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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>The Press and the Public—The Editor</i> - - - -	49
<i>Priests in Private—Mimnermus</i> - - - -	51
<i>Evidences of Organic Evolution—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - -	52
<i>Things Worth Knowing</i> - - - -	53
<i>Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm—James Thomson</i> - - - -	54
<i>The Witch Mania—H. Cutner</i> - - - -	58
<i>The Meanderings of a Sceptic—Alfred E. Bevan</i> - - - -	59
<i>Freethought Anniversaries—Autolycus</i> - - - -	60

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

Views and Opinions

The Press and the Public

"THE PRESS," by A. J. Cummings (John Lane, 3s. 6d.), fits in well with last week's notes on the question of liberty and tyranny in matters of opinion. Mr. Cummings is a man who has spent his life in journalism, and who stands high in the opinion of his fellow craftsmen. He writes, both in this book and in the press, as "one having authority," with an evident pride in his profession and with a sense of responsibility. All that he has to say in praise of the press—its readiness to spend lavishly that it may collect news from all quarters, its skill in the arrangement of that news, and so forth, may readily be admitted. He also praises the modern press for the good done by the introduction into the columns of a newspaper articles by experts in science, or literature, or philosophy, and so stimulate "enormously" "intellectual curiosity." I do not think that anyone will accuse me of undervaluing simplicity of language in the handling of an abstruse subject, but granting some degree of truth in what Mr. Cummings says on this point, it has to be remembered, as a *per contra*, that this writing has often to be "sensationalized," and paragraphed in such a way that, for the mass of newspaper readers, an article on a scientific subject, even by an expert—after it has passed through a sub-editor's hands—is probably read as an article on the wonders of astrology or thought-reading is read. And something might also be said of the tendentious character of many of these articles on science by experts. In a book written for a different audience, the scientist would be careful to keep his own opinions on religion, for example, distinct from his science. In a newspaper he shows no such care, nor is he expected to do so. With the result that with large numbers science becomes a species of wonder-working, positive teaching and unscientific inferences being accepted without the slightest discrimination, and with all save a very few, the scientific interest ends with the article.

A Pressman on his Craft

But I am now concerned with the effect of the modern newspaper press on the formation of public opinion, and on this Mr. Cummings has some very scathing comments. He contrasts the reports of the trial over the burning of the Reichstag, ample, and of such a character that Germans went to English papers to know what really was taking place in their own courts, with the reports of the trial at Moscow of the Metro-Vickers' engineers. Here there was "a continuous torrent of venomous abuse such as the world had not witnessed since the early days of the World War," and he says that "the reporting of the trial in the British press was, in my judgment, the most disreputable in the history of the British press." Another striking example of unscrupulous propaganda was the creation by Lord Northcliffe of that obscenely filthy story, the boiling down by the Germans of their own dead for the purpose of extracting fats. This made its first appearance in the *Times*, then dominated by Northcliffe, and formed part of the Government propaganda. It was all part of the war-lying which resulted in the most disastrous "Peace" in the history of the world, and which came very near to destroying civilization. No country ever paid more dearly for anything or anyone than this country has done for Lord Northcliffe, and the type of paper created here by him. Mr. Kingsley Martin once said that owing to such influences as that of Northcliffe's "broadly speaking the profession of journalism had been turned into a branch of commerce." To this we would only add, and the lower type of commerce, at that; for in commerce there is a code of honour which unless a man observes he runs a great risk of being put out of business. But with the modern "national" journalism the public never seems to remember one dishonesty in its eagerness to experience the titillation of a new one.

* * *

The Greatest Common Measure

What are called "national" newspapers, or are classified under the less reputable name of the "Yellow" press, is American in origin, but owes its domiciling in this country to Lord Northcliffe. Its genesis and the secret of its power are worth tracing. First of all it may be noted that the capacity for sustained thinking and the taste for a consecutive argument are possessed by a minority of the population at any stage of culture. If we were to take the number of good books published at any time during the past three centuries, together with the number of editions issued, and if allowances were made for the larger number of good books now published and the increased population, most people would, I think, be surprised to discover that there are good grounds for concluding that the number of "good" readers has probably not increased—certainly with regard to in-

creased population. One can hardly credit Lord Northcliffe with a perception of this, for to do so would be to grant him the possession of greater knowledge or of a greater fundamental intelligence that he possessed. But he did see one thing which opened a way for exploitation, and to power, and which led to the demoralization of a large section of the British press.

Compulsory elementary education, established in 1870, which meant little more for huge masses of people than the ability to read and write, provided a temptation not to be resisted. Here were millions of people able to read, desirous of reading, and of these only a small proportion were capable of or had the taste for serious reading and sustained thinking. The temptation was too great to be resisted; and the result was—the "Yellow" press. It appealed with equal force to the poorer mental types among the "lower" and the "upper" classes, and the proportions in each class are about the same. Henceforth everything was to be sacrificed to avoid two things. To create sensation and to avoid mental effort on the part of the reader. The leading article was doomed. A single idea covering at most a sixth of the length of the old leading article took its place. Reports of political speeches, or of any other kind that did not offer something that appeared to be sensational were rigorously cut down, or omitted altogether. If in a meeting of the British Association a scientist said that it might be possible to draw supplies of green cheese from the moon, that would be given a prominent place with glaring headlines. Anything else was not news. No matter how important anything was, after one or two prominent appearances it had to yield pride of place to something that would attract immediate attention, and prevent any feeling of weariness on the part of the ideal reader. A political end was served by making sport of all kinds prominent, developing an interest in the movements of theatrical—later film—stars, gossip about people in high places, etc., and thus keep attention from being focussed on things that really mattered. Lord Salisbury is credited with saying that the *Daily Mail* was written by office boys for office boys (rather a cruel comment on office boys), and Lord Northcliffe is said to have ordered his staff to write for servant girls (again a libel on many servant girls). But however described the fact was there. The new journalism catered for an unthinking class, and it reaped its reward. People read the "Yellow" press with appreciation who would have found the *Times* stodgy, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Yorkshire Post*, or the *Glasgow Herald*, too "heavy," or too "dry," for reading. The people without the capacity for sustained thinking were satisfied, those who had that capacity received no incitement to develop it.

* * *

The Daily Dope

If Northcliffism had stopped with one paper, or even with several papers under the same control, the evil would have been comparatively small. But success forced other papers into line, and tempted new ones into existence. Every one of the "national" papers depends for its existence upon advertisements. There is not a paper that could pay its way by revenue from sales. That source of revenue is so comparatively unimportant, that after the war the "Yellow" press was only kept from returning to the halfpenny evening papers by the refusal of the trade to handle them. But the advertiser, who supplies the revenue, wants circulation. Sometimes he dictates policy, as in the case of big combines and big advertisers. This happened when a few years back the Government launched an economy campaign,

and was backed by the papers. Then a number of the big stores united and issued an ultimatum that if papers continued to incite people not to spend money advertisements would be withdrawn. The campaign in favour of not spending was dropped, readers were urged to spend, and they never appeared to even note the change of policy.

As advertisers—the large advertisers—are guided by circulation, other papers found their advertising revenue dropping off. So, in sheer self-defence, they were compelled to follow the Northcliffe lead, and if possible beat his record. Multiple ownership was next established. One paper would be run in Glasgow advocating support of the Government, another in London, from the same ownership, opposing the Government, and a third in the North of England of a midway policy. Snippets of news gave a fine opportunity for misdirection. It was so easy to be right in what was reported, but to be absolutely wrong because of what was left unsaid. It was so easy to conceal the importance of any movement by never noticing it, or by laying stress on its extravagances or errors. Not exactly a new era in the art of lying was established, but a more subtle technique was created. Worse still, gradually the majority of the readers knew the paper was as like to be telling a lie as to tell the truth, but they seemed to accept what was told them. That was the strangest the most curious result. The press should be a vehicle of public opinion. In fact it is a megaphone for the flattering of prejudice or for the furtherance of personal ambitions.

* * *

A Dangerous Public

Now consider the influence of this paragraphic, sensation-hunting policy on the public mind and on public affairs. Broadly we may say that everyone reads one or the other of these papers. Some portion of the public is proof against its influence, being blessed with a kind of immunization that protects them against infection. Another portion would not in any case ever rise above it; they are doomed by nature to remain mere echos in the mental world. But there is another section to whom, in more favourable circumstances a decent school education would serve as an introduction to the larger world of worthwhile reading and liberal thought. To them the newspaper becomes the channel through which they gain their knowledge of the world. They get from the newspapers their knowledge of history, their views of life, and their—in the circumstances—fantastic science, which a little conversation with them proves to be of the quality of medieval necromancy. Fed on paragraphs they develop the paragraphic mind which becomes incapable of bearing the strain of consecutive thinking on any subject whatever. They live from the sensation of to-day—a royal marriage, a royal jubilee, the phenomenon of four or five at a birth, the multiple marriages of a film-star, an international football match, a dispute in the cricket-field—to the expected sensation of to-morrow.

Give any one of this class a very ordinary book on a serious subject to read and it will be returned with the complaint that it is very hard reading, and he has no time to accomplish the feat. Tell him that the keynote of the present is the past, that the past contained the present as the present contains the future, and therefore the understanding of a people lies in a knowledge of their history, their traditions and their relation to other peoples, and he is too bored, too mentally weak even to try to understand what he is being told. He has developed the paragraph mind, and can think only in headlines.

I agree with Mr. Cummings that "the Press of the future will be very much what the public wants it to

be," but the outlook is indeed black if the "national" paper is anything like what the public desires. Mr. Cummings says in closing his book:—

I do not profess to be a man of courage, but if there is one cause for which I would be prepared to die, it is that of helping to preserve my native land from the shame and misery of Fascist dictatorship towards which the first decisive step would be the State control of "that endless book" *The Press*.

The public will have to be very much on the alert if we are to avoid some kind of Government control of the press either by a Fascist or some other form of Government. For there are suspicious agreements and unadvertised conferences between the Government and representatives of the syndicalized press. Most people have forgotten how, up to a particular date, there were scathing, contemptuous references to Ramsay Macdonald in the general press. This went on, day after day, for some time. Then a number of press representatives were invited to meet Mr. Macdonald. The meeting took place, and at once the comments almost ceased. What took place I do not know, but one may suppose that some threat of legislation—perhaps of the kind which guards Judges from personal criticism, perhaps the threat of withholding information from those papers that would not toe the line—was held out to induce comparative silence.

The Press is, I agree, a powerful instrument, and a free press an indispensable one for the maintenance of liberty. But it can only remain such by the creation of a better *educated*, not a better *instructed*, public than we have at present. I do not like to think that the public has the Press it deserves, and that it deserves nothing better than the present "Yellow" one. Let us rather say that the public has the present Press because it does not realize its true nature and its malevolent influence. That at least provides the opportunity for hope for better things.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Priests in Private

"I do not wonder at what men suffer, but I do wonder at what they miss."—*Ruskin*.

"General opinion is no proof of truth, for the generality of men are ignorant."—*Clifford*.

It used to be said that the only books of reminiscences worth reading were those of actors and actresses, because these irresponsible Bohemians were never even expected to be respectable. Nowadays, players are far more respected than prelates, and, unless the human interest is in evidence, even eminent ecclesiastics may go unread, and their books find their way to the waste-paper merchants. The private lives of the clergy usually make the dulllest of dull reading. There are exceptions, however, and in Mr. R. F. Benson's book, *Our Family Affairs*, there are some amusing passages which should appeal far beyond the very narrow circle of persons who regularly trouble the pew-openers.

It appears that Mr. Benson's father, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, had an old-maidish horror of smoking, which he regarded as a vicious and a vulgar habit. His clerical colleagues knew of His Grace's prejudice, and on one occasion, at a Church Conference, when the Archbishop went in one night to the bedroom of one of his colleagues, he found the parson on his knees before the fire. Benson, who was quite a simple soul, thought he was at his devotions. The plain truth was that the parson was smoking a furtive cigar up the chimney.

Not only did this Archbishop's three sons smoke like chimneys, but his wife also indulged in the fragrant weed. Her own son relates, smilingly, how one day, after mountaineering, she complained of a headache, and asked her son for a cigarette. He had not a cigarette, but offered her a pipe and tobacco, and she sat smoking her pipe of peace like an Indian chief. The Archbishop himself would have none of the wicked weed. When a manuscript was laid upon his table, and betrayed that the writer had been enjoying a cigar while in the pangs of authorship, Benson attributed the aroma to the notes being written in a railway smoking-carriage. It is fortunate that His Grace was spared the horror of knowing that a popular Church of England parson was advertised widely as "Woodbine Willie."

Scarcely less entertaining is a volume entitled *In Slums and Society*, by Canon Adderley, who is a peer's son, and who has flirted with the Socialists, and earned the title of the "enfant terrible" of the Established Church. What, however, elderly spinsters may find highly undesirable in an ecclesiastic is a popular asset in a literary man, and some of Adderley's good things make very pleasant reading. A capital story is told of Canon Liddon, who wrote to a clergyman who had humbly confessed to the "borrowing" of a sermon. "Dear Friend, It is a pleasure in these days to hear two clergymen saying the same thing." Bishop Temple, who had been the headmaster of a great public school, and the terror of a generation of youthful scholars, figures here in his most dictatorial and magisterial manner. Adderley once had a letter from him consisting of two short words. "Thank you!" and on another occasion the more expansive and familiar note: "Your second letter shows me that my first was right." A better story of the gruff bishop is his reply to the gushing lady who asked him, "Oh, my lord, I do believe you haven't seen my last baby?" "No, and I don't believe I ever shall."

Adderley tells of a fussy visitor who called on Father Stanton at St. Alban's Church, Holborn, and asked if a large statue of the Virgin Mary had miraculous qualities. The clerical showman looked at the visitor and replied: "If you put down half a crown, I dare say the statue will wink." But, after all, the stories that are likely to attract generally are those concerning the busy world, and not the cloisters of superstition. Very neat is the anecdote of Sir Andrew Clark and Sir James Paget, two famous physicians, who breakfasted at the same house. Sir Andrew remarked: "I see, Paget, that you haven't many patients; there are few letters." Sir James replied: "I notice that most of your correspondence has a black edge." One of the best stories concerns that ill-fated genius Oscar Wilde, who once boasted that there was no subject on which he could not speak at once. Someone suggested "Queen Victoria." "She's not a subject," retorted Wilde. Adderley has a gift of repartee of his own. A bishop once roundly accused the Socialist Canon of "playing to the gallery." Adderley replied: "The Church has been playing to the stalls and dress circle long enough."

Indeed, he disarms criticism by his buoyancy and frankness. Some of his reflections are worth quoting, such as: "Converted Tories make the best revolutionaries"; "Extreme Protestants entirely lack humour"; "The way of theology is marked by slinky milestones." This is one of the very few books of clerical reminiscences which an ordinary book-lover will find readable, and its justification is that its author, like the Reverend Laurence Sterne, is so much more of a man than a theologian. Life

has interested and fascinated him, and the written page echoes some of the enjoyment. The clergy too often are responsible for much grief and repining, and seem to be waiting with ever-gaping and insatiable jaws to condemn all the things that ordinary men approve. It is, therefore, an added pleasure to turn from their usual extraordinarily mixed and tough diet to something lighter and more soothing.

MIMNERMUS.

Evidences of Organic Evolution

EVOLUTIONARY concepts are at least as old as early Greece. Thales and Empedocles are among its protagonists while Aristotle clearly realized the struggle for existence in the world of life. "Animals are at war with one another," he avers, "when they live in the same place and eat the same food. If the food be not sufficiently abundant they fight for it even with those of the same kind."

But in the darkness that descended on Europe with the overthrow of the classical civilizations science practically disappeared. In modern times, however, the study of Nature was resumed and the classification of Ray and the embryology of Harvey serve as landmarks in its revival.

Another man of mark was the Swedish naturalist, Linnæus, whose system of classification of floral and faunal organisms is still retained. This system restored order where chaos have previously prevailed. For naturalists were almost overwhelmed by the multiplicity of living forms, and the theory of special creation, which had so long bemused the minds of men prolonged the erroneous belief that organic Nature remained substantially what it was when it left the hands of God. This error was one from which Linnæus himself failed to escape, and he declared that there existed as many genera and species as on creation's primal day. Yet even he was impressed by the marked variations displayed by many families of plants, notably in the bramble, but he decided to adopt the doctrine of the fixity of species and his example was followed by his immediate successors. Whether Linnæus entertained doubts is uncertain. In his day theological dogma brooked no contradiction, and the Swedish botanist had already been charged with indecency when he proved that flowers are the sexual organs of plants.

Buffon, in France, went further than his eighteenth century contemporary. He stressed the struggle for existence and the elimination of the unfit, and also noted the influences of isolation and artificial selection, and the transformations due to food, climate, and environmental conditions as a whole. But academic and religious orthodoxy became alarmed and Buffon was compelled to recant.

Still, the discovery of fossil remains attracted considerable interest. In the sixteenth century, Da Vinci discerned that petrified remains stored in the rocks were really those of plants and animals that once had lived on earth. Yet most men continued to explain them as mere freaks of Nature, but as science progressed the real meaning of fossils became obvious. Even so, when shells were seen in Alpine deposits they were regarded as the remains of creatures drowned during the Biblical Deluge.

Then the great anatomist Cuvier (1769-1832) laid firm foundations for the science of palæontology. He demonstrated that the great majority of fossil forms were the relics of animals quite distinct from living species, and that our planet had been peopled in past ages by a succession of changed animal and vegetable

organisms. Unfortunately, Cuvier compromised and enunciated the theory that a succession of creations had occurred in former times. For, at different epochs, a catastrophe had taken place after which an entirely new order of flora and fauna had appeared. Volcanic upheavals were invoked to account for these catastrophies.

Hutton's geological views were then developed by Lyell, whose immortal *Principles*, which traced the past history of the earth with its multifarious transformations to causes similar to those still in operation, revolutionized the science of the globe. Again, Cuvier's contention was also confronted by adherents of the doctrine of descent, whose most famous names are those of Lamarck, Goethe, Erasmus Darwin, and Geoffroy St. Hilaire.

Despite the cogency of their case, the evolutionists made little impression, and the then reigning systems of German metaphysics were intensely opposed to their teachings. To Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, such suggestions appeared daringly and wickedly materialistic and scarcely merited serious notice.

In England, however, evolutionary ideas were in the air. Several pioneers adumbrated the doctrine, while our great philosopher, Herbert Spencer, was in the early 'fifties a firmly convinced evolutionist, but even he proved unable to convert Huxley to his views.

But a change came over the spirit of the scene with the appearance of Darwin's masterpiece, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, in 1859. Then the conflict raged and, for a time, with great bitterness, especially on the religious side. Still, evolution won the day and Darwin lived to see the leading scientists of the world converted to the theory of descent. To-day, if less importance is attached to natural selection as an evolutionary factor than formerly, while some biologists incline to discard it entirely, all, without exception, are agreed as to the indisputable truth of evolution itself.

Palæontology teaches that in Ordovician and Silurian ages the fishes were the only representatives of backboneed life. Countless centuries passed before the Amphibians appeared in the Devonian and reigned supreme in the Carboniferous Period. In later Mesozoic times came the prolonged supremacy of the Reptilian order, and from this ancestry birds and mammals were destined to emerge. This seems to indicate a successive development of higher and nobler types of life.

In addition to the evidences afforded by fossil remains, comparative anatomy supplies many others. As Dr. Bavinck urges in his important work, *The Anatomy of Modern Science* (Bell, 1932): "If we compare, for example, the fore-limbs of the various groups of vertebrates, particularly the mammalian orders and families, it strikes us at once that they are all built on the same lines, no matter whether they form ordinary legs for walking, or wings (birds), flying membranes (bats), flippers (penguins), excavating organs (mole) etc. We find always the same bones in them, although often misformed and degenerate, the toes only, varying between one and five. These relationships cannot be understood in any other way than by assuming that the specialized organs have developed from a more or less fundamental type." Nor is man himself any exception to this rule, for not only are his anatomical structures the counterpart of apes' and monkeys' organs, but those of all higher mammalian forms.

Vestigial organs also testify to the truth of evolution. Animal structures not merely instance pronounced evidences of advance, but frequently provide proof of degeneration. Organs that fall into disuse tend to dwindle. The disused eyes of the mole,

an animal that tunnels in the soil in search of earth-worms, have completely disappeared in the South European species, while the mole of northern latitudes still retains a vestigial or rudimentary eye under its skin. The shoulder-bones of the blind worm; probably the vermiform appendix, and certainly the nictitating membrane, a relic of a third eyelid in man, the pelvis of snakes and whales, vestigial organs of locomotion in several species of lizards are a mere modicum only of the atrophied structures that occur. Obviously, the only rational interpretation of these phenomena, the still dwindling remnants of formerly functioning organs, is the descent of present-day organisms from ancestors in which these atrophied structures were fully functional.

The world of life displays indubitable signs of near relationship, on the one hand, or more remote consanguinity, on the other. As Bayinik phrases it: "This systematic relationship requires a reason to be found for it, just as every other single fact of Nature. We cannot be satisfied to say that it is just so, that we are naturally compelled to include the beast of prey, for example, in the families of cats, dogs, bears, etc.: we are obliged to ask why these various species within a certain genus or family are so like one another that we are obliged to collect them into groups of this sort." One reply only is possible, for the facts all conspire to point to community of descent—to descent from more generalized ancestors.

As already intimated, the record of the earth's past life preserved in the sedimentary rocks conclusively proves that distinctly different forms of plant and animal life flourished in earlier ages. The more remote the period, the more unlike the floral and faunal populations of the globe, with a steadily increasing approximation to living forms, as the æons rolled on. Then, in the Tertiary Epoch, when the earth began to assume its present form, the relationship between now-extant organisms and those of that period become clearly apparent. In the course of our planet's career, however, not families only, but complete orders and classes have perished beyond recall, and others have arisen and taken their place. And despite degeneration, the history of the living world has proved in the main progressive.

In conclusion, we may recall the fact that the whale has long been regarded as the modified descendant of a four-footed ancestor: a decision necessitated by that mammal's anatomy. Until comparatively recently, however, no proofs of the transformation that had obviously taken place were afforded by fossil remains. But now, petrified skeletons have come to light in Egypt, which are plainly those of ancestors of the living whale, and these fossils, which form a nearly complete series, reveal the gradual degeneration of the limbs.

T. F. PALMER.

LIBERTY BY VIGILANCE

In the Middle Ages the state of society was widely different. Rarely and with great difficulty did the wrongs of individuals come to the knowledge of the public. A man might be illegally confined during many months in the castle of Carlisle or Norwich, and no whisper of the transaction might reach London. It is highly probable that the rack had been many years in use before the great majority of the nation had the least suspicion that it was ever employed. Nor were our ancestors by any means so much alive as we are to the importance of maintaining great general rules. We have been taught by long experience that we cannot, without danger, suffer any breach of the Constitution to pass unnoticed.—*Macaulay's "England,"* Chapter I.

Things Worth Knowing*

XXV.

THE CHILD IN SOCIAL EVOLUTION

OBSERVERS have frequently noted the extreme precocity of mental development among the children of primitive peoples. The faculties seem to ripen prematurely as compared with those of the children of historical and literate peoples. This is probably caused by the exigencies of life that surround the primitive child. The bareness and meagreness of the culture . . . forces the youngster to bestir himself immediately for self-support. Self-reliance, rather than reliance upon the social heritage and accumulated surplus means, sharpens the senses and provokes the mental faculties. There is also evident a marked tendency to learn to grasp things that are newly presented. The capacity to learn seems more highly accentuated than in the modern child. The potentialities for mental improvement and advancement, we are told, are as great as those of the modern child. Thus, in New Zealand it has been found that Maori children, when they can be induced to work, are quite equal to their white schoolfellows. Fijian boys educated in Sydney have been proved to be equal to the average; Tongan boys who have never left their islands write shorthand and solve problems in higher mathematics. Of the Bantu youth it has been said also that "in mission schools children of early age are found to keep pace with those of white parents. In some respects they are the higher of the two." The Australian children "learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, more easily than white children." It does not appear, therefore, that an essentially different type of mentality is necessary to comprehend a developed culture with its language, ways, customs and societal processes. A body of culture is a veneer which must be acquired anew, and must be transmitted artificially to each generation.

The perspicacity of the primitive child comes to a dead halt, however, about puberty. On this a unanimity of opinion also exists. The declaration is made of the Africans that, "after the native reaches the age of twelve or fifteen his faculties, which are at first fairly quick, grow blunt and dull, his understanding becomes sluggish, he withdraws into himself, the childishness of his primitive nature crystallizes, and henceforth he will never exceed the height to which the swift progress of his early days has carried him." Torday believes therefore that "the highest period of the intellectual life of the negro is between the ages of ten and twelve."

. . . Many reasons have been assigned to explain this "mental ossification," and decay of the native child at puberty. The physical exhaustion consequent upon excessive lubricity is offered by Maughan as an explanation of the lethargy of mind. Torday contends that "the highest period of intellectual life of the negro is between the ages of ten and twelve; after that age he falls into a slough of insensibility, and his powers fall off." . . . In speaking of the Baholoholo of Central Africa, Schmidt offers a summary of the problem. "Undoubtedly extracted from his milieu, he would become an intellectual machine of the first order, a factor of great progress. Unfortunately, abuse of the pipe, intoxicating drinks, sexual indulgences and the fear of

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

sorcerers rapidly stifle all his nascent talent. At twenty years he is nothing but an ignorant savage whose promise has been forever destroyed." All this excessive over-indulgence is apparently, therefore, an aspect of the culture of the folk so that it is well to say that the falling-off in mental development is caused by the limited powers and extent of the folk-ways and the mores of the group.

The development of the individual is bound up securely with the give-and-takes of the social contacts. The child of any culture, however well elaborated this may be, is born an utter stranger to these ways, customs, institutions, and beliefs of the folk. There is no reason to suppose that a more marked disposition toward the approved conduct in life is the endowment of the modern child than it is of the child of the simpler society. Children of all races start on a practical plane of equality, biologically. Culture, like clothing itself, must be fastened upon the child making for an early conformity. Social pressure inevitably tends slowly to attach to the child those marks as in the system of naming, mutilations, reception to the folk and its attendant spirits, which make him typical and recognizable as a member of the tribe. In this way the cohesion of the folk is reaffirmed by conferring upon its new arrivals the insignia of membership in it.

Until the child has assumed these preliminary marks and forms of group-fellowship, he is hardly considered human. Without the benefit of the ways and modes of his people he is an "infant." Infancy, in the social sense, is the period in which the child waits upon his society to be slowly drawn within its portals. During these years each child relearns afresh the technique of the ways of self-maintenance and grasps unwittingly the system of sentiments which make for the preservation of the coherence of folk-lore. These years are fewer in the societies of simpler culture as there is less to be learned. As society progresses, infancy is prolonged and the process of socialization becomes necessarily more systematized, more tortuous and more specialized. At the same time a larger and larger part of the efforts of the group—a larger number of persons and a more extensive material equipment—is reserved for this process.

We have mentioned also the observable signs by which the child attains worth and a semblance of maturity in the cultural sense. Growth is punctuated by definitive ceremonial observances as the child first assumes clothing, takes up hunting, begins to speak intelligibly and the like. Without a written language, notice of these significant steps can be brought to consciousness and retained in the memory of the tribe's fellows by the most direct methods of bombarding and striking the senses through feasts, bodily disfigurements, and ceremonies. It is not long, however, before the child is independently bestirring himself by the side of the physically adult; he is socially mature, and has acquired the culture of the group; for the child in its development generally recapitulates the culture history of its folk. In the more developed societies, by virtue of cultural aids alone, for example, and elaborate language-apparatus, the recapitulation may be appreciably telescoped and many steps of culture history omitted. Where this is not extensive, however . . . it is not long before the infantile dependency is dropped, a care-free childhood left behind, and the child becomes the man. At the same time the mental development follows the same path. The repressive weight of a harsh struggle for food and shelter with the aid of a thin culture-stratum confines the individual early to a stagnated monotony and interests.

The child . . . is heir to a culture which has been wrought by the efforts of countless individuals that have preceded him, fused into a type or organic consistency. This is as real an inheritance as the aspects and elements of the geographical environment itself. It is necessary for the child to acquaint himself with this heritage. To accomplish this there is no need to recapitulate the trials and struggles of the evolution of the folk's culture history *in toto*. The set-backs and failures are omitted, and the child is granted the net results of this long history of trial and error in the efforts of his forbears to accommodate their lives to the environment of nature and of other men. Each generation is indeed a stranger to its culture, but this crystallization of the culture-history of the folk handed down soon elevates it into a social setting from which to start the life-activity of a new day.

The Child in Primitive Society,
by N. MILLER, pp. 124-30.

Story of a Famous Old Jewish Firm

MANY thousand years ago, when the Jews first started in business, the chief of their merchants was a venerable and irascible old gentleman named Jah. The Jews have always been excellent traders, keen to scent wealth, subtle to track it, unweary to pursue it, strong to seize it, tenacious to hold it; and the most keen, subtle, untiring, strong, tenacious of them all, was this Jah. The patriarchs of his people paid him full measure of the homage which Jews have always eagerly paid to wealth and power, and all their most important transactions were carried out through him. In those antique times people lived to a very great age, and Jah is supposed to have lived so many thousands of years that one may as well not try to count them. Perhaps it was not one Jah that existed all this while, but the house of Jah; the family, both for pride and profit, preserving through successive generations the name of its founder. Certain books have been treasured by the Jews as containing exact records of the dealings of this lordly merchant (or house) both with the Jews themselves and with strangers. Many people in our times, however, have ventured to doubt the accuracy of these records, arguing that some of the transactions therein recorded it would have been impossible to transact, that others must have totally ruined the richest of merchants, that the accounts often contradict each other, and that the system of book-keeping generally is quite unworthy of a dealer so truthful and clear-headed as Jah is affirmed to have been. The records are so ancient in themselves, and they treat of matters so much more ancient still, that it is not easy to find other records of any sort with which to check their accounts. Strangely enough the most recent researches have impugned the accuracy of the most ancient of these records; certain leaves of a volume called the *Great Stone Book* having been brought forward to contradict the very first folio of the ledger in which the dealings of Jah have been posted up according to the Jews. It may be that the first few folios, like the early pages of most annals, are somewhat mythical; and the present humble compiler (who is not deep in the affairs of the primeval world, and who, like the late lamented Captain Cuttle with *his* large volume, is utterly knocked up at any time by four or five lines of the *Great Stone Book*) will prudently not begin at the beginning, but skip it with great comfort and pleasure, especially as many and learned men are now earnest students of this beginning. We will, therefore, if you please, take for granted the facts that at some time, in some manner, Jah created his wonderful business, and that early in his career he met with a great misfortune, being compelled, by the villainy of all those with whom he had dealings, to resort to a wholesale liquidation, which left him so poor, that for some time he had not a house in the world, and his establishment was reduced to four male and as many female servants.

He must have pretty well recovered from this severe shock when he entered into the famous covenant or contract with Abraham and his heirs, by which he bound himself to deliver over to them at a certain, then distant, period, the whole of the valuable landed property called Canaan, on condition that they should appoint him the sole agent for the management of their affairs. In pursuance of this contract, he conducted that little business of the flocks and herds for Jacob against one Laban; and afterwards, when the children of Abraham were grown very numerous, he managed for them that other little affair, by which they spoiled the Egyptians of jewels of silver and jewels of gold; and it is even asserted that he fed and clothed the family for no less than forty years in a country where the commissariat was a service of extreme difficulty.

At length the time came when he was to make over to them the Land of Canaan, for this purpose evicting the several families then in possession thereof. The whole of the covenanted estate he never did make over to them, but the Jews freely admit that this was through their own fault. They held this land as mortgaged to him, he pledging himself not to foreclose while they dealt with him faithfully and fulfilled all the conditions of the covenant. They were to pay him ten per cent per annum interest, with sundry other charges, to put all their affairs into his hands, to have no dealings whatsoever with any rival merchants, etc., etc. Under this covenant the Jews continued in possession of the fine little property of Canaan for several hundred years, and they assert that this same Jah lived and conducted his business throughout the whole period. But, as I have ventured to suggest, the long existence of the house of Jah may have been the sum total of the lives of a series of individual Jahs. The Jews could not have distinguished the one from the other; for it is a strange fact that Jah himself, they admit, was never seen. Perhaps he did not affect close contact with Jews. Perhaps he calculated that his power over them would be increased by mystery; this is certain, that he kept himself wholly apart from them in his private office, so that no one was admitted even on business. It is indeed related that one Moses (the witness to the execution of the covenant) caught a glimpse of him from behind, but this glimpse could scarcely have sufficed for identification; and it is said, also, that at certain periods the chief of the priesthood was admitted to consultation with him; but although his voice was then heard, he did not appear in person—only the shadow of him was seen, and everyone will allow that a shadow is not the best means of identification. And in further support of my humble suggestion it may be noted that in many and important respects the later proceedings attributed to Jah differ extremely in character from the earlier; and this difference cannot be explained as the common difference between the youth and maturity and senility of one and the same man, for we are expressly assured that Jah was without change—by which we are not to understand that either through thoughtlessness or parsimony he never had small cash in his pocket for the minor occasions of life; but that he was stubborn in his will, unalterable in his ideas, persistent in his projects and plans.

The records of his dealings at home with the Jews, and abroad with the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Philistines, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Edomites, and other nations, as kept by the Jews themselves, are among the strangest accounts of a large general business which have ever been put down in black on white. And in nothing are they more strange than in the unsullied candour with which the Jews always admit and proclaim that it was their fault, and by no means the fault of Jah, whenever the joint business went badly, and narrate against themselves the most astonishing series of frauds and falsehoods, showing how they broke the covenant, and attempted to cheat the other party in every imaginable way, and, in order to ruin his credit, conspired with foreign adventurers of the worst character—such as MM. Baal, Ashtaroth, and Moloch. Jah, who gave many proofs of a violent and jealous temper, and who was wont to sell up other debtors in the most heartless way, appears to have been very patient and

lenient with these flagitious Jews. Yet with all his kindness and long-suffering he was again and again forced to put executions into their houses, and throw themselves into prison; and at length, before our year One, having, as it would seem, given up all hope of making them deal honestly with him, he had put certain strict Romans in possession of the property to enforce his mortgage and other rights.

(Reprinted).

JAMES THOMSON.

(To be continued)

Acid Drops

What is, on the whole, a very good article in favour of toleration, appears in the *Star* for January 17. It is by the Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Matthews. But is not quite as convincing as it might be, and for one reason. There is upon the Statute Book a law against "Blasphemy." There is also the Common Law of Blasphemy. Is Dr. Matthews in favour of the abolition of these laws? Nothing but religious intolerance created these laws, and nothing but religious intolerance maintains them. Dr. Matthews may reply in the customary insincere manner that the law of blasphemy only operates to prevent people being outraged. But there is a law against language calculated to create a breach of the peace, there is one against the use of indecent or abusive language. These laws are adequate in every case but religion. More than that the only religion considered by the blasphemy laws is the Christian religion—and not all of that. For one may talk as one pleases about, say the Mass, and although one may be charged with using abusive or indecent language, or creating a breach of the peace, the blasphemy laws would not apply. Now will Dr. Matthews be good enough to say whether he is willing to have religious opinion placed on the same level as opinions on other subjects? If he is not what is the use of talking about a belief in toleration? The blasphemy laws are created and maintained by Christian intolerance.

One other thing. Dr. Matthews says that toleration is a recent thing. That is not so. There were no laws in ancient Rome against the free expression of opinion. So far as Western Europe is concerned, that came in with Christianity.

We so often read of Magistrates asking witnesses irrelevant and occasionally impertinent questions, that we gladly record the admirable conversation between the Lambeth Magistrate and a child witness last week. This question and this answer—as well as the Magistrate's comment—should be brought to the notice of all who imagine that the kissing of a book or calling on a Mythical Judge in Heaven have anything to do with Evidence:—

Mr. Barrington Ward (Lambeth magistrate, to girl of nine years): Do you know what it is to tell the truth?
 Girl: To say what did happen.

Mr. Barrington Ward: The best definition of truth I have ever heard.

Pious reviewers of historical works have always to keep a weather-eye wide open in favour of religion. They dare not miss an opportunity of jibing at the author if he dare imply progress is possible without Jesus or a belief in God in some way. Thus, in the *Church Times*, the critic of Mr. H. A. L. Fisher's *History of Europe*, Vol. III., admits it is "well written" and "far superior" to the preceding volumes. But he contends, "the author's Modernism pervades all his chapters on French and English history," and he objects that Mr. Fisher has "distinct sympathy for the anti-clerical monarchy of Louis Philippe," and "little sympathy with the Church" in England. Actually "nothing is written of the history or effects of the Oxford Movement." But we do have "a eulogistic reference to Sir Robert Morant, the Civil Servant who was responsible for anti-Church provisions in the Education

Act of 1902"—and so on. Mr. Fisher's work is a valuable contribution to the historical literature, and it is good to see, as his critic recognizes, that he is not afraid of clearly expressing his opinion about the Church even when they are quite unfavourable.

In a *Century of Municipal Progress*, edited by Prof. Laski and others, Dr. Hammond has some interesting remarks on the state of English towns, one hundred years ago. They "were sunk in a condition of barbarism that would have put a citizen of the Roman Empire to blush." Nearly everybody had small pox or typhoid due almost entirely to the horrible insanitary conditions of the drains, and the filthy water one was obliged to drink. Clean streets were, of course, almost unknown, and in the whole of Lancashire there was only one public bath. One can imagine the state of the food one had to eat in those happy times. Yet Christianity had been in control for over 1,200 years in this country, and evangelists like Whitefield and Wesley had "converted" thousands of citizens to Christianity in addition to the huge numbers who were already saved. We are told that "local government" has changed the awful conditions under which the greater part of the population of this country lived a century ago. It was not Christianity but "local government"—how very strange!

That eminent Churchman, Lord Hugh Cecil, "earnestly hopes that the Convocations will absolutely reject the ministry of women in the ordinary services of the Church or in preaching." He does not altogether object to an Order of Deaconesses, so long as "it be limited to the functions which it performed in the apostolic and primitive age"; and he cannot take "very seriously" the suggestion that a deaconess should be called "Reverend." Even Lord Hugh Cecil, who is not particularly distinguished for humour, feels "such a title would only bring ridicule on the holders, and is susceptible of the flippant comment, that a head deaconess should be called "Venerable." In addition, "as Holy Scriptures and the practice of the whole Catholic Church" "are clearly against the leadership of women in the normal public devotions of the Church," it looks as if the noble lord does not like women as preachers at all. But it is fairly certain that if women do really want to preach they will, Lord Hugh Cecil notwithstanding.

Fr. W. H. G. Holmes, in a sermon he recently preached, filled it with references to the Holy Child, the Man of Sorrows, the Babe, the Man of Joys, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Eternal Youth, Strong Son of God, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Everlasting Father—all, of course, referring to the one comprehensive "Catholic Christ." Whether a truly devout evangelistic Protestant would like his Saviour to be called a Catholic Christ is another matter. But Fr. Holmes must be a Godsend even to the Catholic Church—Anglo and Roman. There is nothing in the Gospels he does not believe in literally. No half-baked Modernism for him. What a Blessed and Holy Father he must be in the eyes of Heaven!

According to the Report of the American Institute of Social and Religious Research, there are 200 Protestant denominations in the U.S.A. It seems also that many of these denominations are not so particular about theological doctrines as one would expect. They don't want their ministers to be "Catholic," but he must be "free," and "honest," and "can go where grief is." The minister himself is put up in competition with others—sometimes as many as two hundred; and he has to appeal to the pulpit committees personally with his credentials—often rather an undignified procedure for an educated man, when he is educated, that is. He must believe "in his wares, must be loyal to his organization, can advertize his product, balance his budget, and show dividends in increased membership." The author of *The Man Whom Nobody Knows*, who proclaimed Jesus as the greatest Business Boss who ever lived, must be in raptures with this kind of thing happening in his native country.

All the same, Christian prospects are not very rosy in the land of Big Business. The annual statistics of the Episcopal Church show a falling off of no less than 30 per cent in receipts during the past three years. In addition there were 125 fewer applications for Holy Orders; 3,099 fewer baptisms; 5,466 fewer confirmations; 550 fewer Sunday School teachers; and 3,909 fewer Sunday School pupils. We are told that "the Church is in the doldrums of paying the penalty for years of worldly respectability, expansion without instruction and 'boom' psychology."

To cope a little with all this loss of faith, all the Methodists in America are amalgamating "into one body with 7,200,000 communicants and 30,000,000 adherents," called the "Methodist Church." The Secretary of the new body characterizes it as "the most epochal event in all Protestantism since the Reformation." It may be; but we hazard the prophecy that it will not save Christianity even in America. Nothing can save a worn-out creed.

Lord Middleton, in his presidential address at the North of England Education Conference made a strong attack on the secularization of education "as a most sinister thing and highly dangerous." He claimed that before the break-up of the Church four centuries ago, "a man might travel almost all over Europe and find a form of worship much like his own, and a common language." Yes, and it was a big question if he ever came back. The lawlessness, the injustice, and the ferocity of those happy times are well known; and many travellers must have paid with their lives in their endeavour to go over "almost all Europe." The secularization of education is the only fair thing all round; and we are glad to see that it is slowly coming to be accepted. Lord Middleton and his friends should themselves pay for the particular brand of religion they believe in, to be taught in our State-aided schools. We would never oppose that.

Dr. W. B. Selbie, writing in the *Christian World* on "The Doctrine of (Divine) Guidance," is not very flattering to "the great puritan tradition" which, "rested ultimately on a profound belief in the guidance of God." He says, "It led to infantilism on the one hand, and to fatalism on the other." Dr. Selbie—like all Modernists, does not therefore repudiate this absurd belief. No, he still believes in some Divine Guidance, but nowadays it takes the form that "God trains us to use our judgment and intelligence." Of course "the responsibility of our actions must always lie with ourselves." Dr. Selbie seems to be using the word "God," when what he means is the ordinary education which we obtain by instruction and experience. But is it quite fair to saddle God with the judgment and intelligence of the average Christian? One really ought not to do this without the clearest of evidence. To saddle God with the responsibility for cosmic events is bad enough, but to say that the intelligence manifested by the average parson is a product of God's training, is too, too much.

The Rev. Stanley Jones (author of *The Christ of the Indian Road*) sadly deplores the disunion of Christendom. He looks at the statistics and says: Look how big we are—"The Christians of the world hold the balance of power in their hands." Fortunately for mankind there is no near prospect of Catholics loving Protestants or of Greek Church ritualists tolerating Hard Shell Baptists. Mr. Jones suggests that all the Churches should at once act as though they were united. But his only definite step to be put in hand forthwith would be the singularly absurd and useless one of printing on the denominational note-paper "The Church of Christ—Church of England Branch," or whatever denomination the "Branch" happened to be. And we suppose when inquirers asked for the name and address of headquarters they would be told to go to—heaven! Mr. Jones must first get his One Church before he can make "Branches" of it. Heretical "branches," let us say Mormons and Unitarians, would no doubt be "cut off" and flung to the flames.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Advertising and circulating the *Freethinker*, D. Fisher, 38.

C. C. DOVE.—Thanks for suggestion, but we do not think it would work out as you anticipate. The expense would probably exceed the outlay.

F. RAYMOND.—Glad to see that 28 years of reading the *Freethinker* has not weakened your sense of humour.

A. A. NOAKES.—Mr. Cohen would have no objection to visiting Bristol if proper arrangements could be made for a lecture. Let us know what can be done. A date might be found towards the end of March.

We wish to apologize for errors in Mr. C. C. Dove's article, "Some Martyrs of Edessa," in last week's issue of the *Freethinker* (page 44, col. 2) for *Asroene* read *Osroene*; and (p. 45, col. 1) read "Angar (i.e., Abgar), prince of Edessa," and omit the inverted commas before the next word; also, for *Osdroene* read *Osroene*; for *Lucius Pietus* read *Lusius Pietus*; and for *Pontres* read *Pontus*.

WILL W. MAURICE, from whom we received a manuscript some time ago, please send his present address to the editor.

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

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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

We print elsewhere in this issue a letter from the Leicester Secular Society, with reference to its recent appeal for £2,000 in order to clear the society of debt. We regret to see that less than half the required sum has been subscribed to date. Times are bad with many, but we would like to see the sum subscribed brought much nearer the total required. The Leicester Secular Society has during its existence done excellent work, and has provided a platform of which Leicester might well be proud. The Hall is a very fine one, and is situated in one of the principal thoroughfares in the city. Any of our readers who wish to know more about the Society, its resources, and its aims—financial and otherwise—may receive all information on writing the Secretary, H. Anderson, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester.

We have received very many appreciative letters on our recent pamphlet, *Humanity and War*, and a few days ago we had a very generous offer from a friend who called at this office. He wished to pay for the cost of printing an edition of two thousand copies, for the purpose of sending them out to selected addresses in different parts of the country. He will also bear the cost of postage—one penny per copy. He considers this will not only get the pamphlet into very many hands that would not otherwise receive it, but may lead to the purchase and reading of other Freethought literature. The offer is a most generous one, and advantage is being taken of it.

It is just possible that some friends in other parts of the country would like to co-operate in this effort to the extent of adding, say, 100 copies and upwards to the number distributed in this manner. We will undertake the selection of the addresses and also the dispatch of the pamphlets, if desired. But the postage must be paid by the sender. We are inserting this paragraph because the cost of printing will be considerably decreased by printing a larger number of copies. But replies must be sent at once, as we shall be going to press with the pamphlet in the course of a few days after the issue of this number.

Last Sunday's weather was not of the kind that encouraged people to leave their firesides, and in the circumstances, there was a good gathering in the Preston Hall to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture. An audience of between four and five hundred in such conditions may be reckoned good. The members of the Branch had worked hard to make the meeting a success, and it is to be hoped they felt repaid for their efforts. It was evident that the lecture was appreciated, and there was, we understand, a good sale of literature.

While writing the "Views and Opinions" in this issue we received a letter from a reader containing a suggestion that has often been made before. We notice it here because it has some bearing upon the subject dealt with in our notes this week. The suggestion is that the *Freethinker* would get into more hands, and so might secure a larger circulation if it had some other title, one a little less suggestive of the cloven hoof. It is thought that in this way we might get the paper displayed, and very many religious people to read it. Whereas it is so well-known that many avoid it, and even when it is not known the title is enough to scare timid people.

We remember a similar suggestion being made to us by the late Sir John Sumner, who offered to do what he could financially, to put the paper on a paying basis if we could see our way to adopt this suggestion. The reply we made then, will, in substance, serve now. We have no doubt whatever that if we altered the name of the paper, changed the nature of its contents, and made it a paper similar, say to *John Bull* or a journal of literary gossip, or concerned with obvious, but quite respectable social or legal reforms, we might with confidence count on soon making the paper pay its way. But the paper is not run as a financial venture, and its aim is not merely to rank as one of the papers working along the lines indicated. The *Freethinker* is the only paper in this country that is doing the work it does. As Bernard Shaw said, there is no other paper doing this work. It has been run at a loss for nearly fifty-five years, and I see no prospect of making it pay its way until public opinion is of such a kind that our work is no longer necessary. The *Freethinker* has won its way, has held its course, and has gained such warm friendships as few other papers in this country can claim, as the *Freethinker*, not as a merely liberal journal, or as a paper that can comfort weak-kneed believers in such a way that they may retain their fundamental superstitions while thinking they are genuinely liberated minds. The name itself has become an asset, something worth retaining, and we have said so much against sailing under false or deceptive names, that we ought to be the last to engage in any such subterfuge. Nor do we believe that Christians are so stupid as to be deceived into reading the *Freethinker*—if it adopted some ambiguous or misleading name—under the impression they were reading a religious or a "respectable" journal. The *Freethinker* will continue as it began, relying with absolute confidence upon its friends in all parts of the world. It has never had cause to doubt their loyalty.

We are asked to announce that the address of the Secretary of the Liverpool Branch N.S.S. will for the future be, Mr. S. R. A. Ready, 34 Lancaster Avenue, Great Crosby, Liverpool.

The Witch Mania

III.

NOTHING did more to foster the belief in the actual existence of the Devil than the Christian Church. As the vast majority of the people in Europe were for many centuries hopelessly uneducated, and unable to read, she employed artists and sculptors to represent visually the Evil One. I have already referred to the many tableaux of the Devil found sculptured on medieval churches; but in addition, his portrait must have been painted on thousands of pictures, and, for those who were unable to purchase paintings, popular prints were produced, filled with all the horrors of hell that the imagination of artists could desire. In Grillot de Givry's *Witchcraft Magic and Alchemy*, many of these prints are reproduced; and one can quite understand how ignorant and credulous people must have reacted to them. "Cheek by jowl," says de Givry, "with theology, the science of God, demonology, the science of God's hideous rival, the Devil, was written up over the very portals of the churches which housed the Throne of Truth. There was small room here for doubting the existence of all that obscure and invisible world where the devilish host was arrayed against the angelic." Books were also written about Hell, and no doubt read out to the various congregations, and everything possible was done to prove that there could be no doubt whatever about the existence of the Devil and all his infernal crew—to say nothing of the fires and other exquisite tortures of Hell itself. Nowadays, we laugh at any picture showing the mouth of Hell, for example, or the Devil poking the eternal fires in his abode, or the various representations of the thousands of different evil spirits attending his Infernal Highness.

But these things were very real to the Christian-sodden people of medieval times; and prints showing the Archangel Michael crushing Lucifer, or Jesus descending into Hell, or Demons and Angels contending for the soul of a dying man, or the punishment of Judas, or the temptation of St. Anthony (this was a favourite subject, as it gave scope to the most ingenious inventions of devils), were all extremely popular. Moreover, the Devil himself appeared, as is well known, to Martin Luther, and had an inkpot thrown at him, without, it should be observed, making him any blacker than Christian theologians painted him. Luther's was only one of the pure souls harassed by the demon.

Even Aquinas, and St. Dominic, and St. Francis of Assisi, and many others were troubled in this way, all coming out of the ordeal unscathed, of course. According to the various pious narrators who hastened to put on record the terrible temptations of the saints, there seemed to be nothing that the Devil did not do to capture the Christian souls. They were almost always beaten, or tortured or stripped of their clothes. Some had even a worse temptation to face—that is, a beautiful woman.

This was St. Anthony's purgatory. Nothing that the Devil could do with his satanic imps moved the holy man from his holy book. But what could St. Anthony do when a devilish beautiful girl appeared arrayed in nothing but tempting loveliness? All the same, considering that St. Anthony is generally shown as an old man somewhere near eighty years of age, it is rather surprising that even this vision tempted him—if it did. The lady saints also seem to have had a hard time with the Infernal One. We are told that St. Catherine of Siena was thrown several times into the fire; that demons pursued

Anne, the Reverend Mother of St. Bartholomew, even in the corridors of her convent; that Sister Mary Angelica was pursued for two years by a demon in the shape of a dog with green scales; that Satan tried to strangle Sister Margaret of Beaume; and that demons threw great logs at Agnes, a Reverend Mother of the Order of St. Dominic. This Agnes seems to have been beset by devils more than anybody else, as they often came in troops; sometimes in the shape of long snakes or famished wolves, and they kept this up for years.

De Givry insists that "Satan figures in the iconography of the period quite as often as the Saviour, and the existence of the Devil was just as much an article of faith as the existence of the Most High. The attempt should not be made to separate these two notions, following the ill example of certain schools of historical philosophy, which have pronounced the idea of the Deity to be worthy of respect and that of the Devil gross and ridiculous. To adopt such a standpoint is to misapprehend the fundamentals of theology. If the Satanic concept is tampered with, the whole edifice laboriously erected by the Fathers of the Church crumbles to the ground." This is well said, and should be borne in mind when the accounts of those witches who believed that they met, spoke to, and had intercourse with the Devil are read. In Miss Murray's work on the *Witch Cult in Western Europe*, she quotes extracts from contemporary documents which purport to give the exact confessions of witches here in Great Britain and on the continent. Nothing can be more evidential. Woman after woman admits she held concourse with the Devil. There was no doubt about it whatever. In the case of the holy women saints, they also claimed to have encountered him, but they resisted all temptation. In the case of the witches, these invariably gave way, and openly confessed having a good time with him. Miss Murray does not make it clear how often the poor unfortunates were first tortured. But whether they were or not does not matter much as far as some of the evidence is concerned, as there is no doubt it was a particularly easy thing to impersonate the Devil in front of the kind of women whose trials have come down to us. They were superstition-soaked. With the Church thundering its anathemas against the Evil One, who was blamed for all the evils mankind had to suffer, with pictorial representations of him surrounding people everywhere, it would have been almost impossible, in those days, *not* to believe in him. And the probability is that the meeting-places of witches, brought a certain amount of pleasure and joy to certain individuals who were, from one cause or another, deprived of happiness of some sort.

The priests of the Devil were sorcerers, and, no doubt, these men acted as go-betweens. At all events, they were held in fear—or admiration—quite as much as the witch; and they generally accompanied the women to the Sabbaths, as the meetings were called.

We have very elaborate details, collected from the various confessions of women, of what these meetings were like. Whether the accounts come from England, or Scotland, or Sweden, or France, or Germany, they are almost all alike. The women were supposed to strip before going, or they undressed on the spot. They generally smeared themselves with ointments of some kind—it was often called sorcerer's grease. Some of them then rode astride a broomstick, or a forked stick on to the meeting-place. There is definite evidence of this; but, as Miss Murray says, "the number of cases vouched for by the persons who actually performed or saw the feat of

riding on a stick through the air are disappointingly few." Certainly, nearly all the contemporary prints of witches going to the assemblies show them flying through the air, either on sticks or on the back of some animal, or clinging to the Devil himself. Perhaps the poor women who were accused of witchcraft really believed that *others* did go to the Sabbath in this manner. They went by way of the chimney if broom-stick locomotion was the method adopted; for no witch could ever go out of a house by such a prosaic exit as the door or window. Sixteenth and seventeenth century art depicts these scenes with uncompromising realism, and proves how the artists vied with each other in representing occult details.

Nothing could stop either a witch or a sorcerer from going to the Sabbath. They could even go through a keyhole if necessary; and de Givry gives the case of a witch in 1547 who, "hailed before the Inquisition of Navarre, was able to bring her jar of ointment with her, and so managed to fly off through the air before the very eyes of the judges, changing into a screech owl as she did so."

Witches and sorcerers were able quite easily to change into animals—generally wolves. Hence, perhaps, the medieval belief in werewolves. Hence, also, the belief that Satan could come in any animal guise he wished. It was often as an animal that he presided at the Sabbath—though the evidence shows the only animal part of him generally was his head. And that, of course, can easily be accounted for by a mask the man wore.

What happened at the Sabbaths, or rather, what is said to have happened, will be described in another article.

H. CUTNER.

The Meanderings of a Sceptic

(Concluded from page 28)

THE river, though somewhat cheered through having successfully negotiated this awkward bend, was appalled at the dismal prospect which stretched out beyond it. Indeed, it could see no definite tract which it might follow, and had sudden fears of petering out in a horrid expanse of marsh which it could see making a huge sweep in the immediate foreground. It hence slackened its pace which had been riotous for a professing meanderer and edged its way cautiously along each bank, searching for a course which, if somewhat harder than the marshes, would at any rate preserve its character as a river of no small importance.

In the course of these cautious convolutions, Nozama, for that was the river's name, found himself (he was, of course, a male, for woman ever lives by faith and shrinks from doubt), wandering back towards the mountain range through which he had so rudely broken, but whose peaks had continually decreased in size until they were now no more than low foothills. Occasionally gaps occurred in these hills, through which Nozama could perceive what appeared to be a shallow but exquisitely beautiful valley. Much human activity was taking place in these passes, and Nozama correctly guessed that another river was running parallel to himself just across the hills. Unfortunately elemental laws prevented either river from obtaining a proper view of the other, and any news they obtained of each other's condition and progress was conveyed by the travellers who passed from the valley to the plain, and who, being human, frequently misunderstood, misrep-

resented, or exaggerated what they saw and heard; which was a pity, for I feel sure that if there had been a more reliable means of communication these rivers would soon have arranged to join together to form one majestic flood instead of eventually veering apart again. But this anticipates.

Nozama commenced the intercourse with his neighbour by praising the latter's felicitous surroundings, which in truth he regarded not without a little envy. "But why be envious, friend?" responded his neighbour, who was called Nadroj. "You may discover pastures equally as sublime as mine through which to flow." "How so?" questioned Nozama. "I have wandered for many moons upon this desolate plain, yet so far from discovering Arcadia, I have narrowly escaped a lingering death among nauseating bogs." "Pray, brother, pray," softly replied Nadroj. "And to whom should I pray?" asked Nozama, his vitality returning sharply. "Pray to the God who made me, who made you, who made everything. To Him all things are known and by Him all things are possible. He has declared that no man shall be refused a request if he ask it humbly and honestly; nor wandering stream shall be denied this boon, nor winding river." "Absurd," retorted Nozama, "you have not considered the might and incomprehensibility of the First Cause. Why should It alter the plans It has made just to suit the convenience of a few poor rolling rivers, of which It has created millions? Again, It cannot do so, for Its first plan must have been perfect, and any alteration in it must render it imperfect, which digression would cause the omniscience of the First Cause to be doubtful." "Nay, brother," interposed Nadroj, "with the Father, to Whom I suppose your cold term First Cause relates, all things are possible. Remember when we talk of perfection we discourse upon a subject which we can but faintly apprehend. But when we refer to perfection as an instrument of our all-knowing and all-powerful father, whose majesty again we can but dimly visualize, surely we should plead ignorance rather than make dogmatic assertions. As for the necessary intervention in a perfect plan already laid down, you, firstly, know too little of perfection to be confident that there are not two states of it, while, secondly you are as yet as far from proving predestination as I should be were I to postulate individual freedom of will. A word upon this latter antagonism which has been debated for centuries, and is likely to continue for centuries more. It is one of the deepest conflicts that man feels himself to be free, despite an ever-growing mass of evidence which points to his imprisonment without a plan. Friend, may I suggest that you accept free-will as a basis for your life. You cannot go wrong in so doing, for if at the end it turns out that your life was mapped out by other hands, and that your actions were predestined, then your defence for having accepted free-will as a basis for your life will be simply that you were predestined to do so. Besides you could never bring yourself to disbelieve entirely in the freedom of the will—such a state would be a living death. Hence, friend, accept the idea of free choice along with your obvious limitations, and accept also the idea of a God to Whom you can pray and Who will answer your prayers. They are but suppositions, but they can never be disproved, whilst you will nowhere find a firmer basis for your life. Life being an enigma and all accounts of it so much guesswork, accept that guess which is most helpful; it is probably the truest account which we can assimilate at this stage of our development."

Nozama was very impressed by this oration, though he could not help observing Nadroj's inability to keep to the point. Yet he was not wholly satisfied with

the idea of prayer. "Are prayers always answered?" he again questioned. "All those which God sees will benefit us if they be answered," replied Nadroj. We sometimes ask for things which it is not good for us to receive, though we might not think so at the time, nor understand why afterwards." "Then how do you know that your worthy prayers are always answered?" "Through faith, brother. That same faith through which I believe in the existence of a beneficent God. Just now, as you saw, logic forced me to acknowledge that my conception of God was but a supposition. But faith transcends reason, or at least rules equally with it, and when I say I believe in such a God, a logical chain of reasoning is of no effect as a counter argument. Reason would recommend a beneficent God as a reasonable supposition; but faith asserts His existence as an innate conviction. This being so, there is really no question as to worthy prayers being neglected by the Father."

"But how may one acquire this faith, Nadroj?"

"By concentration and by prayer, friend. Pray as you have never prayed before. Assume at first the existence of Him whom you desire to exist, cast all doubt aside, and in due time God will reveal Himself to you. And then, friend, you will have transcended both faith and reason—you will no longer seek to argue a beneficent deity into existence, neither will you simply believe Him to exist. You will know He exists, for you will see Him in His infinity. He will be revealed in thoughts and ideals, in actions and accomplishments, in things moving and still will His glory abound, in beautiful scene and noble edifice. You will wonder at your previous blindness, and your barren plain will reveal that arcadian sweetness you so envied in my restful valley."

This was most instructive to Nozama, who began pondering over the great and noble words of Nadroj. One thing above all others struck him at that time. It was that prayer was self-justifying. Even supposing that the whole conception of the validity of prayer were illusory, yet the fact that the being who prayed believed in it, gave him comfort and strength. It could never betray his faith, for if his prayers were not answered he merely assumed that a mightier power than he had so ordained for his ultimate benefit. Wherefore Nozama concluded that the possession of a mind which could see above this perfect circle of consolation was of doubtful worth to its possessor. But the thick mud which was the very marrow of him continued to ooze and suck and sigh in a most uncomfortable manner, until at length Nozama found himself saying, "How far am I justified in accepting the personal experiences of other people as a sufficient proof of the existence of a personal God? If I accept Mr. Nadroj's assertion of a personal revelation unreservedly, I am logically bound to deny the existence of hallucinations, whilst I am also asserting my ability always to see through the most elaborate hoaxes and deceptions. How can I trust myself to this extent? Messrs. Maskelyne and Devant make a rabbit disappear before my eyes, and a little later they cause a hen to appear from nowhere. This completely mystifies me, and I am at a loss to account for the phenomena. But were these conjurors to assert that they had the power of creating livestock, I should not believe them, not even if they successfully defied all people to repeat the trick. My reason? Simply because this happening is at variance with the laws to which all relevant phenomena have been observed to conform. It is inexplicable, but should not be worshipped merely on this account. I should not deny the appearances which I had seen any more than I should declare Mr. Nadroj to be a liar. But although

Mr. Nadroj's experience may be supremely absorbing, and to him cannot be an hallucination, it comes at second hand to other people to whom he relates it, and they are no more justified in not ranking it as an inexplicable phenomenon or hallucination, than they would be in conceding creative powers to Messrs. Maskelyne and Devant. But what if Mr. Nadroj is not alone in his experience? Let me postulate the case of many rivers swearing to this personal revelation by the Deity. Could I with reason accuse the world of being deceived by inexplicable phenomena? Of course, it has never yet been proved that it was Johnny who was really out of step. Possibly he had rigidly adhered to the beat of the drum whilst fatigue or some diversion brought disorder and then chaos to his companions, and a subsequent reformation on a wrong footing. But, even so, was it reasonable for Johnny to hold out for his rights? Did he or anyone else gain thereby?

So Nozama reflected and decided that he must learn more about other rivers. Being, however, isolated from them, he turned his ear once more to the wise old fishermen who frequented his banks.

ALFRED E. BEVAN.

Freethought Anniversaries

J. M. WHEELER—JANUARY 24, 1850

JOSEPH MAZZINI WHEELER was born in London on January 24, 1850, only a few days after G. W. Foote, with whom he was so long associated. He was brought up a Christian, and had to undergo the process of unlearning it before becoming a convert to Freethought. The present writer remembers Mr. Foote saying, during a lecture, that the writings of Cardinal Newman were more likely to make Atheists out of Christians than to convert anyone to Christianity or to strengthen the faith of waverers. He instanced *The Grammar of Assent*, and *On Miracles*. Perhaps he had thoughts of his old colleague who had died shortly before.

Anyway, we have Mr. Wheeler's own statement that he was converted to Atheism by reading—among others—Newman, Mill, Darwin and Spencer. And that is a really formidable quartette with which to confront those who like to sneer at the "Victorians."

Soon the readers of the leading Freethought and secular papers were profiting by his wide reading, his industry in research and his breadth of culture. He wrote for the *National Reformer*, *The Secularist*, *Secular Chronicle*, *Liberal*, *Progress* and the *Freethinker*. Of the last-named he was for sixteen years sub-editor.

In 1896 he published a volume of Essays entitled *Footsteps of the Past*, of which a re-issue has recently appeared. Earlier had come *The Frauds and Follies of the Fathers*. Jointly with Mr. Foote he wrote the *Crimes of Christianity*, while they issued a translation with copious and exhaustive notes, of the *Jewish Life of Christ* or *The Sepher Toldoth Jeshu*. And in 1889 he published his greatest work *The Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of all Ages and Nations*. This work takes in about twenty-three centuries, there are nearly two thousand names, and the references are beyond count. No work of equal value had been done before, nothing of equal value has been tried since then. In many cases only a line or two can be given, as for instance: Petit (Claude) French poet, burnt on the Place de Grève in 1665 as the author of some impious pieces. In other cases it was possible to give fuller sketches and this was done. At the close of his Preface he writes, "But the work throughout has been a labour of love. I designed it as my humble contribution to the cause of Freethought, and leave it with the hope that it will contribute towards the history of the 'good old cause'; a history which has yet to be written, and for which, perhaps, the time is not yet ripe." Ten years later, Mr. J. M. Robertson published his *Short History of Freethought*, with due acknowledgement of the assistance

rendered "by my dead friend . . . inasmuch as the aid I have had from his manifold research does not thus appear on the surface."

He described himself as "a willing drudge in the cause he loves," and few can have drudged to better purpose.

Mr. Wheeler died on May 5, 1898.

ROBERT BURNS—JANUARY 25, 1759.

ROBERT BURNS, greatest of Scotland's poets, was born at Alloway, a village near the town of Ayr, on January 25, 1759.

Of biographies of Burns there have been too many. Of the numerous critics it would be better if many had kept silence. So many have been moralists of the snivelling sort. And at this time of year they get full scope at the Burns' Dinners. What many of them forget, or, more often, never knew, is that he did not write or try to write sermons or elevating addresses. To his friend James Smith he writes:

Some rhyme a neebor's name to last;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
An' raise a din;
For me, an *aim* I never fash;
I rhyme for fun.

Into what kind of world was he born? Well, the generation before his had seen the end of witch-burning in Scotland, and he was only nine years when John Wesley recorded in his journal ". . . the giving up of Witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."

When Burns was 22 years of age he spent some months in Irvine. There, for the first time in a seaport town, he met a greater variety of men and women than ever before, his poetic gifts became known—not always to the best qualified judges—and there is not a doubt these gifts were cultivated to the full. He wrote that he always had a pleasure in the company of blackguards. And so the wayside waif, the tinker, the scum of the city were glorified in *The Jolly Beggars* and—later on—in *The Holy Fair*.

In the Church of Scotland at this time there were two parties. The Evangelicals stood for the gospel of Calvinism, they were the Elect of God. On the other hand the moderates were of a kind described as more heart than head, readier to give prominence to Ethics than to the intolerances of the letter of the (Divine) law. As is usual there was little love lost on either side. *The Holy Fair*, a description of a communion Sunday in a Scots Toon, was—and is—a masterpiece of sarcastic ridicule of one of the most sacred ceremonies of the Scots Kirk.

About this time the Evangelicals fell foul of a Mr. Gavin Hamilton for non-attendance at certain services. Mr. Hamilton was a lawyer, and denied the jurisdiction of the Church courts. His appeal was upheld. He was the poet's landlord at Mossiel, and had proved himself a generous friend. Into the dispute enters the poet with *Holy Willie's Prayer*.

O Thou, wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
Wha as it pleases best thyself
Sends aye to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

Lord, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race;
But God confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring thy elders to disgrace
An' public shame.

Lord, mind Gann Hamilton's deserts,
He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes,
Yet has sae mony takin' arts
Wi' great an' sma',
Frae God's ain priest the people's hearts
He steals awa'!

The difficulty is to know where to stop when quoting Burns, but the last verse must go in.

But Lord, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,
That I for gear and grace may shine,
Excell'd by nane;
An' a' the glory shall be thine,
Amen, Amen.

The majority of the biographers and critics have disapproved! Few of them know the period at first hand, Burns lived it! Lockhart has an inkling, but only an inkling, of the truth. In his *Life of Robert Burns*, chapter 3, he quotes the Rev. Hamilton Paul. "This was not only the prayer of Holy Willie, but it is merely the metrical version of every prayer that is offered up by those who call themselves the pure reformed Church of Scotland. . . . Such are the identical doctrines of the Cameronians of the present day, and such was Holy Willie's style of prayer. The hypocrisy and dishonesty of the man, who was at the time a reputed saint, were perceived by the discerning penetration of Burns; and to expose them he considered it his duty . . ." To Lockhart it was blasphemous! thereby closing his eyes to his own environment. To his father-in-law—Sir Walter Scott—it was "a piece of satire more exquisitely severe than any which Burns ever afterwards wrote."

Burns may have been a Theist or—as other students say—a Deist, a Christian he was not.

Not all of his verse was concerned with religious disputation. Two examples of his paraphrases are given. To his poem on "Scotch Drink," he gives a preface. Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7. Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Burns:—Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That's prest wi' grief an' care;
There let him bouse, and deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves and debts,
And minds his griefs no more.

And here is the preface to the "Address to the Unco' Guid, or the Rightly Righteous."

Eccles. vii. 16: "Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?"

Burns:—My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither;
The RIGID RIGHTEOUS is a fool,
The RIGID WISE anither;
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some piles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow creature slight
For random fits o' daflin.

And the following lines from a rhymed letter to the Guid-wife of Wauchope may help to show us another side of our Poet. He is 28 years old, and is writing of the time when he was "beardless, young, and blate."

Ev'n then a wish (I mind it's power),
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast;
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least,
The rough bur-thistle, spreading wide
Amang the bearded bere,
I turned the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear:
No nation, no station,
My envy e'er could raise;
A Scot still, but blot still,
I knew nae higher praise.

Whatever his opinion on any subject may have been, Burns was in every essential a Freethinker, and it is in the spirit of Freethought that we would honour his memory.

Robert Burns died at Dumfries on July 21, 1796.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

SIR,—The Members of the Leicester Secular Society wish to thank, through the columns of the *Freethinker*, the generous subscribers to their Special Appeal. Outside friends of our Society have given about £170, and members of the Leicester Society have added £400, making a total of nearly £570.

We are very deeply grateful to our friends for their generosity, which has materially eased our financial position for the present. At the same time we are bound to confess that the result is much below what we hoped for, and need. However, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and we cling to the faith that somehow, and before long, further help may enable us to clear away our liabilities. The subscription list is being kept open for a short time longer. When completed, a detailed list will be sent to each subscriber.

Apart from the financial aspect, it has been a very great pleasure to hear from, and to have the good wishes of, so many friends in Great Britain and all over the world.

All are very heartily thanked.

SYDNEY A. GIMSON (*President*),

HERBERT E. ANDERSON (*Secretary*).

(For the Leicester Secular Society).

MECHANISTIC MATERIALISTS

SIR,—Mr. G. H. Taylor, in the *Freethinker* of December 29, 1935, p. 822, states: "We know of no one who now styles himself . . . Mechanistic Materialist."

Let it be recorded that the officers of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism call themselves Mechanistic Materialists. We regretfully admit, however, that except for four of our co-workers, we know of no others who have adopted the title.

CHARLES SMITH.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

SIR,—The fact that (unnamed) photographic "experts" were unable to tell Sir A. C. Doyle exactly how fairy photographs can be produced does not prove that they are genuine, or that fairies really exist—except, of course, to the kind of credulous believer represented nowadays so ably by Mr. Denis P. S. Conan Doyle. I still maintain that had a photograph of "King Kong" been shown by Sir A. C. Doyle to the same experts, and had neither he nor they been able to say how it was done, he would have believed in the existence of the gigantic baboon. May I add that I shall say and write what I like about Spiritualism, even risking the terrible penalty of incurring the wrath of Mr. Doyle.

H. CUTNER.

Society News

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH

At the 46th Annual Meeting of this Society, the President, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, gave an outline of the work of the Branch during 1935. Over eighty meetings had been held during the year, twenty of them indoors. The meetings had been on the whole very successful, and no interference by the police had been experienced during the year, as had sometimes been the case. Firmness and courtesy had prevented this annoyance. A number of new members had been gained, and acknowledgement had to be made to the local press for reports of the meetings. From a propagandist point of view the year had been a very successful one. The Branch hope to receive even better support in the coming year, which would be sure to lead to profitable results.

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, Debate—"That Christianity is Incompatible with Socialism." *Affir.*: Mr. L. Ebury. *Neg.*: Mr. S. J. Hart (Secretary Socialist Christian League).

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Rt. Hon. Lord Snell, C.B.E.—"Western Civilization and the Challenge of Asia."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 27, Discussion continued—"The Influence of Science on Art."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Rooms, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton, E.10): 7.30, G. Bedborough—"Morality and the Christian Model."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, A. Burall—"The Future of Education."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BERKENHEAD (Witral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead): 7.0, W. A. Atkinson (Salford)—"Theism or Atheism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham): 7.30, Impromptu Debate.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Mr. Jack Avis (Blackpool)—"Some Further Frauds of Spiritualism."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Tavern Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.15, Professor Levy—"Modern Science and Religion."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Jack Clayton—"Shall we Tell the Truth?"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Picardy Halls): 7.0, Mrs. I. Whitefield—"The Art of Living."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, J. Harrison Maxwell—"Easter Island and its Riddle."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12 Shaw Street, Liverpool): 7.0, W. Fletcher (Birkenhead, Hon. President Birkenhead Branch N.S.S.)—"Are We Rational Beings?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. A. Kohn—"Socialism, Atheism and Religion."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Labour Hall, Grange Road): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HETTON (Club Hall): 8.0, Wednesday, January 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTHERN FEDERATION N.S.S. BRANCHES (18 Churchill Street): 3.0, General Meeting.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Speakers—Messrs. Planders, Brighton and others.

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