

THE
FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

A New Blasphemy Bill

MR ERNEST THURTLE, staunch in his opinions, has taken the first opportunity to introduce into the House of Commons a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. What will be the fate of this Bill remains to be seen. It may reach a second reading, to be wrecked in Committee by the cowardly and underhand cunning of the Government, as was the last measure; or it may, owing to House of Commons procedure, never reach the stage of a second reading debate. In any case, its introduction will serve to advertise the existence of such survivals of barbarism as blasphemy laws. But we feel assured that Mr. Thurtle will miss no opportunity of pressing the Bill to a full-dress debate. If that occurs, something will be achieved. For the existence of such laws in the modern State is so monstrous a fact, and offers such anachronisms, they are so completely indefensible on moral, social and intellectual grounds, that every time they are brought to public notice they are a step nearer abolition.

But whatever happens Mr. Thurtle deserves the thanks of all Freethinkers for his action, and for his desire to see decency and dignity established in public life. In this matter the politician who will venture on even the introduction of a Bill that seeks to dethrone religion from its privileged position, and place it on a level with other forms of opinion, stands out from the common ruck. His action will not help him to attain office, it will not advance him in the good opinion of a large number of his constituents. Church and chapel will be prejudiced against him. He will expose himself to all sorts of slanderous innuendoes, and gain the reputation of being a dangerous man. The *odium theologicum* is still powerful, and in politics honesty of speech and sincerity of action, even when added to intellectual ability, are not yet considered steps that lead naturally to advancement.

A Curious Case

These blasphemy laws are surely the most ridiculous laws we have, and the least defensible. In law there are two parties in every case. One is John Smith or Jack Robinson. The other is "God." Apparently it is he who is offended, or insulted, or outraged, or "blasphemed." There is a human prosecutor in the case, but he claims to be acting as a mere representative of God, protecting God or carrying out his wishes. This prosecutor is there, but the one behind the action, who originates the case, never appears. He is the "John Doe" of the law books. The chief party in the case never attends. More, I imagine that if a man charged with blasphemy were to press for the name of the principal in the action in order to examine as to "damage," the judge would rule out such a demand. No one has ever seen the alleged principal in a blasphemy case, no one—at least for a very long time—has ever heard from him, and a great deal of discussion is always going on as to whether he is an actuality or a myth. And yet in the name of this mysterious principal, or on his behalf, to protect him, a man may be dragged before a criminal court, and from thence packed off to prison. And all for committing an offence against a being whose existence no one has ever been able to establish. The prosecution does not offer any written authority to prove that it is acting in the name of "God," that is, if we rule out a very ancient document, the authenticity of which is very widely questioned. The prosecutor is not asked to prove his credentials; and the whole proceeding becomes riotously grotesque when it is remembered that the prosecutor and the judge may be privately convinced, and even have publicly proclaimed, that in their opinion there is no evidence that any such person as "God" exists. Many rules of law, and certainly every rule of common-sense are flouted in the course of a trial for "blasphemy."

* * *

The Laws Against Blasphemy

I ought to have explained that there are in this country two laws against blasphemy. One is the statute law of blasphemy which was passed near the end of the seventeenth century. This Act provides that anyone who has been educated in or who has at any time professed Christianity, and who asserts that there are more Gods than one, or who denies that the Christian religion is true, or that the Old and New Testaments are of divine origin, may be subjected to three years imprisonment, deprived of office, and subjected to practical outlawry. The Act originally applied these penalties to anyone who denied the Trinity, but this part was afterwards repealed. The provisions of this Act was so truly Christian and so unmistakably barbarous that there is no record of any conviction under it. It is not quite correct to say, as is often said, that it is a dead letter; since it

has been used to support such things as denying legacies to Freethought societies, to refusing copyright to "blasphemous" publications, as happened to Shelley and Byron, and to refuse the custody of children, as occurred with Mrs. Besant. One curious feature of the Act is that it would make the present writer a kind of licensed blasphemer, since he has never professed Christianity, and was fortunate enough to have parents who were not Christians.

The other law against Blasphemy is the Common Law. Blasphemy was taken into the Common Law during the Commonwealth, owing to the suspension of the Ecclesiastical Courts, with whom and the Court of High Commission had previously rested all prosecutions for heresy. Atheism was not, *per se* an offence in English law. There are two peculiarities about the Common Law that may be noted. First, it is based upon custom and precedent, although it may not run counter to Statute Law. Second, because Common Law is based upon custom and precedent, its interpretation varies from time to time, the variations being determined by prevailing circumstances such as the temper and the state of public opinion. This means that while, say, in the fifteenth century the "displeasure of Almighty God" could be averted only by burning at the stake, in the seventeenth century cropping a man's ears would suffice, and in the nineteenth century a mere term of imprisonment brought "Almighty God" lack of good temper. Thus "Almighty God" becomes more tolerant as men and women get less barbaric, and we may look forward to his acting in the future as most sensible people do, and join in a joke even when it is against him.

* * *

Loading the Dice

There is one other important consideration that may be noted, but which has been overlooked in all the modern cases I have read. The judge in instructing the jury usually lays down the law in a way that amounts almost to misdirection. Usually he says, "I will tell you what the Common Law is on this subject," and he proceeds to lay down a definition of Blasphemy which has been given by other judges, and in advising the jury implies that their decision must be in the same terms that have been customary. But the whole value of the Common Law lies in its adaptability to changing circumstances. And the principle here is that what is blasphemy in one age is not blasphemy in another. Consequently all that the judge ought to do, and all that he is actually justified in doing, is to impress upon the jury the adaptable quality of the Common Law, and the fact also that the interpretation of its practical application depends upon the jury, and not upon the judge. The judge can only tell them what *the practical application of the law has been, it is for the jury to say what it shall be in the case before them.* In practice the making of the Common Law depends upon the jury. It is their decisions which determine whether what was blasphemy in the seventeenth century shall continue to be blasphemy in the twentieth, and the judge must be bound by their verdict. In one lengthy discussion I had with a well-known Counsel, he agreed with my view of the matter, but he said that as this would mean setting the jury against the judge, no counsel would venture to stress that aspect of the Common Law. It would prejudice him in future cases.

But this varying character, in practice, of the Common Law introduces a very strong reason for its abolition. It was pointed out by one of the law lords in the case of *Bowman v. The Secular Society, Limited*, that while an enlightened state of public opinion gave

opportunity for a more liberal interpretation of the Common Law of Blasphemy, a decline in the liberality of opinion might just as easily cause a reversion to the intolerance of earlier years. I agree with this entirely. It means that whether questioning the belief in God or in the Trinity or in the inspiration of the Bible is to become a serious offence entirely depends upon whether public opinion becomes less liberal in its scope or not. The same general factor which led to a more liberal reading of the law may lead to a more intolerant one. Nor is this the only danger. A very old custom has identified the Christian Church with not merely the custodianship of what is the true religion, but also with what is the right morality. For many centuries the Church claimed the control of religion and morals, and we know that the Roman Church explicitly, and other churches implicitly still claim that guardianship. In earlier days the Church would have "admonished," and punished the advocates of birth-control, or of the legalization of abortion, or of the right, in certain cases, to end one's life, or reform of marriage, and there is actually nothing in the Common Law of Blasphemy, given a sufficient change in opinion, to prevent this state of things again prevailing. Nor is the development of a set of conditions that will favour this reaction quite impossible. The possibility of a large part of Europe being governed by the most absolute of dictatorships would have, fifty or sixty years ago, been declared an impossibility. The Government that fifty years ago had introduced such a measure as the Incitement to Disaffection Act would have been thrown out of office with no likelihood of an early return. Our immediate ancestors moved under the conviction that the nature of freedom was such that men who achieved it would not be inclined to give it up. We live in an age when bodies of men openly proclaim their desire to be told what to think, what to do, and who desire to wear the badge of mental servitude with all the pride with which they once proclaimed their liberty. Of course the most stringent of Statute laws would not prevent the things described happening, but the repeal of a Statute is at least a little more difficult than a re-interpretation of an elastic Common Law. Nothing but eternal vigilance and the resolution to defend freedom to the last ditch can guard the liberty that is and to use it as a means of securing more.

From this point of view the Common Law of Blasphemy holds an implied threat to all forms of liberal opinion, and one that wide-awake reformers would do well to bear in mind. As is so often the case, the Freethinker is not fighting merely for himself. He is championing the cause of human progress.

There are other aspects of this question with which I will deal next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE GLAMOUR OF WAR

I can understand that men find a pleasure in studying the art of fighting, as they do in playing a game of chess; and I have allowed in my own the fascination which even its horrid reality is capable of exercising over me. But for the man who deems it a pleasure and a glory to use the science of war as a weapon wherewith to annihilate thousands of human beings, for the delusion called "prestige," or in the game of politics, I would have him to know that it is a foul and monstrous thing, full of hideous suffering, cruelty and injustice, with nothing to redeem it save the courage whereby such miseries are endured.—From "*With an Ambulance During the Franco-German War*," by Dr. C. E. Ryan, 1896, p. 254.

The Church's Clutching Hand

"The human mind cannot be burned, or bayoneted, nor wounded, nor missing."—Emerson.

"Thought is the measure of the universe."—Shelley.

THE report of the Royal Commission on Tithes, with its bountiful offer to the Anglican Church of £70,000,000 to end this ages-old extortion, should be a useful reminder that priests are as much business men as sugar-refiners or stock-brokers. They may not actually issue summons or levy distress, but they employ subordinates who attend to the purely commercial side of the business, whilst they themselves play the showman's part. Most tradesmen consider that a business is old-established if it survives a century, but priests have been at the game of exploiting people for thousands of years. The majority of business men think in terms of thousands of pounds, but priests deal in such sums as would bewilder the average merchant. The ordinary shopkeeper is no more than a child playing at shops on a chair with a penny borrowed from mother and twopence from father compared with the financial activities of such bodies as Queen Anne's Bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who could teach a multiple-shop concern a few wrinkles in money matters and window-dressing.

Primarily, priests are showmen, and the very cleverest in the world. Beside them Cagliostro was a mere mountebank, and Barnum but an amateur. Unlike other showmen, the priests' stock-in-trade is of the very simplest description. It consists of a fancy dress, united with a colossal impudence and a front of brass, with something of the effrontery of a footpad, who says: "stand and deliver!" And they never could have continued in business for so long a period, but for their very astute control of education, by means of which they imbue the rising generation with a respect for their sorry charlatanism, and thus ensure to-morrow's bread being well buttered on both sides.

Think for a moment how these ecclesiastical gentry have exploited the unfortunate farmers. From the very twilight of history, thousands of years ago, they have extorted "sacred tenths" for their "god." Any god would do, provided it was a suitable deity for money-raising purposes. In Ancient Egypt, Babylon, India, Ancient Judaea, and Ancient Britain, these "sacred tenths" were extorted, on behalf of gods as various as Baal, Astaroth, Dagon, Horus, Osiris, Jehovah of the Jews, and the Christian Trinity, one member of which is alleged to be a working-man. So profitable a source of income has it been that the Church of the Latter Day Saints, of Utah, U.S.A., one of the youngest of all religions, has adopted it, and tithe is enforced upon all church members, who are fleeced of a tenth of their incomes.

The Church of England's claim for tithe is based upon the priestly injunction in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible (Genesis, chapter 28), where the passage occurs:—

Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.

Quite simple is it not? The farmer does the work, and the priests levy a ten-per-cent tax on his produce. The Protestant Church of England has handled this easy money since the so-called Reformation, but their immediate predecessors were the Roman Catholics, and before them the Druids and other Pagan priests. For many centuries the tax was actually payable in kind—wheat, oats, barley and so on. The Parliamentary Tithe Act of William the Fourth (1836)

abolished all tithe payments in kind, and substituted an annual tithe rentcharge. The reason was that so many rural areas had become urbanized, and payment in kind had been rendered impossible in such areas. In finance priests are always up to date.

Some idea of the strangle-hold this Church of England has upon the country may be gauged by the plain fact that there are no less than 300,000 tithe-paying land owners, 10,400,000 acres of land, and the annual income runs into over three millions of money. And why, might one ask, is a so-called "National" Government so tender concerning the susceptibilities of these priestly extortioners? Why else has the capital value of tithe been estimated at a quarter of a century's purchase, when it should be estimated at half that amount? Why else is it proposed that the unfortunate tithe-payer should compensate the alleged poorer clergy when the plutocratic Anglican Church could quite well look after its own parsons?

Tithe rentcharge, which varies from 6s. 3d. per acre in Nottingham, to 12s. and 14s. an acre in East Anglia, in the minds of many taxpayers, is regarded with intense dislike as being associated with a Church to which they do not belong, and with which they have little or no sympathy. Just as the public conscience has been stirred again and yet again by revelations of sweated labour, and other social injustices, so it must be disturbed by the iniquities of a ten-per-cent impost on agriculture, originally imposed by a greedy pre-Christian priesthood in the far-off ages of ignorance and faith.

The plea of poverty of the clergy of this wealthy Church of England is merely a clerical ruse to excite sympathy and to raise more and more money in tithe redemption. There are plenty of instances of small populations and large clerical incomes. For instance there are the two-score City of London churches, with annual incomes totalling £50,000, and a resident population of caretakers and Jewish people. There are other instances in other parts of the country, such as: Income £3,292, with population 152; income £3,030, population 86; income £1,533, population 200. The higher Anglican clergy are not by any means starving, for two archbishops and thirty-seven bishops share £180,700 yearly, in addition to palaces and palatial residences.

This much-belated ending of the tithe racket by the Church of England clergy is simply an act of common justice, but it is vitiated by the proposal of handing over £70,000,000 to the priests for the furtherance of superstition. This is not too strong an expression to use, for Christian Orthodoxy can no longer be made current coin in the intellectual world of to-day. Orthodox religion is practically using a dogmatic system of the pre-scientific world. It is using modes of thought and language that belong to the Middle Ages and not to the living world of the twentieth century. The creeds which still hold a formal place in churches are for the greater part impossible of belief to educated and intellectual men and women of our time. To levy taxes on agriculture for the furtherance of such ideas may be good business for the priests themselves, but it is the intellectual damnation of the Christian ministry.

I wonder how much longer it will be before the people of our country realize that this Anglican Church is not a benevolent grandmother, but a very greedy wolf. Tithe is but one of the many tricky methods of extorting money. By a legal fiction all citizens are assumed to be members of this State-supported Church, and Dissenters are regarded as freak-religionists. In the life of a citizen the priest is in evidence at a christening, at a marriage, and at a

funeral. In the intervals the alms-dish and the collection-box are so constantly exhibited that priests may justly be regarded as the champion beggars of the world. In order to safeguard their own mean trade priests take much interest in education, but observe that they place a large share of the burden of the upkeep of their schools on the ratepayers. Even so, their teachers are the worst paid, and the schools lack proper equipment. Just at present this Church is appealing for money for providing places of worship in newly built areas. In the heart of the City of London there are nineteen derelict churches, the site values of which would more than cover the cost of the proposed buildings. But the collection goes on merrily, and the innocents pay. Not long since it was stated that St. Paul's Cathedral was in danger of crashing into Paternoster Row, and a huge sum of money was raised, far in excess of the actual need. Throughout the years, the generations, and the centuries, the priests chant the chorus of "Pay, pay, pay." Why should this very wealthy Christian Church continue to have State support for obtaining money by false pretences?

MIMNERMUS.

Mad

WE, Brother Fernando de Perez, Brother Diego de Spinoza, Confessors of His Royal Majesty and Masters of Divine Theology; and Brother Juan de Robloz, Confessor in Ordinary to the Mother Prioress of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, have, in accordance with the command of our worthy General and Brother Sixto Falco, visited the said Mother Prioress. We herein faithfully report all that happened on the 25th of November, the day of the blessed martyr, Saint Catherine of Alexandria, this day being especially suitable for our visit, since it fell this year on a Friday. We chose the hour of noon, for Brother Juan had informed us that the flux of blood began about noons, the hour at which it would reasonably be expected, since at that hour was wounded and died our Lord as is tersely expressed in the verses: *Hora nona Dominus Jesus expiravit, latus eius lancea miles perforavit*. Following our instructions, we gave no warning of our intent, but at the said hour presented ourselves at the convent-door and demanded that the Mother Prioress should appear at the grating without delay or preparation. For we had resolved to do all swiftly and secretly.

The Mother Prioress, obeying our summons, came to the grating. Thereon the three of us went forward, and Brother Fernando made a short address, animadverting on the need of patience and submission, and reminding the Mother Prioress how she had been given to taste of the world's envy and calumny. To which she listened with downcast eyes. He consoled her with the words of the Psalm: *Quoniam probasti nos, Deus*, and spoke more to the same purpose. Afterwards spoke Brother Diego explicitly. He told her that the reports aspersing the validity of her wounds were noxious to the Church, and that though it was not for him or his brother examiners to prejudice the matter, yet had they come with all respect to put her to the trial. It was to be hoped that she was not one so puffed up with a false spirit of pride that she would think the examination a shame, seeing that the Lord himself did not manifest indignation when His Resurrection was doubted by S. Thomas, but lovingly offered an essay of His wounds, meaning thereby to cast scorn on future doubters. He did not shrink

from a hand on His loins and fingers placed in the raw nail-holes of His Passion; therefore she in turn must endure inquisition.

Further, to allay any qualms, he showed her the warrant in the hand of the Most Venerable General of the Order, in which she was commanded to do what the Brothers required of her. To all these remarks the Mother Prioress listened without a word or sign; but when she was bidden to bare her head and denude her feet and loins, she clasped her hands together and lifted then her eyes to heaven, still without a word.

Then Brother Juan, her Confessor in Ordinary, spoke to her roughly and said: "Do you think that it is not shame for us also to look on a woman's body except in so far as we shall behold the blessed wounds of the Lord? You likewise, think that we look at the wounds, yours only by Grace, and not at your body, yours by sin predestinate, that it is not we, three sinful men, but the eyes of the Holy Catholic Church that look upon you, for the greatest glory of Christ and His Church, and for the humiliation of all heretics, Jews, and doubters, which in these bad days multiply. For us it is nought whether we behold man or woman, a thing gracile or a thing deformed, but the living word of God writ in blood."

But Brother Fernando interrupted this good but choleric man who was zealous to have the matter brought to proof, being long acquainted with the Mother Prioress and assured of her truth. Brother Fernando went on with calm words, showing the reason of the demand; and in a while the Mother Prioress abated her horror and unclasped her hands, accepting the right of the General to order thus an inquiry for the good name of the Church. She was then told to call two or three of her women to the Choir and instruct them to stay with her. She at once called three old nuns. They opened the wooden grating, but the iron grating remained closed; and thither the Mother Prioress went with the three nuns, to enable the Fathers to see everything quite clearly. First the nuns lared the head of the Mother Prioress. There was no need to cut away her hair since she was close-cropt, the most Venerable General having given orders for her cropping a few days previously. One of the nuns fetched a lighted taper and held it to the head of the Prioress, so that we saw nine or ten raw wounds as large as glass-buttons.

Brother Diego took out a clean piece of Dutch linen, laid it across the wounds, and ordered the Prioress to replace her coiff. This piece of linen was all examined first to make sure that it was quite clean, though we knew that it was so, Brother Diego having cut it with his own hands from an unused bale of linen. For the moment we left the wounds on the heads under the coiff and turned to the lower wounds. She was commanded in the name of holy obedience to denude her loins, and this she did with great circumspection and modesty. She showed the left side where was the wound, so that we could see both the wound and the surrounding flesh. The wound is a finger-length, nearly straight and ruby-red; it is also about as broad as a finger, and has in the middle a slight fissure where the colour is dark and bright. In the middle the wound is divided. Brother Fernando asked if the division was in the flesh, and she answered, "Yes." The nuns held the wax-taper close so that all was clearly seen.

Brother Diego ordered the Mother Prioress to divest herself of her scapulary so that her hands might remain free in our sight. He then pushed her clothing aside and laid a fourfold piece of Dutch linen on the wound; the clothing was then reattached. We next inspected the wounds on her feet and hands. We saw the wound about the instep of the right foot, not

quite round, ruby-red, with the mark of a nail in the centre. In the sole she had a round wound of the same hue, with the black mark of a nail. Brother Diego then asked to see the hand from which, for some days past, blood had issued when she held the Book whereon a young woman had taken her vows. We inspected the hand, and saw thereon a somewhat-raised wound redder than the wound in the other hand.

We now spent some time in spiritual talk, reciting sacred texts and relevant passages from the Fathers. The Mother Prioress listened with the greatest interest and twice was rapt into an ecstasy. Brother Fernando impressed on her that the sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ were far more intense than those of the two thieves, because of the more subtle sensitivity of His Body. At this she shuddered and trembled all over with a slow heaving motion which seemed to increase of its own momentum, so that it was in vain to wait for it to exhaust itself. Brother Juan ordered her in a loud voice in the name of holy obedience to calm herself. At once the trembling-fit passed; but being again addressed on spiritual matters, she fell into a trance, wherein she stayed till again bidden to awake. Brother Fernando then questioned her as to her experiences during the trance, whether her reason and will had been alive or dead. She answered, "Alive."

He asked her what she experienced. She hesitated, then said that God had been with her, and a feeling of peace. He asked her what she had felt latterly when the charges of counterfeiting the wounds had been made against her. She answered that she had felt nothing for herself, but had been grieved for the conscience of her slanderers and persecutors.

Brother Juan spoke angrily of these liars, women who were mere vases of lust and open sores of carnality, as were all women who did not seek out a heavenly bridal, and who therefore openly defiled with their tongues one that shamed their sinful estate: wherefore they would writhe on spikes in hell in place of the engines of lascivious pleasure. And more which was not needed to be said; till Brother Fernando asked the Mother Prioress if she had verily beheld the Lord, and she answered, "Twice." He had appeared to her with a large Cross and asked her if she would carry it. "With thy aid I can," she had replied; then God had laid the Cross on her shoulders, but it had so pressed upon her that she had been weak for two months because of the sore weight. Again, He appeared to her in a most beautiful and shining form, but bleeding profusely from his left side, saying: "Learn how to suffer." And she was comforted greatly.

We now asked to see the linen that lay under the coffin. There were small drops of blood in it. Next we took away the cloth and found in its folds five drops of blood, and other blood issuing from the wound with a small piece of linen which Brother Diego took from her and retained. We gave thanks to God for the sights which we had been permitted to see, and we went away after the Mother Prioress had approached the grating with great humility and begged to be allowed to kiss the hands of the Fathers.

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be concluded)

Freedom in a democracy is the glory of the State, and therefore, in a democracy only will the freedom of nature deign to dwell.—Plato.

The Book Shop

THERE are many reasons for buying books, and I found myself asking a question of myself, "Why do you buy books?" Holding my head high in a metaphorical witness-box, I said, "Stodgy Longfellow was bought for ninepence so that I could have his sonnet 'Nature'—very often omitted from editions." Here it is:—

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
Still gazing at them through the open door,
Nor wholly reassured and comforted
By promises of others in their stead,
Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
So Nature deals with us, and takes away
Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
Leads us to rest so gently, that we go,
Scarce knowing if we wished to go or stay,
Being too full of sleep to understand
How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

Aids to the Immortality of Certain Persons in Ireland, by Susan L. Mitchell, was acquired for sixpence, because I liked the following; it is found in the author's own review of her book, and concerns the late George Moore:—

There is too much George Moore in it. Is there? Then be thankful when I chose a George to write about it was not George Bernard Shaw; that I gave you some one you can understand and be superior about and did not ask you to seat yourselves on a volcano and play with forked lightning. I once wrote a review of George's "Ave." It was such beautiful writing I cannot bear it to be lost. I know that George, who fondles and caresses his own best efforts, will sympathize with my determination to reproduce some of mine here. I do so now. George, none of the religions will let you in, and something must be done for your soul. Let me give it immortality. Shall I also, who deal in personalities, sneak into immortality under my own pious sanction?

And I bought a ninth impression of *The Testament of Beauty*, by Robert Bridges, because he could tell me something of the real things in nature that never deceive and desert one—and I bought it in spite of the poet's gibe at reason and his dissension from Spinoza:—

Repudiation of pleasur is a reason'd folly
of imperfection. There is no motiv can rebate
or decompose the intrinsic joy of activ life,
whereon all function whatsoever in man is based.
Consider how this mortal sensibility
hath a wide jurisdiction of range in all degrees,
from mountainous gravity to imperceptible
faintest tenuities: The imponderable fragrance
of my window-jasmin, that from her starry cup
of red-stemm'd ivory invadeth my being,
as she floateth it forth, and wantoning unabash'd
asserteth her idea in the omnipotent blaze
of the tormented sun-ball, chequering the grey wall
with shadow-tracery of her shapely fronds; this frail
unique spice of perfumery, in which she holdeth
monopoly by royal licence of Nature,
is but one of a thousand angelic species,
original beauties that win conscience in man:
a like marvel hangeth o'er the rosebed, and where
the honeysuckle escapeth in serpentine sprays
from its dark-cloister'd clamber thru' the old holly-bush,
spreading its joybunches to finger at the sky
in revel above rivalry. Legion is their name;
Lily-of-the-vale, Violet, Verbena, Mignonette,
Hyacinth, Heliotrope, Sweet-briar, Pinks and Peas,
Lilac and Wallflower, or such white and purple blooms
that sleep i' the sun, and their heavy perfumes withhold
to mingle their heart's incense with the wonder-dreams,
love-laden prayers and reveries that steal forth from earth,
under the dome of night: and tho' these blossomy breaths,
that hav presumed the title of their gay genitors,

enter but singly into our neighbouring sense, that hath no panorama, yet the mind's eye is not blind unto their multitudinous presences :

And I bought 90° in the Shade, for two dollars fifty because of the following extract which, in a world fouled by newspapers, is a nod and a wink to the struggling student who can keep his mind clean by saving his money and letting others get the spooks of the world's woe in their heads for a penny or two-pence daily, or, as a friend said of the readers of a boasted circulation of a daily newspaper, "Two millions too stupid to want anything better." And here is the reason, My Lord :—

Although I know that it is heresy to suggest such an idea in the midst of an age of progress, it may be that ultimate truth lies in the spiritual attitude of the southerners who are always going fishing. A person who has achieved an immunity from the everlasting inner demand that he improve upon his earthly position must possess an unusual degree of cosmic equilibrium. He must have learned in some way that composure of the human spirit is all that actually matters. He has attained, without conscious effort, the serenity for which all men strive. Without being under the necessity of forcing themselves through rounds of accomplishment, they can endure peace. Without having the refractory sounds of the universe resolved into a harmony for them, they can endure silence. No one should miss the significance of the fact that the old houses of Charleston have their blind sides turned towards the street.

The last-mentioned book is termed *A Psychograph of the South—a Paradox of Unrest in a Land of Contentment*. Published by Chapel, Hill, The University of North Carolina Press—\$2.50. The author, Mr. Clarence Cason, takes us into the Southern States of America, and, helped by excellent photographs this makes an unusually interesting book.

C-DE-B.

Acid Drops

The Bishop of Ely, Doctor Bernard Heywood, has set us guessing. For we read that on February 26 every seat in St. Anne's Church, Manchester, was occupied when Dr. Heywood preached his Lenten sermon. And this has set us wondering what the people went to hear and what they thought of what they got. First of all, he may have shocked some very orthodox persons by saying how much he disagreed with what had been appearing in some Parish Magazines. One of these had said that the late frosts we had been experiencing was due to our disregard of the Sabbath. And, asked the Bishop, can you imagine a God sending a frost because people do not go to Church? But why not? The Bishop believes, or leads people to believe that he believes in a book which tells him that God sent all sorts of plagues and pestilences because people did not worship him as he desired. And he also believes in a prayer book which contains precisely the same kind of teaching. And if God does not rule the weather, what on earth is the meaning of praying for rain, and good harvests and so forth? We are afraid the better informed of his hearers may get the impression that the Bishop has been reading *Letters to the Lord*.

Then the Bishop went on to assure his audience that there is no such thing as an Atheist. "Agnosticism is different." We believe this is correct, but it is a difference of muddle and timidity and not a difference of clear-cut opinion. "Everyone," says the Bishop "is bound to believe in a certain Power. Everyone must believe in the power that causes grass to grow," etc. We agree, and to the power that makes the grass to grow we add the power that makes sheep bleat and donkeys bray.

But we may remind the Bishop, if we are not placing too great strain upon him, that a man is not a Theist because he believes there are forces in the universe that causes the grass to grow, and people to go to Church, and that also gets Bishops appointed, etc., but because he believes that this power is a great magnified man, who wills and who does things for his followers in preference to doing things for other people that are not his followers. It is the difference between personality and non-personality controlling the universe that separates Theists from Atheists. If this is too hard a nut for the Bishop to crack, expressed in this terse manner, we are quite willing to put it in simpler and more elaborate language.

All the same we wonder why these people filled St. Anne's Church, and what they thought of what they got when they went. Of course it may be a case of the way in which Charles II. explained the popularity of a certain people. "His nonsense suited their nonsense."

Very often we have marvelled at the wonders of the writer who really believes that he is competent to express an opinion on, say, the Ottoman Empire, because he has spent several weeks holiday in Constantinople, or that he understands the ancient Peruvians because he has actually "studied" the ruins of the buildings left by these people, by walking over them or round them. Last week we mentioned one of this kind of critic who knew that Jesus had appeared before Pilate, and had been hooted by the mob, and had worn a crown of thorns because he had actually found preserved the pavement on which Jesus stood when these things took place. That, we admit, is as good and as strong evidence for the actual existence of Jesus as anything we have read.

This week we have another example of the same kind of thing in the case of Mr. Hilaire Belloc, who by dint of bullying and bragging, and with the kindly help of friends on the press, has managed to build up some kind of a reputation as a scientific historian. From a review of a book of Mr. Belloc's on Syria (*The Battle Ground*) I take the following citation from the preface :—

The writer has not only taken for granted that there is a God, but also design in the Universe and in the story of Mankind. He has affirmed a special design in the story of Syria, and particularly of Israel, reaching a climax at the Crucifixion. He even seems to imply the Divinity of his Saviour.

Now Mr. Belloc may be a very good fogleman for his Church, but we have not the slightest hesitation in saying that a man who sets out writing in that style, and with that idea may produce a very interesting religious tract, but he will never, never, manage to write anything that in the faintest degree approaches a scientific study of history. He will provide material for a very interesting study of Mr. Belloc, but even the value of this will be diminished from the fact that this type is very common. Street corner evangelism, Christian Evidence lecturers and revivalistic Missions will provide any number of Belloes in varying degrees of development.

Apropos of the marvellous thrills and tremendous emotions that Mr. Beverley Nichols experienced when he stood upon the very pavement that Jesus Christ stood, and on which pavement, drops of his blood "must" have fallen, the *News-Chronicle* of March 9 reports the first "air photograph" of Adam's Peak in Ceylon. Mohammedans believe that this bears the footmark of Adam, and Hindoos that Siva stood there, and Buddhists believe that the imprint is that of the Buddha. Now, considering the direct evidence of the existence of Jesus which Mr. Nichols had when he saw the piece of Jerusalem pavement, in the thrills and emotions he felt, we advise Mr. Nichols not to visit Ceylon, for the fact of standing on a spot pressed by the foot of Siva, Adam and Buddha, would tend to wreck his equanimity altogether—that is, unless the lack of news-value to an English paper would diminish his thrills and emotions.

One of our home-bred devil-dodgers is the Rev. Yarn-ton Mills, who belongs to the Church of England Mission of Healing, although he certainly has unmistakable affiliations to the devil-men of West Africa. One of the remarkable feats of Mr. Mills' is that of casting out a "black imp" that haunted a Mr. H. T. W. Bousefield. Mr. Mills confesses that he never sees anything, he just feels the presence of imps and the like. Then he exorcises them and they go. We wish Mr. Mills was not so effective. We will give a reasonable sum merely to see one of the devils exorcised by Mr. Mills, and will pay more if he can induce the said "imp" to stay with us for awhile. We promise a good home and all reasonable entertainment. But we are afraid that we cannot be content with Mr. Mills merely *feeling* him. That sounds to us a trifle artful.

We are always interested in psychological byways, and we find an interesting item in the *News-Chronicle* for March 6. Lady (Beddoe) Rees, speaking at a meeting (We think of the S.P.C.C.) at Romney, said that a young married couple rang up a cinema proprietor "in the middle of the night," and said they had left "a valuable article" in the building—they had attended the performance. After a "frantic search" they found their baby fast asleep. The baby had been forgotten when the parents left the building. Now if this had not appeared in the *News-Chronicle* we confess that we should hardly have credited that a young father and mother could have forgotten a baby they had brought with them (Presumably they had placed the baby under the seat, or left it in the cloak-room) waited until the middle of the night to discover their loss, and then were so frantic at their loss that they facetiously described it as consisting of a "valuable article." The story sounds to us "as true as gospel." As *Punch* once said, we believe it, but there are some who would not. At any rate it helps us to believe why many believe in the miracles of the Bible. Someone should try it on Mr. Hilaire Belloc.

The *Church Times* takes up a curious attitude with regard to the quarrel over the Football Pools. We quite understand the Puritan. He disbelieves in anything in which people find any pleasure, if it does not involve the singing of hymns and the observance of Sunday. But the *Church Times* finds fault with it on the ground that whoever loses the promoters of the pools win. But this is the case with any such gamble. In every sweepstake or lottery the promoters take a profit, and with that the winners have nothing to do, provided they are aware that such profit is taken. The *Church Times* cites the *Manchester Guardian* as saying that the pool proprietor is on "something to nothing." Again, why not? And again provided we know that the proprietor will take a proportion of the subscriptions as payment for service. The *Church Times* says that the public, on the whole, must be out of pocket. Again, why not? This happens in a Church lottery and in every lottery. In the end the *Church Times* concludes that the pools ought to be either suppressed or heavily taxed. Now that is quite Christian. The pools ought to be suppressed, but if they are taxed, that is all right, because that will help to reduce the taxes of Christians, among others.

Meanwhile we suggest that every shilling given to any Church is a pure gamble, for no one knows that there will be any return from this speculation. The only certain thing is that the clergy—the promoters of this particular gamble take a very large proportion what is subscribed, and there is no guarantee that anyone is a winner. Really, the Churches should be either suppressed or very heavily taxed. As it is they are actually relieved from taxation altogether.

While we welcome the proposed Divorce Law Reforms which form part of Mr. A. P. Herbert's "Marriage Bill," we cannot feel any sort of interest in the suggested delays of all marriages. Mr. Herbert should not mix up two very different subjects. We ought not to wait till Mr. Herbert has converted England to his peculiar

opinions about "Marry in haste . . .," before we get sane civilized opinion incorporated into our Divorce Laws. Even if we thought marriages should be delayed by law, we should strenuously oppose exceptions being made in the case of those wealthy enough to obtain a special licence or move the Courts to consider a plea for urgency.

The ex-Dean Inge, still described as "very reverend," admits in the *Evening Standard* that David, the "man after God's own heart," was "no gentleman." King Henry VIII., the original "Defender of the Faith," was a murderer—at least he would have been had his power over the Courts not been such that he murdered women by the hand of the public executioner. The ex-Dean flatters David by calling him no gentleman. His behaviour in the case of Michael, Uriah, Shimei and others would have made Jack-the-Ripper blush.

Dr. Inge says that "the typically Godly life under Queen Victoria," including the practice of thrift and eschewing those innocent amusements Victorians loved to call "the pomps and vanities of the world," was "Calvinism in practice." Here too Dr. Inge flatters Calvin, and Calvinism. He should read Ingersoll and study the experience of those who unfortunately were brought up in Calvinistic homes. He must have forgotten Calvin's outrageous bringing of Servetus to the stake.

At a public meeting of the Sheffield Diocesan Conference, a few days ago, Canon Harvey and the Bishop of Sheffield "both urged that the Church still stands for the indissolubility of marriage." The Bishop, of course, leaned upon "God's original plan in this matter"—and he talked as if there could be no doubt whatever that he, the Bishop, really knew what "God" actually said. People like the Bishop of Sheffield must really live in a world as far from this as Neptune; for if there is one thing which does emerge from Biblical criticism it is that the Bible is merely a collection of documents written by men who were as much in touch with "God" as we are.

"If the State wanted to make alterations," said the Bishop, "for the benefit of people who were not Christians, it must be made clear that they did not apply to Christians." The Bishop knows perfectly well that it is the State, and not the Church, which is responsible for marriage in this country; and that the Church, as a Church, can no longer interfere in the matter; it has to obey the State. Divorce, on certain grounds, is permitted, and those who advocate extending these grounds do so in the interest of humanity—and that has nothing to do with the archaic notions of "Our Lord" or Christianity. We have an idea that when divorce reform is finally agreed upon, people like the Bishop of Sheffield will be among the first to declare that it is the result of Christian progress, and was advocated by "Our Lord," nearly 2,000 years ago, in language which, alas, is only now beginning to be understood.

Extraordinary how some people think a saint can be made. A writer in one of our numerous religious papers tells the story of a dockside Irish labourer who "for the first thirty years of his life was a waster and a terribly hard drinker." It would be interesting to know how much "waste" and hard drinking there was, let us say, in the first 15 years of this period. However, afterwards the man was "converted," and always went to Mass before work. When he died, "they found a coil of rusty old chains wrapped round his flesh." He was, therefore, "a very fine character and a very rare kind of saint." He must have been, indeed! How many more "converts" will now qualify for sainthood in the same way?

When it comes to Christians discoursing on the "future life," it is really amusing to find how the question can be evaded. For example, either a Dean or a Bishop, or a priest is in touch with "God" or he is not.

If he is, and if the Bible says there is a Paradise for the converted, then they ought to proclaim it from the house-tops. In his recent broadcast talk on the future life, the Dean of St. Paul's said that "for many, the chief interest, perhaps the sole interest, in our subject is summed up in this question, 'Shall I see and know my loved ones again?' When we begin to think about this, we find all kinds of difficulties arise in our minds."

"All kinds of difficulties," indeed! But surely the question can admit of only one answer—if Christianity be true? Is not the Dean a "Man of God"? Does he not know what God has said on the matter? What is his reply? "It seems to me that we cannot suppose the child (whom a mother may have lost) to remain a child. He must develop in the life beyond. But we have no materials out of which our imagination can construct a picture of the life beyond. Its conditions must be so different from ours that we are baffled when we try to conceive them." And this from a member of the body which declares it has "Holy Orders"!

The truth is, of course, that Dr. Matthews has no more idea of the "future life" than we have, and he cannot produce a single logical reason that any exists. When he declares that "God is love," it may prove the future life to some people—to "true" Christians, for example. But even he must recognize that such a statement also needs proof, and that he has none to give for it either. If people really want proof of a future life, they should go over to the Spiritualists. For a suitable fee, they will be put into touch with any relative they like, ranging from still-born babies, centenarian aunts, to far-off ancestors. Moreover, the "spirit" is produced—what better proof could possibly be required?

"Conversion" is another delightful problem which occupies the church. It seems, according to Fr. A. R. Vidler, of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, Cambridge, that "the intelligent convert will, of course, take the Christian Faith as it has been thought out and expressed by wise men in the past as, to say the least, his working hypothesis." Now to say that a convert is "intelligent" may be to some rather a contradiction in terms. But can anything be more amusing than to be told about the "wise men" who have "thought out and expressed" the Christian Faith? Why, hundreds and thousands of books have been published attempting to show what the Christian Faith really is. How much of unanimity, on the part of Christians, is there about it? Which "Christianity" must a convert go to, to become a "true" Christian?

One pious critic on "conversion" says "to suppose that a converted person, whose sins are undoubtedly forgiven, is automatically and immediately fit to take his place in God's presence and home, in the company of pure spirits and holy angels, is either a vulgar error or a piece of theological ignorance." But surely, does not the convert really think he is fit for God's presence and the company of angels? We admit, however, he does not want to be ushered into "God's home" immediately even at the risk of being thought not converted.

Mr. Jack Lawson, M.P., gives God the chance of His lifetime. We hope God will take advantage of the occasion. This sanctimonious politician informs God that "never was there an era when men and women cleansed and ennobled by His Companionship were so needed," and much more about the present opportunity "for mighty deeds to be done." Mr. Lawson is, however, by no means sanguine that his Heavenly Hearer will answer the call. He admits that "ages of brooding prayer by countless millions of men and women" . . . "have pleaded Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth . . . until desire has grown to spiritual pain."

With the commoner and more ignorant type of Christian, some sixty or seventy years ago, it used to be a common statement that without religion there could be

no morality. Gradually decent-minded Christians dropped this silly and ruffianly argument(?) or put it in a more subtle way. But there still are surviving representatives of this Stone Age type of religion, we find one illustrious member in the present Bishop of London. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* for March 6, the Bishop agrees with another survivor, Sir Ambrose Fleming, that "the absence of moral restraint (is due) to the little religious training that many of the youth of to-day receive." We have yet to learn that the youth of to-day show less moral decency than the time when the Bishop was just a newly-fledged parson. And if the Bishop is a sample of truthfulness, and desirable behaviour, then the less the youth of to-day resemble him the better. Now, as in his younger days, the Bishop uses his religion as a cover for untruthfulness and slander.

Dr. Stewart, one of the leading "Anglos" in America, declared the other day, that there was no need for the Church of England to go over to Rome, as she was already "Catholic"—though "unable to admit the modern claims of the Papacy." In reply, Cardinal Mundellin, the Archbishop of Chicago, in his official organ, said that "the Bishop's speech was his attempt to block the tidal wave of conversions to Rome." Upon which optimistic pronouncement, an American religious writer insists that as far as he could find out "there has not been a single conversion to Rome from Epicopalean divines of real reputation, in America, at least, since Bishop Kinsman went over in 1920. The 'tidal wave' would seem the creation of the Cardinal's imagination." What a polite way of putting it!

What do Catholic Communists really think of the attacks on Communism by the priests of their Church? For example, Cardinal Verdier, the Archbishop of Paris, has issued a warning against the "insidious campaign" of Communists among Catholics. "It is a doctrine destructive of truth and of the most necessary human values." Further, it seems that the Communist Party has declared that "Communism is ready to acknowledge all religions." And it has issued a paper called the *New World*, the organ of Christian Revolutionaries, "carrying on its cover 'the cross, the hammer, and the sickle'"—all this for Catholic workers. Perhaps the idea is that once inside the movement, even Catholics will see the absurdity of the cross being allied with the hammer and sickle. If not, they ought to.

Why are naval commanders so often very religious? The Archbishop of Taranto, Italy, celebrated Mass the other Sunday, in a submarine 90 feet below the surface of the sea. The Admiral commanding and several other military and civic dignitaries were present and, no doubt, everybody would have been happy if only the submarine could have been then used against the Abyssinians. The Archbishop's speech was afterwards relayed to a torpedo-boat and broadcasted. Blessing flags and battle-ships, plenty of religious services for soldiers and sailors, army and navy priests, almost no pacifism, and numbers of fiery sermons against the enemy (see *Arms and the Church*) by men in "holy" orders, all form part of the proof that Christianity is entirely out for Peace with Jesus as its Prince.

Science owes a debt of gratitude to such pioneer thinkers as Prof. J. Alexander Findlay. He knows all about psychology. He refers, in a recent number of the *British Weekly* to "the proved facts of telepathy and thought transference." And what are these "proved facts" which the Professor so glibly proclaims? These "proved facts" demonstrate "that even in this life souls can communicate without flesh and blood." We admit our ignorance (and the professor's) as to what a "soul" can do when its body is dead, but in "this life," which is the only life we are acquainted with, the existence of any "soul" is utterly unproved. The word "soul" is a mere figure of speech.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. BARON.—We hope that all Freethinkers throughout the country will follow your example and make it a point of calling the attention of their Members of Parliament to the Bill now before the House of Commons, for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws.

A. MUSTY.—Thanks for good wishes. Someone *must* see our exit, but if we move for some time with care, we do not think anyone is likely to see our obituary for some time.

H. M. AND T. L. MATTHEWS.—Mr. Cohen is taking every care, and intends taking a holiday between now and the Conference. That, however, will not stop him writing for the paper.

G. H. TAYLOR.—Pleased you find "Things Worth Knowing" excellent in both conception and execution. We shall probably reprint a volume of the best selections. If that is done, it should rank as one of the world's best books. Considering it will be made up of the best essays from the best and most authoritative writers, with each excerpt complete in itself, it could not be otherwise.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—S. Barralet, £1 1s.

R. SIDE.—Mr. Cohen has the matter in hand, and will soon be writing you.

A. WOODHOUSE.—Thanks, but regret we are unable to use.

L. H. B.—Further article will appear so soon as we can find space. Thanks.

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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

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

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

Almost the first thing Mr. Cohen did after leaving the hospital was to commit a very bad blunder in connexion with meetings at Manchester. He had arranged to visit Manchester to-day (March 15), but confused it with March 8. Unable to go himself, he announced that his place would be taken by Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, grandson of the founder of the National Secular Society, and that in the afternoon Mr. Shortt, President of the Liverpool Branch, would lecture at 3 o'clock. We are very sorry that our note was misleading, and we hope that a disappointment last week will not prevent attendance to-day (March 15). Mr. Shortt is well known in Manchester, but this is Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner's first lecturing visit, and we hope to hear that the Picture House, Market Street, was well filled on both occasions. Full particulars of the meetings will be found on other pages in this issue. We beg the forgiveness of all who were put to inconvenience by our blunder.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will, this year, be held in London. The Branches that had invited the Conference withdrew their invitation when it was known that it would be less strain on the President in his present state of health. He is greatly obliged to them for their thoughtfulness, although it would be paying the Branches concerned a poor compliment to say that he was at all surprised at the consideration shown. Mr. Cohen is not one to sentimentalize on such a point, but he was never blind to, or inappreciative of, the kindly feeling that has always existed between himself and the members of the N.S.S. Fuller particulars concerning the Annual Conference will be given later. For the moment, motions for the Agenda should reach the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, not later than March 31.

The Government is trying its hand at subsidizing still further religion in the State Schools, and this gives greater significance to a Public Conference that is to be held in the Conway Hall on Thursday, March 19, at 7.30. Mr. Cohen had promised to be one of the speakers, but has had to cancel this, with other engagements. He was to speak as representing the views of the Secular Education League, but his place is being taken by Mr. Ernest Thurtle, M.P., who has just introduced into the House a Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. The other speakers are Professor H. Levy, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, and the Rev. James Barr, M.P.

We hope London Freethinkers will make it a point of attending this meeting. The Churches are doing what they can not merely to make their position secure, but to get an ever increasing hold on the public purse. The only way to stop this is to let our Government of shifts and dodges see that there is a volume of public opinion against this use of the public schools to breed customers for Church and Chapel. And we would also like to see a larger measure of support given to the Secular Education League, by membership and donations. There is a hard fight before those who believe in the State standing apart from religion, and merely sympathizing with this is not enough. Personal and financial support is the only thing that will tell. Particulars of the League may be obtained from the Secretary, 12 Palmer Street, S.W.1.

The new Leeds Branch of the N.S.S. will hold its first meeting to-day (March 15) in the Trades Hall, Upper Fountain Street, Leeds, at 8 p.m. Important business is to be discussed, and arrangements made for future activity. All members are asked to attend, and new members can be enrolled. There is plenty of Freethought work to be done in Leeds, and a strong and active N.S.S. Branch should be a useful addition to the intellectual life of the town.

The Bradford Corporation Libraries have refused to exhibit the *Freethinker* in its reading rooms. We advise Bradford Freethinkers to press the authorities so that their exhibition of bigotry is made public. We supply scores of public libraries and institutions with weekly copies, and so far as we know without ill-effect on the population.

Blackburn Freethinkers wishing to keep in touch with the movement will be welcomed at the Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn, where lectures and debates are held every Sunday evening, under the auspices of the local N.S.S. Branch. The Branch is very active, but could easily do with more help, chiefly in the way of new members.

At the Streatham Adult School, Mr. Fred Pullin, an experienced lecturer on the Cinema, declared that Town Constables everywhere have reported that crime and drunkenness, especially at the week-ends, have considerably diminished owing to the existence of the Cinema.

We believe this to be the general experience. It not only is evidence in favour of Sunday opening of Cinemas, it is one of multitudinous proofs that "mere materialism," as pious platitudinarians call it, is a more valuable guide to morality than religious instruction.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's "feeler," thrown out some time ago, in the direction of testing public opinion on the question of making criticism of Cabinet Ministers punishable at law, would probably find favour with the judges of the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago, who convicted an editor for contempt of court, the offence being criticism of the verdict of a judge. The editor appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and the conviction was quashed. Lord Atkin properly held that "provided that members of the public abstain from imputing improper motives to those taking part in the administration of justice, and are genuinely exercising a right of criticism, and not acting in malice or intending to impair the administration of justice, they are immune." This strikes us as quite a good judgment. We have not yet sunk to the German level where criticism of a ruler is a deadly crime. The right of a man to criticize anything and anyone, from King to dustman, and from the throne to newspaper hawker, ought to be taken as a matter of course by anyone with a sense for genuine freedom.

Die Gotterdammerung

It was always a source of wonder to me that in every subject of my education the most rigid system of investigation was insisted upon except in one case only. From mathematics to historical research, there are rules of procedure recognized by every educationalist in the world and which satisfy the most extravert minds in the quest for proof; but there was always a difficulty about God.

What were the lines of inquiry? How was one to find out anything about an entity which gave not the slightest evidence of its existence to the tenets of reasoning? What were the first propositions in the matter of a syllogism?

There was nowhere to begin. God was as elusive as a shadow, and as intangible as a shiver. The childish story of a gigantic ogre who sent his only son to be sanguinarily murdered by a brutal mob, out of love for his home-made puppets, was soon consigned to the limbo of fable. It was as H. G. Wells says, a horrible story as nasty as it was needless.

Putting on one side the essentially Christian characteristics of God, there was never anything given in the nature of a definition. Etymologically there is no help whatever, for the word God seems to be nearly as old as man. A psychotherapist friend of mine once playfully attempted to define God as "a self-creative purposive entity, whose attributes are absolute truth, goodness, and beauty"; polemically not worth the paper it is written on, but the best definition I have heard yet.

In modern times, and under the influence of advancing culture, the conception of God held by most Theists is an abstract amorphous essence of the earlier and primitive idea of a giant in the sky. Yet no matter how many personal characteristics are removed from God, man's imaginings of his existence are always anthropomorphic. He is none other than a super-manufacturer, and throughout the whole field of religious apologetics there are only two fundamental arguments which have ever been advanced for his existence. They are found in one form or another in every theological treatise, from a Sunday-school teacher's primer to a higher scriptural commentary, and are easily disposed of.

First there is the argument of a Theistic purpose in nature. Solar systems, moonlight scenes, vegetation, bubonic plague, human kindness, in fact the entire procession of nature must have been arranged by someone. That is the popular and tiresome fallacy expressed in its usual form.

The simplest reply is to ask the believer if he has ever seen a kaleidoscope, and to point out that the elements of existence are bound to bear some relation to each other whatever it may be. If the pattern and procession of nature had been any different, there would still be as much reason as there is at present for believing in a Pattern-maker; that is no reason at all.

Second, there is the statement that everything must have had a beginning. No-one can quarrel with that. What is usually meant, however, is that at one time there was nothing, except God. An infinite being for infinite years was alone in the infinite void, and suddenly decided to have company. If it is possible for such a being to exist in infinite loneliness, without previous authorship, then it is equally possible for nature to exist in the same circumstances. Science knows nature, but it has no evidence for God. Furthermore, it knows that the idea of God is an ignorant hypothesis from a prehistoric age, and the elaborate fallacies formulated since were never thought of at the inception of belief.

Yet there are hosts of people whom no amount of argument will convince. There are millions of reputedly educated people who, even whilst agreeing with the inexorable logic of Atheism, will tell you they prefer to believe in God. Their mental picture of existence includes God, whatever difficulty they may have in describing him. It is a matter of choice. The scientific outlook is subordinated to the exigencies of faith.

Cases like that might be cited to support the view that man is a praying animal and hungers for a God. That cannot generally be true even on the most biased foundation, for there are millions of others who are quite outside that description; but with modification it does apply to countless numbers who are still the victims of childhood influences, and who, even if you remove God from their minds in one form will have it in another.

What is the blind and insensate devotion to the totalitarian state with its Führers and Dictators but the symbolic fantasy of Theistic idealism? Megalomaniacs like Hitler are as much the ego-ideal in irrational minds as gods or kings. The explanation is simple enough. The psychology of mass-mentality is merely the psychology of family life extended in its scope. The child bears the same unconscious relationship to the father as does the later adult to the god, the political dictator, the State, or even an abstract idea like democracy. The same factors of unreason are working in the one case as in the other.

Man comes into the world with all the imperfections of atavism, and when he arrives is fondly nurtured in the cradle of unreasoning fantasy. There is no wonder that the will to believe, and the readiness to worship have such consuming power.

The scope of the Freethought movement is more comprehensive to-day than ever it has been. Gods come and go from one phase of history to another, they make their appearance in this form and that form, and are fed by primitive ideation in every sphere of thought and activity. To expose the hidden spring which gives life to all the gods is one of the tasks of modern Freethought.

The god-idea is a hideous bogey which can stand up against anything but the searching light of scientific thought.

Things Worth Knowing*

XXXII.

SUPERSTITION AND SPEECH

FROM the earliest times the Symbols which men have used to aid the process of thinking and to record their achievements have been a continuous source of wonder and illusion. The whole human race has been so impressed by the properties of words as instruments for the control of objects, that in every age it has attributed to them occult powers. Between the attitude of the early Egyptian and the modern poet there would appear at first sight but little difference. "All words are spiritual," says Walt Whitman, "nothing is more spiritual than words. Whence are they? Along how many thousands and tens of thousands of years have they come?" Unless we fully realize the profound influence of superstitions concerning words, we shall not understand the fixity of certain widespread linguistic habits which still vitiate the most careful thinking.

With the majority, and in matters of ordinary discussion, the influence of this legacy is all-pervasive, in language no less than in other spheres. "If we could open the heads of two men and read the thoughts of two men of the same generation and country, but at the opposite ends of the intellectual scale, we should probably find their minds as different as if they belonged to two different species. . . . Superstitions survive because, while they shock enlightened members of the community, they are still in harmony with the thoughts and feelings of others, who, though they are drilled by their letters into an appearance of civilization, remain barbarians or savages at heart."

Most educated people are quite unconscious of the extent to which these relics survive at their doors, still less do they realize how their own behaviour is moulded by the unseen hand of the past. "Only those whose studies have led them to investigate the subject are aware of the depth to which the ground beneath our feet is thus, as it were, honeycombed by unseen forces."

The surface of society, like the sea, may, as the anthropologist admits, be in perpetual motion, but its depths, like the depths of the ocean, remain almost unmoved. Only by plunging daily into those depths can we come into contact with our fellow men; only—in the particular case of language—by foregoing the advantages of this or that special scientific symbol system, by drinking of the same unpurified stream, can we share in the life of the community. If the clouds of accumulated verbal tradition burst above us in the open—in the effort to communicate, in attempt at interpretation—few have, as yet, evolved even the rudiments of a defence.

The power of words is the most conservative force in our life. Only yesterday did students of anthropology begin to admit the existence of these ineluctable coils by which so much of our thought is encompassed. "The common inherited scheme of conception which is all around us, and comes to us as naturally and unobjectionally as our native air, is none the less imposed upon us, and limits our intellectual movements in countless ways—all the more surely and irresistibly because, being inherent in the very language we must use to express the simplest meaning, it is adopted and assimilated before we can

so much as begin to think for ourselves at all." Tens of thousands of years have lapsed since we shed our tails, but we are still communicating with a medium developed to meet the needs of arboreal man. And as the sounds and marks of language bear witness to its primeval origins, so the association of these sounds and marks, and the habits of thought which have grown up with their use and with the structures placed upon them by our first parents, are found to bear witness to an equally significant continuity. . . .

In some respects the twentieth century suffers more grievously than any previous age from the ravages of such verbal superstitions. Owing, however to developments in the methods of communications, and the creation of many special symbolic systems, the form of the disease has altered considerably; and apart from the survival of religious apologetic, now takes more insidious form than of yore. Influences making for its wide diffusion are the baffling complexity of the symbolic apparatus now at our disposal; the possession by journalists and men of letters of an immense semi-technical vocabulary and their lack of opportunity, or unwillingness, to inquire into its proper use; the success of analytic thinkers in fields bordering on mathematics, where the divorce between symbol and reality is the most pronounced and the tendency to hypostatization is most alluring; the extension of a knowledge of the cruder forms of symbolic convention (the three R's), combined with a widening of the gulf between the public and the scientific thought of the age; and finally the exploitation for political and commercial purposes, of the printing press by the dissemination and the reiteration of clichés.

The persistence of the primitive linguistic outlook, not only throughout the whole religious world, but in the work of the profoundest thinkers, is indeed one of the most curious features of modern thought.

The Meaning of Meaning,

by C. K. OGDEN AND I. A. RICHARDS, pp. 24-9.

Liberty and Re-armament

IT has been said, somewhat glibly, that "Truth is the first casualty of war," apparently upon the assumption that truth exists in peace time, and that it dies immediately war breaks out, and the war censorship begins working. The answer to that illusion is that truth, except in a modified form, does not exist in peace time; for if the real thing existed it would stop war, and that the truth, such as it is, is slowly strangled as war preparations intensify. And the combination of war preparations and the lack of truth, the deadly pair feeding each other's fires, rushes us into catastrophe.

To keep out of the way of this disaster, it seems that the best way is to preserve what truth and liberty exist: it is to watch carefully over the liberty of the press, the wireless, the right of free speech and the personal liberty of the individual. It is now, when these are further threatened by the "co-ordination of industry" with which the Government proposes to facilitate re-armament, for those who love liberty to re-affirm their faith in it by resisting any further curtailment of our democratic rights. For these have already suffered too badly for any further infringements to be tolerable.

For instance, in the summer of 1934, a notice was pinned up in the reporter's room of the Press Association, which is the principal British news gathering organization. The notice said that whenever at public meetings, demonstrations, or public functions of any kind, any reference was made by any speaker

* 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.

to British war preparations, the reporter who covered the speech must, before writing his story, get his notes passed by the news editor. More recently, the War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry, have begun trying themselves to establish a form of domestic censorship of the press. At least one big London newspaper has been severely reprimanded for reprinting from a German newspaper an account of the fortifications of the Singapore naval base. And in the beginning of 1935, a move was proposed to make bitter, personal attacks upon prominent people impossible by a Bill which would make them libel. Alternatively, it was suggested that newspapers should be compelled by a law to publish in full special Government communiqués, these to offset the news given in the other pages of the paper; echoes of these ideas still linger.

Regarding the freedom of the press, there may be added to the above the fact that the always unsympathetic attitude of the police towards sellers of "left" newspapers and literature, has lately developed into arresting them and binding them over for long periods, on charges of "obstruction," or "calling out for the purpose of selling a paper." It is not known, either, what is behind the backing has been found in influential reactionary quarters, for the proposed scheme for a State Register of Journalists, and what such a scheme brought to fruition might do towards the muzzling of the press.

By the digging up of a number of old, out-of-date acts, the liberty of the individual has been curtailed: Tom Mann, the Communist leader, was imprisoned under an Act passed in Edward III.'s reign, 600 years ago. Ancient Acts furnished precedents for the militarization of the police and police discrimination against radicals, which was facilitated by the Police Act of 1933. Police authorities banned meetings outside labour exchanges, and began repression which achieved the feat, in some parts of England, of breaking up radical and anti-war demonstrations, and providing police escorts for Fascists! In two-and-a-half years, 1,100 people were arrested for political offences, most of the charges proving baseless.

When it is remembered that most of these measures were made necessary by the war preparations of the last few years, it may well be asked what will be the measures which may be necessary to facilitate the much larger armament of the next few years.

A Government spokesman recently said: "The Government, which has been considering the defence problem for some time, has been impressed by the organizing advantages enjoyed by the Totalitarian over the democratic countries. It has been recognized that dictator countries can organize their industries and regiment labour in time of peace to a degree which can be only achieved by democratic countries under the stress of war." This speech shows the way the wind is blowing in governmental circles, and in view of this it seems highly likely that, as the pace of re-armament grows more intense, the Government will take, and be forced to take, any and all measures necessary for the smooth working of the war machine. And with the inclusion, nowadays, in that war machine of an immense part of the life of the nation, the press, industry, agriculture, education, scientific research, religion—the scale and intensity of modern war demanding totalitarian obedience from the citizens of the warring states, re-armament apparently, inevitably must lead to increased State power over the people, i.e., to a variety of Fascism. And the combination of war preparations and the lack of truth, the deadly pair feeding each other's fires, rushes us into catastrophe.

L. H. BORRILL.

The Witch Mania

IX.

REFERENCE was made in a previous article to the "familiar" who accompanied witches. They are of particular interest because of their likeness in some way to the spirit-guides of modern mediums. One shudders to think of the fate which would have been meted out to mediums had the laws against witchcraft been still active.

The evidence on this subject extracted from the numerous poor women who were accused of being witches (some of them, by the way, seemed to glory in the title) is very difficult to account for. There can be no doubt that they actually believed, in many cases, that the cat or toad or other animal which accompanied them was really the Devil or at least one of his imps. They believed, according to Miss Murray, "that they could foretell the future" through the animal, whatever it was. Nobody seems to know exactly how this was done, but some of the questions asked are preserved in the accounts of the trials. Many old women, who had the traditional look of a witch, and who had, in addition, a black dog, or crow, or hen, were almost certain to be accused of witchcraft and made to confess how, through the animal, they actually spoke to the Devil. The strange thing is that, if we are to believe the accounts of the trials, the witches and wizards themselves believed that they were talking to the Devil when they spoke to the familiar. The names of spirit-guides are funny enough, in all conscience, but the names of the familiars will take a lot of beating. Here are some: In France, they were called, Minette, Joly-bois, Maitre Persil, Sante-Buisson, Verdelet, etc.; in Germany Mashleid (mischief), Ugluck (ill-luck), Tzum-walt-vliegen (flying to the wood), Feder-wisch (feather-washer), and so on; in England, Peck-in-the-Crown, Pyewackett, Sack and Sugar, Grizzell Greedigut, Tetty, Robin, Hoppe, Puckle, Piggin, Smack, etc.

Toads seem often to have been the witches' familiars; and curiously enough, it has even been recorded that "thousands of these creatures sprang out of the earth and standing on their hind legs, danced to the devil's playing on the bagpipes or trumpets" at one of the assemblies. All these toads could speak and insisted on the flesh of unchristened babies as a reward for their entertainment. This was promised them and they all then immediately disappeared. Nothing more veridical could happen even at a seance.

It is curious also to learn that the witches often confessed giving the familiars some of their own blood by pricking or cutting themselves. Later on, it was the familiar who sucked the blood, generally from one of the super-numerary nipples—if the witch had one. It is quite possible that some of the women who found themselves thus endowed believed they were witches and felt that the right thing to do was to nourish the domestic cat or dog from it, if possible; and, of course, any animal who did suck in this way was obviously a familiar. It should be added that as soon as the judges learnt these facts, they almost invariably condemned the women.

It was Matthew Hopkins (1644) who made witch-finding a fine art. He had a way in doing this which has been described by the Rev. Mr. Gaul—who, to his credit, impugned the "Witch-finder General." Gaul was a contemporary, and wrote a pamphlet against Hopkins, "accusing him," says Dr. Charles Mackay, "of being a common nuisance." The pretensions of this impostor were heightened through his brazen impudence. He travelled through various counties at

tended by two assistants, putting up at the chief inn of any town he visited, and, of course, at the cost of the authorities. "His charges were," says Mackay, "twenty shillings a town, his living expenses, and his carriage there and back. This he claimed whether he found any witches or not. If he found any, he claimed twenty shillings a head when they were brought to execution." He followed this occupation for about three years, but was by no means well received everywhere.

Hopkins would make the suspected witch sit on a stool or table, cross-legged; if she objected she was forced to take up the required position and bound with cords. She would then be watched for about twenty-four hours, during which time she was allowed no food or drink. The watchers had to see whether an "imp" would come in to suck her blood. The imp was supposed to be in the shape of a moth or a fly or a wasp, and it was allowed to enter through an open window or door. The idea was that the watchers would endeavour to kill the insect. If they did not succeed, then the woman was guilty. It was her imp, and she was sentenced to be burned, and twenty shillings was paid to Hopkins. One can imagine how deeply sunk in credulity and superstition both the magistrates and the people were at the time when such a foul imposture was allowed to be carried on for over three years; and the terrible thing is that it succeeded so often.

But the Rev. Mr. Gaul's pamphlet and Hopkins' own greediness brought about his fall. "He was," says Mackay, "beset by a mob at a village in Suffolk, and accused of being himself a wizard. An old reproach was brought against him, that he had, by means of sorcery, cheated the devil out of a certain memorandum book, in which he, Satan, had entered the names of all the witches in England." Hopkins was thus accused of finding out the witches not by God's aid, but by Satan's. He was thereupon put to one of his own tests—thrown into a pond after having his thumbs and toes tied together. It is not certain whether he floated, was taken out and lynched, or whether he was drowned. In either case he fully deserved his fate.

In Scotland there were many witch-finders who also received a fee for every witch condemned as a result of their efforts. They tried to find the devil's marks upon the poor woman; but eventually the judges refused to take their evidence and the witch-finders were considered both as cheats and nuisances. But this only happened after many innocent men and women had been put to death as the result of their findings. How terrible it all was can be judged from the way in which John Bain, a witch-finder in Scotland, accused a woman of talking to the Devil. The evidence showed that all she did was to talk to herself—a common practice, after all—but Bain's accusation was allowed, and the woman was actually burned to death.

Even a judge of such standing as Sir Matthew Hale, condemned two women to the stake on evidence which showed that their neighbours looked upon them as being ugly, a proof that they were therefore witches! Of course, efforts were made to show that if the women touched anybody, a fit resulted; and if a person was taken ill, and one or both of the women were anywhere near, that proved they were the cause of the illness. Even Sir Thomas Browne, one of the great masters of English prose, was called upon as a witness, and he concurred in the opinion that some of the witnesses were clearly bewitched. In spite of efforts to make the poor women confess to witchcraft, they refused; but they were eventually hanged.

Between 1694 and 1701, eleven trials took place before Chief Justice Holt. Although the usual evidence

was produced, it is good to think that Holt prevailed upon the jury to throw it overboard and no conviction resulted. At the same time, it was often most difficult for an enlightened judge to persuade the jury to acquit the accused in some cases. As late as 1716, a woman and her daughter—the latter only nine years of age—were hanged for selling their souls to the Devil. Think of a judge and jury of grown men, supposedly sane, hanging a little girl of nine! It is too awful to ponder upon. And yet it occurred in the golden age of religion, that age when the pure, simple religion of Christ Jesus was the faith of the people of Europe. It is some compensation to think that Humanism is slowly but surely ousting true Christianity. The horrors attending the execution of men, women and children for witchcraft are no longer possible.

H. CUTNER.

A "Freethinker" Salesman

It was the culmination of a long and wearisome search for truth when I came across the *Freethinker*. The tragic fact that, in an environment of social convention and orthodox Christianity one may never meet with Atheism, or encounter a confessed Atheist, was the reason of my losing many precious years of progress in human growth. "Tragic" is the apt word when lamenting my own experience in that respect, and realizing that it must be the experience of many, many thousands of good-thinking men who, revolting against the barbarism of religious superstitions, have not found contact with Freethought.

How I found a "conversion" which no honour or profit the world can offer would change, is too long a story to be told here. Suffice it, that all the alleged "blessings" and ecstasies of a "saved" soul are but boredoms and banalities to the peace which doth NOT pass understanding. AND UNDERSTANDING CANNOT GO BEYOND REAL FREETHOUGHT.

Well—the immediate sequel to my "discovery" of the *Freethinker* was to obtain a supply of the journal and some pamphlets for outdoor sale. Learning of the National Secular Society's branch meetings in Hyde Park, thither I went, and the first Sunday ensuing stood at Marble Arch from 11 a.m. until 12 midnight without a break for rest or refreshment! Fanaticism?—Emphatically no! It was simply a grateful reaction to having rid my system of the hereditary doping of religion. Of course, I did not maintain such hours in the three years or so during which I performed the same service, although six hours a day would be a fair average to claim for most of the period through all weathers. Nor was I ever wearied in the task itself.

Ever anxious to learn, I studied life from the new perspective of the gutter, and thereby learnt why politicians, pressmen, and clerics have such narrow outlooks. Such people know little of life in the mass.

My first encounters were with unhappy, sour-visaged daughters of Zion, who, if looks could kill, would have slain me on the spot for displaying the *Freethinker* placard. The "brethren" were not so rabid, their general attitude towards me being that of the Bedlamites, who are quite convinced that not they, but the people outside are the lost—or insane. On the other hand, it was delightfully common to meet an increasing number of more intelligent people, prepared to discuss the paper and its purpose. The majority had never heard of it, which is not surprising, considering its necessarily restricted publicity (with limited resources). However, more people are now beginning to think for themselves, and the blatant advertising of "successful" publications will not always overcome the dissemination of Reason.

Several clerics of various denominations bought the paper, and one had obviously discarded "the cloth" after its perusal, followed by the influence of Ingersoll's *Rome or Reason*. I have little hope of a certain Bishop of the "Established" Church doing likewise, though he was courageous enough to write me in defence against the criticism he invited.

Ex-Catholics—not necessarily Freethinkers—were frequently in discussion with me, and what experiences of Holy Church they could unfold! For instance, the mother, whose children, attending the Roman Catholic School under their Catholic father's compulsion, were told by the teaching nun that their sister was nothing better than a prostitute by marrying only at a Registry Office. Then the elderly Irish woman who, apologizing to me for his deafness, explained that when a lad at school, the drum of his ear was broken by a priest who struck him in dissatisfaction with the boy's answer to a question. These, and similarly atrocious incidents can, of course, be substantiated.

Meeting with all sorts and types of persons under the conditions described, the fact emerged that ignorance and knowledge are fairly evenly distributed between the uneducated and so-called "educated classes." Many of the latter actually do not know what Atheism is, and that there is a Secular Society numbering among its members those whose status could not be questioned in the highest intellectual and social circles. It follows that they are even less acquainted with the contents of the *Freethinker*. Would it be credited that a Judge of the High Court, after greeting me, could only offer his opinion that "this country was the freest in the world," apparently under the impression that the *Freethinker* had some connexion with politics, or with a Russian periodical being sold some yards away? "A learned Judge!"

Summing-up: the position of the Public in respect to Freethought and its literature, I am justified, from observation, in saying that fear in its phase of moral cowardice is the great bar to progress. Social conventions, neighbours' opinions, "suburban" mentalities rule the lives of the vast majority, and thousands, otherwise well disposed to their own emancipation through Freethought, still endeavour to disguise the manacles of their mental enslavement as ornaments of freedom.

To conclude with positive evidence from the unique vantage point I took—I never have met one who, claiming to "believe in God," was not by that particular pretence the worse as a Man or as a Woman; which is only to be expected of any who waste time and tissue in hunting for, or pretending to "find" that chimera called "God," which never was nor ever can be where Humanity (in both senses) LIVES.

D.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"
ATHEISM AND FREEMASONRY

SIR,—Those who wonder whether an Atheist can remain a Freemason or whether an Atheist can become a Freemason may be interested in the following remarks.

The ritual or ceremonial of Freemasonry is, it may safely be assumed, not dissimilar in nature to that associated with well-known religions, past and present; and its psychological purpose is undoubtedly similar. Hence, no Atheist possessing a genuinely liberated mind would waste his time or stultify his intelligence by taking part in such "mysteries."

Freemasonry is—like the Christian religion—fundamentally a brotherhood of believers; and its Love and

Brotherhood and Benevolence are primarily intended for adherents of the cult. Of course, under the influence of good food and wine at a Freemasons' dinner, some of the aforesaid L. & B & B flows in the direction of the "outsider." Nevertheless . . .

No Atheist with an emancipated mind could adorn himself, like some primitive Red-Indian or Central African native, with the childish insignnia of Freemasonry. Only the adult with an adolescent mind could get pleasure from wearing such puerile trappings or inspiration from Freemasonic ritual.

No convinced Atheist could affirm the dogma of English Freemasonry concerning "the Architect of the Universe," and thus commit himself to all that it connotes or implies. And even if this affirmation were eliminated, the aforesaid objectionable features of Freemasonry are sufficient, or should be, to prevent an intelligent Atheist from adhering to or joining this secret society.

Moreover, if the *Freethinker* has succeeded, while converting the reader to Atheism, in emancipating his intelligence also, he will have no use for Freemasonry and its mysteries; for he should have discovered better employment for his leisure and money, and better ways of exercising the feelings of benevolence and brotherhood.

D.P.S.

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—"Is the Theory of Spirit Return Reasonable?" Affir.: A. T. Connor (F.N.S.C.) Neg.: H. Preece.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Moritz Bonn, D.Sc.—"From Empire Making to Empire Breaking."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4) : 8.0, Monday, March 16, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Ideals of East and West."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Rooms, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton, E.10) : 7.30, Mrs. Saran—"Fascism and Clericalism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, Debate—"Is the Bible a Wise Guide?" Affir.: C. A. Oliver. Neg.: G. Bedborough.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level) : 8.0, Saturday, March 14, Mr. L. A. Miles—"Freethought and Progress." The Level, 3.30, Sunday, March 15, Messrs. Byrne and Miles—"Secularism and Society."

INDOOR

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham) : 7.30, Cinema Lecture by Mr. Harris, Birmingham's Water Supply, Columbia Circus, etc.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Tavern Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford) : 7.15, Mr. J. Backhouse—"Morality and Right."

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Institute, 164 Elm Grove, Brighton) : 7.30, Mr. J. Cecil Keast—"Christianity and Progress."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place) : 7.0, Messrs. Copland, Pensom and Topp will speak.

(Continued on page 175)

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ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY

(Continued from page 174)

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge
Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Myth Theory"
No. 3.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries,
Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield—
"What Freethought Means to Me."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone
Gate) : 6.30, Mr. H. J. Adams—"The Duty of Examining
Both Sides."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12 Shaw Street,
Liverpool) : 7.0, Mr. W. T. Wood—"Fear."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market
Street, Manchester) : 3.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt—"Religion or
Reason." 7.0, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner—"Christi-
anity in the Classroom." Admission free. Reserved seats
6d. and 1s. Teas in the Cafe at moderate prices.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green
Street) : 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

The Secular Society Ltd.,

CHAIRMAN: CHAPMAN COHEN

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

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

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

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