus, insist on the man especially as a wondrous ideal for all men. And finding no basis for their conviction that such a man lived in the gospels, turn to Josephus (and Tacitus) for "secular" proof. I have not got either of the works by me at the moment, but Dr. Robert Eisler's book on the Russian translation of Josephus and an English book by Prof. St. John Thackeray both make strenuous efforts to uphold Josephus as a genuine witness for Jesus. In the Russian version, there is a description of a more or less villainous looking Jesus in the place of the usual passage. As the Russian version was made somewhere in the Middle Ages, it seems rather wonderful that it should be brought forward as a positive proof that Jesus was known to Josephus. Nobody—as far as I have been able to gather—knows anything whatever about the version except that it exists; and speculations on various passages in it can be carried on through many volumes by theologians, whose happy habit of word-spinning is proverbial. As for Prof. Thackeray's book, I hope one day to look into it in more detail. It will have to contain some striking arguments if it can answer those put forward against the authenticity of the passage by so many Christians.

For my own part, I wonder most at the "reverent" Rationalists. It is they who insist that Jesus was a man; yet they support Josephus who says he was a God—if his statement is genuine. But perhaps I really ought not to wonder.

H. CUTNER.

### A Trap for Rationalists

In the old days of agitation against the House of Lords some thought that that gilded chamber could be reformed while others maintained that it should be abolished. Some said, "mend it." Others said "end it." A similar position arises with regard to the attitude of Rationalists to the Church. That there are many people calling themselves Rationalists who think the Church can be reformed and made an agency for human emancipation, development and uplift is undoubted. There are even said to be so-called Rationalists among the clergy themselves! Now what sort of Rationalist can he be who maintains his allegiance to an institution whose foundations Rationalism is out to destroy?

The Modernists who pose before the public as "broadeners" of the Christian creed are trying to do something which is bound to end in failure. They are in effect trying to show that a person can have one foot in the Church and the other in the camp of Rationalism. They think they can convince people that Christianity can be made a "reasonable faith," and that a renovated theology may quite well fit in with Freethought. To the Churchman they represent religion as suffering by having to carry several

<sup>2</sup> The second passage is in *Ant.* xx. 9, 1:—"Ananus . . . assembled the Sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, whose name was James and some others; and . . . he delivered them to be stoned."

tenets which have become obsolete or obsolescent. To the Freethinker they say that the advance of Free-thought will not be hindered but helped by the retention of the "essence" of Christian teaching relieved of those anachronistic burdens; that a modernized Christian Church and Free-thought may very successfully co-operate for human betterment; and that the acceptance of belief in an Almighty benevolent supernatural Ruler of the Universe cannot do us any harm. In many cases they say advanced thought amongst religionists has reformed the jealous and wrathful avenger of the Old Testament; and, whatever his character in detail, any one will be entitled to repudiate him if he does not come up to the standard laid down by the Modernists. Ay, ay, kittle cattle are they, these accommodating Modernists!

Now the first criticism that occurs to one on this Modernist argument about a reformed God is that if the orthodox Creator is to have his attributes decreased as is proposed, he is simply being turned into a limited inoperative simulacrum of his original self, and in effect becomes a projection of Modernist imagination. Who would be an Almighty God on these terms? One can picture a theologian of the old school—his feet planted firmly on the Rock of Ages—his hand grasping his "Calvin's Institutes"—his eye gleaming—his lips uttering fulminations against this new fashionable breed of jellyfish, who would presume to question the authority of the Great I AM in any particular! Is it suggested that the theologians of that type have all died out? Rubbish! It is that kind of religious faith which upholds the great Ecclesiastical Corporations, including as a supreme example the Roman Catholic Church, whose immutability, indivisibility and infallibility are acknowledged and devoutly recognized by her millions of adherents throughout the earth! The piscatorial activities of the fashionable Modernist will be found to be limited to very shallow waters and to be rewarded by very small catches. Those who have entrusted their destinies to a supreme supernatural authority which is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, are not to be lured from their security by the call of any siren, sing she never so sweetly.

Of course, on the other hand, the unfortunate thing is that you encounter crowds of people who are not anything in particular. There are to-day many individuals who have formed no definite opinion about anything. They follow the band. And the leader of the band they follow will never bother himself to prick them into trying individually to arrive at any definite opinion on anything—so long as they just continue to follow. Why should one bother? Changes no doubt are inevitable; but we needn't have any responsibility for them. That is the attitude of myriads who continue to go to Church; and were it not for them, the Modernists would probably never have thought of advocating a revised form of religion. The Modernist has not much prospect of success amongst those who have decided views. But he may catch quite a number of the opposite kind of folk! The only thing is, how long does he hope to retain such wobblers? They are of no help to any cause. They are off with the old love to-day and on with the new love to-morrow. They are gadabouts and intellectual butterflies who have never actually proved anything for themselves.

But we must not underrate the force of conventional and social pressure. And here is where one may fitly address a fraternal warning to his brother-Rationalists. The ancient writer said: "I fear the Greeks even when they are bringing gifts." The Modernist says to the Freethinker: "You allow that it is possible for us to co-operate for certain purposes. Why put any limitation to our co-operation seeing

that we have so many essential things in common? By combining our energies, we will have a more powerful engine in the cause of human betterment; and matters of doctrine and belief can very well be left in peace. We want to join with you in real beneficent work for mankind. We reject ecclesiastical formularies and refuse to obey ecclesiastical inhibitions. We join with you in declaring that the World is our Parish; and doing good is our Religion. So, brothers, join with us in saving the Church from itself, and in making it a real contribution to human well-being and happiness."

So would the sirens of Modernism beguile the Saints of Militant Free-thought! But their snare is one for rabbits—never for bulldogs or lions.

IGNOTUS.

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## Acid Drops

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One of the Spiritualist papers has an article with the title "Spirits who do not know they are Dead." We have come across large numbers of people on this side of "Summerland," who are in exactly the same state. On the other side we should say that there must be a great many who wonder what on earth is the use of their being alive.

We are fond of analysing terms and phrases because they are nearly always indicative of frames of mind. One can often get far more information concerning a man's mental outfit by studying his use of terms, to say nothing of his understanding the nature of events, than by taking his language at its face value. For example; Mr. Robert Lynd reviewing a volume of Mr. H. A. L. Fisher's *History of Europe*, says, "The Reformation, which set out to liberate the spirit of man, had for its consequence the Thirty Year's War, which put the civilization of Germany back by 200 years." That is a very common way of putting the matter, and it is wholly wrong. The Protestant Reformation did not set out to liberate the spirit of man, it set out to establish a particular form of the Christian religion, and the only freedom it had definitely in view was the freedom to attack the Roman Church and to establish another Church in its place. And against those who arose within the Protestant ranks, and who showed the least disposition to exercise freedom in their religious opinions, established Protestantism was as intolerant and as brutal as ever the Roman Church had been. The "liberation of the spirit of man" was carried on by the "Humanists," and their religion was at best of a very nebulous quality, when it was not obviously non-religious.

Naturally the very fact of the authority of the Church being questioned gave rise to a certain amount of liberality of thought, unpleasant though this was to the Protestant leaders. But in Germany, in England, in Scotland, in Geneva and elsewhere the world was soon forced to realize that "New presbyter is but old priest writ large." Persecution of opinion was as common, and as brutal with Protestants as with Catholics, and the tremendous increase of witch-hunting under Protestant rule offers an apt comment on Mr. Lynd's remark. Mr. Lynd is, of course, just repeating without due thought one of those misleading pulpit phrases that no careful thinker would encourage.

To what has been said must be added two other things. The first is that if the Reformation helped to put German civilization back about 200 years, it also helped to retard intellectual advancement in other parts of Europe. Historical students are well aware that if there was a movement against Rome outside the Church there was another movement against the Church from within, with this important distinction. Inside the Church the revolt was Humanistic and intellectual. Outside it was doctrinal and religious. The reaction of the

Roman Church to Protestantism was to remedy some of the abuses in religion, and to stamp out the intellectual revolt inside at the same time. It took nearly two hundred years for Europe to recover from the new religious intolerance established by Protestantism, and the story of intellectual emancipation that was at work in the sixteenth century was not clearly resumed until the eighteenth century. The world in general, and many non-Christians in particular have too readily accepted the Protestant version of history, and Protestant history is no more to be trusted than is the history written by Roman advocates.

Finally, it was Protestantism which gave Europe the curse of a State Church. The claims of the Roman Church prevented its ever becoming a department of the State. Its aim was to make the State a department of the Church. But when the Princes took the reformed church under their wings they made Protestantism the State religion, and proceeded to enforce obedience, or to protect it against attacks on almost the same grounds that they tried to suppress treason and revolution. In this the leaders of Protestantism and the chiefs of the Secular State were at one. The heretic, whether Free-thinking or religious, found against him not merely the established Church, but the secular State formally and legally punishing him for his dissent. To sum up the matter in a few words. Just as persecution existed before Christianity, and it was the work of the Christian Church to create within its administration the legal machinery for the persecution of opinion, so it was the work of Protestantism to give a legal basis to the persecutory action of the secular State, which the Church, previous to the Reformation, could only ask from it in terms of religious obedience. The real liberation of Europe would have come if both the Roman and the Protestant Church had completely annihilated each other.

Christian preachers have a very old method of classifying things. If they are good they are Christians. If they are bad they are non-Christian or anti-Christian. So one is not surprised to find the Archbishop of York in that home of religious mediocrity, Broadcasting House informing the world that "Secularism takes a cosmopolitan form in Fascism, and a nationalistic form in Communism." All that can be gathered from this is that the Archbishop does not agree with either Communism or Fascism, and so labels them as Secularism, which he dislikes more than he does the others. In controversy representative Christians are certain to be more or less blackguardly. The blackguardism may be indirect or direct, restrained or violent, but it is certain to be there.

The Radio Manufacturers' Association has arranged to set on one side to-day, Sunday, August 18, as National Radio Sunday with the object of directing "the thoughts and prayers of the nation on the high purpose to which the B.B.C. has directed its broadcasting instrument." It is said that hundreds of Churches are to offer up prayers for Sir John Reith and those who direct B.B.C. operations. Humbug and hypocrisy have characterized the chiefs of the B.B.C. ever since the corporation has been established, and we are far from denying that for this Sir John Reith richly deserves the thanks of the Churches. Deep calls unto deep, and like is attracted by like. The B.B.C. has announced more than once that it meant to do what it could to help God, and it is only fair, perhaps, for the Churches now to ask God to help Sir John Reith. It would not be worth while, perhaps, to ask God to endow Sir John Reith and his committee of parsons to act fairly towards the general public, and to use his "instrument" for genuine education instead of for the administration of "dope." The reply might take the form of the question, "How is that going to help the Churches?" And to that we do not know what answer could be made. But the last word in humbug has surely been said when the nation is called on to thank God for Sir John Reith. It looks as though those responsible for the original appointment of Sir John wish to shift the responsibility on to God.

Laicus Ignotus, one of the best writers on the *Church Times*, had a very disquieting experience the other day. It seems he went to Mass, and the service began with the *Asperges*! Then "the *Gloria* was sung at the end instead of being restored to its ancient place." But the climax—that is, "what bothered" him most—was that the *Benedictus* was actually separated from the *Sanctus*, and sung after the Consecration. We can only exclaim—piously—Horror of Horrors! And we wonder who felt the terrible mix-up most, "Our Lord," or Laicus Ignotus?

An entertaining report comes from Scotland of a baptismal font discovered nearly 70 years ago in a pigsty, and which was again used for its original purpose on July 28. There is nothing said about the quality of the pigs which fed from it for evidently a long period. But why did its discoverer and his family retain it so long in private possession? The kirk of Shotts has got it now anyway. It is to be hoped that there is no risk of any baby baptized from the font being thereby turned into a dear little piggy like the baby of the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland*!

The pietists know how to combine business with pleasure in these summer days! Some of them have had a great time at Keswick celebrating the diamond jubilee of their egregious "Convention." The Buchmanites are also holding happy outdoor gatherings under pleasant conditions; and 90 delegates, we see, have gathered at Pitlochry from the London Missionary Society. Great spoutings and glorious outings!

We read in the press that the Bible and an Edgar Wallace novel *The Clue of the New Pin* ranked first among the best sellers among braille books published by the National Institute of the Blind this year. The respective figures are not given; but as regards the reading public generally, we are open to bet that Edgar leaves the Prophets and Evangelists at the post. The Bible-pushers are glad to get any little advertisement. One would like to know though how many of the Bibles were bought not to read but to give away to blind relations and friends! And it would be interesting to know in each such case how the donee regarded the gift. Some would perhaps prefer the *New Pin* to "the needle!"

His celestial majesty must have been asleep when the Roman Catholic Chapel at Salsburgh, Lancashire (built of wood) took fire recently and was completely destroyed. But, oh, by the way, it happened between 2 and 3 a.m., which is sleeping time. But surely not in Heaven? There is no night there: and "HE slumbers not nor sleeps." Well, let's say he must have been nodding—or listening to a Broadcasting service from some place far removed from Salsburgh.

There is not much truth in Kipling's "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." If it is a religious "twain," they meet all the time—in prayer! The Rev. Pitt Bonarjee of "Olivet," Meopham, Kent, has "invented" a poor imitation of the Eastern Prayer Wheel. He possesses a "Register," in which appears details of all kinds of "requests for prayer":—

The requests are of all kinds, for physical healing, help in business and financial difficulties, conversion of friends, for victory over besetting sins, for revival in the churches, for reunion of husbands and wives who have been separated, for relief from loneliness, unemployment, etc. The day is divided up into definite seasons of prayer. Every country in the world has a day and time allotted to it, it is a case of "pray without ceasing." Every day, usually between the hours of 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., I have my register before me, and, kneeling down, one by one, and name by name, I intercede at the Throne of Grace.

We suggest that the "common form," which children prefer, "God bless everybody," covers the whole ground, and would prove just as effective.

Mr. G. C. Warden makes a pathetic complaint against the Rev. Mr. Iremonger, the religious director of the B.B.C. "Why," he asks woefully, "is it that Anglo-Catholic Churches appear to be entirely unrepresented in the religious programmes of the B.B.C.? Why are thousands of Anglo-Catholics deprived of hearing a sermon from a church of the type of All Saint's, Margaret Street, or a sermon from Catholics like Dom B. Clements, etc.? It is time that fairness was exercised by the B.B.C. in this matter." This takes our breath away! Here is a man who wants actually to add more religion to the wireless—or, at least, to displace some of the nauseating rubbish—like that of Canon Elliott—we already have to bear for something which may be infinitely worse. Heavens!

A religious writer dealing with Christianity in modern fiction is forced to admit that many modern novelists, who are "men with actual experience of the conditions they describe," are "at one in their testimony to the dogged virtue of the people in the face of adversity; but they do not suggest that it is due in any degree to the sustaining force of religion. On the contrary, they depict their characters shrinking from showing their faces in church or chapel." This writer thinks "this is the bitter aftermath of the industrial system or the result of a generation reared largely on a colourless undenominational religion." But would it not be nearer the truth to say it is the result of *education* and free libraries? The workers, as a class are no longer illiterate and can read and study for themselves. Education—as the Catholic Church wisely foresaw—is fatal to religion.

The Rev. H. Beevor, in a paper read before the School for clergy at High Leigh, made some very disquieting admissions. He said, "At the moment the Anglican Orchestra is playing four distinct tunes Catholic, Moderate Anglican, Modernist, and Evangelical"—and the world to-day "hears, not harmony but discord." The chief enemy, he declared, is Materialism, but his message to the Materialist is "not that there is anything unreal or evil about matter." For which relief, much thanks. Mr. Beevor said that "the world of matter is the means of God's revelation of Himself to man," which possibly explains why almost all Materialists reject both God and his revelation.

Continuing, Mr. Beevor said that their business was to explain to "a Materialistic generation the purpose of the material creation, and to call attention to the world of spirit," a business which people like Mr. Beevor have tried to do for centuries with the same success he so far has achieved. In fact, "if the world is to hear and to receive the glad tidings, we must proclaim them with no uncertain voice." What a powerful and original personality is the Rev. Mr. H. Beevor!

Miss Lucy Hall, the late Headmistress of Pontefract High School, deploras "the absolute lack of religion of the average school girl." She blames the fact that "the habit of church and chapel going simply does not exist," and also that "the Bible is never opened." And in trying to remedy this deplorable state of affairs, and more or less compel the children of her school "to get back the habit of daily Bible reading," she found "the sixth form, which was the most important, the most difficult to deal with." All of which makes suggestive reading; in other words, teachers have to move heaven and earth, so to speak, to force religion nowadays, even on school girls; which surely is a positive proof that most people are gasping for God's own Word and Way.

The Rev. Dick Shepherd is loudly proclaiming at present that he will take no part in the next war, and calling upon all good Christians to follow him. We suggest there is a way in which he and other parsons can put their sincerity to the test. We are approaching Armistice Day, and there is now agreement among a large number of people that this anniversary, intended to express the nation's feeling for those who were lost in

the war to end war, has been utilized as a great recruiting occasion, and to excite in the younger generation, which does not know war, an admiration for military parades. They see the glitter, the pomp, the admiration paid to the *soldier*, and not to those who were killed as mere pawns in the game that is carried on between the statesmen of the different countries.

But if it is intended to excite a genuine revulsion against war amongst the people a number of things might be done with a genuinely educational effect. (1) Let the clergy decide to take no hand in military parades or ceremonies. (2) Let them agitate, if the commemoration is continued this year, for the soldiers who are there to be without arms or other military paraphernalia, and let civilian life be fully represented. Let the route be kept not by soldiers, but by policemen, who are the proper persons to act in any civic ceremony. (3) There are still thousands, many thousands of blind and crippled men left from the last war. Let a few thousand of these be collected, and let them line Whitehall. This will give the rising generation a practical object lesson in what war means. We do not think that these suggestions are likely to be acted on, and we are certain that if only the last suggestion looked like being carried out the Government would decide that the commemoration should be dropped. It would undo all the advertising value of the Jubilee.

The Middlesex County Council has decided to raise the charity tax on Cinemas to twelve and a half per cent. The Cinema proprietors are up in arms and threaten to close down. We have no sympathy whatever with these men, who were ready to submit to any kind of injustice, and to countenance the racketeering methods of the Government when the Act was introduced. For years we pointed out that the Cinema proprietors could legally break down the Sabbatarianism which threatened them if they were only willing to spend a little money on the fight. Then when the demand for Sunday cinemas grew so strong that the Government dare not close them down, and the Racketeering Act was passed, an Act which introduced a procedure based on the operation of Chicago gangsters, we again urged Cinema proprietors to fight. Now they threaten to do at the end what they might have done at the beginning, but with doubtful results.

The objection urged to open fighting was that if Cinemas adopted the plan we suggested, while they might be able to fight that point successfully they would have to face all sorts of petty annoyances on the part of bigoted police chiefs, and equally bigoted magistrates. It was pointed out to them that an industry with millions behind it need not be afraid of that, there were always the high courts to which an appeal might be made. It was in vain. The bigots were allowed to have their way; a body of men whose whole aim was money, money, and still more money, permitted themselves to have a special tax placed upon them for carrying on an admittedly legal business. And now when the racketeers and religious Al Capones of the country increase the "rake-off" the Cinema owners begin to squeal. It is rather late—if it is not too late. Having admitted the principle that it is almost criminal to earn money on a Sunday—unless one is a clergyman, one ought not to grumble if the principle is applied.

Dr. Kirk of the Church Union Summer School of Sociology "insisted that faith appeals to facts, and not to ideals. It derives from, and depends on, the Incarnation of the Son of God, His birth, His dying, His rising, His gift of spirit." In fact, the usual caboodle. What a happy party that would be consisting of Dr. Kirk, the Bishop of London, the Pope, Mr. Arnold Lunn, General Eva Booth, Lord Justice Slesser and a few American negro Fundamentalists! Especially if they were allowed to rule the roost and be given a free hand to re-introduce the pious twaddle of Christianity as being the Truth of Truths.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ,

EDITORIAL

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Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**E. PARIENTE.**—We are obliged for the list of names to which copies of this paper are to be sent. Hope they will prove acceptable.

**M. W. SMITH** and **H. GREEN.**—Thanks for getting subscribers. That is real help.

**S. YANEY.**—We have to take the parson's word for it that Jesus Christ was with the soldiers in Delville Wood. It is certain that not many of the soldiers noticed the "Presence." But, after all, it is the business of a parson to see things that are invisible to other people.

**T. CLAYTON.**—Sorry we cannot answer your question and for the reason that, like so many others, it is not worded intelligibly. A question to be profitably answered must be properly asked. Try again.

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 1367.

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. Roselli, 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

On Thursday morning, August 8, the National Secular Society, and Secular Society, Limited, letter-box at 68 Farringdon Street, was forced open and the contents stolen. Will any reader who sent a communication to reach either organization on that morning please understand by this notice that such communications did not reach the General Secretary, and the despatch of a duplicate letter appears to be the best way of meeting the situation. We regret any delay or inconvenience caused through the theft, and have now made arrangements which should ensure the safe delivery of all future correspondence.

Mr. Havelock Ellis, the well-known writer, who can make any subject interesting and instructive, has received many letters from his readers, in the course of a long public life, and in *My Confessional*, The Bodley Head, 7s. 6d. net, he has made a fine book of them. There is, in this collection, his usual mastery of style, and a distinctness in his aim that leaves the student in no doubt about his meaning. More important still, Mr. Ellis consistently makes no compromise with the myriad claims of Christianity to all the virtues. In the preface to his *Affirmations*, published in 1898, we find the keynote to all his work stated quite definitely. It reads as follows: "If a subject is not questionable it seems to me a waste of time to discuss it. The great facts of the

world are not questionable; they are there for us to enjoy, or to suffer, in silence, not to talk about. Our best energies should be spent in attacking and upsetting questionable things that so we may enlarge the sphere of the unquestionable—the sphere of real life, and be ready to meet new questions as they arise." The method indicated here is carried on in his latest work; the author discusses in every chapter the questionable arising out of each of the letters sent to him, and there is always present the dry light of common sense. There is an extensive range of subjects, quiet philosophic truths; nothing sensational, and, without heat, Mr. Ellis gives his thoughts on matters as widely divergent as "Sex Enlightenment in Education" to "Is War the Best Way of Killing?" It is what might be described as fruitful reading, and *My Confessional*, a refreshing draught of sanity, is an acquisition without being an encumbrance.

We hope to deal very soon with M. Maeterlinck's last work, *Before the Great Silence*. Like other books by the same writer, it is not to be missed, not because it commands universal agreement, but because there is profit in disagreeing with him. We note the book now to point out a curious example of the timidity of publishers when addressing a British public. The publisher's announcement says "the title is ambiguous," and suggests that it indicates Maeterlinck's silence "when confronted with the great enigma." We think it quite plain that it is nothing of the kind. It contains the author's conclusion when confronted with the interpretation of the universe given by religions. His conclusions as to personal immortality are quite plain and definite. In Maeterlinck's opinion it is sheer delusion, and he does not hide his belief that if it were real it would be too horrible for contemplation; which is a conclusion we have stressed in these columns scores of times. We intend dealing at length with the book when we can seize the opportunity.

In the sale this year of the late M. Barthon's library, Voltaire's copy of Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* (1657), with three notes by him, fetched 20.100 f. It will depend on the point of view whether the great wit and satirist gave Pascal's book a value, or whether the date of publication was the important factor. At any rate, here is a good instance of verifiable immortality, for as long as discerning minds give credit where it is due, Voltaire is with the immortals.

According to the *News-Chronicle* there is grave anxiety in Glasgow over an outbreak of enteric fever. There is nothing surprising in either the outbreak or the anxiety of the responsible authorities, but the noticeable feature about this epidemic is that it appears to have commenced among the 1,100 pilgrims who returned from Lourdes about three weeks ago, which fits the time of the incubatory period. We do not imagine that the Roman Church will advertise this unwelcome result of a pilgrimage to Lourdes.

On Sunday, August 25, the West Ham, and West London Branches N.S.S. will join forces in an outing to Hampton Court. The party, to which all Freethinkers are invited, will meet at the News Theatre, No. 1 Platform, Waterloo Station, at 10.45 a.m., and book to Hampton Court, cheap fare 1s. 8d. return, reserved coach. Lunch must be carried by each member, and tea will be arranged at the Mitre Hotel at 4.30 p.m.

Branches of the N.S.S. in Durham and Northumberland work together as a federation and useful and efficient propaganda has resulted. During the next four weeks, commencing from to-day (August 18th) Mr. G. Whitehead will be operating in the area covered by the federation. It is part of the summer campaign for which the Executive of the N.S.S. is responsible, and in which N.S.S. Branches co-operate wherever possible.

## Shakespeare, The Great Unknown

A REASONABLE plea was recently advanced in these columns for "Shakespearean Free-thought," and the writer, Mr. W. Kent, outlined the difficulties which beset the unorthodox doubter. Since the end of the eighteenth century there has been increasing uncertainty regarding the authorship of the Shakespearean works; and among the sceptics we find such names as Emerson, Disraeli, Dickens, Gladstone, Henry James, Mark Twain and . . . Bismarck. The spirit of Locarno, unfortunately, does not prevail; research is not always welcome; and, recently, the reviewer of an anti-Stratfordian book in a leading daily paper commended the author "for his moderation and absence of that rancour which Shakespearean controversy is apt to generate." Who are the rival claimants that periodically emerge from Cimmerian darkness, and disturb the tranquility of the Stratford dovecot? Professor Gilbert Slater, in agreement with Professor Connes of Dijon, gives prominence to Bacon, Derby and Oxford.

In 1785 the Rev. James Wilmot first propounded the Baconian hypothesis. In 1857, Delia Bacon suggested a group consisting of Raleigh, Bacon, Paget, Buckmaster and Oxford. The Baconian fabric has gradually arisen from these beginnings. It is accepted that Bacon in devious ways, ciphers, and enigmatic illustrations, suggested that he was "Shakespeare."

Certain persons, at the time, believed that Bacon, under the pseudonym "Shakespeare," was author—or part-author—of some of the Works. In 1597-8, when at least twelve Shakespearean plays had appeared, prominent men, Hall, Bishop of Norwich, and the Rev. J. Marston recognized the pseudonym, and implied that "Labeo," in reality Bacon, was part-author of *Venus*.

"Better write, or, Labeo, write alone."

In a controversy with Hall, Marston referred to "Labeo" as *mediocria firma*, Bacon's motto.

Lastly, there is the Northumberland MS., discovered in 1867, and dated by Chambers 1598, consisting of loose sheets in a paper cover. In the list of contents were the plays "Rychard the Second," "Rychard the Third." Above the words "Rychard the Second," there is written—"Mr. ffrancis William Shakespeare," and "Baco" is added below the word "by." Elsewhere the words *William Shakespeare*, *Bacon*, *yourself* occur repeatedly. The writer believed that Bacon was "Shakespeare."

Joseph Greenstreet, in a series of articles cut short by death, first put forward the claims of William Stanley, sixth Earl of Derby. Professor Abel Lefranc of the *Institut de France*, independently formed the same conclusions in his book *Sous le masque de William Shakespeare William Stanley Comte De Derby*. Lefranc's strongest evidence centres round the play, "Love's Labours Lost" (1598). The play reveals intimate acquaintance with the Court of Navarre. In 1580 Stanley was travelling on the Continent with his tutor Lloyd, and was in Navarre between 1582 and 1587. He identifies the character Holofernes with Lloyd. In the play Holofernes presents "the Pageant of the Nine Worthies." In 1584 the Stationers' Company registered a work of Richard Lloyd, "A brief discourse of the most renowned Ates and right valiant conquest of three puisant Princes called the Nine Worthies." Hector, Judas Maccabæus, Alexander appear in both representations. In 1595 Stanley married Elizabeth de Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, and Sir Sidney Lee states that

*Midsummer Nights Dream* was written for, and performed at the wedding. Lefranc finds that Stanley was the author of the play. Lastly, Mr. J. T. Looney, in *Shakespeare Identified* (1922) submitted the case for Edward de Vere the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. A "Shakespeare Fellowship" for further research, was founded by Sir George Greenwood, and there is a considerable literature in support of this hypothesis.

The Oxford case rests, firstly, on the personality of Edward de Vere. He was a distinguished playwright, the writer of *Exquisite Lyrics* (Lee). Francis Meres, in 1598, recognized him as the "best for comedy": yet none of his plays can be traced. Meres perhaps believed him to be "Shakespeare." He was a patron of the drama and maintained his own Company of Players. A cultured nobleman, he knew French and had lived in Italy, the scene of six Shakespearean plays. He was in touch with the political movements and versatile spirits of the age; and his life-history contained all the tragedy that is reflected in the *Sonnets* and Plays. Secondly, there is the resemblance between the Welbeck portrait of Oxford (26 years) and the so-called Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare (47 years); and the Trentham and de Vere Estates were near Ashbourne. Thirdly, the remarkable series of allusions personal to Oxford, in the *Sonnets* and Plays. Pre-eminent is the discovery of the marriage registration of "Mr. W. H." of the *Sonnets* at Hackney. Lee identified Mr. W. H., to whom Thorpe the publisher wrote the dedication, as "William Hall," the third line reads "Mr. W. H. ALL happiness." Mrs. Stopes held that this was a wedding tribute and that Hall must have been married in 1608, the year before the publication of the *Sonnets*. The late Colonel B. R. Ward set out to find the marriage registration. Realizing that Oxford died at Hackney in 1604 and that the Countess vacated the house in 1608, he first selected Hackney Church; and found the entry of Hall's marriage dated August, 1608. Lee admitted the identity of this William Hall. This discovery clearly resulted from the Oxford clue, and was no fortuitous coincidence.

As instances of personal allusions we have *Sonnet* 125.

Wert ought to me I bore the canopy  
With my Extern the outward honouring?

It was the privilege of the de Veres to "bear the Canopy" on historic occasions, and this Earl had borne it in 1588 in St. Paul's, on the occasion of the Armada celebration.

Again, the *Merchant of Venice* 1, iv.

Romeo: "For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase  
I'll be a candle-holder, and look on.  
The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done."  
Mercutio: . . . "If thou art dum. . ."

Oxford's grandmother was Elizabeth Trussell, or "Trestle," a frame for candles in religious worship. A Trestle appears in the Oxford coat of arms. He was thus literally "a candle holder." His great-grandfather was Sir John Dum—hence the play on "done," "Dum."

The plays were originally written as masques for presentation at Court, dating from 1578, and were not converted into literature until after 1593, while Oxford was living in retirement, until his death (1604). The *Merchant of Venice* for instance (1596) is identified as *Portia and Demorantes* (the Merchants) produced in Court in 1580, shortly after Oxford's return from Italy. Traces of many hands are found in the Plays under the dominance of a Master mind. The Oxfordians identify Oxford as the latter and find evidence of collaboration with his cousin Bacon and his son-in-law Derby. They cannot ignore the evidence submitted by Professor Lefranc regarding the latter,

or dis-associate Bacon from such plays as *Richard II.*, *Richard III.* and *Winter's Tale*. The latter contains references to Bacon's *Essay on Gardens*, not published until 1625. Otherwise Oxford, as the Master Mind was the sole author of the *Sonnets*, *Hamlet*, and most of the plays.

Broadly defined there are two schools of thought. The one accepts Shakespeare of Stratford, the busy Malster, Money-Lender and Actor, of substantial yeoman not peasant origin, as the Great Poet, and accounts for the obvious uncertainty regarding his life, "a Great Perhaps" (Saintsbury) by the belief that he was an incomparable Genius, "not of an age but for all time." The other, holds that the Shakespearean works originated in the Elizabethan Court. Thus only can we account for the intimate knowledge of Court Life, the bold impersonation of prominent men, the dangerous references to the political movements of the period, which are woven into the text of the plays. They accept Sir George Greenwood's views that the name Shakespeare or Shake-Speare was adopted as a mask-name in 1593, and "that many subsequently wrote under the name without let or hindrance is a matter of fact." Several men of high position, including one of supreme genius, also used the name, and the Shakespearean works were the product of "many pens and a Master Mind."

The problem is one of intense interest, and there is no reason why the spirit of tolerance should not prevail, and every effort be made to solve it.

M. W. DOUGLAS.

## The Provincial Press

WHILE the views of a Freethinker may occasionally be admitted to the columns of a newspaper in some of the larger centres, it is certainly the case that they are rarely seen in the columns of many provincial organs. The provincial press is fettered by clerical bonds. Ecclesiastical dictation with regard to Free-thought is supreme with most papers in the provinces, more particularly in the agricultural and rural areas. Almost every provincial newspaper that one takes up gives very considerable space to reports of Church gatherings, and to special articles by religious correspondents, while wholly excluding all letters and articles with an anti-clerical flavour. It is well that Freethinkers generally should be reminded of these facts, so that they may consider how isolated Freethinkers in remote districts might be encouraged and supported in their opposition to the tyrannical boycott of unpopular opinions as exhibited in the pietistic reports and opinions continually appearing in local prints.

The writer has just received, for example, a copy of the *Cumberland News* of July 27, a weekly newspaper published in Carlisle, in which one finds not only reports and opinions of the kind above-mentioned favourable to the Churches; but also articles on ostensibly secular topics, into which are imported subtle suggestions commendatory of religious belief. In this paper there appears, evidently each week, an article on some Bible subject under the general heading of "The Home Shrine"; and in this particular issue the writer, "Christopher," deals with the subject of Jesus as "The Light of the World." His thesis is what one would expect, namely that all minds not illumined by Christ are in gross darkness. And the writer has this amusing passage: "The best educated and most developed life that excludes the thought of Him is very incomplete, and sooner or later circumstances will bring such a life to feel its spiritual impoverishment." He concludes with the

remark that there will be no night in Heaven, presumably because it will be for ever lighted by the presence of Jesus.

But is it not possible for continuous high light to be monotonously burdensome? Nature does not find unvarying high light beneficial to human beings, animals or plants. There must be variation for health. But then these religious gentlemen claim a faculty denied to unbelievers—the faculty of spiritual discernment. So they postulate an inward light of a mystical kind kindled by the Grace of God, bestowed by faith on the part of the believer—a light which has no source in knowledge, but purely in supernaturalism. And this is just what those of us who know nothing of any life but that which we now live, emphatically deny the existence of, and therefore on this crucial matter we join issue with the cocksure religionists.

It is a very remarkable commentary upon the proclamation of Jesus as the Light of the World to read in another weekly newspaper that in all denominations of the Christian Church the reduction in the number of Sunday School pupils last year was nearly 100,000. The Church of England lost 25,000, and the Methodist Church over 30,000, while the Church of England is losing 2,000 Sunday School Teachers every year. This all despite the admittedly powerful influence of the Churches in the matter of the education of young children in the day schools as well as in Sunday Schools. How are the lapses to be accounted for? The Churches have great wealth; they are better organized than ever they were; they have devised various kinds of secular schemes to attract the young; they have striven to prove that religion is the source of real happiness; that those who have described it as a thing of gloom are desperate liars. And yet the ecclesiastics are confronted with these irrefutable evidences of ignominious failure to retain the young folk. And not only the young folk, but their parents as well! The fact cannot be blinked: that there is a landslide of the laity from the Churches. We are living in an advanced age of electric light, and the farthing dips of Bethlehem and Nazareth are eclipsed. People of intelligence are not to be misled by the will o' the wisps of fancy and myth. They have historical witnesses to the fact that supernaturalism has done nothing to emancipate or elevate mankind. They realize that the clerics to speak colloquially "have missed the boat." Clericalism is being shown to be an imposture maintained by superstition and fortune telling. People now consider it to be a vital duty to regenerate conditions in the present state of existence, and incidentally one important way of doing so is to relieve the population of the expensive luxury of maintaining 40,000 clergymen.

If one might give a word of counsel to believers in the supernatural, it would be to refrain from following the example of King Canute or Mrs. Partington. The rising tide of Freethought is not to be kept back by the edict of majesty or the most effective kind of broom. The supporters of clericalism have trusted too long to ostracism and the boycott. True, there are individual Christian controversialists who now and then engage in a courteous discussion with Rationalists; but it is safe to say these acts are frowned upon by leaders of the Churches. "Ignore it" is the policy of the ecclesiastical corporations. But the leaders would get a shock if they could hear the opinions expressed about them by the laity in private conversations. Their life is not the life of the common people however. And the average layman whenever he meets a cleric draws back into his shell; and on essential points regarding religion the cleric gets no adequate representation of his views. The clergy

are not now looked up to or co-operated with. They are merely tolerated. And with a fuller appreciation of their place and effect in society tolerance will not be long in passing into antipathy, and antipathy into actual antagonism. Who is "Christopher" that he presumes to criticize the best educated and most developed life that excludes the belief in the supernatural which he preaches and presses upon the public? The whole body of "reverends" throughout the land have a common self-interest to secure the continuance of belief in the myths upon which ecclesiastical corporations are built. Therefore they are biased and their dictation cannot be recognized. Man is slowly rising to a higher place, not with the help of but in despite of supernaturalism. He has had to make his own light, and it has shown up the falsity of the faith as it is in Jesus. Nothing or no being external to man can save him. He must save himself.

Freethinkers—who want to see the Bishops removed from the House of Lords—must be on their guard. The Church of England in its swollen arrogance, the more it realizes that its grip on the people generally is loosened will strive the more resolutely to entrench itself with the Government; and to this end it may agree to representatives of other Churches being admitted to the House of Lords—on which matter one already see a few *ballons d'essai* being sent up! This is an important part of the friendly discussions between Scotland and Lambeth.

J.L.M.

### Pity the Bishop

[Bishop Welldon (writing of his experiences after the War of 1914-18): "It has been difficult for me, on board ship, in recent years to decide what should be the attitude of an Englishman towards those of his fellow-passengers who were Germans."]

It's said that years O years ago  
someone very holy came  
and gave his life that men might know  
all difference a sin and shame:

*Forgive and turn the other cheek!  
All men are one, are one! Condemn  
no man! Shun no contact! Seek  
the sinners out, redeeming them!*

These facts are little known, the aim  
obscured, and the evangel dumb.  
Perhaps the heathen, in Christ's name,  
should start converting Christendom.

Two thousand years men killed each other  
for abstract love. That's how things go.  
I understand each murdering brother,  
put not this naïve bishop—no!

JACK LINDSAY.

### JUPITER AND GREECE

Jupiter, Father Zeus, has the highest place, the throne of nature. He causes rain, he produces everything. Successor of the old gods, of the Titans, he engenders the family of the Hellenic gods. He rules, he has thunder, and he terrifies the world. As to the winds he delegates his power to *Aeolus*, a little Jupiter, who keeps them confined in obscure caverns. If Jupiter is the great fertilizer below, it is because he is also a celestial fecundity above. In Asia he would have been a double-sexed god. In Greece they divide him in two, and give him a consort, who is but the Air, the female Air, Here or Juno. Air, troubled, agitated, angry. This is not sufficient. Jupiter becomes triple. They create for him a daughter, Pallas-Athene, who is produced out of him alone, and not of his Juno. Zeus, doubled, tripled, quadrupled, nevertheless maintains his supreme rank.—*Michelet*.

### Hegelian Bunk

"The earth has bubbles, as the water has,  
And these are of them."

SUNDAY, the first day of our week, is a "holiday"—a "free" day—for the bulk of British citizens. It is so in spite of the still powerful Christian superstition. And it has been a long struggle to make it as free as it is. Up till now, that measure of freedom has been steadily—if slowly—increasing. Hence the bitterness, and the sour looks, of so many Christians against Freethought and the Freethinker—paper and individual alike. Nevertheless, only ceaseless and effective vigilance can maintain that relative liberty against the never-ending audacity of Christian re-action and dictatorship. *Ne forgesu lion.*

One of the results of this—comparatively—Free Sunday has been the "Sunday Paper." Not that most of them are anything of which to be proud. Among Sunday papers, however, for a considerable time, the *Sunday Referee* has made a place peculiarly its own. Using the word "Tory" in a general sense, it is "Tory" in its outlook. Still, on the chief topics of the day, it holds a very independent position among the rival political, ethical, economic, and religious, parties and opinions. Hence it is—probably—more read by Freethinkers than is any other Sunday Paper. One may—at times—fear that its editor allows "variety of opinion" to take the place of "independent opinion." Yet, nevertheless, and all the same, the average British Freethinker prefers the *Sunday Referee* before the—others.

The regular contributors to the *Sunday Referee* constitute a staff of brilliant writers; and brilliance is to be found—at times—upon the page of "What our readers say!" Among the scintillating and attractive features, "Vanoc II" is not the least. Some might consider his—more or less—weird vocabulary, "repellent"; but the repellent is often the most attractive. If you doubt me about that ask "God," or the biographer of the Rev. Charles Spurgeon. Of course, "Vanoc II" varies quite a lot. No one can maintain the same high level, all the time; so he sometimes writes on things that do not matter. Even then, he's interesting.

The chief object of "Vanoc II" in his writing life—I know him in no other—is to put the case for "Hegelian Materialism." He was not the architect of that *Metaphysical Monstrosity*: he is not even the chief apologist for it. There are others. But he does his utmost, all the same and all the time. It was Pecksniff—was it not?—who had plans and elevations of his to-be-constructed-edifice, from the N., S., E. and W., and also from other opposite and contrary points of the compass. So have "Vanoc II" and the other "Hegelian Materialists." Probably, the results will be the same.

This being so, naturally enough "Vanoc II" sat up; took notice; seized his pen; and rushed into action when the Rev. Dr. Inge—among his "substitutes for religion"—put "Communism" as a "kind of religion." 'Twas kind of kind of him, as an apologist for Religion; but, 'twas horrible and awful to "Vanoc II." Therefore, in the *Sunday Referee* of June 23, he proceeded to smash Dr. Inge—dialectically. In the vigour of his attack, he exhibits all his dialectic prowess; but, with the dialectic details, we are not now concerned.

The interesting point, to Freethinkers with a sound Atheist Philosophy, is that neither Dr. Inge nor "Vanoc II." touches the real dialectic similarity between "Religion" and "Revolutionary Communism." The cause of that is not "far to seek." The dialectic explanation of that dialectic similarity would not only burst poor old Plotinus: it would do the same, as well, to "Hegelian Materialism."

"How come?"—as they say in U.S. America. The answer is easy.

Primitive religion was an attempt by Primitive Humankind to get at some Powers greater than themselves, for future benefit. That attempt failed; although it led to some useful social "by-products."

Later, more developed religion, and theology, attempted to find "absolute" knowledge and an "absolute" morality—for future benefit. The strictly limited

tried to reach the unlimited. Again the attempts failed; and the "by-products"—if any—were more doubtful. The "old" metaphysics followed in the same path. Leaving Spinoza on a peak by himself—on a different range—the "old" metaphysics culminated, and failed, in Hegelian Idealism.

Then they had—and are trying to have—"another go" in "Hegelian Materialism." I am not using the name "Dialectic Materialism"; for that is an utterly question-begging term. The dialectic fallacy in the "New" metaphysics—Hegelian Materialism—is the same as in the "old" metaphysics—Hegelian Idealism.

They failed with one Incomprehensible. They failed with three Incomprehensibles. They fail, now, with three Incomprehensible Theses.

'Tis the same old sighing for another world—a world that never was, nor will be. *Neniam Iam Lando.*

In the *Sunday Referee* of July 28, Victor Neuburg—in his poetry column—gives a poem by a child of fourteen. The second verse thereof well describes Hegelian Materialism:—

"He laughed and scorned yet longed to explore,  
Clutched at the air, till his fingers were sore.  
There it was again in the grey, grey dawn,  
As its misty vapours heralded the morn."

Whether it be the mob "cry," denying Free Speech; or the metaphysical "cry" of the Hegelian; Tennyson's words are true:—

"An infant crying in the night,  
An infant crying for the light,  
And with no language but a cry."

All that belongs to yesterday; and "all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death." The Freethinker, with a scientific Atheist Philosophy, deals with all our human, social, needs; and leaves the rest to Vanoe and to Inge.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

Notes from Scotland

In reading a church notice board in Kilmacollm one day, I noted that a weekly Prayer Meeting was held from November to March inclusive. Kilmacollm being a health resort was otherwise engaged during the rest of the year taking in the shekels from the visitors; hence no Prayer Meeting; banking in the present comes before banking on the future. Perhaps, during the winter, enthusiasm would be doubled to atone for the summer neglect, or would it be that there was nothing else to do?

\* \* \*

It will be news to many that the Established Church Congregation at East Kilbride on entering separate at the door, the women going to the left of the minister and the men to the right, and that in a church ten miles from Glasgow. Being present once, the order amazed me, and in wondering what could be the origin I could only conjecture that it germinated from a low conception of sex, and generation followed generation as a matter of course.

\* \* \*

In speaking to the Rev. John McNeil when he held a Mission in Edinburgh four years ago, I made reference to the lunch-hour services which he had held in Glasgow a few years previously. "Yes," he said, and his eyes glowed when he mentioned that he had there spoken at one service to over ten million pounds sterling, that being the cumulus wealth of the Congregation, which included Lord Maclay and other wealthy shipowners, with a large sprinkling of Merchant Princes. So that was his "glad tidings" at our short interview.

\* \* \*

The leading layman in the Free Church of Scotland for many years was Lord Guthrie, one of the Senators of the College of Justice in Edinburgh. He was the presiding Judge at Oscar Slater's trial and conviction for murder, afterwards commuted to life imprisonment. Slater, after serving nineteen years had his case taken to the Court of Appeal (a then recent institution) when the conviction

was quashed. The Government gave him £6,000 as solatium. A writer commenting on the first trial says "the Prosecutor's address to the Jury was full of deadly inaccuracies, which went uncontradicted by the Judge." The Judge often occupied the pulpit, and I have no doubt would give an eloquent discourse on the text, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

\* \* \*

When Gipsy Smith was last in Edinburgh he was allowed the largest church for his services (St. Cuthbert's, which seats 2,300), and it was expected by the managers that the collections might suffice him; but no, he stipulated that if they fell below £100 per week, they would have to guarantee to make up the deficit to that figure, and this was done.

\* \* \*

Ebenezer Erskine was the founder of the Secession Church in Scotland, which his brother Ralph joined later as his chief lieutenant. The Erskines came from Dryburgh, and in the Abbey grounds there is a tombstone to one of their near forebears, which records that he was the youngest of thirty-three children. This made me turn to Chamber's Biographical Dictionary of eminent Scotsmen, to see how the brothers fared in the paternal way. Ralph is stated to have had fourteen children, but in the case of Ebenezer it only records that he had "several children." Did the Editor think that fifteen children (the number stated elsewhere) were too many for a Church founder? I am afraid it looks like it, so he discreetly says "several children."

\* \* \*

In Edinburgh to-day if Church members have children too quickly in succession they have to appear before the Church Session for admonition, etc.

\* \* \*

I once knew an Assistant Minister in a Presbyterian Cathedral. Letting himself go one Sunday, he referred to Jesus as "our best and most glorious Saviour." A letter in the local paper the following day enquired how many Saviours there were? He broached the head medicine-man on the predicament, and was advised to ignore the letter. The decanter was produced and the little barb was soon forgotten.

\* \* \*

H. Belloc, the Roman Catholic Historian, in his book *James II.* p. 67, says, "The King knew by a right instinct when it is legitimate to lie and when it is illegitimate." Well, well.

\* \* \*

In the Palace of the Dean of Winchester there are three miles of carpets. Well, well, well.

J. MACKINNON.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."  
FREETHOUGHT AND THE B.B.C.

SIR,—Following on Miss Sylvia Pankhurst's letter to the B.B.C., a friend of mine wrote asking them their reasons for not allowing a member of the National Secular Society to broadcast. Here is the main portion of the reply:

"You may remember that we have had several non-Christian and anti-Christian speakers, from time to time at the microphone, but in arranging our talks we have to take into account the tastes and interests of the great body of our listeners, by which talks given by an official representative of the National Secular Society would not be welcomed or appreciated. You will understand that there are many societies and institutions whose representatives would only have a 'minority appeal' for our listeners, and we treat them all as consistently as we can."

The first part of the reply is a little soft soap intended to allay indignation. It is common knowledge that non-Christians and anti-Christians appear before the micro-

phone. As a matter of fact it is these people who supply the bulk of the intellectual matter which escapes the notice of the B.B.C. censors. Unless the B.B.C. were desirous of giving wholly farcical talks on controversial matters they could not avoid engaging persons who were not Christians. As it is, it is questionable if most of the talks really take into account the tastes of the majority of the listeners. Religion is foisted on the people together with a dull programme on Sunday, and we are asked to believe that this is in accordance with the wishes of the listening public.

The public are not consulted in the matter. In all probability, if they were, a very healthy vote would be recorded in favour of lighter programmes modelled somewhat on Continental lines. Despite the rather vague reference to "minority appeal," it is doubtful if any talk or series of talks could be said to have a majority appeal. The truth is, the B.B.C. do not know one way or another whether a Freethinker stating his case would be welcome to that section of listeners who are interested in talks. It is quite likely that such an innovation would be refreshing after the drivel trotted out by parsons and priests over the air. But there is no excuse, save that of bigotry and prejudice, for the B.B.C. ignoring Freethought as it does. There is no reason why a Freethinker should not have been asked to state his case in say the series of talks on "Freedom"; the militating factor was religious intolerance. The label "minority appeal" is just a "red-herring," it is a typical product of religious cunning. But what is one to make of the statement, "we treat them all as consistently as we can?" Is this a joke? One is forced to believe so. Societies having a minority appeal are treated so consistently that however much their ideals and objectives may be attacked the B.B.C. haven't the decency even to invite a representative to reply. This is certainly a new and indeed humorous interpretation of the word "consistently."

Listen, however, to the concluding sentence in the B.B.C. reply: "We are very sorry not to be able to send you a more satisfactory reply."

One would have to wait a long while to read anything more abject. It is the admission of a dishonest body fearful lest its dishonesty has been exposed. The phrase "minority appeal" is thus revealed to be a sham to hide the ugly reality of bigotry which lies beneath.

If this letter may be taken as a criterion, it would seem to imply that the B.B.C. is weakening. It is now shedding crocodile tears where it once waved an imperious hand with contemptuous indifference. Progress is indicated. Therefore Freethinkers take heart, pen another letter of protest, or demand your rights as licence-payers. You may only achieve the waste-paper basket. Yet, on the other hand, if the number of mis-sives should be formidable, then it is possible that yours will turn the scales and result in us hearing at long last a Freethought address on the wireless.

C. MCKELVIE.

### THE FAILURE OF FORCE

After having served six months for selling "a penny paper without a taxed stamp," Henry Hetherington was again convicted and imprisoned—this time with his friend James Watson. Their treatment was most cruel. An opening, called a "window," but without a pane of glass, let in snow upon their food; cold and damp filled their bodies with pain; and the "Liberal" Government seemed intent on trying to break their spirits. Nor were Hetherington and Watson the only prisoners for selling the "Unstamped." John Cleave and his wife, Heywood of Manchester, Guest of Birmingham, Hobson and Mrs. Mann of Leeds, with about 500 other offenders, in town and country, were sufferers by imprisonment, as Vendors of the "Unstamped." The spirit displayed by them is worthy of remembrance. And to the honour of English radicals the sufferers were nobly upheld by such people as the high-minded Julian Hibbert, William Lovett and many others. The Government were, in the long run, obliged to admit defeat.

*Funeral Elogue on Hetherington by T. Cooper.*

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### INDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH DISCUSSION SOCIETY (375 Cambridge Road, E.2, opposite Museum Cinema): 8.0, A Debate—"Is Prostitution Inevitable?" *Affir.*: Mr. Paul Goldman. *Neg.*: Mr. Arthur Cohen.

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, August 18, Mr. P. Goldman. High-bury Corner, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, August 19, Mr. L. Ebury. Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Wednesday, August 21, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, August 18, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, August 20, Mrs. E. Grout. Manor Street, Clapham High Street, 8.0, Friday, August 23, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

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 J. Darby. Thursdays, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin and Gee. Fridays, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Connell. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at The Kiosk.

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street): 7.0, Members' Meeting. Important.

#### OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (The Market): 7.30, Thursday, August 15, Mr. J. Clayton, A Lecture.

BOLTON N.S.S. BRANCH (Chorley Market): 8.0, Tuesday, August 20, Messrs. Maughan and Sisson will lecture.

CRAWSHAWBOOTH: 7.30, Wednesday, August 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

BASINGTON (Lane): 8.0, Wednesday, August 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HETTON: 8.0, Tuesday, August 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, August 18, Mr. J. V. Shortt. Belfast Road, Knotty Ash, 8.30, Tuesday, August 20, A Lecture. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, August 22, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields, Manchester): 7.0, Mr. Sam Cohen—"God and Mammon."

NELSON (Chapel Street): 8.0, Tuesday, August 20, Mr. J. Clayton.

QUAKER BRIDGE: 3.0, and 7.0, Sunday, August 18, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR: 8.0, Saturday, August 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

WORSTHORNE: 7.30, Friday, August 16, Mr. J. Clayton.

I believe that the worthier part of the nation is yearning for a new attitude to truth. I myself trust that the day is coming when a fresh spirit will awaken, and when, above all, the bitterness and bias of the mere partisan will be regarded as the symptoms of a moral defective.

(The Late) Justice McCauley.

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