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• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

Broadcasting and the Public

THE report of the Committee appointed by the Government to consider the constitution, control and finance of the B.B.C. leaves matters very much as they were. No great fault is found and no striking reforms are suggested. The religious monopoly is to be left as it was, and Sir John Reith (Heaven—and the friends behind him—alone know why he was ever appointed) Sir John and his committee of parsons are to remain undisturbed, and the B.B.C. will receive a larger proportion of the licence fees. It is admitted that there is a general desire for a different programme on Sundays, and an alternative programme of a "lighter and more popular character" is recommended, but this should be "in a more serious mood" than that provided on week days. Sunday must still retain its Sabbatarian character even for those who frankly say they would like something different, and are driven to the Continent to get it. The Government will still exert a measure of avowed control, and a larger measure of unavowed control. We have, of course, no open control of opinion in this country, but there is a considerable amount of control that is unacknowledged. Pointing out this usually invites the retort from the muddle-headed brigade that there is more liberty here than in most countries. With that we agree, but it is because liberty is here, and because we value its being here, that we would guard it with care and extend it whenever possible.

Opinions and Quantity

So far as the formation and the control of public opinion is concerned, broadcasting is one of the most important events of our time. For that reason, unless all forms of thought are granted a hearing by the B.B.C.—which is given by the Government a monopoly of broadcasting—we have created a very subtle form of misdirection of opinion. As our

readers may remember, we foresaw this abuse of broadcasting from the very commencement, and the agitation we then incited led to a greater degree of freedom with regard to politics, but none at all so far as religion was concerned. There actually occurred an increase in the time devoted to religious services, sermons, and lectures, while dust was thrown in some people's eyes by some very mild heretical discourses being given. But no direct and authoritative adverse criticism of the Christian religion has ever been permitted. And even in politics the plan that was adopted gave an unfair advantage to some forms of opinion; for the B.B.C. decided that, in addition to members of the Government having the use of the microphone whenever it was desired, the different political parties should have a number of speakers proportionate to the size of the party they represented. And that confused the whole issue. For the point at issue is not the size of political parties, but the value of political opinions. It is entirely a question of opinion, and where opinion is concerned numbers simply have no existence. If the aim is to educate the public, and not fool them, the policy should be to see that every form of opinion gets a hearing, each represented by an equal number of speakers, and each speaker occupying the same amount of time. The different speakers are, substantially, conducting a debate, and if one thinks of a debate in which one speaker is given a longer time than another, or in which three speakers are allowed to speak on one side and only one on the other, one will at once realize the nature of the policy pursued by the B.B.C., and what is understood by equality of treatment. What with Government influence and B.B.C. inclinations one needs to keep one's eyes open.

* * *

Foreign Broadcasts

There are two things in the report which deserve rather more than a word of comment; and both have a bearing on the question that has just been raised. It is suggested by the B.B.C. that programmes from abroad, which include either advertisements or "communications which are specially intended for listeners in another country"—that is, so far as we are concerned, in English—should cease; the other is the proposed increase of broadcasting to schools. With regard to the first it is plain that no one can possibly be injured by listening to a foreign programme which also gives an advertisement of someone's soap or pills. No one is compelled to listen, and most people switch off the B.B.C. Sunday programme because they find it so full of religion and often so deadly dull. And, certainly, the B.B.C. has no hesitation whatever in advertising their own publications at considerable length. The only reasons that can lie behind this suggestion are, first, the desire to bring every foreign station into line with the B.B.C.'s own practice, and secondly the English trade interests that do not ad-

vertise from abroad. One suspects the influence of "big business" here.

Next, can anyone tell us what harm can be done to the public by their having the opportunity of listening to an English broadcast from a foreign country? And why should "the Post Office and the Foreign Office take all steps within their power" to prevent this being done? Admitting this to be propaganda intended for English consumption, is not a deal that is broadcast by the B.B.C., British propaganda, and does not even the suppression of certain views by the B.B.C. also constitute what one may call negative propaganda? The only chance that all but a very small proportion of the public has of getting foreign views of English policy, or of their own affairs, is by these English broadcasts. Far from stopping them I would retort by adding to them some of our own for the consumption of foreign peoples. The newspapers tell the people only what each of them thinks it is good for the people to know. Under Government influence they can be, they are, induced to suppress genuine news, or to give publicity to "doctored" information. If to these methods of misdirection we are to have added the microphone, which the Government is to control in times of "national emergency" (the fact of emergency to be decided by the Government itself) if other nations are barred from giving us views from abroad, then broadcasting becomes in this country, as it already is in some other countries, an instrument of pure "dope."

* * *

Broadcasting and the Schools

I think this element of broadcasting comes out in a still more subtle manner in connexion with school-broadcasting. The Committee points out that there are more than 3,500 schools that listen regularly, and it is hoped that this will become general. But whatever be the present character of the school broadcasts, I do not think their ultimate danger can well be exaggerated.

In the first place, school teaching, if it is to be most effective, will always depend very largely upon the personality of the teacher. The personal influence, the adaptation of a lesson to the known mentality of a class, and the slight modifications introduced to make clear what to some would otherwise not be clear at all, the possibility of repetition when the teacher observes that a point has not been noticed or has been misunderstood, are all lost. Broadcasting can never make good these vital conditions of effective teaching. The young people are not greatly interested in the fact that the unseen person is an "authority" on the subject on which he or she is talking. Lessons on the wireless may be a welcome help to the ineffective teacher or to the lazy teacher—and I admit there are plenty of both—but they can never replace a good teacher, one who knows his subject and is endowed with the capacity for making it clear to those with whose education he is entrusted. If anyone doubts this, let him listen to half a dozen of these school broadcasts, and then reflect whether, if he were a child in school he would consider the blaring of a loud speaker as a fitting substitute for the living person. And let him also remember that a child learns more in terms of *interest*, than in terms of a desire to acquire knowledge. Moreover, if broadcasting can take the place of the teacher, it would seem that the trained teacher may be gradually dispensed with altogether. All that will be required in a school completely fitted with loud speakers is an efficient attendant to see that children do not go to sleep or play games during the broadcast.

Education or Official Dope

But I must confess that I have a deeper reason and a more fundamental objection to the development of broadcasting in schools than the one just named. A national system of education is inevitable and desirable on both financial grounds and on that of efficiency. But a national system inevitably tends towards a uniformity, not merely in method, but also in the nature of the instruction given. Private schools have many faults, so have the "public" schools, and of the latter I think it may truthfully be said that a boy who leaves one of them with his mentality and character unaffected for the worse, must be of a rather strong and independent type. But these schools, given one strong enough to withstand their influence in the wrong direction, had, along with an undesirable uniformity in some directions, a certain individuality of teaching. One could say by the views expressed, that the man had been trained at this or that school; and in the sum one had diverging views of life and history current that made for development.

A State system tends to decrease this diversity, but there still remains the individuality of the teacher, and he, with his own private views of life and affairs, cannot help affecting to some extent those who are under his care. But while at present broadcasting to schools is, I believe, mainly concerned with nature studies and other harmless subjects there are possibilities of development and of danger. The uniformity inherent in a State system of education cannot help becoming more rigid and, in the worst sense of the word, more distinctly propagandist. Consider what history might become as taught through broadcasting. There would be one view only. Criticism would be to the pupil a lost art, and even questioning would be reduced to a minimum. A Government-directed series of broadcast talks on ethics, or on political life, or on the relation of this country to other countries, or the character of our kings and governors, would become nothing more than a colourless repetition of official opinion. If we bear in mind the policy of the B.B.C. before it was affected by a public outcry, the careful way in which certain views were ostracized, and the emphasis laid, directly and indirectly, on other views, one can easily see what educational broadcasts would rapidly become. I do not wonder that one of the earliest things done in Italy and Germany was to control the wireless. With broadcasting to adults kept strictly under Government control, with it playing a larger and larger part in school life, with a Government, as is the case at present, able to declare at any moment a "state of emergency," and taking over broadcasting in terms of that decision, we have the nation kept without trustworthy information at a time when that kind of information is most necessary.

Finally, it should be said that I am not writing thus with a particular Government in view. With the history of the world before me, I cannot think of any Government, no matter what its complexion, not "cooking" the news to its needs once given the opportunity. Broadcasting is one of the greatest of modern inventions. It is capable of incalculable good; but its power for good is the exact equivalent of its power for evil. The public would be well advised to take long views and put it out of the power of anyone, even of themselves, to use it to serve the ideas and the necessities of the moment without due regard to the future.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Wilkinson says among no ancient people had women such influence and liberty as among the ancient Egyptians.—*Buckle*.

A Bishop's Book-Keeping

"If I had been a bishop with an income of five to fifteen thousands a year, I should have had an inexhaustible source of rejoicing and merriment in the generosity, if not the credulity, of my countrymen."

John Bright.

THE Bishop of London is a large-scale philanthropist. For two whole generations he has added to the gaiety of a nation by his exuberance and optimism. Indeed, one of his own colleagues once described him, happily, as the "Sunny Jim" of the Established Church. It is this trait which distinguishes him from so many other members of his profession, who, with rare exceptions, rival the gravity of bailiffs, gravediggers, undertakers, and other solemn folk.

The Bishop's latest *bon-mot* is as good as anything he has ever uttered. Addressing a temperance meeting recently he declares that he has saved no less than £10,000 during fifty years by abstinence from drinking and smoking. The newspaper report does not say if the statement was received with cheers, or in deadly silence. Anyhow, it is worth a little examination.

It will be seen that the Bishop would have allowed himself £200 yearly for alcohol and tobacco, which works out at about £4 weekly. As this sum represents the total income of many working-class families, it will be noticed that his lordship intended "to do himself proud," as the saying goes. By denying himself these social amenities, however, the Bishop reckons that he saved about £10,000.

But this does not end the Bishop's heroic capacity for self-denial. He is a bachelor, and has never been burdened with a wife and family, which should represent a far greater saving than mere side-lines such as alcohol and tobacco. He should be in an enviable position with regard to finance, and likely to regard this as the best of all possible worlds, and his banker as a friend.

"Things are not what they seem," sang a popular poet. Some time since, the Bishop himself astonished a congregation by declaring that, after drawing his episcopal salary of £10,000 annually for a great number of years he was getting further and further into debt. This, be it noted, in spite of the stern economies he had imposed on himself in matters of temperance, and also in leading a celibate life. It is all very unsettling. On such book-keeping it seems not impossible that had the Bishop enjoyed the emoluments of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, his distress would have been so much the greater, and he might have finished his career in a casual ward instead of Fulham Palace, or a palatial town house in Mayfair.

Figures have always had a peculiar fascination for the Bishop of London, but he uses these symbols with greater freedom than most accountants. Some time since, pleading the cause of the "starving clergy," who were said to be on the very brink of suicide with incomes of £300 a year and a house, he quoted the words of a rural dean: "I see that no meal for myself, wife, and children exceeds sixpence and a half-penny." This horrid story was retailed at an excellent luncheon at the Mansion House, London. Is it not "too deep for tears"? Who in that gay assembly of lunchers could resist the appeal of the "rural dean" who had to feed at least five human beings (for the higher clergy are always expected to have a servant) on a beggarly "tanner."

The mystery remains how that rural dean managed to provide food for his family, so that "no meal exceeds 6½d." Did they, like old Nebuchadnezzar, eat grass? Or did the kind-hearted ravens who fed

the Prophet Elijah: "revisit the glimpses of the moon," and bring them sandwiches? Perhaps the Bishop of London can explain. So skilful is he with figures, that he has already proved to an admiring world that the more money he gets the nearer to the workhouse he becomes.

It was at the Mansion House that the Bishop told the tale of the dinner for five at a penny and a farthing per head. It must have startled his well-fed auditors as much as Banquo's ghost is said to have scared the amazed Macbeth. For Judge Rentoul has stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at this Mansion House seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk, which then cost about £40. He added that he actually saw those figures in black on white one year, and he was told that the figures were every year about the same.

The higher clergy usually devote themselves with extreme unction, to the pride, pomp, and circumstance of their spectacular profession, and it is with some surprise that one finds the Bishop of London talking in public with all the cheerful inconsequence of a schoolboy on holiday. It is true that his lordship favours a dress which is reminiscent of a Pre-Raphaelite painting, or a stained-glass window, but he mitigates the gravity of his professional decorum by the levity of his utterance. Is it true that he is a Peter Pan among prelates, who has never grown up, or are there other explanations?

The Bishop was once, for a short period, a curate in Bethnal Green, one of the poorest districts of the Metropolis. Yet he talks glibly of spending £10,000 on beer and baccy, for that is what his statement amounts to. Could anything show more clearly the gulf that separates the rich and the poor after twenty centuries of a Religion of Love? It reminds one of the story of the young princess in Paris at the time of the Revolution. Noticing a crowd of hungry people clamouring for food, she broke out: "If they haven't got bread, why don't they eat cake?" The Bishop, enjoying a salary of £200 weekly, with a palace and a town-house thrown in, appears not to notice that his suggested weekly expenditure on such luxuries as wine and cigars would keep a working-class family in comparative comfort.

As for the Bishop's highly-coloured picture of clerical poverty, this may be but a trick of the trade. In this particular instance he may be practising the arts of his sorry profession, and he probably smiles in private at his public performances. Perhaps, in describing his penny-per-head dinners, he is merely seeking to excite the sympathy of devoted Church people who have balances at the bank. Oratorical exaggerations such as this will only last so long as they produce the desired golden result. Some day the democracy of this country will turn a deaf ear to such importunities, and the clergy will have to seek more honest employment.

Sincerity makes respectable even absurd and wrong-headed causes, but it is not a shining Christian virtue. Mohammed has a direct influence over his professed disciples; Gotama Buddha still colours and controls human life; the teachings of Brahmanism affect the lives of millions. Confucius' teaching is faithfully adhered to by his followers. Even Joe Smith's injunctions are held in honour by the Mormons. But where, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, are the Christians who are faithful to the ideals and aspirations of the Gospel of Poverty? The Bishop of London is not an ordinary Christian, nor an average reverend. He is a Right-Reverend Father-in-God of one of the most important Christian Churches. Yet he follows in the footsteps of his master, who had not where to lay his head, by drawing a salary of £10,000 yearly, by living in a palace,

and by having a seat in the House of Lords. He is in no danger of crucifixion, but is a "curled, perfumed darling" of society. Posing as an heir of the legendary "twelve disciples," he is, on a close examination, seen to be but a successful showman, and a buttress of a fast-decaying Feudalism.

MIMNERMUS.

The Centenary of Mr. Pickwick

A HUNDRED years ago appeared the first part of a book destined to rank as one of the acknowledged masterpieces of world literature. No one—not even the author—could have envisaged its later extraordinary success; yet one might truthfully say that it bore the hall-mark of its greatness in the very first chapter.

The *Pickwick Papers* is the work of a genius. It is typically English, and yet it has that uncommon quality which characterizes universality. Its broad humanity, its humour and pathos, its wonderful observation, its wit and humour, its clear-cut delineation of men and women, ordinary men and women that is, its finely-conceived satire, broad in outlook but none the less severe when necessary, but above all, its love and pity for the common people, stamp *Pickwick* as being in the class which produced *Don Quixote* and the best of Shakespearean plays. Perhaps Dickens wrote greater books later; he never wrote anything finer; and in its own way, it has never been surpassed.

Whatever may be said about genius, it is bound to have its limitations. It may not be explained, but environment and heredity circumscribe it. The author of *Sketches by Boz*, young, vigorous, of unbounding vitality, was destined to write *Pickwick*. He could never have written *Waverley*. Everything in his life pointed the way to this rich recital of Mr. Pickwick and his friends, a recital only made possible through Dickens' own work as a reporter and journalist, and through the impressions made on his sensitive and artistic temperament in contact with people, places, and things.

The idea of a man and his servant setting out in search of adventure was not new. Cervantes had made it famous in a book known throughout the world. Butler had taken the idea and given us in *Hudibras* and his squire Ralph, a scathing satire of the period. Smollett in *Roderick Random*, a book which the boy Dickens knew well, gave us in the picture of Roderick and his simple servant Strap, another variation of the same idea. And it should be added that Dickens was by no means uninfluenced by contemporary novelists such as Theodore Hook, whose *Gilbert Gurney* and *Gurney Married* appeared about the same time as *Pickwick*. Moreover, both Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, and the *Tours of Dr. Syntax* may have contributed more than is thought to the creation of the *Pickwick Papers*.

But only native genius could have transformed the original conception, however it germinated, into such a masterpiece. Month by month Dickens, little more than a youth, poured out a wealth of observation and humour, which not only delighted the reading public of the day, but which has never ceased to delight it since. *Pickwick* is a book which can be read and re-read; a book full of one's immortal friends. Its descriptions of these people are inimitable; and equally so are the descriptions of the towns, and inns, and places, and things, described with such gusto by a man whose every touch made them spring into life.

We grow old; our memories grow dim. But can anyone forget the zest and enthusiasm provoked by a first reading of *Pickwick*? Can anyone ever forget

its hosts of living characters—not just Sam Weller, but the others, the lesser lights? Even though one does not meet Mr. Blotton (of Aldgate) again in the book—still, his calling Mr. Pickwick a "lumbug" in a *Pickwickian* sense, is not that a never-to-be-forgotten delight from the celebrated first chapter of the book? Is not, indeed, that first chapter a perpetual delight?

As for Mrs. Bardell and the circumstances which led to the most famous trial in fiction that has ever been recorded, what can one say about them? Does any one dare to say that the lady is a caricature or that Sergeant Buzzfuz was never met with in real life? Are medical students now very much different from Bob Sawyer or Jack Hopkins? Have we not all met Mrs. Leo Hunter—and the "werry good imitation" of a gentleman, her husband? Have we not all read similar odes to the one dedicated to an expiring frog? But one could go on in this way and easily fill an entire copy of this journal with references and extracts from *Pickwick*, which will never die as long as there are people who can read the English language.

One thing stands out in the book. Its almost entire silence on the beautiful purpose of religion, and its insistence throughout on what can be described as the Gospel of Secularism. Here and now must we be happy; the evils and abuses by which we are surrounded must be removed by our own efforts. Love, charity, humanity, these real secular traits, are the means through which we can combat evil. And it is remarkable that Dickens should not have dealt more with the Church and its teachers considering that he must have come across both in his peregrinations up and down the country, and considering how much he dealt with all phases of life in his books. The Church was still a power in his early life. Newman was becoming known in the religious world, and only a little later than *Pickwick* was galvanizing the pious into action with his *Tracts for the Times*. Dickens always protested that he was religious. In private letters and in some of his utterances, he insisted upon his belief in "Our Lord and Saviour." (Mr. W. Kent, in his excellent work, *Dickens and Religion*, goes fully into the subject.) But the curious thing is that in almost all his novels, Dickens says as little as possible of Christianity or its power of regenerating mankind. Indeed, one might say that his books show hardly a trace of his own belief at all.

But one aspect of religion he does touch upon, and that with the most savage satire his pen could muster. For dissenting ministers like the celebrated Mr. Stiggins of *Pickwick*, he had literally undisguised contempt. Indeed, he hated the very sight of their hypocrisy and cant.

Stiggins was a type Dickens must have met with constantly—and in this I disagree with Mr. Kent. He was a genuine product of dissent. He flourished during the Victorian era, and was kept alive by the astonishing Christian credulity, ignorance, and superstition of that epoch. To meet him as an institution, one should have lived in provincial towns between 1830 and 1890, when he reigned almost supreme in certain quarters. He certainly represented a type of Christianity which was decidedly unpleasant, a type which still survives in some northern towns in England and many towns in Scotland. It was based on the narrowest Puritanism and sectarianism and the fear of the Lord, utterly joyless. Ingersoll lashed it with contempt and scorn, but he did not succeed in entirely extinguishing it. People in London sometimes hesitate to believe it still survives, but personal acquaintance with members of these dissenting sects proved to me the reality of Dickens' brilliant study.

Stiggins is called the "Shepherd" and his flock seems to have been composed mainly of women. He

was a drunkard and Dickens copied his language with extreme fidelity. I have often heard similar phrases in Hyde Park. Old Weller found him particularly obnoxious; and it is rather extraordinary how often quite good-natured husbands, men who would not hurt a fly, have found the Stigginses of dissent, and smirking oily-faced parsons and priests of the "Catholic" persuasion, equally obnoxious in their homes. And old Weller was obviously voicing Dickens' own sentiment when he intimated he wouldn't subscribe to the "flannel veskits" which Stiggins was supposed to send to "young niggers abroad." In fact, Mr. Weller said, "lowering his voice and bending toward the fireplace, 'I'd come down very handsome towards strait veskits for some people at home.'"

The missionary ramp seemed always to rouse Dickens' ire. He objected to so many kindhearted women subscribing to "missions" which meant really to the pockets of the religious promoters of missions:—

"Lord bless their little hearts," said Mr. Weller, "they think it's all right and don't know no better; but they're the wictims o' gammon, Samivel, they're the wictims of gammon." "I suppose they are," said Sam.

"Nothin' else," said Mr. Weller, shaking his head gravely, "and wot aggrawates me, Samivel, is to see 'em wasting all their time and labour in making clothes for copper-coloured people as don't want 'em, and taking no notice of the flesh-coloured Christians as do. If I'd my vay, Samivel, I'd just stick some o' these lazy shepherds behind a wheelbarrow and run 'em up and down a fourteen-inch-wide plank all day. That 'ud shake the nonsense out of 'em if anything would."

Needless to say, even Dickens could not make certain classes of people see the necessity of clothing Christians in this country who needed it, and not bothering so much about the "niggers" abroad who didn't. Funds towards missionaries and missions may not always be high, but the supply has not yet run out.

Stiggins' appearance, dead drunk, at the monthly meeting of the Brick Lane Branch of the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association provides another example of satire at which Dickens excelled. It is a delicious chapter in *Pickwick*, and I never tire of reading it. I have attended similar temperance societies, and can vouch for the truthfulness of the descriptions. They did more to make me enjoy a glass of beer when I want it than the beer itself. People like Stiggins must literally make one subscribe to "the vice of intoxication," which he likened in one of his exhortations "unto the filthy habits of swine and to poisonous and filthy drugs." No wonder that, in a memorable scene, old Weller immersed "Stiggins's head in a horse trough full of water." Are there more entertaining chapters in the whole range of fiction than these?

When one thinks that Dickens was only 24 years of age when he commenced *Pickwick*, and that, young as he was, he attacked such abuses as the imprisonment for debt of his day with a pen which, though dipped in humour, yet was so deadly serious—when we realize that not only *Pickwick*, but almost all his novels, were propagandist writings, and in spite of that, he made them works of art, masterpieces of characterization and creation, we can see why he took his place almost from the first at the head of English literature, sharing it with giants like Shakespeare, Scott, Fielding and Thackeray, to the glory of our tongue. I doubt if any single work ever written has given more joy to men and women than *Pickwick*. And the world rightly honours the centenary of the birth of this humble draper and his coterie of immortal companions.

H. CUTNER.

What Is Truth?

BACON informs us that *Jesting Pilate* asked the above question and would not stay for answer. Surely, Bacon was jesting in doing so. Voltaire in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (Vol. II., pp. 555-6) deals with the question of truth also but, like Bacon, leaves us dissatisfied. But Voltaire says some good things about our English philosopher, John Locke (Vol. II., S. 1., pp. 166-70) who has many interesting things to say about truth and falsehood. "Perhaps," says Voltaire, "there never was a more methodical genius, never a more accurate logician, than Locke." Turn we then to Locke, *On the Human Understanding*, Book II., Chap. xxxii., wherein he pertinently asks, "What words are there that are not used with great latitude, and some deviation from their strict and proper signification?" Locke, here, in one pregnant sentence, gives us more food for thought than does either Bacon or Voltaire.

But to return to Bacon. Why did he write *Jesting Pilate*? Roman Governors were very serious persons, certainly not given to jesting. And Pilate must, according to the story, have felt worried, and very serious. It must have been no light matter for him to come to a decision in the critical political situation forced upon him.

But probably Bacon did not think Pilate was of Roman nationality. He may have thought of him as being a Frenchman, jesting being a characteristic of the French nation. He would scarcely think of him being a Scotsman. But perpend!

"There's no such thing as certainty, that's plain
As any of mortality's conditions."

In a *History of Northumberland*, Vol XI., p. 123, may be seen an engraving—Fig. 7, "The Adoration of the Magi," described on page 124, as follows:—

One of the most interesting details of this church (Kirknewton) is a piece of rough sculpture built into the wall behind the pulpit said to have been encased in some other wall when the nave was rebuilt. It represents the Adoration of the Magi, and is executed in a rude but vigorous style. Our Lady and the Child Christ are shown seated in a sort of trough which on its right side has a T-shaped branch rising from it as though meant for tying up cattle. Both have their arms raised, the hand of Our Lady seeming to hold something which is not distinguishable. The Magi are depicted as almost running towards them, each holding his gift aloft in his left hand and supporting his left elbow with his right hand. They seem to be attired in kilts, and have nothing on their feet.

Seem to be attired in kilts! If Rob Roy had given the artist a sitting he couldn't have improved upon the figures, the heavy pleats of the kilt being the most visible thing in the sculpture. So, one may well ask, if the Magi (The Wise Men of the East!) happened to be Scotsmen, why shouldn't Pilate have been one also? But, if he had, the Baconian epithet would still have remained obscure. What then can we do "But wonder on, till truth make all things plain"?

Wondering on, I oftentimes think truth would have had a better chance of making all things plain had it not been for publishers' readers. In my lifetime I have at least read twenty volumes that have been rejected by them.

One, a drama, written just before the Puritan era, offered to a publisher, rejected, returned to the author, and now looked upon as an heirloom by his descendants, I found remarkably interesting. It has something to say about our question, so a word or two anent it may not be out of place, "The Divine Drama, being a Tragedy in five acts."

The play is mainly built upon St. Matthew's Gospel and the Sepher Toldoth Jeshu, odd dramatic passages from Mark, Luke and John appearing here and there. As indicated by the author's copious notes, he seems to have been well versed in French, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The story, as we have it, is very incomplete, and I suspect that here and there he drew upon his imagination, for he made a very complete and reasonable drama.

Of the many remarkable characters portrayed in it our interest is restricted to three of them, i.e., Christ, Pilate and Pilate's wife. "The last shall be first."

Pilate's wife was, as she seems to have been in real life, a remarkable woman. She had a great admiration for Christ. His actions she sometimes questioned, but she never questioned his motives. The many-headed multitude she scorned and would have defied them had she stood in her husband's shoes. She begs her husband to deny the mob the release of a desperate robber, one of themselves, and not to be given this "just man" for crucifixion.

To Pilate's question, "Art thou a King then?" Christ made answer, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Pilate said unto him, "A more kingly reason for coming into the world was, of a surety, never given, but, lest I be mistaken, tell me which of the many kinds of truth thou speakest." Christ explained that from the beginning of his career he had denounced the evils of the time, had in so many ways interfered with the mode of living of the people both high and low to constitute himself a nuisance to be got rid of. His teaching was but the crystallized experience of the race, the truth he bore witness to. The charge that he claimed to be a King of the Jews was on the face of it absurd. Pilate agreed with him and would have released him but for the priests who trumped up a charge—"If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend for, whosoever maketh himself a King speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate then had no choice, and his last word to the mob speaks for itself. "Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." Our playwright's strong point towards the end of the drama is that but for the priests Pilate would have released Christ.

Let me say, in conclusion, that the only criticism our playwright makes lies in his relation of the story of the Syrophenician woman. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." The criticism is made in the woman's reply and she said "Truth Lord; yet the *doggies* eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Our author explains his use of the word *doggies* as being a correct translation; *doggies*, little dogs, being used affectionately by the woman, whereas Christ uses the word *dogs* in a contemptuous manner.

Considered as a whole; if to be gloriously secular is to be divine, this Drama was certainly well-named.

GEORGE WALLACE.

Pleas to the Profound

PHILOSOPHER—true wisdom is like gold
Engrained in quartz: its value in suspense
Until, from assay judged, the ore is mined
To profit on the world exchanges' call.
Thus should the mind its richer veins unfold,
Pass through the stamp-mills of Experience,
And from the crucible come forth, refined,
As wisdom good for currency *with all*.

Poet "inspired,"—give Pegasus a rest,
And mount some common hack of language plain,
If you would spread a message to mankind
Or Charm or rouse rude Demos with a lay.
While Everest still vaunts a virgin crest,
Olympus seems too easy to attain:
Norse Sagas, Attic legends—all combined
Cannot excel the epics of *to-day*.

Good doctor,—whatsoever you profess—
Simplicity is virtue in the learned;
Science expounded in a jargon strange
Serves but to stultify or else conceal.
The naked Truth is shamed by fancy-dress,
And you more shamed, who, fearful, have not spurned
High priests who would their heathen dogmas range
With Science,—and your fruits of knowledge steal.

D.

Canon in Action

[Canon Davey, with the support of the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral, has declined to offer prayers for the Ministers of State, because he does not agree with the Government's policy with reference to Germany. The Canon said: "Last week, before the talks in London, I prayed for the Foreign Secretary and others, and prayed that they would meet the coming events with wisdom. I think what they have done is neither wise nor right. So where this week I would normally have offered a prayer of my own composition for the Government and Ministers of State I felt I had to omit them."]

My sympathies go with the Canon;
He's been treated by methods unfair.
And now he's replied with a ban on
All further consignments of prayer.
So there!

He prayed, you will notice, as late
As last week (to insure against ill)
That the men who were guiding the State
Would be wise and humane in their will.
Result—nil.

So now he's fed up 'cos he sees,
By the way they have let matters run,
That praying for fellows like these
Is a waste of good time. It's no fun.
It's not done.

For, after all, what is prayer meant for?
It's asking for something that's due.
When I don't receive what I sent for,
Well—I just don't bother; do you?
I'm through.

I wouldn't go, wasting my breath
And bringing up knobs on my knees
And working my poor brain to death
For people that do as they please.
Not in these—!

And It's not as if we could debate
Whether God Himself scuttled the plea;
'Cos we know, in all matters of State,
That God and the Canon agree.
Don't you see?

So it all simply boils down to this:
The Canon told God what to do;
God tried, but recorded a miss.
He just couldn't put the job through
With that crew.

But Oo, what a mess they will make
Now the Canon has turned off the prayer!
You wait! They'll come cringing to take
His advice. But he'll give 'em the air,
I'll swear.

So look out, Messrs. Eden & Co!
Just mind what you do over there.
For now that the Canon's let go
You'll find that you're caught in a snare.
Take care, debonair Secretaire!
Beware!!

TWINKLE.

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare . . .
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance . . .
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

W. H. Davies.

Acid Drops

The German "elections" may be taken as a gesture that even the greatest and the most stupid tyranny is compelled to make towards liberty. Otherwise there is no reason why the farce of an election should be gone through. No one but the followers of Hitler is allowed to put up for election, and no one but declared followers of Hitler vote. And while everyone is compelled to vote, if anyone dares to negate his vote by spoiling his voting paper, prison or a Fascistic "beating up" follows. And yet, we have not the slightest doubt but that large numbers of Germans will persuade themselves that in this election they are vindicating their freedom, and that Hitler is the man of Germany's choice. What is called "Mass psychology" is a fearful and wonderful thing. The Christian Church has always had it and used it, but they called it by another name.

Canon Storr says he is convinced that God shares the sufferings of the world. Well, after all he made it. It is only a case of making "the punishment fit the crime."

The Government's tithe proposals seem to be liked by nobody. Certainly those clergy whose incomes would be reduced as a consequence of the proposals being put into practice would kick, and both tithe-payers and tithe-owners are quite unsatisfied. The *Church Times* comments on the situation prove that the whole question of tithes is an anachronism which constitutes a danger to the Church. "If, as it ought to do," it says "the Government proposed that the taxpayer should compensate the partially disendowed clergy, the opposition would at once ask why should the public be taxed for the purpose of making a present to the landowners; and that is a risk which the Government is afraid of running." Precisely; why should the taxpayer or a landowner pay for the "clergy" of an utterly outworn superstition like Christianity? Why should these priests expect they ought to be kept? And of what use are they, anyway, to the community—except for some paltry social services which could be done equally as well by people who are not priests? Tithes should go with other religious anachronisms.

The Catholic Truth Society is always boasting about the millions—or is it billions?—of their publications sold. And the point that precious few converts are made as a result is certainly not met. However, here is the Welsh C.T.C. having a "difficult year." The expenses are greater than the receipts. But surely the millions of pamphlets sold elsewhere ought to compensate the loss in Wales? And anyway, what about converts? How many are made in a year in Wales?

The Catholic Archbishop Downey has had to face another severe shock. The Personal Service Society, in Liverpool, passed a resolution, the other day, that "where it was thought advisable, a mother might be sent to a birth-control clinic." The Archbishop, on recovery, ordered all Roman Catholic members of the Society to resign forthwith—which may not be such a bad thing for the Society, after all. He intends to form a Society of his own. Words like Protestantism or Calvinism used to send Catholics almost into convulsions, but the effect is much more pronounced when one whispers "birth-control" to them. It must be very galling, in spite of this, to find that artificial contraception has come to stay; that, indeed, even Catholics are known to use these sinful methods; and that not all the celibate priests in the world can stop the spread of knowledge which has given women a freedom they never have before enjoyed.

The latest book on Gibbon by Mr. R. B. Moffat has called forth the usual religious critiques which desperately try to account for Gibbon "sapping a solemn creed with a solemn sneer," as Byron so aptly put it. One of the writers asks, "Had Gibbon lived another twenty

years, had he seen the full effect of the French avalanche on the social order in which he lived, would he have remained a Rationalist, or would he, like Chateaubriand, have wept and believed?" Apart from the fact that many of the leaders of the French Revolution were Deists, and therefore believers, the answer must be that Gibbon, with his extraordinary knowledge of history, would never have "believed," and certainly never would have "wept." No revolution could prove by its effects, myths and miracles.

Those intelligent Christian critics who have to acknowledge that Gibbon was one of the world's greatest historians, are always seriously perturbed by his anti-Christianity. To explain this is extremely difficult—for them. They seem unable to see that under the influence of Christian teachers or Christian reading, it is not surprising that he became a Catholic or a Protestant in turn. Only when he commenced the serious historical studies which culminated in his monumental *Decline and Fall*, did he see on what a flimsy structure Christianity rested, and how utterly impossible it was to reconcile the myths and miracles of Christianity with genuine history.

We are puzzled (as usual) by the behaviour of a Converted Grouper, as recorded in the *British Weekly* :—

A man who was serving a short term of imprisonment for motor-stealing became convinced that he must make restitution. His business had been built on fraud, for he had sold an inferior article under a superior trade mark. He wrote letters to all parts of the world, confessing what he had done. The amount to be made up was £680, and he cheerfully accepted the sacrifice.

Surely a most praiseworthy action—in a way. But unconvincing. We should like to know where the £680 Restitution Fund came from. It says he fraudulently sold things. Was it from these fraudulent sales that he amassed his Fund? Or did he start a new Fraud? Or does he intend to rob somebody of another £680 later on when the facts leak out about the later fraud? It certainly looks as if at some time or other our ex-motor-sneak will be converted for keeps, and then he'll have no Fund wherewith to make restitution for the latest robberies.

The *Sunday Express* calls attention to the fact that Mr. J. P. Maclay, M.P., is "the son of a very rich and a very good man, Lord Maclay." That the father of Mr. Maclay is very rich can be accepted without surprise. Lord Maclay's goodness, however, is supposed to be demonstrated by the following paragraph :—

Lord Maclay supports a mission in Morocco, another in Glasgow. His good works are many. He was once a shipping magnate. Never would he allow his ships to discharge or take in a cargo on a Sunday, in whatever part of the world they might be.

We should be sorry to think that Lord Maclay's goodness rested on such a shabby foundation. Purely theological virtues such as observing Sunday in a particular way, abstinence from meat-eating on Friday, attendance at Mass; though they are grasped at eagerly by those who wish to acquire a good reputation on the cheap, have no relation to morality. That they should be thought to have, amongst gentlemen of the press, furnishes a biting reflection upon the pretended influence that Christianity has had upon man's serious task of living together profitably and happily.

Probably Mr. Maclay is wishing to be saved from such friends. Take the "good" reason they have found for Lord Maclay never taking in or discharging a cargo on a Sunday. The fact is that it is only shipping commercial practice to have sailing vessels out on the open seas on Sunday, if possible, as by so doing they avoid paying double dock dues and double rates of pay for labour involved. It is by no means rare to find that the ways of "getting rich" coincide with the religious idea of "being good."

From the *Daily Herald* we note that the Bishop of Exeter has been drawn into correspondence with Miss Georgina Horsfall, M.A., Newnham College, on the subject of blood-sports. From the extracts given, it would appear that not only has Miss Horsfall gained all the honours, but she has driven the Bishop into a very uncomfortable corner. "If it is wrong to keep cats to kill mice," he writes, "If this end of life is a cruel end, one can only say that God is a cruel God." But, he is convinced that "The order of Nature is very merciful. It eliminates disease and old age for it is the old and diseased that fall a victim to the beasts of prey, not the young and the strong." And, further, "as the Church has never condemned hunting or shooting I do not condemn it."

The burden of the Bishop's lay is therefore "Imitate God," thus illustrating once more the way religion hinders the growth of humanitarian feeling. The Bishop's description of nature's methods contains only a partial truth, and is for that reason quite misleading. But if he accepts it as a truth that God's method is to kill off not the young and the strong but the old and the weak, how is it that the huntsman does not carry out the same formula when engaged in shooting or hunting? If the huntsman is basing his craft on the divine model, why not do the job well?

Miss Horsfall twits the Bishop for "only condemning what the Church condemns, and not what your conscience and judgment tell you is wrong." But one sign of independence the Bishop of Exeter does show. He thinks the cat a cruel and horrid animal because of the way it treats mice and so he bars cats from his *ménage*. It may be because the cat tortures young and strong mice! As he refreshingly draws the line at one example of God's mercy, Miss Horsfall may not dismiss the Bishop's case as entirely hopeless.

The Rev. C. W. Marriott, M.A., will not agree that "compulsory Scripture lessons have contributed to the spread of secularism." He thinks that "the conscience clause" is more responsible. Mr. Marriott refers lightly to the "scruples of a purely academic nature about the liberties of non-Christian students in Christian schools, and of their parents, many of whom are illiterate, to decide the religious education of their children." Mr. Marriott raises no objection to "the grants from local education departments, made purely on the grounds of the efficiency of the school as a secular institution." We stand aghast at the impudence of the church claims. Not content with demanding the same grants as the State Schools, the clerics regard even a "conscience clause" as a nuisance. Utterances such as these ought to strengthen the hands of the Secular Education movement.

The *British Weekly* contains a quotation from Ingersoll to support "The Hope of Immortality." If Ingersoll tried to bring comfort to a bereaved mother by saying that "God's love will not do less for your boy than you would," he was only expressing his certainty that there can be nothing in any conceivable world more loving than a mother's at its best. Perhaps next week the journal referred to may quote the very definite words Ingersoll used with deliberate intent: "Teach your children the facts you know. If you do not know, say so. Be as honest as you are ignorant. Strangle the serpent of superstition that crawls and hisses about the cradle. Keep your children from the augurs, the soothsayers, the medicine-men, the priests of the supernatural. Tell them that all religions have been made by folks and all the 'sacred books' were written by ignorant men."

Who has not heard of the maiden lady who for ever kept the piece of mistletoe under which the man who never married her, once nearly kissed her. Also the Museum wherein was kept the sword of Balaam. "Ah," said the visitor, "but there was no sword." "No," said the Curator, "but Balaam said, 'Would that I had

a sword,' well, this is the sword he 'would' have had." And now Gipsy Smith, at West Ham Methodist Mission says a man once came to a meeting determined to heave half a brick at Rev. Gipsy's head. Smith bewails the fact that "I never kept that brick."

Henry Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* is described by the Rev. George Jackson as being "one of the greatest literary sensations in the religious world of the early eighties." Mr. Jackson does well to be meticulously careful of his dates. These great literary sensations are sheer accident. They do not imply any more than the shape or colour of a woman's hat. A princess wears something, or a politician refers to a book, and both are fashionable amongst those who rely upon these irrelevancies as guides to what they shall wear or read or drink. Drummond's book never was of the slightest importance to anybody. It is to-day less read than *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, which was the "literary sensation" of some other period.

"A Methodist Doctor," writes on "Faith and Healing" in the *Recorder*. He seems to be more of a Methodist than a doctor. He enjoys the very unprofessional moralizing of the confirmed religionist, whose practice of medicine seems to be worthy of B.C. 1936. He "draws attention to the relationship between sin and disease," and declares, "it is hardly fair to blame God" when people die of "faults obviously their own." Freethinkers never blame God for anything at all. The illogical nonsense of Christians is in praising God, in thanking God, in believing that God intervenes one way or the other, in anything. Yet this same "M.D." (Methodist Doctor) preaches "The Curative Power of Prayer," and praises God because, even in cases where he thinks men bring diseases on themselves, "God in His Infinite Goodness, forgives us over and over again," "obviating some of the effects of our sin." And yet this same God—on the supposition of His power to intervene—destroys innumerable innocent lives by His floods, His fires, His wars and the other "instruments of His Wrath."

The Rev. Adam Burnet, D.D., says he loves to call himself a "Fool for Christ's sake." Well, well, there are many kinds of fools in the world, and if Dr. Burnet prefers one variety to another he is within his rights.

The intrusion of the new Protestant sect calling itself "Ironsides," into a church at St. Helens, and doing its best to stop the vicar from proceeding with a "Eucharist" service, has resulted in the Bishop of Liverpool asking the vicar to resign. We hold no brief for any Christian sect, but we are rather sorry for anybody compelled, through hooliganism and uproar, to desist propagating his cherished beliefs in his own way. Either the Eucharist is part of the Church's service or it is not. If it is not, it should be properly forbidden by the authorities. If it is, every endeavour should be made by them to protect those who hold it from interruption. In any case, what a beautiful picture of Christian love and toleration the incident shows!

All is far from well for the "Holy" Church even in Puerto Rico. According to the Pastoral letter of Bishop Byrne, the inhabitants have been availing themselves of the works of "Neo-Malthusianism" and putting into practice "artificial birth prevention." This is evil enough, but it seems also that while the Catholic men were marching through the streets of the town "vile and insulting remarks" were hurled at them from the windows of the local Y.M.C.A. And many Catholics had actually supported this heretical building! But to cap all, the Protestant episcopal chapels that are being built in Puerto Rico are being labelled "Catholic and Apostolic"! We hope sincerely this does not bring about the inevitable earthquake as for some reason known to Our Lord alone, earthquakes have no sense of discrimination. Catholics are engulfed equally with Protestants.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. J.—You are not quite accurate in your statement. Dean Inge has been very sharply criticized in these columns. But the fact of his undoubted mental superiority to most clergymen, does not prevent his using silly arguments when backing up a ridiculous creed. He is not the only man of ability who has used foolish arguments in defence of religion.

J. CLAYTON.—Lecture notice did not arrive until Wednesday morning.

C. TRSON.—We are pleased to have the good wishes of the West London Branch on our recovery. We intend taking every possible care, but it is not easy to get a lengthy holiday. We will manage what can be managed.

J. HEAD (Sunderland Branch)—We note that the Sunderland Free Library has declined to place the *Freethinker* in the Public Reading Rooms. This supplies an adequate reason for Freethinking ratepayers insisting on equal treatment with others. We hope you will keep up the agitation. Pleased to hear of the success of your Social. Properly conducted such gatherings are an asset to a Society.

T. S. WILSON (Milner, U.S.A.).—It is gratifying to know that the *Freethinker* has played such a big part in your mental liberation.

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 connection 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.

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

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

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

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

A correspondent writes that he is puzzled by a paragraph in this column last week which said that a "Christian blackguard had stated in a letter to us that the *Freethinker* was once prosecuted for blasphemy." We called this a lie, and one of our readers, Mr. W. L. Driver, says he is puzzled, and we are not surprised. The statement of the Christian blackguard was that the *Freethinker* had been prosecuted for "obscenity," and it was that which constituted the lie. Mr. Cohen was not looking over the final proofs in the last issue, hence the unfortunate blunder passed unnoticed. The charge was, of course, blasphemy, and far from being ashamed of that offence the *Freethinker* has been committing it ever since.

Judging from the reports of the conduct of the police during their endeavours to guard from interruption the Fascist meeting at the Albert Hall, there seems an obvious case for a careful enquiry. Sir John Simon has refused this, but Sir John Simon is the kind of man who

will always decide that officials are right—particularly if their being wrong discredits a party with which he is associated. But there is a volume of testimony that the police treated with quite unnecessary violence a meeting which was proceeding quietly enough. That testimony should be sifted by an impartial committee, and the sooner it is done the better.

Some time ago we wrote on the policy that was being pursued in militarizing the police force, and the aim under "Boom Trenchard" to drive a line of cleavage between the police and the public. That policy appears to be still followed, and it holds a distinct threat to public order. The character of the London police has always been deservedly high, but if they are trained, or encouraged, or ordered to break up peaceful open-air meetings such as the one that was held in Thurloe Square appears to have been, then there are dark days ahead for all concerned.

Also we think it is time that something was done to check policemen in their evidence, magistrates in their comments, and all people holding public office, talking of Communism as though it involved a public offence. We hold no brief for Communism, but a Communist has as much right to air his opinions as has a Conservative or a Fascist, and in guarding the freedom of Communists to carry on their propaganda, subject to the same regulations that apply to propaganda in general, we are protecting the freedom of opinion in general. We should like to see one of the recent cases brought before magistrates carried to a higher court.

No one need look very far to find an illustration of the truth of some of the warnings we print elsewhere concerning broadcasts. One of the talks to schools recently given (March 27) is by Mr. G. K. Chesterton, on "The Middle Ages." Now if there is one man who should not be trusted to deliver such a lecture to schoolboys, unless it was followed by another lecture from another standpoint, that man is certainly Mr. G. K. Chesterton. We say at once that we did not discover the lesson until the time of its delivery was past, but we have heard Mr. Chesterton broadcasting on books, and on other subjects, and whenever it was possible it was nothing more than a piece of flagrant Roman Catholic propaganda. Sometimes the book is decried in such a manner that only those who know Mr. Chesterton are aware that he is playing the Roman Catholic game. We have no objection whatever to Mr. Chesterton conducting his propaganda as he thinks fit, and where he thinks fit, but when he is selected to deliver a lecture on the Middle Ages, then it is time that something was said. Those at school should be trained to understand history, not take a form of disguised Roman Catholic propaganda.

The Study Circle will hold its last meeting of the Session on Monday, April 6, at the offices of the National Secular Society, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Under the leadership of Mr. A. D. McLaren the Circle has served a very useful purpose, and we are pleased to note that the attendance during the session has improved. No meetings will be held during the summer months, but the members will no doubt be active in other directions, especially at the open-air meetings of the London Branches of the N.S.S.

Talking about Lent, *The Arbitrator* (organ of the American Civil Liberties Union), suggests that "the unwilling fasting of the unemployed is of greater importance than commemoration of the fasts of forty days, of Moses, Elijah and Jesus." *The Arbitrator* adds, what Freethinkers often complain about, that: "the Bible is not to be relied upon for a modern philosophy," and that "when we attempt to preach this truth, we are met with opposition by the very best people," i.e., by well-meaning social reformers who imagine that talking nonsense about the coming of the "Kingdom of Heaven" is getting mankind nearer a satisfactory Earth.

The most conspicuous feature of the excavations in Palestine and surrounding countries is the fact that hardly a scrap of genuine Biblical discovery ever results. It is true, of course, that when an excavator is working in Ur, he lets the world know that this is the country from which Abraham came. But does he ever find anything whatever corroborating the Biblical Story of the Father of the Jewish Race? Not an item. Anyone can prove this by reading Sir L. Woolley's latest work entitled *Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins*. It is, of course, packed with all sorts of conjectures—most of them, by the way, totally at variance with the Bible. But does it even prove that Abraham actually existed? Not in the least. We only get from the famous archaeologist the statement that "there are good grounds for believing that the fact of his existence was vouched for by written documents almost if not quite contemporary with him."

"The good grounds" are Sir L. Woolley's opinion only for not a line of any kind has ever been found regarding Abraham outside the Bible; and certainly nothing whatever about him has been dug up. Yet here we have a book all about him and all mere opinion and conjecture. The absurd ages assigned to the patriarchs are "explained" by Sir L. Woolley as being due to "mis-readings and mistakes to which ancient manuscripts are liable." And yet this nonsense is "God's Precious Word"! And the distinguished archaeologist actually suggests Abraham might have been "three Abrahams" combined as a composite character, and "this view is the only one which allows us to accept the Hebrew tradition as a whole and reconcile it with reason." Anything indeed but give up a ridiculous myth!

We note that Ven. David Grimaldi Davis, Archdeacon of Montgomery (1916-25) who died recently, desired that his body should be cremated and the ashes placed in his wife's grave "without any religious ceremony." Rather an unusual kind of an Archdeacon, we should say.

The Glory that was Greece

THE Greek sculptures and other works of art revealed by comparatively recent excavations have revolutionized earlier views concerning ancient archaeology. Some eminent authorities assure us that so many of the memorials of old times have perished beyond recall that any reliable reconstruction is impossible. Although a fragment only remains of Greece's past glory, yet the ampler knowledge now possessed enables archaeologists to form a truer estimate than was possible to the pioneer critics of a century ago. Indeed, Michael Holroyd roundly declares that celebrated eighteenth century authorities such as Winckelmann and Lessing "had to formulate their criteria of Hellenic beauty from what we should now consider degraded works of a tasteless and degenerate age—such as the Laocoön—or at best from indifferent copies of statues themselves comparatively late, as the Apollo Belvedere and the Apoxyomenus."

The systematic researches of the nineteenth century disclosed the leading lines in the evolution of Greek sculpture during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Also, in the course of the past fifty years, excavations at famous sanctuaries such as those at Olympia and Delphi, as well as on the renowned acropolis at Athens, have unveiled the masterpieces of Phidias, Polycleetus and Myron in historical succession. Earlier works of great excellence have likewise been brought to light, and it is claimed that: "An instructed opinion is, in fact, for the first time possible as to the origins and early history of Greek art."

About 700 B.C. Greek merchants, colonists and even pirates were everywhere familiar in the Mediter-

anean. Greek settlements were made on the Asiatic Coast, and these Ionian cities became centres of art and philosophy, but to what extent their products were original or borrowed from Assyria and other lands is still uncertain.

The most archaic distinctively Greek art products were discovered a quarter of a century since by Dr. Hogarth on the site of the venerated temple of Diana at Ephesus. It is suggested that these somewhat resemble Assyrian ivories. Recent research in Syria, again has disclosed a previously unsuspected culture in Cilicia and Northern Syria, largely independent, but with affinities to other forms elsewhere. But further information appears necessary to enable archaeologists to express a definite opinion.

There is little doubt, however, that Greek art when once initiated grew steadily from more to more. The Ionian Greeks led, in the first instance, the Hellenic world, but centres such as Corinth, Sicyon and several others were not far behind. During the seventh and sixth centuries sculptors, painters and potters, resident in the several cities, catered for the domestic and export trade, for the Greeks were growing steadily dominant as the merchants and manufacturers of the Mediterranean region. In all the marts of Southern Europe Greek productions were in constant demand, and were esteemed for their superior quality. This was a wonderful period of artistic achievement, one that Holroyd regards as "perhaps the greatest creative age the world has ever known." But he doubts whether the Orient exercised much influence in the evolution of archaic Hellenic art while admitting that Egypt made a slight, if temporary impression.

With reference to Greek indebtedness to earlier Egyptian models Holroyd recalls the marked limitations of the art of Old Nile. A few minor products designed by Greeks, in places in near contact with Egypt, such as Rhodes, are thought to have played little part in the development of Greek craftsmanship. An artistic passion pervaded the Hellenic people, while on the other hand, as Holroyd urges in his learned address on *The Greek Revelation*, "except very rarely as in the time of Akhenaton—Egyptian art was completely controlled by non-artistic motives mainly of a religious character: it could only supply the Greeks with a bare framework of the human figure, impressive in a massive sort of way, but unrelated to natural anatomical truth, which in the Greek view was the indispensable condition in the quest of beauty." For while the face in Egyptian statues was made as lifelike as possible, the body was crudely fashioned in a stiff and inelegant manner.

In early Greek sculptures Egyptian influence appears, but the Greeks soon exceeded the rude artistry of Africa until, at last, representations of the human form were carved in stone that are still the wonder and the envy of the world of art. All these peerless masterpieces display a careful and conscientious study of human structure.

Now that the magnificent sculptures of the age that preceded the triumphs of Polycleetus and Phidias have been restored to light, the evolution of ancient statuary is plainly apparent. The original realism in the portrayal of the human form was succeeded, as a consequence of practice and experiment by the creation of ideal figures chiselled in the statuary of Phidias and his contemporaries. With these sublime achievements, while ever submissive to the teachings of Mother Nature, these immortal artists rose to a pinnacle of perfection which inspired and sustained all later classic art.

Yet, this majestic array of art is traceable to purely physical causes. For social and economic influences, in addition to historical and geographical circum-

stances, proved highly conducive to artistic achievement of superior character. Again, this supremely intellectual race possessed an inborn capacity to utilize all these advantages to the full. Within the brief span of two hundred years the free population of Greece attained a mental and artistic pre-eminence that the most highly cultured contemporary communities can scarcely rival.

It is significant that for centuries the Greek communities, as a whole, escaped invasion until the time of the Persian onslaught. A brave and adventurous people, in these respects similar to the modern Japanese, the earlier Greeks sought profit and plunder on the seas with the prospect of settlement in favoured regions. While ever eager to trade or barter with the barbarian they were notorious for their fighting propensities, not alone in their own cities and colonies, but also in Southern Italy, Gaul and Spain. Their military and naval prowess which continued for six centuries, indeed, until their overthrow by Rome, long remained a memory.

Famous both in arts and arms, Greeks were in demand as mercenaries in Egypt and elsewhere, while they were even welcomed by the warlike Persians to assist in the recovery and safeguarding of Persia's Western territories. During a protracted period extending to the close of the fifth century B.C., the Greek city states remained the industrial magnates of the Mediterranean, their solitary rivals or competitors being the Phœnician merchants of the North African seaboard. The Greeks almost monopolized the world's commerce and this was the source of their wealth and splendour. Also, the Greek hoplites, those powerfully armed foot-soldiers so splendidly disciplined and led by able commanders were furnished with their weapons and accoutrements by highly organized industrial processes.

Outstanding centres of art have several times arisen in small, if select, communities. The cities of Greece were not merely the schools of politics, but a chief incentive to artistic effort, while a spirit of emulation was constantly stirred by the praise awarded artists in nearby City States. But while the citizens applauded art of high merit, inferior productions were received with derision or disdain. Thus works of genius both in literature and in the arts were enthusiastically acclaimed and encouraged.

Climate, military life and the Olympic Games all contributed to the rapid evolution of ancient art. Greek women were less scantily attired than the men, and the latter in the warmer season of the year wore little clothing and openly displayed the physical beauty of the masculine form. Then we must remember that the Greeks were a remarkably handsome race, and if the earlier statues of the deities were invariably draped until the age of Praxiteles, nude male and draped female figures were not unusual in the archaic period. But when it became customary to reproduce the forms of living men which were distinct from ideal representations, the scope of the sculptor was increased. The very features of those who proved victorious in the Games were reproduced in the votive statues of the winners, and the nude became fashionable in male statuary and even women were occasionally represented in all the supreme beauty of the naked female form.

The fascinating mythology of Pagan Greece also inspired many of the matchless masterpieces of antiquity. Poets, painters, architects and sculptors all shared this inspiration, as their works testify. Again, there was no priestly order in Greece to place its restraining hand on the aspirations of genius, so art was never made tongue-tied by authority. The primary religion of this gifted race was ancestor worship and the appeasement of sinister spirits. The

father of the family officiated as his own minister, and when at a later time the eternal divinities had been developed, all retaining their purely human form and character, certain of the many competing deities were chosen as the special protectors of separate City States.

So far as the Greeks ever searched the Scriptures these were studied in the works of Homer, Simonides and other favourite authors. In addition to this, the pious sentiments of the people were stimulated and doubtless sustained by the contemplation of sculptures so splendid as Phidias' ivory and gold statue of Zeus at Olympia, and the deathless stone representations of the divinities which adorned other centres in classical times.

T. F. PALMER.

Things Worth Knowing*

XXXV.

MATERIALISM AND MORALS

A THEORY is not an unemotional thing. If music can be full of passion, merely by giving form to a single sense, how much more beauty or terror may not a vision be pregnant with which brings order and method into everything that we know? Materialism has its distinct æsthetic and emotional colour, though this may be strangely affected and even reversed by contrast with systems of an incongruous hue, jostling it accidentally in a confused and amphibious mind. If you are in the habit of believing in special providences, or of expecting to continue your romantic adventures in a second life, Materialism will dash your hopes most unpleasantly, and you may think for a year or two that you have nothing left to live for. But a thorough Materialist, one born to the faith and not half plunged into it by an unexpected christening in cold water, will be like the superb Democritus, a laughing philosopher. His delight in a mechanism that can fall into so many marvellous and beautiful shapes, and can generate so many exciting passions, should be of the same intellectual quality as that which a visitor feels in a museum of natural history, where he views the myriad butterflies in their cases, the flamingoes and shell-fish, the mammalia and gorillas. Doubtless there were pangs in that incalculable life, but they were soon over; and how splendid meantime was the pageant, how infinitely interesting the universal interplay, and how foolish and inevitable those absolute little passions. Somewhat of that sort might be the sentiment that Materialism would arouse in a vigorous mind, active, joyful, impersonal, and in respect to private illusions not without a touch of scorn.

To the genuine sufferings of living creatures the ethic that accompanies Materialism has never been insensible; on the contrary, like other merciful systems, it has trembled too much at pain, and tended to withdraw the will ascetically, lest the will should be defeated. Contempt for mortal sorrows is reserved for those who drive with hosannas the Juggernaut car of absolute optimism. But against evils born of pure vanity and self-deception, against the verbiage by which man persuades himself that he is the goal and acme of the universe, laughter is the proper defence. Laughter also has this subtle advantage, that it need

* 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.

not remain without an overtone of sympathy and brotherly understanding; as the laughter that greets Don Quixote's absurdities and misadventures does not mock the hero's intent. His ardour was admirable, but the world must be known before it can be reformed pertinently, and happiness, to be attained, must be placed in reason.

Oblivious of Democritus, the unwilling Materialists of our day have generally been awkwardly intellectual and quite incapable of laughter. If they have felt anything they have felt melancholy. Their allegiance and affection were still fixed on those mythical sentimental worlds which they saw to be illusory. The mechanical world they believed in could not please them, in spite of its extent and fertility. Giving rhetorical vent to their spleen and prejudice, they exaggerated nature's meagreness and mathematical dryness. When their imagination was chilled they spoke of nature, most unwarrantably, as dead, and when their judgment was heated they took the next step and called it unreal. A man is not blind because every part of his body is not an eye, nor every muscle in his eye a nerve sensitive to light. Why, then, is nature dead, although it swarms with living organisms, if every part is not obviously animate? And why is the sun dark and cold if it is bright and hot to only your animal sensibility? This senseless lamentation is like the sophism of those Indian preachers who, to make men abandon the illusions of self-love, dilated on the shocking contents of the human body. Take off the skin, they cried, and you will discover nothing but loathsome bleeding and quivering substances. Yet the inner organs are well enough in their place, and doubtless pleasing to the microbes that inhabit them; and a man is not hideous because his cross section would not offer the features of a beautiful countenance. So the structure of the world is not therefore barren or odious because, if you removed its natural aspects and effects, it would not make an interesting landscape. . . .

It is true that Materialism prophesies an ultimate extinction for man and all his works. The horror which this prospect inspires in the natural man might be mitigated by reflexion; but granting the horror, is it something introduced by mechanical theories and not apparent in experience itself? Are human beings inwardly stable? . . . The panic which seems to seize some minds at the thought of a merely natural existence is something truly hysterical; and yet one wonders why ultimate peace should seem so intolerable to people who not so many years ago found a stern religious satisfaction in consigning almost the whole human race to perpetual torture, the Creator, as St. Augustine tells us, having in his infinite wisdom and justice devised a special kind of material fire that might avail to burn resurrected bodies without consuming them. A very real truth might be read into this savage symbol, if we understood it to express the ultimate defeats and fruitless agencies that pursue human folly; and so we might find that it gave mythical expression to just that conditioned fortune and inexorable flux which a mechanical philosophy shows us the grounds of. Our own vices in another man seem particularly hideous; and so those actual evils which we take for granted when incorporated in the current system strike us afresh when we see them in a new setting. But it is not mechanical science that introduced mutability into things or Materialism that invented death.

The death of individuals, as we observe daily in nature, does not prevent the reappearance of life; and if we choose to indulge in arbitrary judgments on a subject where data fail us, we may as reasonably wish that there might be less life as that there might be more. The passion for a large and permanent popu-

lation in the universe is not obviously rational; at a great distance a man must view everything, including himself, under the form of eternity, and when life is so viewed, its length or its diffusion becomes a point of little importance. What matters then is quality. The reasonable and humane demand to make of the world is that such creatures as exist should not be unhappy, and that life, whatever its quantity, should have a quality that may justify it in its own eyes. This just demand, made by conscience and not by an arbitrary fancy, the world described by mechanism does not fulfil altogether, for adjustments in it are tentative, and much friction must precede and follow any equilibrium attained. This imperfection, however, is actual, and no theory can overcome it except by verbal fallacies and scarcely deceptive euphemisms. What mechanism involves in this respect, is exactly what we find; a tentative appearance of life in many quarters, its disappearance in some, and its reinforcement and propagation in others, where the physical equilibrium attained insures to it a natural stability and a natural prosperity.

Reason in Science,
by GEORGE SANTAYANA, pp. 89-94.

Rationalism contra Mundum

II.

It is only in recent years that knowledge of the origin and growth of human ideas has been available. Sir F. Galton has told us how, in the '40's of last century, "The horizon of the antiquarian was so narrow at the date of my Cambridge days, that the whole history of the early world was literally believed by many of the best informed men to be contained in the Pentateuch. It was also practically supposed that nothing more of importance could be learned of the origins of civilization during classical times than was to be found definitely stated in classical authors." Some eighty years later, during which there has gone forward in a freer atmosphere a great work of historic and scientific research, we get this pregnant statement from the *Cambridge Ancient History*.

"It is not out of place to recall that the written history of one of the peoples of Palestine which represents only the unscientific ideas of an early age, was up to very recent times thought by learned men to furnish an authentic account of the beginnings of the earth and of the human race. To-day, a large though scattered mass of geological and archeological facts supplies us with a little genuine knowledge of what our ancestors were doing and making at a time when land and water and climate differed appreciably from what they are now, a time long anterior to that once commonly thought to be the date of the creation of the universe itself. . . ." ¹ This pronouncement quietly ignores the fact that this history, taken to furnish an authentic account of the beginning of things, is part of a record and scripture imposed on the world, by the institution known as the Church, as a Divine Revelation.

A parallel line of inquiry has also lighted up what man was thinking and believing in these early times. Though not unfamiliar to our readers, we will note

¹ One may note, in this connexion, the valuable contribution to research in history and human science being made by Universities, private Societies and Associations, and individual workers in this country. The lay-out of the great national collections in Archeology and Natural History is a further service. Such work enhances the body of illumination by which purposive free thought steers its course.

one or two of its phases for their bearing on the present purpose.

At some unknown period, beyond using his faculties for the ends of self-preservation (the chief function of "mind" in organic nature), man began to question his surroundings, to venture on ideas about this world. Unfortunately he started off by barking up the wrong tree. He got the notion that all phenomena, animate and inanimate, are moved by an indwelling spirit or *Ka*, similar to that he imagined to act within himself. This "spiritism" is the germ whence sprang the vast legion of super-natural beings or entities which people all things in heaven and earth—air, fire, water, vegetation, animals—in the primal cosmogony. These agencies develop later, in one region or other, into defined deities (anthropomorphism) into good and evil spirits (angels and demons), and incite to ritual practices to cajole or control natural forces in his interest (magic and sorcery). These notions or superstitions (that is, beliefs without valid foundation) persist *pari passu* with the advent of a higher doctrine or mode of interpretation. From them comes the idea that the mind, or soul, is an immaterial entity independent of corporeal function, and survives bodily death. With the growth of material civilization, localized deities are the tutelary genius of the tribe or community whose favour must be steadily fostered. There follow forms of worship and ceremonial rites, a building or temple dedicated to his, or her, service, a special caste to perform these rites. The ruler or king partakes of this divinity; his sustained vitality is necessary to the welfare of his subjects. The customary law or regulation of the society, once established, has a sacrosanct character that must not be questioned. Of such is the norm of "ecclesiastical institutions" so influential in the course of human affairs; and the springs of authority and order in early civilization.

Primal "religion" its regulative side apart is, in a sense, pseudo-philosophy and science in one in so far as it attempts to interpret nature in the terms indicated above. It conflicts necessarily, and its fanciful cosmogonies clash with "science," and its view of causality as impersonal forces acting under conditions, once this concept enters into the field of observation and surmise. From the time when human genius first hit on this mode of approach the conflict has continued. It menaced the pioneers of physical inquiry among the Greeks or Hellenes, usually credited with an intelligence above the average of their contemporaries. It was as "impious" to question the divinity of the sun as, in another dispensation, the divinity of Christ. "The gods whom Aristophanes scoffed at on the stage, sometimes slew their scoffers. They killed Socrates, they all but killed Alcibiades. Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Diagoras of Melos, Prodicus of Ceos, Stilpo, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Aspasia, Euripides, were more or less seriously disquieted. It was the Attali, the Ptolemies, who first gave thinkers the freedom which none of the old republics had accorded. The Roman Empire continued in the same tradition. . . ."²

In this later atmosphere considerable advances were made in knowledge at the schools of Alexandria and elsewhere, and an approximately sound view of Cosmos and its *modus operandi* was in process of explication.

Meanwhile, amid movements of another order, the institution known as the Christian Church emerges as an organized body during the first and second centuries of our era. We must pass here the great controversy over its origin and supernatural claims to come to what for our purpose is its central issue.

It was sufficiently influential in the fourth century to win the countenance of the Emperor Constantine, and was elevated into a State cult. Its Roman or Western branch enters by fortuitous circumstance into the reversion of the declining Roman *imperium*, becomes a sovereign spiritual and temporal power claiming a divine commission to determine all things, mundane and supra-mundane, asserts a supremacy over the Church at large—not altogether conceded by other Communion. Beyond accretions from various sources, it is rooted in a literature partly of Jewish origin, partly made up of Christian documents, which together form a Canon of Holy Scripture of "divine inspiration." The Jewish writings were previously unknown to the world, except to those who came into close contact with their scattered communities. They contain an account of Creation more concise and coherent than the vague cosmogonies of the "Pagan" cults; and a view of the origin, nature and destiny of man—expanded in the later portion of this scripture, as a fulfilment of "prophecy" aforetime. These positions are advanced *ex cathedra* by Holy Mother Church herself: and from such ordained premises develops "that coherent and consistent theology and body of thought" to which the Dean of St. Paul's lately referred as the cause of its attraction to-day. Therefore it stands or falls as a whole; the greater includes the less.

Its proscriptive power was fully exercised to repress all opinion that clashed with this theology, shown in one direction as we have seen in matters of philosophy. Still more hostile was it to any intimations from natural investigation. It adopted the Ptolemaic cosmology as in accord with Revelation when more accurate apprehension of things had been reached elsewhere. So it is not surprising, nay, consistent with this "body of thought," to find this affirmation over the Copernican controversy so late as 1616. "The declaration made by the Holy Father, and published by the Sacred Congregation of the Index has been intimated to him (Galileo), wherein it is set forth that the doctrine attributed to Copernicus that the earth moves round the sun, and that the sun is stationary in the centre of the world, and does not move from East to West, is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and therefore cannot be defended or held." Not alone so, for the Protestant Bibliolaters echo the same refrain: "Melancthon, joint author with Luther of the Reformation . . . retained the Aristotelico-Ptolemaic astronomy, even maintaining that the civil authorities were bound to suppress the new 'so wicked and atheistical opinion.'"³

With the decline of obscurantist obstruction in the succeeding era, the Copernican theory slipped quietly into its place amid astronomical data; and with improved instruments of observation great additions were made to knowledge of the stellar universe.

Meanwhile critical thought began to make tentative assaults on the dogmatic citadel. But scientific study of nature went its way with small regard to "teleology," until by stages the natural history of our planet was unfolded. The real story of Creation came into purview as a change and mutation in unrecorded time as compared with the limited chronology of Genesis. Then *mirabile dictu*—evidence accumulated of an unknown antiquity of man himself, who, so far from being the victim of a "fall," appeared to have arisen in some obscure way from a lower condition to that of his known historic associations. For the first time in human experience veridical data avail in all these things, in lieu of past speculation *in vacuo*.

So natural truth, and cosmic error linked with exclusive tenets, stand now in irreconcilable antithesis. Holding categorically by all its presumptions,

² E. Renan.

medievalism with its offshoots is thus hoist with its own petard—becomes dissolved into nihility.³ This is a conclusion imposed on one's acceptance by the logic of facts; objective, impersonal, inviolate, incontestable. The negative bearing of cosmic law on old misconceptions of all orders, and their attendant beliefs, is the weightiest demonstration in rational judgment on the general problem: and apart from more abstract contentions, psychic or metaphysical.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

³ As for instance the argument in *The Epistle to the Romans*, Chap. v. *et seq.*

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER" "AND ITS OPPONENTS"

SIR,—Many of your readers may, I think, be interested to learn of the following little incident, which chanced to come to my notice lately through the agency of a friend.

A bookshop, in this freedom-loving land of ours, ventured a short time ago to display in its window a copy of a certain book, written by a disabled ex-service man, and "designed," as is definitely stated in its Preface, "especially for the general reader." At first all went peacefully. Soon, however, reproachful murmurings, some of them emanating from an ecclesiastical dignitary, were conveyed to those in charge of the establishment. And it was not until the object of distress had been removed from the window that a state of serenity was once more attained.

The book concerned, I must add, was my *Birth Control and Its Opponents*, with Foreword by Lord Horder. Its chief aim is to throw a little light on the questions of slumdom and war.

FRANK W. WHITE, I.R.C.P. & S.F.

Society News

THE North London Branch of the National Secular Society held its Annual Meeting on March 18.

The Secretary was able to give a very encouraging report of the past year's work. The Branch has conducted 139 meetings, including continuous lectures throughout the Winter at the White Stone Pond, and is starting the coming season with a better cash balance than for some years.

It was decided to reopen meetings on Sunday nights at Highbury Corner on April 4, and on Monday nights at South Hill Park on April 5, and to continue Sunday morning meetings at the White Stone Pond. The Branch hopes that all North London Freethinkers will attend these meetings, and thereby make possible an extension of propaganda in May.

The Branch would like to place on record the regret with which all members heard of the illness of the President, Mr. Cohen, and the pleasure that his rapid recovery has given; and hopes that the recovery will be sustained for the good of our cause.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 26, 1936

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. A. C. Rosetti, Wood, Saphin, Tuson, Ebury, Preece, Clifton, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

The re-union with the President after his illness was warm and sincere, with the expression of many kindly sentiments concerning the future.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted. The Financial Statement was presented. New members were admitted to North London, South London, West Ham, Edinburgh, Blackburn, Birmingham, Seaham, Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Brighton, Tees-Side, Swansea, West London Branches, and the Parent Society.

The receipt of £50 as acknowledged in the *Freethinker* was reported. The question of open-air work during the summer was further discussed, and conditions laid down for the arrangements. Mr. A. D. McLaren gave notice that the last meeting of the session of the Study Circle would be held on Monday, April 6. Correspondence from Brighton, and Bethnal Green Branches, International Union of Freethinkers, National Peace Conference, Brighton and Westcliff was dealt with. The date for the Annual Dinner on January 23, 1937, in the Holborn Restaurant was confirmed. Progress was reported in arrangements for the Annual Conference at Whit-Sun. The business meetings will be held in Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, London, E.C., and the evening demonstration in the Conway Hall. An Agenda Committee was appointed consisting of the President, Messrs. Clifton, Saphin, and the General Secretary.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday April 23, and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI.

General Secretary.

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. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, April 6, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, J. L. Gray, M.A.—"The Nemesis of Humanitarianism."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Hegel's Philosophy of History." Last Meeting this Session.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Members Meeting. Business Important. HETTON (Club Hall): 8.0, Wednesday, April 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance by the Secular Players. LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Room E, Upper Fountain Street, Leeds): 8.0, A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Board Room, Transport Buildings, Islington, Liverpool): 6.30, Tenth Annual General Meeting of members only.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester): 3.0, Annual General Meeting. Members only.

MIDDLESBOROUGH (Labour Hall, Grange Road, Middlesbrough): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Church, The War, The League."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. A. Flanders.

PRESTON (Garth Arms, Avenham Street, Preston): 7.0 Mr. H. P. Turner (Burnley)—"Passover, Crossover or Crucified."

SOCIAL Workers and others. Family, one child, would like to know of three-year old boy as companion. View legal adoption.—Box 25, FREETHINKER, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

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