

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

**Are we Christian?**  
THE Rev. Dr. Mathews, Dean of St. Paul's, and one of the leaders, in this country, of Modernism, must have caused many Christians to open their eyes when they read his statement that there are not twenty per cent of the people in this country who are "in any possible sense of the word, Christian." I daresay that most believers will agree with him, however surprised they may be at his saying such a thing. But they will agree because they are in fundamental disagreement. Dr. Mathews will justify himself to himself by attaching a particular idea of Christianity to the word "Christian"; and the other Christians will agree with his statement because they do not agree with his idea of Christianity. I question whether twenty per cent of the population would be represented by any group of Christians that had to set down a precise statement of what they understood by Christianity. Such agreement as does exist among Christians is not based on definiteness of conviction, but upon indefiniteness of statement. What one group regards as the essentials of Christian belief the others reject. Some are ready to deny an actual physical resurrection of Jesus, others assert that he was only an incarnation of God as other men are, but in greater measure; some deny his miracles, others interpret the virgin birth so as to permit the physical fatherhood of Mary's husband. It is useless to attempt to cover up this discordance by saying that all Christians believe in Jesus, so long as their conception of Jesus differs in this manner. But when Dr. Mathews says that there are not twenty per cent of the people of this country who are Christians, one may say that there never were, if the assertion implies identity of meaning. There was never more than a percentage that united in an identical belief about Jesus. And this applies outside this country when one translates the beliefs of Christians into intelligible language.

## Yes and No

As a Freethinker I should like to agree that there are not twenty per cent of the people of this country who could honestly describe themselves as Christians in any true sense of the word. But, then, I try to import into my Freethought a little scientific *thinking*, as distinguished from the mere accumulation of natural facts which so many mistake for science. And if I lump together the people who, with as much justification as Dr. Mathews, call themselves Christian, and upon precisely similar grounds, then I should say the percentage is nearer sixty or seventy than twenty. Perhaps it has not struck Dr. Mathews that this very Christian habit of claiming at one moment that the "heart of the country is truly Christian," and at another that there are very few Christians, while it may serve well with the dullards (who *do* make up quite eighty per cent of the population) by persuading them that the cure for our troubles is more Christianity, and so relieves Christianity of any positive responsibility for the existing situation, such a statement cannot be expected to go down with really intelligent folk. It is a method of giving play to the radically dishonest suggestion that so far as things are bad it is a consequence of non-Christian and anti-Christian forces, and so far as they are good we must give the credit to genuine Christianity.

So on grounds of both theory and policy, and this is one of those cases in which theory and policy coincide, I cannot accept four-fifths of the population as being Freethinkers. *Freethinkers* are really scarcer than most people imagine. There are plenty of anti-Christians, but the two are not identical. And it has always been the case that four out of every five Christians would disagree with the remaining one—and the four who would unite against the fifth could safely be selected blindfold. The Freethinker would agree with any possible four that the fifth was wrong.

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## The Christian Mind

But to the sociologist the important thing to-day is not the amount of disbelief in Christian doctrines. That is of consequence to none but the parson. The important thing to sociological science is the mental residuum that Christianity leaves behind it. But for their reaction on social life the most absurd of Christian doctrines would have no greater significance than other pieces of primitive myth and folklore. The most serious aspect of Christian beliefs is that they do seriously affect a man's relation to his fellows, and help to perpetuate a type of mentality that can properly be described as anti-social in the true sense of that phrase. There is the insistence of the necessity for "right belief" in a direction in which no valid evidence of whether the belief that is pronounced "right" is so; there are also the artificial distinctions created in the shape of the denial of the right to inter-marriage as between Christians and

Jews, Jews and Christians, between Christians and Mohammedans; there are food and other taboos, sabbatarian and blasphemy laws, all of which serve to create artificial barriers between members of the same community, and to obscure a development of that community of feeling which should exist between members of a given society. These beliefs, essentially primitive in character, and usually traceable to the most primitive of superstitions, in the end give constancy to a mentality that provokes not merely disagreeable but often very dangerous reactions. The truth of this is seen in the fact that there is no part of the world where the Christian mind has been permitted anything like complete control, that the secular State has not had eventually to step in and curtail its power in the interests of social well-being.

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#### The Religious Residuum

But suppose it were true that there are very few Christians in this country, and suppose further, it were true that Christian belief was crumbling away at such a rate that there were no need to trouble about expediting its decease. Should we then be out of the wood? I think not. Just as the Christian period has created, not a unique, but a specific type of mentality, so the pressure of religion on social life has created a mentality which expresses itself, more or less disastrously in ethics, in science, and in sociology. Some of our leading anthropologists have solemnly warned us of the threat which the persistence of primitive superstitions offers to our civilization. Sir James Frazer has well likened the situation to a people who are living in a region where only a thin crust stands between them and an upheaval of volcanic forces. Side by side with our development in science we have the crudest of superstitions accepted and practiced by the "educated" no less than by the uneducated. In general use we have the vogue in mascots, the very wide-spread belief in omens, the exploitation by some of our "large circulation" newspapers of that ancient superstition, astrology, and the ready credulity given by the public to any story of the supernatural. All this implies, nay demonstrates, the unwelcome truth that man is not yet out of the jungle any more intellectually than socially—perhaps he is not out socially because he is not out intellectually. To say, then, that Christianity is nearly dead is not to afford ground for concluding that the religious mentality is dead also. That is still very much alive.

And the danger which this evokes is the transference of essentially religious ideas to the social field expressed in non-religious terms. The worship of the State which is the dominant form that is developing in so many parts of the world to-day is nothing more than the religious idea with a social cloak. Such common phrases as the mission or the destiny of this or that country to do this or that, is another example of the religious mentality transferred from the religious to the political field. The intolerance expressed in the pursuit of this or that political or economic ideal, is a perpetuation of the essentially religious mentality. The readiness with which so many professed unbelievers accept the religious, even the Christian, standard of moral values is one more piece of evidence to the same end. And in science, when one analyses the implications of the language of some of our leading scientists, one can see that even while criticizing religion, these men are still carrying round with them the ghost of a God. When we pride ourselves on how much has been done to destroy religious doctrines and definite religious belief, it is well to bear in mind that in doing so we have mainly succeeded in destroying only the

form in which religious belief expresses itself. The danger of the religious attitude to life is still present and strong.

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#### The Power of the Past

Dr. Mathews says that not twenty per cent of the people are Christian. It will probably cheer him up if I say that in my opinion, while a very much larger number than he states are still Christian in their mental outlook, there is almost certainly not more than ten per cent of the population that have completely cleared their minds of religion. Indeed one of the commonest of my experiences is to find many professed Atheists still unconsciously harbouring the ghost of a God when they begin to talk on philosophy, on science, on ethics and even on sociology. I have given so many examples of this in my book on *Primitive Survivals*, that I may be excused furnishing concrete proof here.

Ought we to be surprised at this? I think not. For milleniums mankind (or shall we say semi-mankind?) wallowed in the slime. The first definite forms of conscious thought established were framed under the dominance of religious terror. The early history of mankind is dominated by fear of mysterious personal forces which determines the expressed form of social life. For thousands of generations the more virile type of mind is weeded out for fear of the danger to society if it is permitted to flourish. In the historic period religion finds a powerful ally in vested interest in this process of killing off the mentally most desirable, and so creating a survival of the fittest which is expressed in the perpetuation of an environment that eliminates the mentally best. This is the great burden that present-day man has to carry. He is beset by a thousand unseen hands that try to hold him on the level of the savage, a thousand ties that direct and keep his mind working along the same tracks that were trodden by semi-animal ancestors. Like an iceberg which with its two-thirds concealed under water threatens the safety of ships, so the mind of to-day has its pinnacle moving in the serene air of civilized thought, and the much larger bulk moving in the region of the primitive forest. And as the iceberg threatens the ships that cross its path, so this submerged savagery of the mind carries with it a potential, and often an active threat to the small degree of civilization that has been achieved.

The number of men and women who were consciously free from religion has always been in a small, sometimes a very small, minority. But they have been helped by the play of social forces that could never be altogether withstood. Consciously man has for by far the greater part of his history bowed to what he conceived to be the will of the gods. Unconsciously he has been continuously forced to interpret the will of the gods in such terms as would permit social life to continue, otherwise the race would have ceased to exist. Nature has always, in food, in work and in pleasures, set a limit to what man might do and still live. The most brutal and barbarous of religious customs have been modified in this way, and the gods have been brought into line with a more civilized mankind. The education of the great mass of mankind proceeds in this unconscious manner even to-day. They learn without knowing it, and are civilized without a consciousness of the process. It is the few who in each generation have realized that progress depends upon circumscribing the area over which the gods rule. I do not agree with Dr. Mathews that very few people are Christian, but I do agree that their number is declining. I affirm that the vast majority of people are

still, in some measure, religious in their mental outlook. And some of the greatest dangers that threaten modern civilization come from that direction. Progress depends, not upon the formal atheisation of society as a whole, but upon the atheisation of the individual mind. It is the only guarantee against reaction.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Cheeky Clerical Caste

"The services of the clergy are imaginary, and their payment should be of the same description."

G. W. Foote.

"Our reformers knock off the head from Jupiter's thunderbolt and sceptre stand."—Landor.

THE inimitable Bishop of London, in one of his numerous appeals for cash, described the professional workers in the Lord's vineyard as belonging to "a rotten profession." This very plain statement upset some of the Bishop's own admirers, and the right-reverend prelate was constrained to explain later that he was thinking only of the financial point of view, and was not at that moment concerned with other, and, perhaps, graver aspects of the case.

From a purely material point of view the calling of a clergyman cannot fairly be described as "a rotten profession." The enormous financial resources of this Church of England, of which the Bishop himself is so distinguished an ornament, run into millions of money, and include such lucrative sources of revenue as agricultural tithe, coal royalties, ground-rents, and ancient endowments, formerly belonging to their predecessors, the Romish Church. It is, however, a sorry trade when judged by ethical and intellectual standards. The 16,000 clergy, including the 300 bishops and assistant bishops, of the State-aided Church of England all subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which, written centuries ago, make the most curious and interesting reading in the year 1935. They include the belief that Christ went bodily to hell; that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and all proceed from itself as a ghost; that Adam was the first man, and that he ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which countless millions are damned to everlasting torture; that the Roman Catholic religion is a vain invention; that the Christian Bible is the actual Word of God; and that King George the Fifth is the head of the real Church of Christ.

To these Thirty-nine Articles of Faith, among others, every Church of England priest, from the youngest curate to the Archbishop of Canterbury, subscribes. We know that great numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them; that they are engaged in taking money by false pretences. Their main reason for remaining in this State Church are "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former cheerful Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral happily expressed it. The right to appoint clergymen to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or a quack remedy for baldness. The Houses of Parliament, be it noted, makes the religion, and the landlords appoint its professors, or charter some appointments to the highest bidder. Is it not "a sorry trade?"

The ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except they conflict with the laws of the land, and the Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy. The first dozen canons are aimed directly at Nonconformists, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of vertebrate Christianity of the Ages of Faith. If you deny the Royal supremacy in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that this

Parliamentary-made Church teaches the doctrines of Jesus Christ you are cursed. If you say that the official Prayer Book of this State Church is out of harmony with the Christian Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity which used to send men and women to the torture chamber and to death by fire for a mere difference of opinion on theology. But that the law of the land overrides these ecclesiastical canons, everybody who refused to attend parish churches would be cursed, and the names read out in churches.

It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people should be taught such mischievous nonsense in language which leads them to believe that millions of fellow-citizens are outcast in this world, and will be damned in the next. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest. These priests, from the greenest curate to the most gorgeously appalled archbishop, claim to be sacred persons, and members of a caste apart from their fellows. Unless a man accepts them and their hocus-pocus, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. That is State Church teaching for the masses, tempered with polite reservations for the classes. Is it not "a rotten profession?"

So far, the State-aided Church of England. Let not the Free Church ministers of the Gospel lay the flattering unction to their souls that they are made of finer clay. They are just as much priests as their trade rivals of the Anglican Church. Does not Milton remind us that presbyter is but priest writ large? These Nonconformist ministers are engaged in precisely similar work to the Church of England priests; and both bear a very marked resemblance to the coloured medicine-men in savage nations. They tell us of gods who get angry with us; of a dreadful devil who must be guarded against; of angels who fly from heaven to earth. Thousands of men are engaged in this business in this country. And their profession is as honest as fortune-telling, but not more so. Many a poor, old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a servant-girl, after promising her a handsome husband and four fine children; but these Christian ministers are allowed to take large sums of money for promises of good fortune in an alleged "beautiful land above." Is it not a sorry trade?

There is nothing in all this holy hocus-pocus which entitles its professors to be revered, except the extreme simplicity of their devotees. What entitles them to be addressed as "Reverend"? In what way are they so far superior to other tradesmen, or ordinary men who are simply "misters." These are questions which, in this crisis of the world's affairs, are worth the consideration of those who do more than pay lip service to the cause of Democracy.

Seeing that precious little merit attaches to the clerical profession, are we to assume that reverence is due to the exemplary lives led by those belonging to this specially favoured class of the community? Divorce Court proceedings and Police Court records show that the clerical character in no wise differs from that of any other class. They may retort that there are black sheep in every fold. That is quite true, but people who are not professional religionists do not make the slightest pretension to being a sacred class apart. They do not ask, they do not even dream of asking, to be known as "reverend," or by any other title implying special respect. It is precisely because the ministers of the State Church, and the fancy religions, expect us to look up to them that we are compelled to compare their behaviour with their boast-

ing. When they decide to come down from their sacred pedestals, and discard their haloes, we will make the same allowance for them that we make for business men who do not need a dog-collar to announce their peculiar sanctity. The word "reverend" is pure humbug in this connexion. To apply it to the lagmen of Orthodoxy is as absurd as to apply the term of "esquire" to every occupant of a jerry-built bungalow.

With the advent of a definite Socialist Party in present-day politics it becomes increasingly necessary to challenge the pretensions of this clerical caste. Knowledge has widened in so many ways never dreamed of in the narrow priestly philosophy of the Christian Religion. New tones have grown into human sentiment. All the lights and shadows of life have shifted, and its whole surface has been dyed in different colours. Naturally and inevitably we are progressing beyond the reach of old-world Oriental ideals. Their voice views which men have outgrown, and to which we cannot respond. At their note our minds are roused to feelings very like amazement. They come like "the horns of Elfland, faintly blowing," and we realize that they were meant for other ears than ours, and are but an echo from the far-off days of bigotry and ignorance. The conscience of the race is rising above old-world dogmas, but we shall never emerge from the aftermath of Feudalism whilst we continue to support tens of thousands of priests in our midst, whose life-work is the perpetuation of the outworn ideals of the bad, old days of Kingcraft and Priestcraft.

MIMNERMUS.

## Conscience

It is often argued that in conscience we have a phenomenon which resists a materialistic explanation and sanctions belief in the moral government of the universe. Let us see whether this belief can be substantiated.

While the churches are now admitting man's evolution from the animals, science is pushing on and collecting a lot of data illustrating how man's mind has developed from the ape-mind; we may here think of mind as reflex-behaviour in relation to the environment, and creative adjustments thereto. In this work of research Professors Kellogg and Kohler are specially eminent.

Thus we have the admission of a distinguished cleric: "Since science was emancipated from the theological prejudice, the barrier formerly thought to exist between the mental processes of man and those of the beasts has largely vanished." (Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*). Everything points to its being completely vanished. The only circumstance, therefore, which would remove conscience to a supernatural origin would be its independence of mind and its inoculation into the mental complex from another source. Yet we find its origin, growth and efficacy wholly coincident with that of the mind. If, then, we find it to be rooted in nothing but natural conditions we cannot ascribe it to any other than an evolutionary origin.

First let us see what the rival theory offers; let us suppose conscience to have been divinely implanted. Theists to-day admit that the all-goodness and all-powerfulness of God do not stand together, in view of the amount of natural evil existent, not attributable to man. Some, like Dr. Schiller, are prepared to sacrifice omnipotence and postulate a God limited in power, the only alternative being to limit his goodness in order to vindicate his power. In either case,

as will be seen, the absolute trustworthiness of the "divine gift" is lost.

Such a gift would fulfil certain conditions; it would be innate, it would be universal, it would not mislead, it would not give contrary dictates. We find that none of these conditions obtains. Consider the varying dictates of conscience in such matters as self-denial in Lent, Sunday observance, church-going, gambling, fasting, vivisection, divorce, prohibition, or birth-control. "Our consciences are absolutely indifferent when we sit down to a good piece of beef, but a Hindoo's would suffer agonies." (Sutherland, *Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct*). The Jew's conscience will not allow him to eat pork, that of the Catholic demands fish on certain days.

That we are sometimes misled in the conception of our duty is a fact of experience, and sometimes the "pricks" of conscience may be unduly severe; in the language of psychoanalysis the Super-Ego needs putting in its place.

It cannot be said, moreover, in support of the contention for divine origin, that conscience has been inseparably connected with religion. Early religious behaviour consists in the propitiation of mighty powers by means of ritual, a quite selfish proceeding. At later stages, we read in Hastings' *Dictionary*, "The accession of the gods to the domain of morality was a slow process." Actually, the God-belief seemed to hinder the development of conscience. "With the Greeks, when the gods were so longer believed in, it became possible for man to assume the responsibility of his own moral conduct. . . . As the belief in the divine pantheon decayed, the idea of conscience developed." "Among both the Greeks and the Romans, the development of the idea of conscience was due to the decay of the State religion and of the State discipline." (Article, *Conscience*).

As religion develops, however, it takes on the idea of conscience as an accretion; and the later religions, including Christianity, absorb so much ethical matter as to suggest to the uninitiated that the two are inseparable and that morality derives solely from religious sanction.

Instead of being innate, or universal, the origin and growth of conscience may be seen in evolution. There are certain definite transmitted pattern reactions giving the potentiality of conscience. These (in the older terminology, instincts) have the following characteristics: they tend to the welfare of the individual or of the species, they are modifiable by experience, yet independent of experience the first time performed (i.e., inherited), and are similarly performed by all members of a (restricted) group.<sup>1</sup> Sexual appetite widens the merely selfish desire for self-preservation, by the recognition that in defending his mate the animal is defending his own chance of enjoyment. Then members of a family or of a community, in the presence of a common enemy, will gain by co-operation, which may even become a condition of their survival.

So far, however, the safeguarding of a mate, or the work done on behalf of a community, has quite selfish ends. We have only the potentiality, not the fact, of conscience. This is where imagination and sympathy, involving the rudimentary use of reason, play an important part. At the human level, to quote Sir Leslie Stephen, "To put yourself in his place . . . to know that a man has certain feelings, is to have representative feelings, not equal in intensity, but identical in kind." (*Science of Ethics*). Knowing what it feels like to be deprived of a treasured possession, say an article of food, a primitive would by observation infer the same feelings to exist in one of his fellows in a similar difficulty. The possible allevia-

<sup>1</sup> cf. Lloyd Morgan, author of *The Animal Mind*, etc.

tion of his friend's distress would arouse in him similar feelings of satisfaction, if the other were a member of his own tribe, that is, a helper in the face of common danger. The mutual goodwill of members conduces to their common safety, and each realizes it is more advantageous to belong to an association which is collectively strong, than to depend on his own efforts. Another important feature is that numbers lend interest to life, and social intercourse lessens boredom. If, then, the community is to survive and prosper, theft, violence, cowardice, etc., will tend to its disruption. The sense of the words "ought" and "to owe" is now beginning. Originally the word "ought" referred to a debt owed to someone for a service performed. The bartering of goods has its counterpart in that of services.

Even when danger is absent, animals as well as human beings will combine, both in play and industry. Mutual reliance on each other's goodwill enables two or more young dogs to indulge in a sham fight. With the application of reason, conscience makes us do nobler things as our knowledge and education improve. As it was born out of conditions, so it is moulded and refined by them. It was born in the demands of circumstance and is directed by the teachings of experience. The Zoroastrians' conscience would not allow them to bury their dead, and the uncleanness of the saints was deemed a virtue. Such was the work of conscience when prompted by religion. Nobler conceptions mean higher planes in which conscience may operate. As Dean Rashdall said, we should educate our conscience before obeying it,<sup>2</sup> and as Dr. Bithel remarked, it should be kept in check by the moral judgment.<sup>3</sup>

And so the egoistic care of mate evolves, at a higher level, into the desire to protect, irrespective of immediate self-gain. Imagination, assisted by reason and knowledge, holds out the hand of friendship, and the unwritten guarantee of goodwill and ready assistance can obtain between all members of the community. The history of martyrdom shows that fidelity to principle may persist even when strength of conscience is an imposition severe to the point of death. As an illustration from the animal world, the mother whale is easily brought within point of capture by harpooning the young calf, which she will not desert.

In such cases the love of others, or the devotion to what is conceived to be the truth, may be stronger than the mere seeking for self-comfort. Determinism thus operates here as everywhere, so that at each stage the evolution and operation of conscience is materialistically accounted for. Conscience is only one factor in that composite phenomenon, a sense of duty. Strictly speaking, then, it is not conscience that misleads; it is the owner's power of reasoning. But for the same reason it is not conscience that directs. "It is not a sign-post, for it ratifies with its approval contrary roads to goodness."<sup>4</sup> I cannot follow the late C. T. Gorham in his statement that conscience examines, pronounces and decides (*Why we do Right*, p. 49), and in any case we are told on p. 26 that it is reason that does this work.

Finally, note that instead of leaving the study of morality high and dry, far removed from the scheme of science, there is a *science* of ethics, investigated by such contemporary writers as Prof. George E. Moore, of Cambridge, editor of *Mind* and author of *Principia Ethica*, Prof. Carveth Read (*Natural and Social Morals*), Prof. Durant Drake (*The New Morality*), Edward Westermarck and others.

G. H. TAYLOR.

<sup>2</sup> *Theory of Good and Evil*.

<sup>3</sup> *Agnostic Problems*.

<sup>4</sup> *What is Morality* (G. Whitehead).

## Things Worth Knowing\*

### OPINION AND THE PRESS

OUR confidence in this (the newspaper press) is based on the theory, not so much that the newspapers make public opinion, as that the opinions they utter are those of which the readers approve. But this ground is being made less tenable year by year, by the fact that more and more newspapers rely on advertising, rather than on subscriptions, for their support and profits, and agreement with their readers is thus less and less important to them. The advertiser rather than the subscriber, is now the newspaper bogie. He is the person before whom the publisher cowers and whom he tries to please, and the advertiser is very indifferent about the opinions of a newspaper. What interests him is the amount and quality of the circulation. What he wants to know is, how many and what class of persons see it, not how many persons agree with it. The consequence is that the newspapers of largest circulation, published in the great centres of population where most votes are cast, are less and less organs of opinion, especially in America. In fact, in some cases the advertisers use their influence . . . to prevent the expression in newspapers of what is probably the prevailing local view of men and events. There are not many newspapers that can afford to defy a large advertiser.

Nothing is more striking in the reading public today . . . than the increasing incapacity for continuous attention. The power of attention is one that, just like muscular power, needs cultivation or training. The ability to listen to a long argument or exposition, or to read it, involves not only strength but habit in the muscles of the ear or the nerves of the eye. In familiar language, one has to be used to it to do it easily.

There seems to be a great deal of reason for believing that this habit is becoming much rarer. Publishers complain more and more of the refusal of nearly every modern community to read books, except novels, which keep the attention alive by amusing incidents and rapid changes of situation. . . . The collection of news has become a business, and it has been greatly promoted by the improvements in the printing press. . . . But as soon as the collection of it became a business, submitted to the ordinary laws of competition, the number of things that were called "news" naturally increased. Each newspaper endeavoured to outdo its rivals by the greater number of facts it brought to the public notice, and it was not long before "news" became everything whatever, no matter how unimportant, which the reader had not previously heard of. The sense of proportion about news was rapidly destroyed. . . . The diligent newspaper reader, therefore gets accustomed to passing rapidly from one to another of a great series of incidents, small and great, requiring simply the transfer from one trifle to another, of a sort of lazy, uninterested attention, which often becomes sub-conscious; that is, a man reads with hardly any knowledge or recollection of what he is reading. Not only does the attention become habituated to frequent breaches in its continuity, but it grows accustomed to short paragraphs, as one does to passers-by in the street. A man sees them and observes them, but does not remember what he may see or observe for more than a minute or two. That this should have

\* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

its effect on the editorial writing is what naturally might be expected. If the editorial article is long, the reader used to the short paragraph is apt to shrink from the labour of perusing it; if it is brief he pays little more attention to it than he pays to the paragraphs. When, therefore, any newspaper turns to serious discussion in its columns, it is difficult, and one may say increasingly difficult, to get a hearing. It has to contend both against the intellectual habits of its readers, which makes prolonged attention hard, and against a priori doubts of its honesty and competency. . . .

Another agency which has interfered with the press as an organ of opinion is the greatly increased expense of starting or carrying on a modern newspaper. . . . Few undertakings require more capital or are more hazardous. The most serious item of expense is the collection of news from all parts of the world. No talent or energy will make up for its absence. The consequence is that a very large sum is needed to establish a newspaper. After it is started, a large sum must be spent without visible return, but the fortune that may be accumulated by it, if successful, is also very large.

One of the most curious things about it is that the public does not expect from a newspaper proprietor the same sort of morality that it expects from people of other callings. It would disown a bookseller and cease all intercourse with him for a title of the falsehoods and petty frauds which it passes unnoticed in a newspaper proprietor. It may disbelieve every word he says, and yet profess to respect him, and may occasionally reward him; so that it is quite possible to find a newspaper which nearly everybody condemns, and whose influence most men would repudiate, circulating very freely even among religious and moral people, and making handsome profits. A newspaper proprietor, therefore, who finds that his profits remain high, no matter what views he promulgates and what kind of morality he practices, can hardly, with fairness to the community be treated as an exponent of its opinions. He will not consider what it thinks, when he finds he has only to consider what it will buy. . . .

In international questions the press is often a poor reliance. In the first place, business prudence prompts an editor, whether he fully understands the question under discussion or not, to take what seems the patriotic view, and tradition generally makes the selfish, quarrelsome view the patriotic view. . . . All first class Powers still live more or less openly, in their relations with one another, under the old duelling code, which the enormous armaments in modern times render almost a necessity. Under this code the one unbearable imputation is fear of somebody. Any other imputation a nation supports with comparative meekness; the charge of timidity is intolerable. It has been made more so by the conversion of most modern nations into great standing armies, and no great standing army can for a moment allow the world to doubt its readiness, even its eagerness to fight. It is not every diplomatic difference that is at first clearly understood by the public. Very often the pros and cons of the matter are imperfectly known until the correspondence is published, but the agitation of the public mind continues; the press must talk about the matter, and its talk is rarely pacific. It is bound by tradition to take the ground that its own Government is right; and that even if it is not, it does not make any difference—the press has to maintain that it is right. . . .

But the newspapers have another concern than mere victory in argument. They have to maintain their place in the estimation of their readers, and, if possible, to increase the number of their readers.

Unhappily, in times of international trouble, the easiest way to do this always seems to be to influence the public mind against the foreigner. This is done partly by impugning his motives in the matter in hand, and partly by painting his general character in an odious light. . . . The worst effect is that which is produced on the ministers conducting the negotiations. It frightens them or encourages them into taking extreme positions, in putting forward impossible claims, or in perverting history and law to help their case. . . . In short, it may be said, as a matter of history, that in few diplomatic controversies in this (nineteenth) century has the press failed to make moderate ground more difficult for a diplomatist, and retreats from untenable positions almost impossible. The press makes his case seem so good that abandonment of it looks like treason to his country.

*Unforeseen Tendencies in Democracy,*  
by E. L. GODKIN, pp. 195-208.

### Twit-Twoo

"I have just seen a miracle, or rather, a thousand miracles.

"You have heard of the Oxford Group.

"It seems to me one of the most important things happening in Europe to-day.

"The thing is baffling, tremendous. Its vastness does not lie only in its spiritual side. It is an entirely Practical thing.

"I do entreat you, at the very least, to acquaint yourself with this movement.

"You'd better put my name on the outside of the envelope and enclose a stamp for a reply."

BEVERLY NICHOLS, *Sunday Chronicle*.

STRAIGHT into the major City, from the college Portals  
flew

One, a tender fledgling pretty. Daring, sought an interview

With an irate type of person,

(Yet he might have picked a worse 'un.)

That he knew!

There he sought the help and pity of that canny person  
who

Knowing well his kind of ditty, gave the little fledge a  
pew,

Pouring forth his ebullitions (through the Sabbath day  
editions);

A coffee-and-cig. Young Man,

A Don't-care-a-fig Young Man,

A going to places with Barons and Graces,

A bit-of-a-prig Young Man.

A spotted-and-soiled Young Man,

A little-hard-boiled Young Man,

A trifle confusing and sometimes amusing,

And very much spoiled Young Man.

So in time that fledgling callow, to an adult "spadger"  
grew,

And begirt with bow-and-arrow, quite a host of monster's  
slew,

Till the Prophet from Atlantis

Took him firmly by the pantie's;

Then he knew,

That the Guardian of the sparrow, by a miracle anew,

Had bid him quit the furrow and the primrose path  
eschew.

So he took the Prophet's trumpet—there was no where  
else to dump it—

And he flew!

A head-in-the-air Young Man,

A pen-pushing-flair Young Man,

A one-time-perverted, now truly-converted,

A doing-his-share- Young Man.

A fatted-and-sleek Young Man,

A lowly-and-meek Young Man,

A teetering, capering, piously vapouring,

Tongue-in-the-cheek Young Man.

FLAMM.

(With apologies to W. S. Gilbert.)

## Acid Drops

Merely because a limited number of the clergy are preaching peace, while war is unpopular, it will not do to forget the usual policy of the Black Army, nor to forget that it is a few of the clergy not all, that are protesting. Here, for instance, is the Senior Chaplain to the Forces, Rev. N. G. Railton, who says:—

There are things in men's lives in peaceful England to-day which are far more horrible than a good, clean war. . . . It is only when it comes to war that people become so horrified. I wonder why?

A clean War! We would much like to know when the last clean war was fought. A clean war reminds us of the objection to the man who spoke of bad whisky—there is no such thing as bad whisky, some wars are better than others, but there is none that is bad. Some wars are less dirty than others, but there are none of them "clean," measured by any decently civilized standard.

And whether Italy goes to war with Abyssinia or not, the filth and cowardice of modern war—which Mr. Railton champions because there are bad things in civil life—should be quite clear. Italy will make war on Abyssinia with poison gas, flame throwers, tanks, and all the resources of modern science and savagery, and against a people who can offer no adequate defence. In order to encourage the army, women and children will be slaughtered wholesale by "gallant" airmen, several thousand of feet in the air, who drop bombs on those who are powerless to retaliate effectively. And then there will be the triumphant return of the gallant soldiers with Mussolini complimenting them on their incomparable bravery. If men and women do not realize that modern warfare is of all things the most beastly and the most cowardly thing that exists, they are almost beyond redemption. The knights of old were mostly unmitigated ruffians, but at least—they met the enemy on something like equal terms, and it offered a contest, the decision of which depended upon individual excellence. Modern war depends on who can throw most bombs and shells and poison gas, and who it kills and who is preserved is a matter of pure chance.

Once again Low, our greatest cartoonist, both because he is a fine draughtsman, and because he mixes brains with his drawings, has put the Italian-Abyssinian position in a nutshell. He says the choice of Abyssinia or Italy is between a slave-owning State and a State owning slaves. The distinction could not be put more neatly—unless some one points out a further difference. In Abyssinia the slaves are not compelled to line the streets and cheer their owners.

Mr. Arthur C. Findon writes in the *Leader*, a rather questionable protest against Mr. Oliver Baldwin's *Return of Aissa*, which was noticed in our last issue. We say questionable for two reasons. First because it is rather difficult to believe that Mr. Findon is not writing with his tongue in his cheek. His chief complaint is that writing a life of Jesus such as Mr. Baldwin has done is "blasphemous," and will "offend devout Christians." He says that "if the suggestion that Jesus Christ was just an ordinary man with peculiar gifts is not an indignity offered to God—I do not know what blasphemy is." Mr. Findon must be peculiarly ill-informed if he does not know that all Unitarians take up that position, and many thousands of professing Christians to-day take up that attitude. It may weaken Mr. Findon's resentment if we point out that to say Jesus Christ was no more than a man is not blasphemy according to the Common Law, which is the only operative law against blasphemy in this country.

We do not question that many devout Christians will be offended, but there are plenty of devout Christians who are offended if they see children playing ball on

Sunday, or eating ice cream when they should be at Sunday school, or are outraged because some people prefer a cinema to a chapel. There is no telling what will not offend "devout Christians," they might even be offended at the publication of a paper such as the *Leader*, which they would say incited men and women to back horses, etc. Candidly, we think Mr. Findon has overdone it. An indignation more restrained, or resting on other grounds would be more convincing.

Last year there were 44,886 cases of cruelty and neglect of children. This does not, of course, take cognizance of those cases where cruelty is of a more refined character, and which cannot be brought within the scope of any Act of Parliament. The 44,886 cases were all handled by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. A good work, and one which deserves every praise. The *Star* thanks God for the S.P.C.C. We fail to see relevance of the thanks. If we have to thank God for the Society, whom have we to thank for the cruelty cases? There would have been some reason for thanking God if there had been no cases at all, and if it could have been shown that the absence of such cases had been due to God. As it is the *Star* is voicing popular and arrant nonsense.

Nansen said that among the Esquimaux he found it difficult to make them understand the justification for even beating a child. But many of these Esquimaux have been "civilized" and taught Christianity. By now they will better understand what cruelty to children means.

Now that a marriage has been arranged between the Duke of Gloucester and Lady Alice Scott, one can safely forecast the account of the wedding when it takes place. The bride will be "lovely," "charming," and "gracious." The marriage will embody a "romance," the bridegroom will be "stately," or "dignified," the love of the people will go to the newly wedded couple, and the whole nation will be "thrilled," the royal family will, through the marriage, be "united in new bonds of love and loyalty to the whole nation," and so forth, and so forth. Newspaper men need only look up what has been said on the occasion of previous royal marriages, and just alter the names of the principal parties. The weather is the one doubtful quantity, but if it is wet it can be said that heaven dropped its benediction of the young couple, and if it is fine, the skies put on its most glittering raiment in honour of the marriage.

The editor of "Debrett's Peerage," writes in the *Daily Mail*, that the marriage of a Prince or Princess with one not of Royal blood "comes as a welcome and flattering proof that Royalty are after all of the same flesh and blood as ourselves." Ye gods, what kind of a man is it that can calmly write a sentence of that description? The sentiment is an insult to any civilized intelligence. And yet judging from the open surprise expressed when a King or a Prince does anything decent or says anything sensible, or the startling interest in a baby Princess calling its father "Daddy," these things are reminders of how little we are in many respects removed from the primitive.

We were amused the other day to read that the Bishop of London claims "Freedom, Joy, Hope," and other good things as essentially "Christian virtues." The Bishop is an authority, of course, on the Christian virtue of freedom! And now the Rev. Dr. James Reid proclaims that Love is not only a Christian emotion, but that actually "It is a gift which we can only get from Christ. . . . There is no other way to get it." These conceited Christians are so accustomed to "lying for the glory of God," that they broadcast their obvious lies with absolute indifference to the common sense of the ordinary reader. If a priest and a presbyter can lie thus about their brother man, how can they expect to be believed when they yarn about an invisible God?

Canon Iddings Bell, who is an American, and an Anglo-Catholic, does not think Anglo-Catholicism is gaining ground in England. He thinks the English are too complacent and unwilling "to consider human affairs" logically for them to accept it; and that it will be "a vast and difficult effort to re-state Catholic truth in vitalist language," so that England can be easily converted. He also thinks there is too much apathy and too much humour in England; and that "intellectual opposition to the Modernist movement is singularly weak." Mr. Bell gives plenty more similarly doleful reasons, but the above will suffice to show why, in his opinion, Anglo-Catholicism, which really means religion, is having a very rough time in this country. Has he any remedy? Alas, no. The fault lies in the English people and character. It is very, very sad. But he does suggest that the Church Union should "defend Catholic faith and practice, and protest against any compromising of the same by Bishops, Councils, Synods, Convocations or Assemblies." Poor Mr. Bell!

Four of the Scottish pilgrims from Lourdes have died of enteric fever and seventy-seven are still sufferers. One of the dead is the mother of the priest who accompanied her to Lourdes. The health official at Glasgow declared that "the fact that there have been no secondary symptoms suggests that the fever will be confined to those who actually took part in the pilgrimage"—which proves that it was at the famous shrine of "Our Lady" that the unlucky crowd caught it. What we should like explaining is (1) Why did not the victims remain at Lourdes and get cured in the usual miraculous way? Is not "one dip—one cure," the slogan there? (2) What are "Our Lady," the priests, bishops, cardinals, and the Medical Bureau going to do about it? And (3) What do the victims themselves now think of Lourdes? We do not expect any answer.

The Catholic *Universe* is gravely disquieted at France's almost stationary population. Birth-Control propaganda is not permitted in France, and "re-populators" are doing their utmost to induce the French to have larger families. Seventy years ago, over a million children were born every year in France; now only about 677,000. This means, that in a Catholic country, birth-control is stronger than the Church—which is very disheartening for all true believers and celibate priests. Since 1870, Italy's population has grown from 25 millions to 48; Germany's from 39 to 67; Japan's from 33 to 68. The *Universe* puts these figures forward as if they were something to be proud of. But is it not a fact that large populations increase the danger of war? Look at bellicose Italy. Do not both Germany and Japan threaten war? Are not small but contented nations, hating war, a finer ideal to be aimed for, than huge populations breathing fire and slaughter?

The B.B.C. religious services are still being criticized by religious people in the religious press. Most of them are by no means satisfied with what they are pleased to call the "B.B.C. pundits." One writer declares that "some of the addresses to children at the afternoon services presuppose on the part of mere children a theological erudition beyond that of an intelligent priest." And he felt thankful that some of the questions "so glibly answered by the super-intellectual babes and sucklings" were not fired at him. On the other hand, another writer thinks the B.B.C. services are read with care, understanding and dignity. His complaint is that many of the Church Anglo-Catholic services "are gabbled in a meaningless way or intoned as to be little short of insult to Almighty God." But does not this truthfully describe Canon Elliott's B.B.C. service?

Moreover the B.B.C. services do not seem to have many religious champions. Another writer in the *Church Times* complains of their "utter unfairness." He complains also that "when a service from St. Martin's-in-the-Fields is broadcast"—for some unaccountable reason—"the whole country must listen in or switch off." The B.B.C. does not realize that there are quite "a large number of Anglicans alone, to say nothing of other re-

ligious denominations, who cannot tolerate what St. Martin's provides." And he concludes by saying, "We listeners only ask for ordinary common fairplay." Just that and nothing more! Fairplay, if that is possible with the B.B.C., surely should consist of fairplay all round. If religious services are forced on to the people, anti-religious discourses should be permitted. Or, at least, one set of programmes should be given over to religion altogether, leaving the other free for something cheery, light and entertaining. The dreary and dismal programmes one gets for the most part on the average English Sunday are an insult to intelligence.

Another clergyman complains bitterly that his brother priests mumble Mass to such an extent that they "irritate the vast majority of the faithful." Mass itself irritates most people with a particle of sense, even if cheerfully performed, but we do pity those who are compelled, through Faith, to listen to our "young clergy who think that it is 'it' to gabble and mumble." But our suggestion—to abolish Mass altogether—and thus to abolish at the same time gabbling and mumbling, would, we fear, not be acceptable to the Church. More's the pity.

Mr. George Lansbury, the Socialist leader, in a letter to the *Times*, has quite a simple way of settling the Abyssinian-Italian question. He wants the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and "representatives of every phase of Christian and other religious thought," to meet in the Holy Land at Jerusalem, and "from Mount Calvary call a truce of God, and bid the war spirit rest." Mr. Lansbury evidently thinks that the Christian representatives and those of the "other religious thought" are bound to agree, and particularly on the mythical but "holy" Calvary. Now, it is quite possible to imagine people agreeing in their opposition to war, or even on business questions, but it is almost impossible to find them agreeing on anything directly religion is introduced. The idea of the Pope shaking hands with a Calvinist, or vice versa, must arouse a smile—whatever is the cause they are meeting for. Surely the proper place to meet is Geneva, under the League of Nations; if this fails, it is difficult to imagine religion succeeding. There is no hatred more fierce than religious hatred.

Mr. Lansbury seems very proud of his silly slogan: "War Is Blasphemy." His fellow-Christians who are at present saying nasty things about certain nations, delight in a bit of mud-throwing which identifies any war they dislike with infidels and infidelity. Mr. Lansbury knows better. He is well aware that all wars have been created, encouraged or blessed by whatever religion had the power to make or stop them. All opponents of all wars have been called blasphemers. War itself is still undeniably justified by every orthodox creed even to-day.

The Churches are calling on God to arrange that "even now, war may be averted." And as if that phrase: "even now" were not humorous enough in its suggestion that God has been steering pretty near the wind up to now, the Archbishop piles jest on jest. Knowing the propensity of God to inspire war, the "Prayer" continues: "that IN ANY EVENT . . ." followed by a plain threat to Italy that "respect for treaties" will be "vindicated." We know what that word "vindicated" always means. If we can't have the usual type of war, let us have a war of "vindication" of some kind or other.

A Mr. Leigh, writing in the religious press, finds it very strange that, while prayers are "so often asked in church for those who perish in a rail, ship, or air disaster, no mention is even made of those who are killed suddenly on our roads." We think it far more strange that prayers should be made *after* people are dead in any of these accidents. Would it not be much more impressive and far more convincing if plenty of prayers were uttered to *prevent* any deaths at all? Why not, if God looks so well after the little birds? Here is a chance for Mr. Leigh and his friends to prove to an unbelieving world that prayers are answered; but we are afraid there is nothing doing.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTER.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. H. POWELL.—Sorry we are unable to use verses.

S.M.L.—Thanks for report of Mr. Cohen's address at Golder's Green. It seems to us to be remarkably accurate.

L. VICARS.—It is quite impossible for us to find space in these columns for many articles worthy of attention. Our space is very limited, and we have to bear in mind the main purpose for which this journal exists. And the subjects you name have plenty of scope in other papers.

H. SILVESTER.—Obliged for report. Will be useful.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—W. James, 5s.; W. Watson, 5s.; W. Don Fisher, 6s.

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."

## THE STRAW HAT

On August 18, the members of several prominent orthodox religious organizations united in prayer to God to prevent the war between Italy and Ethiopia. If God cares; if Jehovah answers prayers addressed in the name of Jesus, he should prevent this dire calamity; otherwise the prayers might as well be addressed to totem poles or pagan divinities.

William Adams Brown of Union Theological Seminary recently announced that "faith in a God who rewarded his worshippers with prosperity" is dead, but that men are finding the "real God." Does Dr. Brown mean that Jehovah, whom Christians have been worshipping, is not the real God? Does the Bible God answer prayers for material benefits, or does he not?

Is God a straw man, blown about in theological winds, having no real existence? Is it all a myth that prayers for rain and other human needs will be answered by God? The subject is very important and should be thoroughly investigated. Either God answers prayers for harmony in human relationships or he does not. The facts can be determined scientifically by experiment without endangering our souls for destroying faith. So far, no convincing tabulated results have been published. For one case where prayer is answered there appear to be a dozen where the results are negative.

From *The Arbitrator* (New York, U.S.A.)

## SPECIAL

I WISH to clear up a matter, if it can be done, once and for all. I say if it can be done, because in spite of repeated corrections the misunderstandings persist. I know that from letters, from recent interviews, and from occasional statements in other papers.

The two prevalent errors that I wish to correct among well-wishers to the *Freethinker* (I do not bother about others) are these. (1) That the *Freethinker* benefits from legacies that fall to the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited. (2) That the income from the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is enough to cover all losses sustained in the publication of this paper. Neither of these statements is true.

First, the *Freethinker* is and always has been an independent property. Its columns have always been at the service of the movement, but it forms no part of the two Societies named. The *Freethinker* contracts its own financial liabilities and must discharge them as it best can.

Second, when the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was formed it was stated that over £400 a year was required to meet the loss on publication, which with a Freethinking paper that speaks with the boldness customary to these columns was not an excessive loss. Taking into account the cost of printing when compared with former days, it is probably less than has ever been lost by a Freethought publication. The statement of loss, signed by a certificated accountant is placed before the Trustees annually, and they can legally pay money to the *Freethinker* only on production of the certified statement.

The income from the Endowment Trust amounts to about £330 annually, which leaves a deficit of over £100 to be met. I am the only person financially responsible for the carrying on of the paper. Since the presentation that was made me some years ago, whatever is necessary to carry on has been met from this source, with occasional help from other quarters. I said at the time that much of that presentation would return to the movement, and events have justified a prophecy for the making of which no great foresight was required.

Although I am Editor of the *Freethinker*, President of the N.S.S., and Chairman of the Secular Society Limited, I have no power to draw a cheque for a shilling from any of these without the cognisance and the signature of others. I took particular care that this should be the case.

Finally, I am not saying what I have said by way of complaint, appeal, or self-glorification. I know that whatever is needed to keep the *Freethinker* going, whenever it is asked for, will be forthcoming. It always has been, and in generous measure. I am only trying to clear away a misapprehension that exists. What I have said ought to effect this—for a time. Then, one day, I expect, the explanation will have to be repeated. Man is a very careless and forgetful kind of a creature, whether he reads the *Freethinker* or the *Methodist Times*.

May I also take this opportunity of thanking all who have sent me birthday greetings, and so reminded me that as I am steadily packing a larger

number of these anniversaries behind me, there cannot be very many in front of me. But I wish that these, and other, friends would unite in giving me a birthday present for 1935-6. And let this take the form of some new subscribers for the paper. I should like to feel that I had raised a monument to myself in the shape of a paying circulation for the *Freethinker*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Sugar Plums

We would like to call the special attention of all concerned to the following. Several times lately we have been informed of some Branch, or some individuals belonging to a Branch of the N.S.S., arranging a debate between Mr. Cohen and another party. Such arrangements are wholly unauthorized, and Mr. Cohen wishes it to be understood that no one is justified in arranging, or approaching others with a view to debate, unless he has Mr. Cohen's authority. Where this is not done, Mr. Cohen will have no alternative but to disown the whole proceeding.

A correspondent writes asking us whether we can advise him how to become a good writer. Candidly we don't know. The people who set out to tell one how to write well, usually write so badly that they are not worth bothering with. But we venture to suggest some rules that we think might be followed with profit. (1) Have something to say, don't look round to find something to talk about. (2) When you have something to say, say it in as few words as possible. Sincerity and simplicity are certainly two of the prominent features of all great writers. Feel what you say and say it in the simplest and plainest words you can find. (3) Don't use foreign phrases unless there are none in your own language that will express your meaning. Ninety-nine per cent of the foreign phrases used in writing are a "show-off" on the part of the writer, and often represent all he knows of the language. If you must use a foreign phrase, give its meaning as well as you can for the sake of the unsophisticated souls who have not a foreign phrase book by them, and your own will be in too great demand to loan it. (4) Soak yourself in the best writers, and then if you have any "soul" you cannot help being influenced by them. (5) Don't, for heaven's sake model yourself on the modern newspaper writer. Remember he writes for the "mostlies." Write in the newspaper paragraph style and you will soon develop the paragraph mind. (6) Any thing that cannot be read aloud with ease is not written well: brain and ear should both be used in writing, and a natural sense of rhythm is a great quality in all good writers. (7) When you have mastered the set rules of composition, forget them and form rules of your own. That is the only way in which you can develop a style that is worth anything at all. Probably we have broken very many of these rules, but they are not the worse for that. A rule that is never broken is not worth the trouble of devising.

Mr. G. Whitehead reports very successful meetings in the North East area, in some cases audiences were awaiting the speaker's arrival and enthusiastic meetings resulted. The work of the North East Federation of N.S.S. Branches, and the personal efforts of Mr. J. T. Brighton in that district has no doubt contributed largely to the aroused interest and desire to hear the message of Freethought. There is no doubt that other districts could be similarly developed if the income of the Society could keep pace with the opportunities.

In the war of ideas there is neither treaty nor truce. To ask for quarter is to admit defeat; and to give it is treachery to truth.—G. W. Foote.

## On Debates

THE nineteenth century was productive of some extraordinarily interesting debates, not only in the religious, but in the political arena. Disputants, staunch in the justice of their cause, were not afraid of defending it, on the platform, or in the press. They took up the question seriously, gravely, had their own committees, chairman and umpires; and did their best to get a verbatim report printed and circulated.

Of course, one must have a sense of historical perspective in looking at these debates. Many of those which took place between Freethinkers and Christians may appear intolerably dull to us because we find the arguments rather childish on both sides. But why are they childish? Simply because we have been educated far in advance of those naïve but often brave disputants who expended their eloquence and learning on Victorian audiences.

The first half of last century was a genuine Bible-worship period. Never in its history, was the "Book" or "God's Word" held in so high a veneration. It is true, of course, that the old scribes and monks and priests who copied the Bible before the invention of printing, did so with reverence; and that they looked upon every word as divinely inspired—more or less. But they kept mostly to themselves and were by no means known to the "common" people. On the other hand, the Victorian parson was a Somebody. He mixed with the greatest in the land—if he belonged to the Established Church; and if he were a Nonconformist, he also mixed with the greatest—of his immediate circle. The title, "Reverend," carried with it a dignity difficult to believe in these degenerate days. A parson or a priest was really God's own representative on earth. He was in Holy Orders; he wore a distinctive dress, a white tie in the old days, a dog-collar these. His silk hat carried with it an odour of sanctity; and when later he wore the typical clerical hat, it still bore with it this divine effluvia in some subtle fashion.

He it was whose signature was required on so many of the "common" people's documents. It really was a signature and not just a homely, simple, but illiterate cross. It was a sort of guarantee for your respectability. It showed that the parson could write as well as read. It is true that very often, the parson of whatever denomination was quite a worthy man, was indeed the counsellor and guide of his flock. In his own way, he did work in the social, as apart from the religious sphere, which had to be done and for which nobody else was at the moment available. I do not agree for a moment that he was always an insufferable type of humanity. But directly the religious element was introduced he became, so to speak, another being.

One senses this in many of the debates between Freethinkers and Christians. Parsons, as a rule, were not keen on these discussions, but every now and then one of them felt it was necessary to champion God, his Son and his Book, against the increasing and more and more confident attacks of Freethinkers. Even when they could not or did not dare to risk a public debate, they were ready to publish a pamphlet, generally in the form of a *Letter In Reply To, etc.* Hundreds of these must have been written, rare and curious for the modern reader. They were not always against the "unhappy" Infidel. Often they were against their own fellow believers, some of whom had the temerity to risk their "immortal" souls by venturing on an interpretation of Holy Writ not sanctioned by their opponents. Catholics and Protestants were also ready to take the field

either on the platform or in the press; and, for those who care for genuine entertainment I can heartily recommend the *Hammersmith Discussion* between the Rev. J. Cumming representing the Protestants, and a Mr. French, a barrister, representing the Catholics. Cumming was a Scotchman, young and enthusiastic, with a vast knowledge of the anti-Catholic case. French was an exceptionally well-informed Catholic, and the debate is a marvel of learning, ingenuity and argument.

It was the vigorous personality of Charles Bradlaugh which made the clergy of his day bestir themselves more than they wished. Bradlaugh was never happier than in discussion; and more than one of his grave and ponderous opponents were sorry at his slashing attacks on their cherished beliefs. Moreover Bradlaugh was never particularly impressed by his opponent's anxiety to show that he belonged to the Caste, the Divine Caste, which was always one of the parsons' most formidable weapons. The Infidel was "coarse" or "brutal" or of a "low moral calibre." The "reverend" gentleman was always socially superior, his women-kind were of "gentle" birth, and so on. One can never read the impressive opening speech of the "reverend" gentleman without feeling his tremendous superiority, not only in the mental and intellectual sphere, but also in the social sphere, over his "infidel" opponent. Quips and cranks, jests and jokes, humour, with a hearty laugh now and then, were not permitted, not, in any case, from the heavenly disputant. It has always seemed to me a pity that Bradlaugh in common with nearly all Freethinkers, should have tried to follow his opponents in the same way. He often seemed only too anxious to treat them with the utmost courtesy, nor under any circumstances must he be suspected of laughing at their solemn nonsense.

I think Charles Southwell was one of the very few who dared to poke fun at his Christian opponent, and he was by no means supported by his own followers.

Debates seemed to drop off as the idea that a parson was of a divine order gradually weakened. They took place, of course, and take place now; but nobody seems to be impressed in these days with the dog-collar—except perhaps some excitable women who still believe that the dear vicar is in constant communion with God Almighty, and therefore different from other men. A debate is held on its merits; and that is all there is to it. But the parson has not altogether lost his cunning. Being of a different order from the ordinary man, was, as I have pointed out, a very fine weapon in his hands. God could never desert his elect. But as all that is now finished and done with, he has managed to impose something else on the public and his opponents, and that is, he will never, if he can help it, debate from his own platform. How many public discussions against religion ever take place in a church hall of some kind? We may get a parson ready to discuss his creed on *our* platforms, but nothing seems to induce him to do so before members of his own congregation in his own church.

We are, it seems to me, only too ready to fall in with his views. The N.S.S. platform is a wide one and opponents are always welcome; but the arguments of both our own champion and his clerical friend are surely known to most of us. We know what the arguments of the average parson defending his religion must be; and the *Freethinker* will certainly not have done its work if its arguments are unknown to our followers.

The people to get at are the Church and Chapel people. And they should be got at from their own meeting houses. If a parson is ready to debate he should be welcomed with open arms providing we can

use his own church hall—or, at least, some neutral hall. Our message, in these debates, is not for the converted but for the unconverted. They never see this journal, they shudder at the idea of going to our meetings. Let us go to them—or not debate at all.

Some months ago, Mr. H. G. Wood, who is, I understand, a prominent Quaker, took strong exception to some articles of mine against the historicity of his own favourite deity, and he eventually challenged me to debate. I immediately accepted—providing the debate took place on a Christian platform; but I have not heard anything further from him. I quite understand his position, and he has my deepest sympathy. It really would be too bad to say a few things before his own supporters they never suspected could be said against their divine creed. It might make them think. They might even feel that the orthodox reply was not quite so effective as it ought to be; or that the "unhappy" infidel did not look either unhappy or scared.

But—even though I might come in for a good licking—I should be sorry if the debate did not come off. Freethinkers have a good idea of my arguments. But I am anxious to get some of them to those kindly religious people who, however badly they might feel hurt, will one of these days, have to face the fact that Christianity is only one of many religions, all equally false; and that their energies can be put to better use than the bolstering up of absurd beliefs or crude superstitions.

I hope that Freethinkers will never refuse a debate; but I hope also that they will insist that it must take place on a Christian platform. In that way some of the seed will germinate in unfamiliar ground, and the message of Freethought take root where it will do most good. We want the stranger *within* our gate.

H. CUTNER.

## The Story of the Sikhs

THE vast peninsula of India is the home of many religious cults. Among these, that of the Sikhs is included. This creed arose from the teachings of an ethical reformer who repudiated caste, the worship of idols and other superstitions. Yet, in common with Taoism, popular Buddhism and other faiths, the religion of the Sikhs has sadly declined from its former purity and is now barely distinguishable from orthodox Hinduism.

Ancestor-worship, animism, phallic-veneration, with countless varieties of minor religions have been current in India for untold centuries. Reformers such as Gautama occasionally appeared to enlighten the multitude, and with the more thoughtful of the native population, philosophical ideas have long been substituted for the crude supernaturalism of the crowd.

Pantheism probably came to India from Persia and Greece, and the Punjab seems to have been the centre of its most refined speculations, as these developed under Hindu auspices. This great Indian area connected India with Persia and Central Asia, and travellers constantly passed to and fro for trading and other purposes. Moreover, the several invading races that settled in India came by way of the Punjab; as also the later military expedition of Alexander the Great and for centuries succeeding the division of the Macedonian's conquests, Greek merchants journeyed to further India through the land of five rivers.

The Vedic religion and philosophy also matured in the Punjab, and there Buddhism subsequently reigned without a rival. The power once exercised

by Gautama's creed in North-Western India is proved both by historians and the extraordinary abundance of Buddhistic monuments which the patience and industry of archæologists have restored to light.

In the ninth century of our era Hinduism recovered much of its lost territory, while Buddhism betrayed signs of decline. Then came the Moslem Mahmud of Ghazni who entered the Punjab from Afghanistan and, having ravaged the country to his heart's content, set up a Governor in Lahore, the capital city, and thus the province became a Moslem State separated from the rest of India.

These Islamic invaders were of Persian extraction, and their theology was tainted with heresy, yet they persecuted as bitterly and proselytized as determinedly as the most orthodox. Meanwhile, the Hindu cult in other parts of India, which replaced an overthrown Buddhism, restored the worship of personal gods and its adherents engaged in spiteful sectarian strife among themselves. The Hindus were thus greatly weakened by religious quarrels, and the Moslem invaders seized the occasion to consolidate their conquests in the Punjab, while further extending their dominion over Hindustan.

Amid all this military and sectarian excitement, with the Moslems striving to make their cult supreme; with a dying Buddhism and resurrected Hinduism in truceless conflict, it was nevertheless possible for reforming Hindu missionaries to arrest and hold attention.

In the fifteenth century, a daring innovator, Kabir, strove to unite Moslem and Brahman under the banner of Monotheism. He assailed idolatry with all the zeal of a Moslem, while denying all divine inspiration to the Koran and the Hindu sacred script. Kabir almost impersonated John the Baptist, for in 1469, Nanak was born, who later proclaimed the oneness of God and the brotherhood of man. Nanak's deity was stripped of all human attributes, and was postulated as a self-existent, all-pervading Power. It was urged that all men might embrace the belief in a divinity so nebulous. In the words of Frederic Pincott: "Nanak taught that all are equal before God; that there is no high, no low, no dark, no fair, no privileged, no outcaste; all are equal both in race and in creed, in political rights and in religious aspirations."

Nanak made many converts, but his endeavour to combine all religions in harmony met with frantic opposition. After many vicissitudes the reformer's disciples developed a new nationality which was slowly moulded into a community claiming complete freedom of conscience.

God and Nature were regarded as one, and the soul or personality was viewed as a semi-detached part of the Universal Power in adventitious and impermanent association with material phenomena. And so soon as the individual consciousness becomes completely aware that it is merely a passing phase of the infinite and eternal spirit, its separate individuality is immediately ended, and the passions and desires of earthly existence fade into oblivion.

Thus arose the Sikh community whose Bible, the *Adi Granth*, abounds in passages of a pantheistic character. The all-pervading divinity never displays its power by creating matter, but restricts its activities to the production of form. Like humanity itself, the Supreme Energy embraces both substance and spirit. It constitutes all that is, and the soul of man, which is merely a spark of the spirit of the Light Divine is, in its pure state, perfectly sinless. Man's all too-human failings are due to the presence of *Mâyâ* or Illusion, and this leads men astray. *Mâyâ* causes egomania; it fosters the fallacy of duality with the erroneous idea that things can exist apart from the

all-pervading Divine. Illusion, thus generated, obstructs the soul in its efforts towards liberation from its material surroundings. Hence, the necessity for the soul's purification by means of its passage from one form of matter to another through a long procession of births and deaths, until the weary, but at last stainless spirit is restored to the Divine Light from which it originally proceeded.

Nanak's birthplace was Lahore, and as a lad he was partial to the company of the fakirs, those half-crazy or knavish fanatics who, then as now, infested India. These mendicants and visionaries inclined the boy's mind towards poverty-worship and applause for indiscriminate charity. All valuables, whether his own or other peoples' that came into his possession, he bestowed on the beggars everywhere around. This habit became an infatuation, and Nanak even gave the money his father had furnished for his sustenance to the wayside poor. His parent then intervened and rescued Nanak from his doubtful acquaintances.

Profiting by experience, Nanak sobered down and became a trustworthy steward of an estate. At the age of thirty-five, he received divine grace, and the customary stories relating to a prophet's enlightenment appear. While performing his religious rites in the river, he was translated to the gates of heaven, where he received God's command to reveal the divine message to men. When Nanak recovered from his ecstasy he exclaimed: "There is no Hindu; there is no Moslem!" This startling paradox, when made public, caused anger and denial, but when tried by an assembly, Nanak silenced his critics by the logic and consistency of his arguments, and the people acclaimed him as God's interpreter. Then he became *Guru Nanak*, the teacher or instructor.

Accompanied by a musician he began his mission, and is said to have composed 3,000 stanzas, and these verses, which were later supplemented, form the scriptures of the Sikhs. Nanak convinced many Moslems, and after thirty-four years' itinerant preaching, in Hindu fashion he bent his steps to a running river to die. His faithful followers received his dying commands, and when his Hindu and Moslem adherents were disputing whether to burn or bury his body, the corpse vanished into space.

Nanak, who was entirely illiterate, died in 1538, and appears to have been a man of exemplary character. Although unable to read or write, his mastery of the spoken language apparently enabled him to compose those popular verses (in the vernacular) still deeply revered by the people. Nanak's liberal theology was accompanied by democratic doctrines. Human equality was proclaimed; beneficence and forbearance were great virtues; the eating of flesh-food and ill-treatment of the lower animals, were alike condemned.

The purity of this cult seems to have remained almost unsullied through the ministrations of Nanak's immediate successors, although the third of these accepted voluntary gifts from the faithful. But under the fifth *Guru*, Arjun, these offerings were made compulsory, and the leader of the cult aspired to become an opulent and powerful potentate. The Moslem rulers uneasily noted the increase of a religious body which now displayed marked Hindu proclivities. *Guru Arjun* collected the poems of his predecessors; added nearly as many of his own, and these now form the *Adi Granth*, or Sikh Bible.

The *Gurus* who followed Arjun were ever hostile to the Moslem authorities, and the militant spirit of the Sikhs strengthened, until *Guru Govind Singh* (b. 1666) began to rule in military style in semi-independence. A religious fraternity once so pacific was converted into a fighting force, and its ambitious head

achieved several military successes when the Moslem Government was constrained to acknowledge him, almost as an equal.

The original *Adi Granth* was international in sentiment, with contributions both Moslem and Hindu. Govind Singh now prepared a second revelation, the *Daswen Padshahi*, which glorifies his own exploits, but in which the humanitarian and philosophical principles of Nanak are ignored. Its contents comprise "Hindu material with miraculous performances of Hindu gods and goddesses . . . laudatory poems on the excellence of weapons, and a history of Garu Govind Singh and his contests." Nothing but mournful deterioration; yet this compilation was everywhere saluted by the Sikhs with solemn reverence.

This militant Garu was ultimately murdered, and a turbulent time succeeded. Decimated by the Moslems, the Sikhs for some time disappeared, but in 1738 they returned to their sacred tank at Amritsar. They were driven away in 1745, but resumed possession of Lahore in 1756, and after several sanguinary conflicts the territory adjacent to the rivers Jhelum and Sutlej became their habitat, and there, under British rule, they continue to dwell.

T. F. PALMER.

## Flint and Steel

A CELEBRATED parson, frequently a prominent figure in the news, was recently committed for trial on a charge of attempted suicide by starvation. Modestly we suggest that those few hundred thousand citizens who are free to starve in "the land of the free" should likewise be committed for trial, on a charge of partial suicide, without being allowed bail. By this means these delinquents will get enough to eat, possibly for several months, at the expense of the State; the number of unemployed will be lessened; and a nominal punishment will be awarded to those superfluous citizens whose existence is a permanent offence to their respectable and prosperous fellow-subjects; all unquestionable advantages to our intelligent and sympathetic leaders. Partial suicide is not as yet an indictable offence; but our National Government is so expert in the invention of new "crimes" that it should find no difficulty in adopting our suggestion.

A recent happening among the humane and enterprising Japanese suggests an improvement that might be adopted by the rest of the world. General Nagata was in his room in the War Office at the war-ministry, when a Lieutenant-Colonel cut him down with his sword. Were this idea extended generally, many war-problems would settle themselves, and millions of lives might be spared. The mutual assassination of wholesale war-makers might well figure on future peace-programmes. There is no reason why the heroism of murder should be confined to the battle-fields; true heroism should begin at home; and if war-mongers generally could be induced to practice upon each other they would unquestionably prove their own heroism, and confer a lasting benefit upon that vast majority of mankind that prefers to remain unmurdered.

The attention of Labour Members and social reformers with social ambitions is directed to the newly formed Entitling Society. This useful institution is authorized and managed, so it is said, by a little anonymous Society of Patriots. The idea is to confer titles upon deserving, and—of course—respectable Labour people on the Drage system of serial pay-

ments. Here is what amounts to a form of insurance against an untitled old age, the chief, and haunting, dread of many of our popular and prominent social reformers. The Society's slogan, "Untitled or Entitled?" amply explains its object. No respectable politician, with a few hundreds a year to spare, need now go without the social distinction that a title confers.

We learn from an exceptionally high authority that very shortly there will be appointed a Governmental Divorce-Facilitator, who, with a specially-trained and vigorous staff of colleagues, will solve our many pressing marital problems in the most personal and practical way. This official will be known as the Official Deceiver, and we hear that there have already been many applications, from the best people, for appointments in this new and novel department.

A well-known Pacifist Society has discovered a possible method of securing a temporary world-peace. It is so simple that it has been overlooked until now, when we venture to give it publicity. Italy and Japan are both feeling the need for blood-letting on a national scale. This national apoplexy, of which, by the way, Signor Benito Mussolini is, to all appearances, an outstanding example, could be cured, or at least mitigated, by inducing these Imperialisms to attack each other in the interests of international peace; and those nations which prefer quiet could learn a fine moral lesson from observing the effects of air-bombs, poison gases, machine-guns, tanks, submarines and disease germs upon both combatants and civilians. Prisoners of War—if any—could be sent to German Concentration-Camps, where Hitler's most trustworthy and experienced henchmen could try out new and ingenious tortures upon them; a fitting punishment for defeat in war, and an interesting series of experiments in human vivisection that should appeal to all Nazis, Fascists, Imperialists and Chauvinists.

Hitler is pleased to attribute his "success" to Providence. Without holding a brief for either party to this alleged partnership, the human side of which has, we seem to remember, been claimed, on their own behalf, by several distinguished historical "heroes," we cannot help recalling the fact that this alliance has invariably been associated with some kind of unpleasantness to humanity. Wholesale murderers and inventive torturers have always claimed to be "inspired." The gentle Aryan who, for the moment, runs Germany, merely provides another instance of the unfortunate consequences that befall a hapless people whose ruler is "inspired." Whatever "inspiration" may be, it always has unfortunate results to those who, not claiming to be "inspired" themselves, are compelled, by an inscrutable Providence, to suffer the consequences of "inspiration" in others. One cannot always trust men; one can never trust gods, or their representatives.

BENJIE.

It is worth observing the extent to which gods and kings follow the same lines of development. They begin as one, and later a division is set up which finally leads to their almost complete separation. Gods and kings originally are all important to human well-being. But little by little the power of each diminishes. To-day the best king is the one who does least. The most tolerable god is the one who interferes least with the natural order. The king tends to become a semi-barbaric ceremony; the god a point of absolute quiescence in a universe of ceaseless activity.—*Quondam*.

## Obituary

HYPATIA BRADLAUGH BONNER

THE cremation of the remains of Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner took place at Golder's Green Crematorium on Wednesday, August 27. The Crematorium Chapel was crowded with men and women who had come to pay a last tribute of respect to the daughter of one by whose side some of those present had stood in the struggles of the '80's. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner was to them the last living and direct link with the great Charles Bradlaugh, and their presence was a tribute to old memories, to an affectionate and loyal daughter, and also to one who all her life had striven on behalf of justice and humanity.

The ceremony was simple but effective. Mr. J. P. Gilmour gave an account of her work in various movements, in addition to her devotion to the cause of Free-thought, and paid a high compliment to her character and ability. Lord Snell also paid a high personal tribute, and there was a brief speech from Mr. Chapman Cohen. All that could be said in such circumstances was said, and the mourners left feeling that they had said farewell to the remains of one who had worthily played her part as she best could in the great war for human liberation. May her example inspire others to follow in the path she trod.

## Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER,"

INDICTING THE DEITY

SIR,—In the current issue of the *Freethinker* (Sept 1), there is a quotation by "Minnermus" of the unforgettable quatrain of Omar's:—

"Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blackened, Man's forgiveness give—and take!"

Minnermus says that this is "the most fearful indictment ever uttered by any man against any deity." With every respect to Minnermus, I venture to suggest not quite! In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* one, Thomas Hardy, commenting and moralizing on the incident of the victimization of Tess by Alec D'Urberville, writes with typical irony and indignation as follows:—

One may, indeed, admit the possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe. Doubtless some of Tess D'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure towards peasant girls of their time. But though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and it therefore does not mend the matter.

Surely no more scathing and scornful indictment of any deity has ever proceeded from the pen of a great master! And yet, the remains of the author of this unique and defiant insult to the Christian deity were "snatched" for Christian burial!

A. HANSON.

## JUSTICE AND WAR

SIR,—Readers of *Arms and the Clergy* are requested to add to their copies the latest Appeal to Arms from the 1935 Christian Arsenal. The Bishop of Durham has put his "pacifism" into a pregnant paragraph. I quote from the *Times*, August 30, 1935:—

Justice is a higher concern than Peace: for while justice can never be rightly abandoned, peace can never be unreservedly pursued. The root-blunder of the pacifists is their single-minded devotion to peace. They invert the moral order. Not first peace, and then justice: but first justice and then, at whatever cost, peace—that is the inexorable law for man.

The work of righteousness shall be peace: and the

effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever. (Isaiah xxxii. 17.)

This nonsense admirably accentuates the difference between the Christian and the lover of peace. The antipathy to War has nothing directly to do with justice, except that in an atmosphere of violence the pursuit of justice becomes most elusive. Peace is not sought mainly that justice may be done, but in order to avoid deeds of violence which obliterate innocent lives, and torture and cripple millions including servants of the state (whose duty it is to kill and destroy, not to study rights and wrongs). Peace may leave unsolved our quarrels (in which justice may be found on either, both, or neither of the two sides). What we say is that the battlefields should not be substituted for Courts, Arbitrations, and Round-table talks, where indeed, after all the bloodshed, disputes can alone be settled.

G. BEDBOROUGH.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### INDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH DISCUSSION SOCIETY (375 Cambridge Road, E.2, opposite Museum Cinema): 8.0, Monday, September 9, Mr. P. Goldman—"Mental Telepathy."

#### OUTDOOR

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, September 8, Mr. L. Ebury. High-bury Corner, 7.30, Mr. C. Tuson. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, September 9, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Leighton Road, 8.0, Wednesday, September 11, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Sunday, September 8, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, September 10, Mr. L. Ebury. Manor Street, Clapham High Street, Friday, September 13, Mr. P. Goldman.

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

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

#### OUTDOOR

GATESHEAD (Warwick Street): 8.0, Wednesday, September 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HETTON: 8.0, Tuesday, September 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, September 8, Mr. C. McKelvie. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, September 12, Mr. C. McKelvie.

MIDDLESBROUGH (The Crescent): 7.0, Sunday, September 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, September 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH EAST FEDERATION OF N.S.S. BRANCHES (Newbiggin, Quay Wall): 7.0, Sunday, September 8, Morpeth, New Market Place, 7.0, Monday, September 9, Blyth, Market Place, 7.15, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, September 10, 11, 12, Ashington, Grand Hotel Corner, 7.15, Friday, September 13, Mr. G. Whitehead will speak each evening at these meetings.

SEAHAM HARBOUR BRANCH N.S.S.: 8.0, Mr. Allan Flanders—"Fascism and War."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, A Lecture.

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

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

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

#### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

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