

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### God's Selected

The following from the *Sunderland Daily Echo* is interesting. It is taken from an address given by the Bishop of Durham (Dr. Henson), on the occasion of his transforming an ordinary curate into a perpetual curate:—

Clergymen were the chosen people of God, who were not called upon to earn their living by manual labour or by any other kind of work. They were removed from the ordinary course of life in order that the whole of their time might be spent in looking after the spiritual side of the people. Even though it might at times be a great temptation, he urged them to resist the lure of politics and business, because interference of this sort often created suspicion and resentment in the minds of parishioners.

It was unfair that people should go to their parish Church knowing well that their clergyman was taking sides against them in issues respecting which he had no more right to give an independent and authoritative opinion than any layman.

This is, of course, a strictly accurate theological statement concerning how the clergy get to be what they are and where they are, but it is not often put in such plain language. Every clergyman of the Church of England, from curate to Archbishop, professes to believe that he is where he is because God, after looking round, decided that he was the best man for the job. The Nonconformist clergy are not so sure about the Church of England parsons, but they believe that they have a "call," and even individuals who are not likely ever to become parsons of any kind, are found wandering about making the same claim, until their relatives have them placed under control.

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### A Plea for Fair Play

But as a Freethinker I have a passion for fair play. Fair play for every kind of man and for every sort of nation, and fair play even for gods. And if I do not endorse the Bishop of Durham's statement that the

clergy have been selected by God, it is because it strikes me as a reflection upon the divine judgment. I know it is said somewhere (I haven't time to look up the exact text) that God speaks to man through the mouths of babes and fools but, I do not care even to accept this statement without decisive proof. Just look at the 17,000 men in the Church of England clergy! Put on one side the few outstanding personalities among them, and note the bulk. As men they may be quite decent individuals, good for looking after Boy's Clubs and Mother's Meetings, or preaching a sermon made up from a seven and sixpenny volume of *Outlines*, but would anyone seriously regard them as of such outstanding strength of mind or force of character as to attract the attention of Almighty God? I do not think so, and I decline to saddle God with the responsibility for the selection of this 17,000. I believe that if anyone went about Oxford Street on a busy day, with a pin at the end of a stick, and so selected 17,000 men in a quite haphazard manner, the average of intelligence or character would be quite as good as that shown among the clergy of the Established Church, or of any other Church.

It may even be that Dr. Henson has the same opinion about the bulk of the clergy that I have, and that he took advantage of the official rule that every clergyman ordained is chosen by God, and after looking at the man before him, and thinking of the many whom he had officially marked as having been chosen by God, he was really saying:—

Young man, you have gone through the ropes. You have been trained along the usual lines, you have been told what you must believe and what you must not believe; whatever mental shortcomings were yours by nature have been fixed by your training in theology, but please remember that I have not selected you. You are selected by God. It is his affair. He may have thought that he saw in you one who would never develop enough independence of mind to doubt anything he has said or question anything he does, and when men of intelligence come into contact with you, they may very likely say, "God only knows why you were called to be a parson." But so far as I am concerned, I, like Pilate, wash my hands of all responsibility. I am merely carrying out the duties imposed upon me when the Lord called me (at an increased salary) to Durham.

But in the kindest possible spirit I beg you to keep away from subjects other than those strictly religious. Do not discuss politics or things of that kind, because if you do some of your parishioners, who have been in the habit of exerting their intelligence on such questions, may criticize what you say, and in disagreeing with you on secular matters they may begin to disagree with you on heavenly matters also. They may ask how one who cannot be trusted to lead them in matters on which intelligent men and women can and do form opinions that are worth attention can be trusted in what he says on a world

about which nothing certain can be known? Do not disturb the belief that God is responsible for you being where you are and what you are. It is the only thing that will explain the situation.

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#### Our Danger

God, who thus calls every priest and parson and Minister of religion to his job, who selects them, not because they are superlatively wise or good according to human standards, but because they are best able to serve Him and to keep His service in being, who moves them from one place to another as a chess player moves his pieces from square to square, has also issued a call to another of his servants. It was announced in the *Evening Standard* of December 20, that Dr. Crotty, Bishop of Bathurst, Australia, had received a "call" to come to England, and is taking up the living of St. Pancras, London. This is not a question of promotion, or salary, or anything of that kind—at least nothing of this sort appears in the paper. What Dr. Crotty himself says is:—

Christianity to-day is joining issue with powerful and alien forces, magnificently organized, in a great battle for the soul of the Western World. I am going to London as the front fighting line. . . . I believe that England is the place where that final battle is actually to be fought, and the place also where, if anywhere, it is going to be won.

I like that qualifying expression "if anywhere." But it is not an expression that Bishop Crotty should have permitted himself to use. For it looks as though he has some doubt about the issue. Also it might appear that the Bishop has some doubts whether God has called the right men to the job in this country, and, as Mussolini, in Italy, recalled one General who was not doing as well as he ordered him to do, and sent out another—who is not doing any better, so the heavenly Mussolini has sent a call to the other side of the globe because his servants in London have let him down. So Bishop Crotty, wise in his generation, says that the battle will be won in London—"if anywhere." But the expression smells of doubt in the strength of the Lord. It suggests doubt as to God's wisdom in selecting the London Clergy, with the Bishop of London, who has so often told the world how he killed anti-Christianity in the East End, at their head. I think if I had been Bishop Crotty I would have phrased it that I was hastening to London in order to be present on that great day when the Lord would put to final flight the forces of unbelief. It would have sounded better, particularly as Bishop Crotty is leaving behind him an amount of unbelief that he has not been able to check. I can assure him that he will not find that unbelief in London is of less tough a fibre than it is in Australia.

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#### A Sporting Offer

Naturally I am interested in Bishop Crotty's decision to be here when the decisive action between religion and Freethought is fought. He evidently expects it to be soon. I do not suppose that it would be any use my asking him how this final defeat of Freethought will be brought about, because a general is not likely to provide the enemy with an outline of his plans. So as this is too much to ask, and as I love a clever and determined enemy, and as the *Freethinker* represents the fighting Freethinkers, who are, after all, the only kind of Freethinker of which the Churches stand in fear, I will make him a "sporting offer." It is an offer that no religious newspaper, and no other paper dare make me.

I will place a whole page, or a page and a half of the *Freethinker* at his entire disposal for, say, six weeks—the period to be prolonged if the matter sup-

plied by the Bishop is considered important enough for the time to be lengthened, the question of the extension to be settled by three of the Bishop's friends and three appointed by the *Freethinker*. During that time the Bishop may say absolutely what he pleases. He shall pass the proof of everything, and the matter shall appear exactly as passed. He may say what he pleases against Freethought, and also what he pleases on behalf of Christianity.

I justify this offer on two grounds. First, as one of the condemned, and as one who has not, in nearly a half-century, met a clergyman either in print or in spoken discourse who could put forward either a serious criticism of Freethought or an effective defence of Christianity, I am anxious to see what can be done; and as, I repeat, being one of the condemned who is to be sacrificed to make a Christian holiday, I am rather curious as to the method of my dispatch. My second reason for making the offer is one that ought to appeal to such a gallant fighter as the Bishop of Bathurst. He will, if he accepts my offer, be meeting Freethought in its strongest position. The *Freethinker* has flown the flag of a defiant and uncompromising Freethought for nearly fifty-five years. Nothing has seriously affected it—neither war-time nor peace-time, neither boycott nor legal threats and penalties. It is known wherever one takes an interest in Freethought. There is not a university in the kingdom in which it has not friends, and there is not an English speaking country in the world where it is not read. The Bishop in making his attack in these columns will be meeting the enemy where he is strongest, and the crushing of the *Freethinker* would be one of the severest blows ever given to Freethought during the history of the past hundred and fifty years. To attack Freethought in sermons which none but the religious attend, to warn mother's meetings and Girl's Guilds, to call a conference of London clergymen to consider the seriousness of the situation, will accomplish little. In these columns the Bishop will be attacking the real enemy. And I am daring enough to stake everything on the hazard.

I really commenced these notes with the intention of writing about New Year's Resolutions. But I have a very devil of a cold, and since the other side of Christmas, I have been ordered to bed, but bed is a very dangerous place—most people die there—and a couple of newspaper cuttings sent me off in the direction taken. Anyway, New Year resolutions are made only to be broken, and in sober truth unless "good resolutions" were broken the world would never be worth living in. It was only because Adam and Eve broke their "good" resolution in the Garden and ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that the world began to move. It was only because Lucifer broke the "good" resolution of obedience in heaven, that he was cast out and independence came to earth. And without the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and of the devil there would have been no fall, no hell as a counterpoise to heaven, no "plan of salvation," no crucifixion and no redemption. The road to progress is paved with broken "good resolutions" and while I raise no objection to men and women making good resolutions, I see a very lively danger if all of them are kept.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and by religious men who are certain they represent the Divine will. . . . I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say, that if it be probable that God would reveal his will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed he would reveal it directly to me.—*Abraham Lincoln*.

## A Gallant Gesture

"Spirits are not finely touched  
But to fine issues."—*Shakespeare.*

"To bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,  
That is the top of sovereignty."—*Keats.*

LETTERS published in the *Freethinker* from time to time show that there are many Secularists who retain marked traces of their early religious training. This lends point to the oft-quoted remark, attributed to a Catholic ecclesiastic, that if a child were in his care during its most impressionable years, he did not care who had charge of that child in after life. Yet there have been remarkably few attempts on the part of Freethinkers themselves to supplant the tens of thousands of schools of the entrenched Christian minority by educational establishments in which superstition has no place. So far as I know, there were recently but two schools in the whole of England in which the curriculum was entirely Secularistic, and one of these was compelled to close down owing to the bad economic conditions following the World-War. With this one I was well acquainted, and a few notes concerning this most gallant adventure may be of some historic interest, and serve as an incentive to future efforts in the same direction.

My first acquaintance with Ruskin House School, Southend-on-Sea (alas! now no more), arose under peculiar circumstances. A friend showed me a beautifully written piece of dictation, in which a fine passage from one of Robert Ingersoll's lectures were transcribed by a child's hand. Seeing my look of wonder, he informed me that it was the ordinary work done by his own boy, who was a scholar at a school conducted on Freethought lines. The next day I visited the school, and was surprised and delighted at what I saw.

There was an air of novelty about the institution, and I felt as if I were stepping into the pages of one of Wells's forecasts of the future. On the walls were portraits of Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Huxley, Walt Whitman, "George Eliot," Bradlaugh, Foote, and other intellectual and scientific worthies, and the scholars were familiarized with the work of these pioneers by daily talks from the principal and his staff. These chats ranged over a very great variety of subjects, principally scientific, historic, and biographic. Auguste Comte would have smiled his approval, for birthdays of great and famous men and women were honoured. Even the school-books had the same air of novelty, for they included Frederick Gould's *Children's Plutarch*, and *Brave Citizens*, Dennis Hird's books, and Ingersoll's works, all being freely drawn upon for purposes of dictation. The classes were mixed, boys and girls sat together, and the tuition was precisely the same for both sexes. Experience proved, so the principal informed me, that the girls became more self-reliant, and the boys more amenable and courteous. Physical culture was in daily use, the rudiments of science were known to all, and, above all, every scholar had a sound groundwork of knowledge. Even the youngest children knew the star-groups and the fundamentals of science. The elder scholars were also instructed in book-keeping and shorthand, and thus fitted for commercial life immediately on the termination of their school careers, and in most instances situations were found for them by the principal.

During the summer months weekly rambles were arranged, and the scholars journeyed to the heart of the country or the seashore, and learned to read at first hand from "Nature's infinite book of secrecy." Occasionally, the children went to London and visited

the Zoological Gardens, South Kensington Museums, Natural History Museum, and the Tate Gallery. On one of these visits to the Natural History Museum, Sir Edward Ray Lankester was interested in the young visitors, and showed the little students around himself.

Every opportunity was given to the pupils for mental exercise, and the critical faculties were kept alert. One day the scholars would hear of Henry VIII., and, maybe, on the next day, of Socrates or Gotama Buddha. Then they were asked to contrast the two personalities. These are but a few instances of how unconventional was the work at this unusual school. Another point well worth noting was the entire absence of any form of corporal punishment. Discipline was maintained by moral suasion, the principal believing that a teacher who had to rely on a stick was unworthy of the care of young children. The whole school was simply one happy family of boys and girls, and the entire teaching staff foster parents. I have never seen such affection between teachers and pupils, for, on a class breaking-up the children crowded round the principal and teachers as though loth to leave them. They even shared the games with the pupils, and, after school hours, were looked upon as friends and companions.

Mr. William H. Thresh, the principal of this unconventional school, made a very gallant attempt to supply a long-felt want in the Freethought Movement. For ten whole years he maintained this secular school in the face of enormous difficulties, which would have daunted any but the most ardent and enthusiastic Freethinker. Full of a high and unflinching courage, he was only beaten in the end by the air-raids of the World-War, and the economic distress following that period of unexampled stress. Among schoolmasters of his time he was what Dr. Arnold was at Rugby in the schooldays of Judge Hughes. Animated with the high nature of his calling, he threw himself into forwarding the education of the rising generation, free from the "lie at the lips of the priest." Men and women may come after him and accomplish what he so bravely attempted, but the credit must be given to the pioneer schoolmaster, whose ten-years' crusade for the young forms, in itself, a high and perfect tribute to the ennobling ideals of, what George Meredith called, "the best of causes."

Let there be no mistake on one point. It takes a man to do these things, for Priestcraft is a very powerful profession, and brooks no rivals. Priests are as ruthless as magnates of Oil Trusts, or Armament Syndicates. And there are plenty of dupes who will do their bidding. In the United States, Stephen Girard left a substantial sum of money as an endowment of an orphanage. By express provision in his will, no ecclesiastic or minister of religion, was to hold any connexion with the college, or even to be admitted as a visitor, but the staff of the institution was required to instruct the pupils in secular morality. This will has been most shamefully perverted, for the officials are all Christians, and, in order to keep within the letter of the law, only laymen are so employed. To-day the Girard Orphanage is pointed at as a proof of the soundness of Christian charity.

Money, it will be seen, is not enough; it must be entrusted to men of courage and opinion. The case for Secular Education is unanswerable, but the Christian Religion is a vested interest, just as slavery is in Christian Abyssinia. Consider the argument. The State consists of persons who profess all sorts of religion and none. If the State compels its citizens to pay for religious teaching in which they do not believe, it commits an injustice. This is not a mere question between one sect and another sect, between

Tweedledum and Tweedledee. It is unjust to make a Quaker pay for teaching the doctrine of the Sacraments, or an Unitarian for teaching the deity of Christ; but it is equally unjust to make an Atheist pay for teaching the existence of the Christian Trinity, or a Churchman for teaching undenominational religion. The Education fiasco in this country is the result of timid and time-serving politicians. It is high time that men of courage and honesty took part in politics. The clergy, who have opposed all reforms in the House of Lords, are not the fit guardians of education in the twentieth century. The clergy, who opposed the use of chloroform in childbirth, because they urged that it interfered with their deity's primal curse upon woman, are not equipped by education and training for the care of the rising generation. For men are daily ordained to the Christian ministry and yet have never been converted to civilization. It is also high time that the Red Ridinghoods of the Socialist Party had a glimmering idea that Mother Church is, in reality, a very greedy wolf, and not a benevolent grandmother.

MIMNERMUS.

## Freethought in Novels

NOT enough attention is paid to novels by those investigating the trends of thought and the freeing of the human consciousness. Ever since Fielding the English novel has played an increasing part in directing and confirming the gains in the fight for comprehension and liberation. What it has done in a reactionary direction is small in comparison with the positive elements; for to destroy a bad condition or to expose a gangrene in the social flesh is to create the conditions of understanding necessary for betterment. The periodic outcry of bishops against the "degeneracy" of novels is certainly warranted; for a bishop means by degenerate anything that seeks truth and faces facts.

In many ways the novel can be used, and has been used, as an educational force in the narrow sense of the term. Thus we have a new tribe of historical novelists who have no concern with dishing up the old romantic ingredients, but who set out conscientiously to interpret past periods. A good historical novel can do more to produce an historical sense in its readers than any amount of history books. Gone is the day of such ridiculous caricatures of history as *Quo Vadis* or *The Last Days of Pompeii*. As examples of books which give a living picture of antiquity, I may instance Feuchtwanger's *Josephus* and Naomi Mitcheson's *Cloud Cuckoo Land*; here we have the real worlds of Rome and Greece. Anyone who reads either of those books will gain an unforgettable impression of their periods. In the same way a book like Mary Borden's *Jehovah's Day* must help to a sense of the biological relations of present-day life hundreds of people who would never open the simplest of biology text books.

But to come to more hidden educational or propagandist effects. The importance of the novel in guiding the sympathies of people cannot be over-rated. How heartening it is to look at the mass of serious novels, and to see what an infinitesimal part in them does institutional religion play! There is the real test. Our novels give a final proof that the Churches have almost ceased to mean anything whatever to the people who matter.

D. H. Lawrence, that great genius who is gradually finding his place, has summed up the problem in his usual succinct, original, and forceful fashion.

He is discussing gossip and the way that gossip exposes the dreadful dissatisfaction and cruelty so prominent in our society after centuries of Christian concepts.

Connie was fascinated, listening to her. But afterwards always a little ashamed. She ought not to listen with this queer rabid curiosity. After all, one may hear the most private affairs of other people, but only in a spirit of respect for the struggling, battered thing which any human soul is, and in a spirit of fine, discriminative sympathy. For even satire is a form of sympathy. It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life; for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and refreshing.

But the novel, like gossip, can also excite spurious sympathies and recoils, mechanical and leaning to the psyche. The novel can glorify the most corrupt feelings, so long as they are *conventionally* "pure." Then the novel, like gossip, becomes at last vicious, and, like gossip, all the more vicious because it is always ostensibly on the side of the angels.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover.*

It is because the novel is leading sympathy away from "corruption" that the bishops protest; it is because the novel is freeing the emotional or *passional* consciousness, and because every such act of freedom means a "recoil from things gone dead"—the Christian Church being the main corpse in a world rather littered with survivals.

As examples of the way that the recoil leads to direct satire of the Church, I will quote two books; Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, and Antony Bertram's *Men Adrift*. Try to imagine such novels being written and published even twenty years ago, and one realizes how the grip of the bishops is weakening, however much they may make their periodic protests (given great publicity by newspaper editors who thereon print all the letters written in support and one or two of the weaker ones in attack—to give an appearance of impartiality).

A fine spirit of scorn for the real corruption of society, the institutions "gone dead" and standing viciously in the way of all real human progress, runs throughout *Death of a Hero*; but from the various indignant comments on religion I select an effective picture of a London Sunday:—

Sunday in London. In the City, nuts, bolts, infinite curious pieces of odd metal, embedded in the black shiny roads, frozen rivers of ink, may be examined without danger. The peace of commerce which passes all desolation. Puritan fervour relapsed to negative depression. Gigantic wings of Ennui folded irresistibly over millions. Vast trails of automobiles hopelessly hooting to escape. Epic melancholy of deserted side-streets where the rhythmic beat of a horse's hoof is an adagio of despair. Horrors of Gunnersbury. The spleen of the railway line between Turnham Green and Hammersmith, the villainous sordidness of Raynes Park, the ennui which always vibrates with the waiting train at Gloucester Road Station, emerge triumphant when the Lord is at rest and possess the streets. The rain is one melancholy and the sun another. The supreme insult of pealing bells morning and evening. Dearly beloved brethren, miserable sinners, stand up, stand up for Jesus. Who will deliver us, who will deliver us from the Christians? O Lord Jesus, come quickly, and get it over!

How are the mighty fallen! To think of the pleasure that bishops, Anglican or Catholic, would have got from burning the writer of such a passage 300 years ago. To think of the suppressive forces that they could have wielded against such a book only fifty years ago. To think how they could have got it at least banned from the libraries twenty years ago. And to-day they can only talk about base tendencies in the novel.

*Men Adrift* is a very interesting novel written in a kaleidoscopic style that works up to a brilliant and moving finale, a crescendo in which verge all the cross-sections of life that make up the book's pattern.

The passages on the Church are amusing and downright. No doubt they would hurt and shock a bishop (like the bishop in the novel itself, who is shocked at everything he reads in the newspaper, and who hasn't kissed all the choirboys in his diocese, as scandal asserts, for *some* are plain). It must be very unpleasant for a bishop never to know when he picks up a novel whether he isn't going to light on a passage which will show him in how little respect his cloth is held. A passage such as this from *Men Adrift* :—

*Peace, my brethren, peace.* Let us all lie down together in the broad bosom of the Church of England. There we can all agree because truth has so many faces. Believe what you like, say what you like, but only pretend that you are a nice, nice flock, and we are your nice, nice shepherds. Shut your eyes tightly and say after us whatever we happen to think of; shut your eyes and open your mouths and see what the parson will give you. Be good, sweet children, and let who will be clever. We will give you nice social clubs and outings, pretty hymns and pretty vestments, we will wash you from sin when you are young, from all the terrible sins which a just God has laid on you from birth—you thought yourself a little innocent, didn't you, baby? But you're wrong. You trust the just God for that—we will tell you pretty fairy tales about Noah's ark to make you good children—though not about Noah's goings on: those we'll smooth over. We'll call a blessing on your tinned salmon, give you in marriage, even if you're dead drunk and half-witted, and encourage you to have plenty of children—nice clean fun—and then at the end we'll pop you in the earth with a promise of resurrection to console your relations. And all we ask is that you'll play the game of let's pretend and give us our harmoniums and our cups of afternoon tea. . . .

And so on. Horrid reading for an unsuspecting bishop to chance on. Really there's nothing left for shockable bishops to read except detective stories, which dealing with murder are quite respectable; for as George Moore pointed out, the puritan has no objection to the most lurid details about the destruction of life, it's only the details bearing on the creation of life that he dislikes and calls "filth."

This brace of quotations will suffice to show the new spirit that is appearing in novels, a critical and fearless spirit which it behoves Freethinkers to cherish and make much of. It is up to all to do what they can to help the circulation of such novels, and to fight where necessary the efforts to suppress, censor and attack that are sure to be made whether on a large scale or in such small matters as public library lists.

JACK LINDSAY.

## Things Worth Knowing\*

XXII.

THE JEW

It is, of course, common knowledge that attempts are made to assign a general character to all Jews as such, the qualities of commercial smartness and financial skill. But the slightest observation makes us aware that many indubitable Jews are as deficient in financial acuteness as the simplest shepherd of the dales or ploughman of the wolds. There cannot, therefore, be in the blood or brain of the Jew any special financial strain; if there were it would show itself in all those who share the blood or brain. It is difficult to conceive an environment which would not evoke a function of this kind if heredity gave it special prominence in the organism. But it is not possible to assume any hereditary endowment to explain the financial genius of the Jews, neither is it necessary to do so. That the Jews as a whole have a long record of financial achievements it would be impossible to deny. But these achievements argue nothing more than the possession of the common natural aptitudes of humanity, incited, fostered and cultivated under the impulsion of a highly favourable environment. . . .

So far as concerns the effect of their European environment upon the Jews, every child knows that during the Middle Ages the Jews were practically excluded from all occupations except trade and commerce. It requires only a small advance in knowledge to be aware that the awakening of the commercial spirit in Christian Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the establishment of the great Trade Guilds, from which Jews were excluded, very soon effected a considerable change in the financial occupations of the Jews. From merchants they became pedlars, pawnbrokers, hucksters, and small money-lenders, and for nearly five hundred years remained such. But a further change of environment effected a further change of career. The eighteenth century saw the rise and rapid development of the great industrial age which still shapes our lives. . . . The Jew was a money-lender on a small scale for five hundred years. He now becomes a money-lender on a large scale; his wealth becomes productive; he can capitalize magnificent concerns. . . . The association of Jew and Christian in capitalistic and industrial life soon breaks down the barriers of hate and contempt, and the political and social emancipation of Jews in the countries of Western Europe is eventually effected; opening up to the Jews every career they choose to enter, giving these countries, not only great capitalists and financiers, but Jewish Prime Ministers, Jewish Judges, Jewish Postmaster-Generals, as well as artists, musicians and men of letters. What, again may we ask, is the meaning of his "race" to an Englishman when this oriental people, alien as possible from his own, comes into his environment and exhibits just these qualities which he himself has exhibited and exhibits? The Jew was a farmer when he was in a farmer's environment; a pawnbroker when his political surroundings compelled him, alien as possible from his own. There is now no career to which he cannot aspire; none for which he is not fitted. Noble poetry, lofty morality, supreme religious aspiration he had

\* 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 to themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

Before we can talk politics, finance, business, or morals we must see that we have got the right mental habits and the right foundation or realized facts. There is nothing much to be done with our lives until we have seen to that.—H. G. Wells.

composed when he thought in Hebrew or Aramaic; when he mastered the languages of Europe he shared the pedantic subtleties of the Talmud by Philo's generous philosophy and Spinoza's profound meditations. We read with some incredulity how Catholic Spain allowed "secret" Jews to become bishops and archbishops, but to-day a Jewish Lord Chief Justice decides between quarrelling Christian sects, and performs the functions of an Ecclesiastical Commissioner with general acquiescence and consent.

There is nothing in the history of the Jews which justifies the view that the latter are not the product of the former, or the view that history and characteristics are the necessary products of a peculiar cerebral convulsion. On the contrary, it is abundantly manifest, almost more so than in the case of any other people, that the environment of the Jews, when it has been constant from generation to generation—as for example, during their centuries of imprisonment in the ghetto—has produced a constant character; and when the environment has varied, as it has from generation to generation during the last century and a half in Western Europe, the variations of the environment have been followed by variations in character which have small suggestion of the ghetto or of the pawnshop.

*Race and Nationality* (1919),  
by J. OAKSMITH, pp. 64-7.

### XXIII.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

THE Church while battling with paganism recognized her deadliest foes in literature. Not only were the Greek and Latin masterpieces the stronghold of a mythology that had to be erased from the popular mind; not only was their morality antagonistic to the principles of Christian ethics; in addition to these grounds for hatred and mistrust, the classics idealized a form of life which the new faith regarded as worthless. What was culture in comparison with the salvation of the soul? Why should time be spent upon the dreams of poets, when every minute might be employed in pondering the precepts of the Gospels? What was the use of making this life refined and agreeable by study, when it formed but an insignificant prelude to an eternity wherein mundane learning would be valueless? Why raise questions about man's condition on this earth, when the creeds had to be defined and expounded, when the nature of God and the relation of the human soul to its Creator had to be established? It was easy to pass from this state of mind to the belief that learning in itself was impious. "Let us shun the lying fables of the poets," cries Gregory of Tours, "and forego the wisdom of sages at enmity with God, lest we incur the doom of endless death by sentence of our Lord." Even Augustine deplored the time spent in reading Virgil, weeping over Dido's death, when all the time he was himself both morally and spiritually dead. Alcuin regretted that in his boyhood he had preferred Virgil to the legends of the Saints, and stigmatized the eloquence of the Latin writers by the epithet of wanton. Such phrases as "the fictions or mad ravings of Pagan poets" are commonly employed by Christian authors of the Lives of Saints, in order to mark the inferiority of Virgil and Ovid to their own more edifying compositions. . . . "Let philosophers and impure scholars of Donatus," writes a windy fanatic of Cordova, "ply their windy problems with the barking of dogs, the grunting of swine, snarling with skinned throat and teeth; let the foaming and

bespittled grammarians belch, while we remain evangelical servants of Christ, true followers of rustic teachers." Thus the opposition of the Church to Paganism, the conviction that Christianity was alien to culture, and the absorption of intellectual interest in theological questions, contributed to destroy what had remained of sound scholarship in the last days of the Empire. . . .

When the minds of the learned were possessed by these absurdities to the exclusion of sound method, we cannot wonder that antiquity survived but as a strange and shadowy dream in popular imagination. Virgil, the only classic who retained distinct and living personality, passed from poet to philosopher, from philosopher to Sybil, from Sybil to magician, by successive stages of transmutation, as the truth about him grew more dim and the faculty to apprehend him weakened. . . .

The meagreness of medieval learning was, however, a less serious obstacle to culture than the habit of mind, partly engendered by Christianity and partly idiosyncratic to the new races, which prevented students from appreciating the true spirit of the classics. While mysticism and allegory ruled supreme, the clearly defined humanity of the Greeks and Romans could not fail to be misapprehended. The little that was known of them reached students through a hazy and distorting medium. Poems like Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* were prized for what the author had not meant when he was writing them; while his real interests were utterly neglected. Against this mental misconception, this original obliquity of vision, this radical lie in the intellect, the restorers of learning had to fight at least as energetically as against brute ignorance and dullness. It was not enough to write books and to discover codices; they had to teach men how to read them, to explain their inspiration, to defend them against prejudice, to protect them from false methods of interpretation. To purge the mind of fancy and fable, to prove that poetry apart from its supposed prophetic meaning was delightful for its own sake, and that the history of the antique nations, in spite of Paganism, could be used for profit and instruction, was the first step to be taken by these pioneers of modern culture. They had, in short, to create a new mental sensibility by establishing the truth that pure literature directly contributes to the dignity and happiness of human beings. The achievement of revolution in thought was the great performance of the Italians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

*The Renaissance in Italy*, by JOHN  
ADDINGTON SYMONDS, Vol II., pp. 59-68.

Every now and again we have a day solemnly set aside and prayers are ordered for rain, or for fine weather, or for something else that is considered advisable. Those who engage in these dissipations believe that God Almighty runs the universe and, therefore ought to consider such petitions unnecessary. They are just giving the Lord thinly veiled advice as to what he ought to do, what he might do, or what he has neglected doing. After looking round at things we are far from denying that such hints are necessary. The unequal distribution of sunshine and rain, the casual manner in which things happen, all point to the need for suggestions to deity, and the form in which prayers are cast is perhaps as polite as any. But why not call this crowd of praying humans "An Advisory Committee for Distressed Deities"? That would be doing things in a sensible manner. The only religious objection to the idea would be its obvious straightforwardness.

"Opinions," Chapman Cohen.

## Acid Drops

In the *Freethinker* for November 10, we passed some criticisms on a speech by Mr. Herbert Morrison, made at an L.C.C. meeting, in which he opposed the extension of a Sunday licence for a dramatic performance on the ground that it was time a "brake was put on" Sunday entertainments, because only a small proportion went to Church, and we were becoming "more continental than Paris," which evidently was a bad thing—in Mr. Morrison's opinion. We said at the time that this speech, made just before the municipal election, was patently vote-catching, with an eye on the narrowest section of Sabbatarians. And at all events the notion of the approach to a continental Sunday being bad, was hosh.

The elections being over, Mr. Morrison was not long before he saw the error of his ways. Perhaps our criticism induced some of his friends to point out that his policy might lose as many votes as it gained. At any rate Mr. Morrison donned the white sheet of repentance in a recent article in the *News-Chronicle*. But it is a white sheet with holes in it. The article reads as though Mr. Morrison had paid his first visit to Paris, for he writes that "Many of my countrymen have illusions about Paris," whereas it is possible that it is some of his countrymen who have corrected his illusions. At any rate Mr. Morrison, after visiting Paris and spending a whole Sunday there finds that "most of the Parisian cafes are friendly, homely, respectable places," and in many cases, the French people "follow a more rigid respectability and give the daughters less freedom than is reasonably desirable." He also points out that a certain music hall, famous for its "naughtiness" is patronized almost wholly "by visitors from abroad." Altogether he believes that the "average Parisians are not terribly different from the average Londoners."

We are very glad to have this admission. What we should now like to know is, what had Mr. Morrison in mind when he lamented the small proportion of people who went to Church, thought that a brake must be put on Sunday entertainments, deplored that we were getting as Continental as Paris, and on these grounds refused support to grant permission for costumes to be used at Sunday performances? Was it really because he wished to secure the Sabbatarian vote that he acted as he did, and was he speaking with his tongue in his cheek or in downright ignorance of the facts when he spoke as he did?

The Bishop of Croydon possesses a very accommodating disposition. A few years ago he was a strong opponent of Sunday Cinemas. After repeated attempts to get the matter passed by the council, it was decided to allow the opening. The Bishop withdrew his opposition, gave the question his blessing and was duly appointed on a Committee of Censorship, to see that no week-day pictures should be shown on the Lord's Day.

Another instance of his adaptability. He recently stated that Secularism was the great danger, whereas now he says religion is "alive and laughing," that, according to scientists 1900 years is only as a tick of the clock, and while he admitted organized Christianity had done much which was contrary to the spirit of Christ (surely, a very mild way to speak of the horrible cruelties practised by the Church during the Dark Ages and subsequently) to-day there were immense changes for the better, and no man could foresee what God might be able to do if human beings would let Him. Poor God! If he existed he would certainly have many a good laugh at the inanities uttered by his minions.

The Oxford University Press are about to publish "a book of questions and answers concerning vital problems of Christianity." Some of the questions are, "Who

Made God?" "Who Made Evil?" "Is the Virgin Birth a Necessary Belief?" "What is the Church?" Now if representative Freethinkers had been asked to supply the answers, and the Oxford University Press were to do its best to see that these answers were properly distributed in Christian quarters, something effective, at least, might have been accomplished. But the gentlemen selected to reply to the questions are the Bishop of London, Father Martindale, Father D'Arcy, Dr. Kirk, and similar stars of the religious firmament. Surely the answers are foregone conclusions. Anything that these men will say has been said over and over again for generations, and always in terms of current orthodoxy. Who do the Oxford University Press and the rev. gentlemen imagine will be converted by the "answers"? Or will anyone even be reassured in his faith? What a farce are these books written by professional theologians!

The fact that December 25 was not the "birthday" of Jesus, is slowly beginning to be known even to the very pious—though some of them are still loth to admit it was the birthday of many of the pagan deities. Mr. Hilaire Belloc, for example, tells us that, for his part, he "always inclines to tradition"—and as tradition fixed December 25 as the date, it was probably the true date. On the same page of the Catholic journal in which he writes this, it says:—

Christmas was not among the earlier feasts of the Church. Before the fifth century there was no general agreement of opinion as to where it should come in the Calendar, whether on January 6, March 25, or December 25.

It should prove instructive now for Mr. Belloc to explain carefully how March 25, in the "early Church," was considered likely to be the birthday of Jesus. Was it faith or was it tradition?

Three girl hikers who got lost for some days on a bleak moor, and were found after great difficulty, attribute their rescue to St. Anthony of Padua—although two of the girls are not Catholics. Apart from the fact that St. Anthony would have been better occupied in preventing them from getting lost, one authority on hiking put it bluntly that if the girls had been provided with flashlamps and powerful whistles they would have been found quite easily. Query—will the Catholic young lady in future trust St. Anthony or adopt the more materialistic flashlamp and whistle before going on another hiking expedition?

The death of Charles Richet calls attention to the fact that here was a famous scientist and a great physiologist who, while not denying some spiritualistic phenomena, never accepted the spiritualist hypothesis. In an article in the *Two Worlds*, Sir Oliver Lodge points out that, "To the end, Richet in public remained an agnostic and a disbeliever in the spiritual explanation . . . on the whole, he adhered to his life-long conviction of the materialistic aspect of the universe." Unlike so many men of science who believed in spiritualism, and who were physicists, Richet was a great physiologist, and knew something of the workings of the mind—yet he refused always to admit that spirits had anything to do with the "manifestations" believed in by Lodge, Flammarion and others. For the rest, Sir Oliver Lodge pays a fine tribute to his brother scientist.

A London newspaper is offering prizes for the Tallest of Tall Stories. What high marks will be scored by those who know their Bible. Some are so tall that even the most hardened theologian boggles at believing them. Professor J. A. Findlay, for instance, believes in the Resurrection of Jesus. But even he cannot swallow the yarn that says, "the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose." Dr. Findlay says, "I must frankly say that I am not so sure about this passage." Still more frankly he suggests "that this was one of the stories which were going round" in those days, and he artlessly admits that "after the

resurrection, men were in a mood to believe anything." Or as we should say—people who could believe in Christ's resurrection were capable of believing that cows jump over the moon.

The *Methodist Recorder* reporter has discovered what is rightly called "a striking character." He is a Mr. Wrigglesworth, a Bradford Evangelist, who "speaks with a great deal of force." This truthful Evangelist—an ex-plumber, he is called—was talking about "healing," of which he "has seen thousands of wonderful cases in his ministry." As far as that goes we can all see wonderful cases of credulous mania in most churches. But Wrigglesworth also (we quote the *Recorder*), says, "he has seen many dead raised, the sight of the blind restored, and so on." We like the "and so on." It would be more to the point if this evangelistic fictionist produced one—just one—of the many he has "seen raised." Even the name and address of a few of them might help.

It was a MERRY Christmas indeed. Especially on the Wireless. To hear the Vicar of Whitechapel hailed by his fellow B.B.C. roysterers as Our Comic Padre, and to hear him—we were going to say SING—but at least he shouted hilariously an ancient comic song. His best joke was a natural mistake about the Christmas Number of one of the B.B.C. weeklies, which he alluded to as "The Christian Number" of the paper. The cream of the fun was an announcement that "The Choir will sing Unto Us a Child is Born, and the address will be given by the Bishop."

The Rev. Ernest H. Jeffs writes in the *Christian World* an article headed, "Or Look We for Another?" No doubt the world is always in such a bad way that it is looking for some solution to its problems. This eternal need of mankind is always being exploited by charlatans. The real helpers of mankind are often, like nearly all the great scientists whose work has "regenerated" the world, far too disinterested to attract personal popularity. If "we" are "looking for another" mob-orator, a Billy Sunday, or a General Booth, there is always somebody capable of fulfilling all the qualifications needed. Moody and Sankey are dead, but Gipsy Smith lives. "Christianity" is said by some of its followers to be either dead, or "difficult and not even tried." But Buchman and "the Group" still attract miles of publicity. Mr. Jeffs need not despair.

We are surprised at the Rev. Leyton Richards, M.A., taking the view that "failure to take the way of God in a God-given world" is the cause of "strife and war." Surely Mr. Richards might leave this sort of bosh to the inferior clergy. It is the veriest fanatical sectionalism to pretend that Christians are all pacifists, and that all wars are caused by Atheists. We quite understand that Mr. Richards disagrees with all war-mongers, and that he does not think God likes anything Mr. Richards dislikes—most Christians are like that. But what a pity he does not see that the affairs of this world cannot be directed aright by appealing to a God whose "Word" is capable of so many interpretations. How does he account for the fact that many Christians have been war-mongers, and many Atheists have been—like himself—devoted lovers of peace?

Dr. Edith Summerskill, the Labour Candidate for Bury, complains bitterly enough of the "insidious reactionary influence—the dictatorship of the priests." Her letter to the *New Statesman* is an eye-opener for anybody who imagines that the fight against priestcraft is no longer necessary, that Socialism is more important than Freethought, etc., etc. We do not suggest that Dr. Summerskill is not a first-class fighter for freedom; the fact that her candidature drew the fire of the priests is a proof that they recognized her as an enemy of their domination. Of course the real moral is that Bury badly needs conversion to Freethought, and until more attention is paid to this aspect of the question, we shall

still see—as in this case—religion winning and all kinds of humanitarian causes being defeated. Dr. Summerskill's advocacy of Birth-Control appears to have been her chief offence. We know perfectly well that the Labour Party is as much dominated by the priesthood on this and other questions, as is the Tory Party.

The *Cape Argus* for November 25 has some very strong and deserved censures on the bearing of a section of white South Africans towards natives. At Potgietersrust, a white youth of 18 was brought before the magistrate on a charge of a "brutal and unprovoked assault" on a native youth. After knocking him down, the coloured youth was kicked into insensibility. The magistrate, who regarded the assault as a very serious one, refrained from sending the accused white to prison, or even to inflict a heavy fine, but ordered a whipping. In the ordinary course of events the finger-prints were taken.

As a consequence of the conviction a "well-attended" public meeting was held to protest against the conviction, and it was suggested that a public apology should be demanded from the magistrate. The chair was taken at the meeting by the Rev. S. W. Naude, M.P., who said he "was grieved to learn that a young man should have received corporal punishment because of an assault on a native." Eventually the meeting passed a resolution expressing the "greatest indignation" against the infliction of "corporal punishment," on the young white, and also dwelt upon the "moral effect on the conscience of the public black and white." The corporal punishment was declared to be "extremely degrading for the man." A demand was also made for the immediate transference of the magistrate to some other district, and also for the transference of the police-sergeant who was responsible for the administration of the whipping. Although there are large numbers of whites who cannot bear to give up the right of a white man to "whip a nigger," we are glad to see the *Cape Argus* in its editorial pointing out that as the blacks have no voice in making the laws they are compelled to obey, the least the whites can do is to see that when offences occur the laws shall be administered with complete impartiality. The meeting was of opinion that the verdict would cause the natives to lose all respect for the whites. That is the usual excuse of the bully. From all we have heard, and from all we have read, it is the white who deals honestly and justly with the blacks who commands their confidence and respect. And the present, above all times, is one when the British Government must largely depend upon the respect that natives have for the equal administration of the law.

The Rev. A. Gordon James doesn't like to "regard the Incarnation as a last desperate expedient on the part of God to save the world." . . . "What discredit this view does to the intelligence of God. It reduces the Almighty to the level of . . . the old woman of the nursery rhyme, who had so many children she didn't know what to do." But the theory Mr. James dislikes is more plausible than any other. After all man had been—even by Biblical chronology—a terribly long time neglected by "whatever Gods there be." Besides it is not the ONLY "view which does discredit to God's intelligence." Whether God invented creation or evolution He inflicted on His world a most disgracefully bungling method of producing whatever results He was aiming at. Wonderful, certainly. But intelligent? Never.

Juries and not congresses and judges are the palladium of our liberties. The law does not require a man to cease to be a man and act without regard to consequences, when he becomes a juror. If the jury have no right to judge of the justice of a law of the government, they plainly can do nothing to protect the people against the oppressions of the Government; for there are no oppressions which the Government may not authorize by law.—L. Spooner, "Trial by Jury."



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We are pleased to learn that a recent note in the "Sugar Plum" regarding the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. in Leeds has led to good results. A Branch is in process of formation, and there is plenty of scope for work. Those interested in the movement should apply for information to M. Feldman, 139 North Street, Leeds.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Lady Maud Simon, 10s. 6d.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the Freethinker.—C. S. Fraser, 5s. 6d.

H. BERLIS.—It is a question of taste which comes first. With Royalty it is usual to speak in the way noted.

W. A. VAUGHAN.—Second letter held over till next week.

J. MCKENNA.—Sorry your letter is crowded out this week.

*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. Rosetti, 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.*

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

## Sugar Plums

Will the many friends who have sent the Editor Christmas and New Year's greetings please accept this note as an acknowledgment of their thoughtfulness. Some of these messages have come from far afield, and were evidently sent off some time ago. The kindly messages which accompanied some of the cards will long be borne in mind. Works such as ours brings little in the way of "worldly" recognition, but it brings one into touch with many high-minded men and women, and gives renewed encouragement to persevere in the "greatest of Causes." Recognition that is of value, like happiness, must come unsought.

Now that we have turned into the New Year, the Annual Dinner becomes a matter for immediate attention. There is every promise that another large party will be present on January 25, in the Holborn Restaurant. With excursion facilities from so many parts of the country, a trip to London and the Annual Dinner is brought within range for an increasing number. Tickets are now obtainable, and should be ordered from the Pioneer Press, or Offices of the N.S.S., 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, price 8s. each.

The operations of "Sanctions" is working out very curiously in one direction. Owing to their influence the Pope cannot get hold of the "Peter's Pence" collections from Sanctionist countries, and as a consequence the Pope is very hard up. The position is said to have become serious. That we can quite believe, and it will also spur the Pope to proceed with his efforts to bring the war to a close—with Italy holding a large part of Abyssinia. It is said that the effect of "Sanctions" has taken the Pope by surprise. Ye gods! Here is God's representative on earth, and who is yet unable to foresee such an occurrence as this. Business men saw it easily enough, but the Pope did not, and there was evidently not one of the hosts of "saints" in heaven who were able to give the Pope a friendly tip on so important a matter!

It is also reported that the Papal Nuncio at Berne has had long conversations with Laval and others, and has received assurances that special consideration will be paid to the Papal needs. But why? If the Pope gets the money it is fairly certain that Mussolini will grab it. For the bargain with the Papacy was not one-sided. It was, and is, a case of you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

A charge of holding a Sunday all-in wrestling match to which admission by money or for tickets sold for money was dismissed at the London Sessions on December 18. The defence won on the ground that the particular offence was not proved. The case was brought under the old Sunday law, and proceedings were instituted by a Common Informer. It is high time the Act was repealed, although there is not much chance of this being done until the public makes up its mind to reduce the Act to nullity.

And there is a very easy way in which this may be done, a way that we have been pointing out to Cinema proprietors and others for many years. To constitute an offence the admission must be by money or by ticket sold for money. But it has been decided that so long as the admission is free a charge may be made for a reserved seat. Under this ruling, for many years, concerts have been run in halls holding well over a thousand people, and all seats, except some forty or fifty, have been reserved, and paid for. There is nothing to stop anyone doing this so long as they observe the condition noted. There are other ways of making this Act so ridiculous that it would be impossible to enforce it. For years, whenever proprietors would let us have the hall, we have charged for admission, and the police have left us severely alone.

Tenants of halls that are licenced for dancing or dramatic performances for six days of the week—that is from Monday until Saturday, do not usually care to exercise their right to hold an entertainment under the conditions named, not because any one could prosecute them for so doing, but because they are afraid of their licence being opposed when it is due for renewal, or because of vexatious interference by the police under pressure from Sabbatarians. This could be dealt with if any proprietor, or combination of proprietors cared to bring an action in the high courts for the purpose of forcing the licencing magistrates to prove that they had just and sufficient cause for refusing renewal of the licence. If the case was properly fought the proprietors would win.

Cases are constantly occurring in which the holders of premises licenced for six days in the week apply for permission to hold a free public meeting on Sundays. This is simply ridiculous. No magistrate has the power to interfere with any such meeting. And if any proprietor of a hall thinks otherwise, and wishes to have the question tested, we will undertake to hold the meeting, and to make ourselves responsible for the costs of fighting any action that the local authorities may be silly enough to bring. A hall that is licensed to do certain things on certain days, is only to be dealt with under laws which govern the holding of all meetings, if meetings are held on the days that they are not licenced. Apart from the

days to which the licence refers the hall is an unlicensed building. That should be clear to all, and ignorant and bigotted licensing magistrates must be made to realize this.

Another legal decision has just been recorded that is worth noting. At the Royal Air-Force Display, a Cambridge lecturer was distributing some anti-war pamphlets. The police seized the pamphlets and removed their distributor. The plea was that of preventing a breach of the peace. The lecturer went to the police station and requested the return of his pamphlets. The Chief Constable said that he had given orders to seize any pamphlets having a "communist flavour," and refused to return them. The action for damages was brought in the Cambridge County Court, and judgment was given for the plaintiff—one pound damages and costs. Quite rightly the judge ruled that the police had exceeded their powers, and the police must have cause for believing that breach of the peace is at least imminent before they are entitled to interfere.

There is no question but the police all over the country frequently do exceed their powers, and what is worse magistrates frequently uphold them in so doing. The order of the Chief Constable to seize any pamphlets of Communist flavour was a piece of official impudence. At present Communists have the same right as Conservatives to distribute their literature, although there is no knowing what may be the case if once the infamous Incitement to Disaffection Act begins to operate. And it is also important to remember that while the police may act so as to prevent a breach of the peace, the onus of proving that there is likely to be a breach of the peace rests with the police in every case. There is sound law for this and it should be borne in mind.

Quite recently, a gentleman engaged in a debate with a Spiritualist, had been announced as representing the National Secular Society, solely on the ground that he was at one time a member of the Society. No reflection was taken to the person in question on personal grounds. Headquarters, indeed, had nothing of the kind on which to base its decision. But as the Society was first made aware of it by public announcements, the Secretary, acting on instructions from the President, at once caused notices to be issued in the public press correcting the statement. The debate, we learn went off quite well, but that again had no bearing on the general rule of practice.

As the same sort of mistake is likely to be made in other places, it is as well to lay down the practice in such matters. No person, with the exception of the President, may speak as representing the Society without express permission of the Executive. A Branch may authorize any one to speak in its name, but in that case the same should be plainly stated; and the Executive will have no ground for interference unless the person is one to whom headquarters may raise substantial objection, or the debate is upon a subject outside the scope of the Society's work. In that case no one, not even the President, is permitted to speak as representing the N.S.S. We hope this is quite clear, and that Branches will help the Executive to carry out this very common-sense practice.

We are asked to announce that the Glasgow Branch is arranging for a tea, whist Drive and Dance, on Wednesday, January 15, in the City Cafe. Mr. George Whitehead will be the guest of the evening. Tickets are 2s. each, and may be had from the Secretary, Mrs. M. Whitefield, 351 Castlemilk Road, Glasgow.

The Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. is fortunate in having Mr. G. Bedborough to speak for them in the Beecheroff Settlement, Whetstone Lane, this evening, January 5. The subject of his lecture, "Morality and the Christian Model" is sure to be interesting, and provides an excellent opportunity for introducing orthodox friends to the Freethought point of view. The lecture begins at 7 p.m.

## Freedom

THE seemingly ineradicable urge of some people to control the lives of others—to coerce them in the fields of (legitimate) action and speech—has again become a rather common feature of civilized life. Tyranny of this kind, both civil and religious, has for so long a period been practised that it is still apparently ingrained in many people, chiefly, no doubt, in those who have picked up their ideas and attitudes in the course of a conventional home training and education, and who have never considered them in relation to intellectual, ethical and social progress. Here one recalls a famous saying of John Bright, viz., that though we have got rid of actual slavery, the *spirit* of slavery continues among the upper and middle classes of English society as strongly as it does in the wilds of Africa.

The National Council of Civil Liberties has drawn attention to the "enormous extension of dictatorship on the Continent, with the resulting suppression of the rights of free speech and assembly, the rights of professional association, trade organization, etc.," and has pointed out that "it is of the utmost importance that we pay the closest attention to the state of our civil rights in Great Britain at the present time."

The needs particularly mentioned are the repeal of the Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934; the restoration of the full rights of Trade Unions enjoyed before the General Strike; the repeal of the statute of Edward III. which empowers magistrates to bind over persons who have not been guilty of any offence; the protection of our right of public meeting from technical charges of obstruction, and the right to organize orderly public meetings in the neighbourhood of Labour Exchanges.

We also note attempts to limit academic freedom of teachers outside of the schools or universities, a subject lately dealt with by Prof. H. J. Laski in *Time and Tide*. Though, he says, the "campaign of intolerance" in this country has not yet reached the "wholesale attack of a positive kind, such as the United States has constantly seen," the condition of things here is very unsatisfactory. Attention is drawn to the two recent cases in which university teachers have been attacked for their utterances outside the university which employs them (one probably his own case, and the other that in which an Oxford Professor was "reprimanded"); to the refusal of the governors of Clifton College and Merchant Taylors School to allow their teachers to become candidates for Parliament or Municipal Bodies; to the notable fact that such regulation and practice affect, so far as Prof. Laski knows, only those teachers who hold advanced views; to the probability that such teachers find appointment and promotion a difficult matter; and to the "hints," "warnings," and "pressures" applied to college teachers of unorthodox views on the ground that they exhibit "partiality" and the like. The Professor adds, "I know of no case where they (the warnings, etc.), have been operative with teachers of more orthodox convictions." Another reason given by academic authorities is that such views tend to interfere with the flow of endowments, an attitude which is highly developed in the United States, where the "interrelations of big business and the universities" tends to prevent the expression of ideas which rich men find inconvenient.

It is dolorous to read that, "following on a period up to 1016, when men looked back upon the history of intellectual persecution, and agreed in general that it was both wasteful and irrational," "To-day,

over much more than half the world there is an intellectual persecution wider and more profound than at any period since the sixteenth century." And we wonder whether we are to undergo, among other things, any definite religious persecution, such, e.g., as the prohibition of Freethought propaganda.

As is well known there is already a claim that Freethinkers and Rationalists should not publicly say or write anything which is calculated to "hurt the feelings" of the orthodox (though we hear nothing of a corresponding embargo on the latter). This means that Secularists would not be free to expound a large part of the history of religion—e.g., the remnants of phallicism underlying Peter and the Rock ("... thou art Peter, and on this Rock I will build my Church," Matthew, xvi., 18); of the enormities of religious wars and massacres and the barbarity of the Inquisition; of the deliberate forgery and other gross immorality of many leaders of the medieval Church; and so on.

Whether there will be any attempt to suppress the books and articles of famous religious iconoclasts such as T. H. Huxley, Haeckel, Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, or the more recent utterances of Julian Huxley, Prof. Laski, J. B. S. Haldane and others remains to be seen. But it does not seem unlikely that the censorship may be extended to other writers, to the exclusion, say, of all rationalistic suggestions in plays, novels, etc., such for example as occur in a play I have just seen, *The Watched Pot*, by "Saki":—

*Will* (a butler) to a guest at a country house: Home life is a different thing with you gentry, you're so comfortable and heathen. Ah, Sir, you haven't known what it was to be brought up by really respectable parents.

*René*: Really, William.

*Will*: My father is a Plymouth Brethren, Sir. Not that I have anything to say against Plymouth as a religion, but in a small cottage it takes up a lot of room. My father believed in smiting sin where he found it; what I complained of was that he always seemed to find it in the same place. Plymouth narrows the perspective. Between gentry religion and cottage religion there's the same difference as between keeping ferrets and living in a hutch with one.

And again, when the Colonel, Vice-Chairman of the local Party Association, is "sounding" Ludovic, the prospective candidate for Parliament:—

*Col.*: I suppose you're sound on religious questions. There is no truth in the story that you have leanings towards Agnosticism?

*Lud.*: My dear Colonel, no one can be Agnostic nowadays. The Christian Apologists have left one nothing to disbelieve.

It may be added that these religious (or irreligious) witticisms were received with the same appreciation as the political and other jokes. But whether the vicar, in whose church hall the play was given, and who I am told was at the back of the hall, joined in the rippling laughter at the two passages quoted, I do not know.

It may be further added that similar humour occurs at times at one of our leading medical teaching centres. A friend tells me that a lecturer told his listeners (senior students) that an explanation of a certain point was not yet known, and added that the cause might be physical or chemical, or—"Divine Providence." The students laughed at this evident badinage, most of them presumably having advanced beyond the stage at which others (mostly juniors) join in the activities of the Christian Union that exists at the College.

Such utterances, if they do nothing more, may to some extent counteract the innumerable suggestions

in our literature and elsewhere that Freethinkers are rather stupid, generally objectionable, even immoral people, who are held in check by the religious training they have received *plus* the pious tradition by which they are supposed to be surrounded.

J. REEVES.

## Some Martyrs of Edessa

### I.

#### AGGÆUS THE BISHOP

FROM a work entitled, *The Doctrine of Addæus the Apostle*,<sup>1</sup> we learn that this Addæus in the reign of King Abgar [Uchama] introduced Christianity into Edessa; that during his last illness he appointed one of his fellow-ministers, Aggæus, in the presence of the whole Church, to succeed him as its "Guide and Ruler"; that three days later he departed this life; and that he was buried by King Abgar in the royal sepulchre. Then we are told that some years later one of Abgar's "rebellious sons" ordered Aggæus—who had previously done filigree work, or something of this kind, for the Court—to make him "a headband of gold." Aggæus refused, saying that the ministry of Christ had been committed to him, and that he would not leave it to make "the headbands of the evil one." Thereupon the King sent men who injured him mortally by breaking his legs as he sat teaching in the church. By his dying request he was interred "within the centre door of the church, between the men and the women." His death caused a mourning "in all the Church and in all the City," like unto that "when the Apostle Addæus himself died." But in consequence of having such a sudden end, he was not able to lay his hand upon Palut, whom Addæus had formerly made a presbyter, and therefore, "Palut himself went to Antioch, and received the Hand of Priesthood from Serapion, Bishop of Antioch," who had been thus ordained by Zephyrinus, Bishop of Rome, who was in the succession of Simon Cephas, to whom "Our Lord" gave ordination.

It is possible that the twenty-five lines describing the martyrdom of Aggæus, and the succession of Palut to the See of Edessa, were interpolated into *The Doctrine of Addæus the Apostle*, for immediately after those lines comes an attestation to the effect that in accordance with the national custom "Labubna... the King's scribe," recorded all the doings of "Addæus the Apostle," and that "Hanan the Tabularius," witnessed the record and placed it with the royal documents, "where the ordinances and the laws are laid up, and there the contracts of the buyers and sellers are kept with care, without any negligence whatever." Then comes the declaration:—

Here endeth the Doctrine of Addæus the Apostle, which he preached in Edessa, the faithful City of Abgar, the faithful King.

In any case, whether the account of Palut's ordination to the episcopal office is or is not an interpolation, the chronology assigned thereunto is demonstrably false. For one of Palut's successors in the bishopric of Edessa, a man named Barsamya, narrowly escaped death in A.D. 112, the fifteenth year of Trajan's reign,<sup>2</sup> whereas the episcopate of Zephy-

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Syriac Documents Relative to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa... Discovered, Edited and Translated by the Late W. Cureton, D.D., F.R.S., London, 1861 (pp. 18-22).

<sup>2</sup> Cureton, p. 63 (*Martyrdom of Barsamya*).

rinus did not begin until A.D. 202, whilst that of Serapion began eleven years before this date.<sup>3</sup>

## II.

### SHARBIL AND HIS SISTER BABAI.

By a writing named *The Acts of Sharbil*,<sup>4</sup> we are told that in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Trajan, in the third year of King Abgar VII., and in the four hundred and sixteenth year of the Kingdom of Alexander, King of the Greeks, an edict wherein Trajan was commanding all his provincial governors to enforce, under torture, followed by capital punishment, the increased offering of "sacrifices and libations," reached "Edessa of the Parthians," when the inhabitants were celebrating "the great festival on the eighth of Nisan, on the third day of the week." Images of Nebu and Bel, and of all the other deities, had been brought out for the occasion, and the priests, led by Sharbil, the chief pontif in his gorgeous robes were offering them hosts of victims, and clouds of incense to the music of tabors and harps, as they ministered at "the great altar which is in the middle of the city opposite the place of records." Abgar VII., King of Edessa, and all his subjects were on the spot for the ceremony. Then, suddenly "Barsamya, the Bishop of the Christians," attended by a presbyter, and a deacon, approached Sharbil, exhorting him in quite a long speech to forsake idolatry and embrace Christianity, which had been introduced into Edessa by the apostle Addæus in the days of a former Abgar (who unlike the present one did not worship idols,) and which was taught also by the apostle's disciple, Palut, a personal acquaintance of his "reverence," the high priest himself. Forthwith Sharbil confessed the falsity of his own religion, and expressed bitter regret for having "consumed" his life in its service. Falling down before him at these words, Barsamya warmly directed him to the Cross, Sharbil replying that because of the festival he could not immediately come to the church of the Christians, but would go thither on the morrow at night, and that even from henceforth he renounced idols and confessed Christ. The disturbance likely to be occasioned by this incident is not reported; and we hear only that, on the following day, Sharbil with his sister Babai went unto the Bishop, who, in company with the whole Church gave him "the seal of salvation" upon "his confession of belief in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Spirit of holiness." Then, when the conversion of Sharbil became known, there was "a commotion among the multitude," who straightway came forth to make inquiries, and found him "clad in the fashion of the Christians." He expressed to the people his regret for having so long deceived them by his false teaching, and desired them to follow his present example. "A great multitude," including four chief persons of the city, hearkened to his words, saying, "We confess Christ, the King whom thou hast confessed." But "Lysanias, the judge of the country," hearing of these remarkable events, caused Sharbil to be arrested by night in the church. Many Christians accompanied Sharbil

to "the altar which is in the middle of the city," and there Lysanias subjected him to examination. Other examinations followed, and the words both of the judge and of the prisoner are exhaustively reported. The judge treated the prisoner with expostulation and menace. The prisoner defied the judge, blasphemed the national deities, and insulted "the Emperors." The main point of interest is the punishment which the judge inflicted upon the prisoner for obduracy at the inquiry, and that which he gave him in the end. But still, hardly less important is the allegation that in spite of his atrocious sufferings the prisoner almost continuously assailed the judge with an argumentation of great vigour; and that he made a public prayer of considerable length just before his ghastly death, although his body was then in a most frightful state of mutilation.

Here is a list of the penalties which Sharbil endured, and under which, in the end, he perished.

He was (1) scourged with thongs by ten men. (2) Hung up and had his sides torn with combs. (3) Had his face torn with combs. (4) Had his body bent backwards, his hands and feet bound, and his belly scourged. (5) Was carried to prison, being unable to walk thither, and was then cast into a dark pit, with many days detention. (6) Upon his second appearance at court (the second day of Ilul on the third day of the week) he was hung up by his right hand, and could not speak for the distraction of his right arm. (7) Was taken down and had his arm pressed back to his side. (8) Was cauterized with "bitter fire" between his eyes, and upon his cheeks, so that the stench rose "in smoke." (9) Was hung up and torn with combs in his old wounds which were then rubbed with salt and vinegar. (10) His face and his wounds were now long exposed to lighted candles. (11) Iron nails were driven between his eyes. (12) Was hanged head downwards from a tree at the door of the Judgment Hall, and beaten with whips while hanging. (13) Was thrown into the murderers' iron chest and scourged with thongs till no sound spot was left on his body. (14) Small round-shaped pieces of wood were put between his fingers and squeezed until the blood came out from under his nails. (15) His fingers were loosed. He was made to sit upon he ground. His hands were bound to his knees. A piece of wood was put under his knees, over the bands of his hands. He was hung up by his feet, head downwards, and scourged with thongs. (16) A heated ball of lead and brass was put under his arm-pits, till the top of his ribs became visible. (17) He was put on a heated gridiron, till the soles of his feet were burned. (18) His legs and thighs were torn with combs till the blood ran forth upon the ground. (19) His cheeks were torn between the nails which had been driven into them. (20) He was hanged for a long time upon a tree. (21) He was hanged and combed as before, till at last his bowels were nearly visible. (22) He was taken down unconscious, and after coming to himself, he was gagged and made to run on his burnt feet to a spot outside the city, where he prayed aloud to Christ. (23) His burned, maimed, and bleeding body was thrust into a wooden vice, and pressed till his joints creaked. (24) He was sawn upwards almost to his mouth, and then when about to die, he was beheaded with a sword. At the moment of this decapitation, Babai, sister of the victim, spread out her skirts and caught his blood. For this she was condemned to death; and her blood was mingled with her brother's as she was carrying it away. His body and hers were buried by the Christian community, in the sepulchre of the father of Abshelama the bishop after the executioners had returned to the city, the date of the

<sup>3</sup> See Haydn's *Dates*, London, 1889, and Jerome's *De Vir. Illus.* Leipzig, 1879 (B.XLI), where he gives the eleventh year of Commodus [A.D. 191] as that of Serapion's elevation.

<sup>4</sup> The Acts of Sharbil, who had been the High Priest of Idols, and was converted to the Confession of the Christian Religion in Christ. Cureton who preserves these *Acts*, says that they exhibit traces of having been translated out of Greek. There are two ancient manuscripts Cod. A and Cod. B. The first he assigns to the sixth century, and regards it as older than the second by three or four hundred years. A he uses as his text; and from B he furnishes in his notes some variations and several interpolations.

deaths and the burial being the fifth of Iul, and the sixth day of the week. Then we read:—

I wrote these Acts on paper, I, Marinus, and Anatolus, the notaries; and we placed them in the archives of the city, where the charters of the Kings are placed.

Instead of concluding the piece, however, the above attestation is followed by a supplement of thirty-four lines which begin thus: "But this Barsamya, the bishop [who] converted Sharbil the high priest . . . lived in the days of Binus [Fabianus]<sup>5</sup> Bishop of Rome," and afterwards goes on to say that then was the time when the Romans complained of there being "too many strangers" at Rome, and in consequence of this complaint "those strangers" would have departed, taking with them the bones of Peter and Paul, had not a mighty earthquake just before their departure caused the Romans to beg them to stay, and to reinter the apostolic bones; which they did; whereupon everything became calm, and everybody felt happy. "Jews and Pagans," we are told hastened to "Fabianus the bishop of their city," and fell at his feet, the Jews acknowledging the divinity of Christ, and the Pagans renouncing their idols for "Jesus the King"; whilst all of other religions, "if there were any," embraced Christianity both "in Rome and in the whole of Italy."

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued)

### Then and Now

In the Hill Country our Sunday, or properly speaking, our Sabbath started at Sun-set on Saturday, some sixty years ago. On week nights, generally, we could play the concertina, fiddle, flute, pipes, or sing, or dance, but not on Saturday nights. After tea on that day we had to make preparation for the Sabbath Day. Newspapers and all books of a secular nature had to be "put by," and the Bible, the Tract (Spurgeon's weekly sermon), *Good Words*, and some other Godly Magazines and books laid out for our guidance and instruction in righteousness.

When opportunity offered, however, we sought abroad what we were denied at home. Near by lived an old radical who did not religiously observe the Sabbath. And on Saturday evenings "we round his ingle formed a circle wide," whilst he sat on the kitchen table with his back to the wall by way of getting as near as possible to a little oil lamp that hung against it. The evening was devoted to the reading of *Reynolds' Weekly Newspaper*. Our old friend was a fairly good reader, but his pronunciation was poor, though always interesting, and often very humorous. Mr. Bradlaugh, and Mr. Labouchere were great favourites of his. But he often doubted our appreciation of them because we couldn't help indulging in laughter at his queer pronunciation of their names, i.e., Mr. Braidallowff, and Mr. Labowch'erry. One evening he read us a small paragraph about the recovery of a watch lost by Wordsworth when he was poet lawratty (laureate). I have tried to spell these mispronunciations phonetically, and hope that I have to some extent succeeded, but cannot hope to give a real imitation of them. Think of the setting and his somewhat harsh, broad North country dialect, and this may help your imagination.

He was nearly beaten by a friendly Belgian who, on trying to learn English during the war, tried to improve our pronunciation. Like our friend referred to I had often to guess at his meaning long after he had done speaking. And on one occasion I remember being completely floored. He had introduced the word "dummysticks" into a question. It had no apparent connexion with any of the other words forming his query. He meant to ask

if we had any difficulty in getting *domestics* in our neighbourhood.

But to return to our guide, philosopher and friend who sits enthroned on the table end. He tried to make us think. "The object, at school," he said is to make you think imperially. "Put not your trust in princes," says the Bible. "It might have added," said he, "Peers, politicians, and priests. To make a long story short, so long as you continue to have priests you'll have all the other pigs with both feet in the trough. Have you ever studied the pig?—the gentleman who pays the rent"—the title given him in Ireland. Here the pig is too often the gentleman who receives the rent. When gentlemen die they soon stink, having had a deal of practice at playing a stinking game all their lives, but when the pig dies he is more appreciated than when alive. His only aristocratic and unredeemable fault is, getting both his feet into the trough."

"Though blasted with antiquity," he was one of those "powerful uneducated persons" whom Whitman advised his readers to freely consort with. One of his favourite poems was "The Jolly Beggars." And to hear him reciting parts of it was beyond description. Think of this burly, bluff man with his tousled head of iron-grey hair, reciting in his powerful Northern dialect:—

"A fig for those by law protected;  
Liberty's a glorious feast;  
Courts for cowards were erected,  
Churches built to please the priest."

He, though I'm afraid, in our green and callow youth, we looked more upon him as a sort of entertainer than aught else, had more to do with directing our steps than either priest or schoolmaster. When I go to the pictures at night, and get comfortably seated, at my own fireside, I often throw him on the screen of memory. I like to think of him as a Torch Bearer. Later on light began to skim along our hill sides. Bradlaugh and Marsden Gibson debated in Newcastle on "Has Humanity Gained from Unbelief?" Good reports were given of it in the daily papers. Then we had Foote's trial for blasphemy, which stirred the Intelligentsia, in our neighbourhood, to open mothers' meetings and a branch of the Primrose League, great efforts surely, to throw dust in our eyes. The pamphlets they broadcasted were vile. One beginning "In these days when bold, bad men sneer at the Bible," etc., was a daisy. One story about G. W. Foote's fight may be new to many, so I repeat it. On asking an old Scots friend what he thought of G. W. Foote's sentence for blasphemy, he asked a question, in reply, and answered it in a breath. "What dae aye think the auld wife said about it? She said she couldna forgie Mr. Foote for deliberately insulting weemen folk by just presuming that the weemen folk in Heaven were so idle as tae let the Almighty appear in public wee a pair of breeks on that sae badly needed patching."

Our Sabbath Day was a miserable sort of day. At 10 a.m. we went to Sunday School. At 11 a.m. we had to listen to a good hour's sermon, when we got back home we partook of a cold dinner. It was even considered sinful to have hot soup on the Lord's Day. After dinner we were allowed to take a Sabbath day's journey (1,000 cubits, or about a mile). At night we had family worship at 8 p.m. At nine we went joyfully to bed. "Now the day is over," and we were so thankful.

After the morning service the meeting of the farmers present always interested me. It took the place of a quietly conducted mart. The sermon was very rarely mentioned. It seemed to me that men came there to meet each other and speak of crops and cattle and so on. The sermon was a thing to be quickly got over and not worth a moment's thought. I must have heard over a thousand of them, and all that I can recall to memory is the preacher's very frequent mention of "The Great Whore of Babylon," The Scarlet Woman, and a quotation he once made from Schopenhauer—"If God made the world, I would not like to be God, for its woes would break my heart." The Church, then had its social uses. It was fairly well attended. Its attendance has declined with the decline of its social utility.

As a young man, on holiday, I used to spend many

<sup>5</sup> Cureton's brackets.

happy hours of each day, enjoying the quiet, "listening the silence," reading, lain on a lawn in front of my father's house. We saw but rarely a passing trap or bicycle. We could always count on the butcher's van on Fridays, and the parson, riding past on his very lean pony (the villagers said he fed it on his old sermons) going visiting. Were I to lie on that lawn as heretofore I should soon be covered with dust. When, as youths, we were hoeing turnips in a field we were once stopped, by the farmer, to see a man on a safety-bicycle pass along the road near to us. Now this same road is a busy thoroughfare not only with local busses and cycles, but with charabancs en-route from different parts of England to the Highlands and other parts of Scotland.

Many villages now have clubs, where billiards are played and other games, a piano played for singing and dancing, a library and news-room and so on. Wireless sets are to be found here and there and many strange questions asked about them. Let me briefly illustrate. *Hodge*. "I think I can receive messages sometimes by means of dreams. I have never read an explanation of dreams that satisfied me. Tell me, why should we not be able to both receive and transmit messages? I think some day we may," and so on. "Did you ever read *The City of Dreadful Night*, asked another "There's one verse in that poem which makes me think "B.V." knew that we were surrounded by music." Here is the "B.V." verse he referred to:—

"Wherever men are gathered, all the air  
Is charged with human feeling, human thought;  
Each shout and cry and laugh, each curse and prayer,  
Are into its vibrations surely wrought;  
Unspoken passion, wordless meditation,  
Are breathed into it with our respiration,  
It is with our life fraught and overfraught."

Here we have evidences of the great work of Bradlaugh and Foote and many others. Our hills and valleys live to sing their praises. The parson is muzzled and the schoolmaster feels in too many cases how impotent he is. The real education of the people proceeds with little thanks to either of them.

And, to conclude; whereas in my young days, the only freedom one had on Sunday was to get drunk, now one can go hiking, cycling, motoring, tennis playing, golfing, fishing, and gardening. We are now responding to the call of the Open Air.

GEORGE WALLACE.

## Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

PAINTED VERSUS PRINTED "BLASPHEMY"

SIR,—Upon my desk, lying cheek by jowl, are the proceedings of two State Trials; one of Henry Sherfield, Recorder of Salisbury, 1632; and the other of some *Freethinkers* impressed, "Prosecuted for Blasphemy."

A comparison of these two law cases is curious, because biblical stories illustrated in painted church windows were considered profane, yet proved divine; while religious pictures of the same kind printed in the *Freethinker* were legally deemed, "blasphemous." In the first prosecution, "Henry Sherfield conspired with factious persons to raid St. Edmund's Church, Salisbury, and therein, beat down and utterly defaced the said painted window, representing the figure of a little old man in a blue and red coat, for God the Father, who is shown making the Sun and Moon, with a pair of compasses in his hand; and, for this sacrilegious offence the Attorney-General demanded Justice."

The verdict of this charge was that: "the painted 'Creation' being agreeable to the 'Books of Moses,' the Bishop of Sarum was awarded £150 damages." In the *Freethinker* case, a like printed picture of Sun and Moon making, compasses withal, in God the Father's hand, was legally decided as "blasphemy," with the printed illustrations of Christ, for which the Editor and his

Assistants were awarded imprisonment. Thus, in 1632, Salisbury's painted glass was blasphemous, but deemed holy; and in 1883, Secular "Saints," as printers of religious subjects, were awarded servitude in Holloway.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

## THE QUESTION OF DIPHTHERIA

SIR,—I have no desire to intervene in the correspondence that has taken place in your columns, but the following from the *British Medical Journal* may be of interest to many:—

N. B. McKinnon and M. A. Ross (*Journ. Amer. Med. Assoc.*, October 26, 1935, p. 1325), states that before the introduction of active immunization by three doses of toxoid, no definite decline in the diphtheria mortality had occurred in Toronto for thirty years. In 1926 and 1927 the mortality rates were respectively 16.2 and 20 per 100,000. After the introduction of immunization the incidence of diphtheria fell to such an extent, that in 1934, in a city of 630,000 inhabitants, there were only 18 cases, and for fifteen months only one death. Up to date no death has occurred among any of the 46,000 children given three doses of toxoid.

AN INTERESTED READER.

The other day I furnished a sentiment in response to a man's request—to wit:—

The noblest work of God? Man.

Who found it out? Man.

I thought it was good, and smart, but the other person didn't.—*Mark Twain*.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday. Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. Current *Freethinkers* on sale.

#### INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Gauden Hotel, Gauden Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. Ralph Fox (Communist Party)—"Communism and Freedom."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor G. H. G. Catlin—"Has Liberalism a Future?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, R. B. Kerr—"Abyssinia, Mussolini and Birth-Control."

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead): 7.0, George Bedborough (London)—"Morality and the Christian Model."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Annual General Meeting of Members. Business Important.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. H. Harrison (Burnley)—"Gods."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield—"Roman Catholic and other Methods of Birth-Control."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12 Shaw Street, Liverpool): 7.0, Demonstration by Local Speakers.

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Is the Lowly Origin of Religion a Ground for Rejecting it?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Emma Goldman—"Traders in Death—the International Munition Clique."

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