

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN  
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## Views and Opinions

### God Save Sunday

If antiquity equated with science, or even sense, then the belief in a "sacred" day would be one of the most admirable of our institutions, instead of being a survival of a very primitive superstition. Throughout nearly the whole of the world of primitive human society there exists the ceremony of rest days, that is days on which the ordinary pursuits of life must not be followed. This is not because rest is considered a positively good thing, but because work or any enterprise on these days is considered dangerous. A "sacred" day is a phenomenon belonging to one special class of taboos, and their object is the protection against the displeasure of some god, which may be manifested in the sickness of a King on whose welfare the crops may depend, or to ward off a disease, or to avert some other probable calamity. These Sabbaths are not of necessity confined to a day, they may exist for a number of days on end; neither are they necessarily of a weekly occurrence; they may happen at the period of the full moon, or when special danger is threatened. But whether taken in the form in which taboo days appear among very primitive peoples, or as it meets us in the more advanced social stages in a weekly taboo day, the significance of its occurrence is the same.

The Christian Sabbath has its origin in the Jewish Sabbath, and the Jewish Sabbath, as is well-known, is Babylonian in origin, and was actually called an "evil day." This is the way it is written of in the Babylonian tablets:—

The seventh day is a holy day of Merodach . . . an acceptable day, an evil day. The shepherds of the great tribes shall not eat salted meat cooked over the embers, he shall not change his body clothing, he shall not be clothed in white, he shall not offer a sacrifice. The King shall not ride in a chariot, he shall not talk victoriously. The seer shall not make declaration with regard to a sacred place. A physician shall not touch a sick man. It is not suitable to make a visit.

This it may be noted comes very near the Biblical regulations for the keeping of the Sabbath, which were, in fact, derived from the Babylonian rules as above set out. But the one thing certain is that the Sabbath has nothing to do with the desire to establish a day on which there should be cessation from labour, it had nothing to do with the need for rest, it had no concern with morals, unless we enlarge the term so as to make it cover every form of behaviour. The Sabbath was due entirely to the desire to avoid exposing oneself or one's society to the anger of the gods. It was a kind of preventive medicine. The notion of the Sabbath as a day to preserve morality or to secure rest is a mere rationalistic device of after-days. To-day it is mainly a device of knaves for the purpose of imposing on fools.

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### The Empire of the Primitive

But the empire of the primitive is an extensive one. It has subjects in all parts of the world, and is well represented in our own country. The belief in the "taboo" is with us, not merely with respect to the Sabbath, but in the belief that it is "unlucky" to do this or that, in the faith in charms to ward off evil, in the incantations over battleships or guns, or land, or fishing nets, in the exploitation of general ignorance carried on by some of our Sunday papers which inform their readers on what days certain things are unlucky, or what coloured dresses will ward off ill-fortune. And it is common to all classes of society. The crown exhibits this primitive ignorance as clearly as the gutter, the university is as full of it as the "lower" walks of educational life. The Ex-Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip, is as profound a believer in a taboo day as the most ignorant of religionists, and professes to believe that if that taboo is broken the "great chief God" will punish the people. Even Mr. Ramsay Macdonald walks solemnly to the temple of this taboo god in the professed hope that he will deal more kindly with the people.

There appears to be a very nice little nest of these intellectual Polynesians in Slough (Bucks). Slough has a population of about 40,000 and possesses three Cinemas. Recently a request was made to the local Council to take a vote of the town—in the manner arranged by the Racketeering Act (inspired by Al Capone of pious memory)—to see whether it was the desire of the inhabitants to risk breaking this primitive taboo by opening the Cinemas. One of the principal medicine-men of the town, Rev. A. A. Dowsett, called a meeting in order to see what could be done to prevent the breaking of the taboo, and about 100 of the members of St. Paul's Church duly attended. That left about 39,900 of the forty thousand out, but in such cases as the upholding of a taboo, it is not quality of mind or character that counts. The quality of this gathering may be estimated by the



following resolution that was placed before the meeting:—

That this meeting, representing the whole Church life of the Parish of St. Paul's, Slough, calls upon the members of the Slough Urban District Council to resist any effort to promote the opening of cinemas on Sundays for the following reasons:—

1. That it will not promote the best interests of the community by providing secular entertainment on seven days a week.

2. That the opening of cinemas would be followed by other undesirable forms of entertainment and amusement.

3. That it is the only day when people can freely, without let or hindrance, consider and prepare their lives for the greater life which is to come.

4. That the English Sabbath is a priceless heritage handed down to us to preserve for the future generation.

5. That it would rob the children of the influence which makes for the building of upright, virtuous character.

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### The Tail to Wag the Dog

I think this document is worth preserving, because it illustrates as well as anything the profound humbuggery that underlies current Sabbatarianism. The mover of the resolution, with the support of the gallant hundred members of St. Paul's, wished the Council to ignore its responsibilities under the Act and declined even to put the matter to a town's vote. He argued that as the Council had, without a plebiscite, embarked on a drainage scheme, why ask for a vote on Sunday Cinemas? With this the presiding medicine-man agreed. But we ought to point out that the Council was elected to look after the drainage, not to see that the sewage of primitive superstition was left undisturbed in the town. Moreover, he said, the working man "cannot afford the Cinema on Sunday." Presumably he could afford it on other days in the week, but Sunday spending must be in the upkeep of the Taboo-shop. There was another speaker, a lady who said she represented the "young married women," and complained that Sunday was "the only opportunity for proper home life" young married people had. But old married people, and also unmarried people go to the Cinema on Sunday, why should they be kept out? Besides one is left wondering why a young married couple spending two hours in a Cinema on Sunday destroys the only chance for developing a "proper home life," while to go out to Church two or three times a day leaves their home life unwrecked? To use an Americanism, this is a new one on me. I have heard of young lives being wrecked by looking at films (when I was a boy it was the boy's paper that did the trick, and a little earlier it was the bad boy who ran away from Sunday school, who ultimately ended his life in prison or on the gallows, and who bemoaned his wickedness to the good tract distributor) but this is the first time I have heard of early married life being ruined by spending an evening with Elizabeth Bergner or Cedric Hardwicke.

The seconder of the resolution, a Mr. Graham Tucker, represented the St. Paul's "Young Peoples Fellowship," and came armed with their authority to stop Sunday Cinemas at all costs. He had secured from his one hundred members a vote of 80 condemning Sunday Cinemas. On the other hand, the Cinema proprietors had secured 7,000 signatures in favour of the Sunday opening of Cinemas and only 17 against. But, naturally, the *spontaneous* wish of the 80 children was not to be beaten down by the 7,000 votes of Slough's criminal population. All the same, one would like to get these children aside, and, free from the influence of Mr. Tucker, offer them the choice of either a free ticket to the Sunday Cinema,

or an extra session at the Sunday school, and note the result.

I agree that the cultivation of "upright, virtuous character" is of importance, and I also agree that if Sunday Cinemas are permitted, the character of the next generation will not be that displayed at the St. Paul's Church meeting. And something ought to be done in this connexion to prevent Chief Constables all over the country issuing reports that the behaviour of young people in the streets had improved since Sunday Cinemas have been in existence. I admit that the Polynesians of Slough would reply that this might be true of mere worldly behaviour, but in "the greater life that is to come," the god of taboo will see that they suffer for it, while the congregation of St. Paul's will have their celestial happiness intensified by knowing that the wicked Sunday Cinema-goers were in hell. We have it on excellent authority that the suffering of the damned contributes mightily to the happiness of the saved.

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### What Might Have Been

I am sorry that no report appears in the *Slough Observer* of the remarks of the medicine-man who presided. But I think that if Mr. Dowsett had been overtaken with an attack of candour and truth-speaking, he might have spoken somewhat as follows:—

My Dear Brethren and Sisters,—This meeting has been called to preserve that ancient institution, the Sabbath. I am sorry that only one hundred of the inhabitants of Slough are present, but we must remember that we are the faithful ones of Slough, and even Sodom might have been spared had they had such people as ourselves among its inhabitants. It is more imperative that we should strive to preserve the Sabbath, since the Lord no longer strikes with death or causes to be drowned, or provides the Sabbath-breaker with a criminal career, as was the case years ago. He has left the defence of the Sabbath to us, and has made this more manifest by permitting there to be even improvement in worldly behaviour with the encroachments of Sabbath desecration.

My friends, we must prove ourselves worthy of the trust. The preservation of these taboos, particularly the Sabbath taboo, is necessary to the Church, it is necessary to me, and it is necessary to you if you wish to retain me. It is my business to see that you make it your business to help bring up the young so that they will make my business flourish. What is the use to me of a population that does not attend Church? And how can we expect children and adolescent boys and girls to come willingly to Sunday School and Church if, in their path, there lies the temptation of the Cinema? Where and when has our religion withstood the claims of the world if left to fight by its own power, and without social or legal coercion? How can we expect the attraction of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, to have more power over the minds of the young—and, I regret to say it, even of the old—than has Charlie Chaplin, Wallace Beery, and George Arliss? It is urged that no one is forced to attend Cinemas, and no one is prevented going to Church. Why not let things remain as they are? That argument is fallacious. No good Christian, no real Christian, is ever content to do as he pleases, so long as other people do not act as he wishes them to. Why should the carnally-minded be permitted to indulge in the riotous enjoyment of the Cinema house, while the Christian is mourning his sinfulness in Church?

I beg this meeting to do what it can to prevent the breaking of this ancient taboo. If you would have your children grow up complete copies of yourselves, if you would ban worldly happiness as a snare of the devil, if you would value a long face as indicating greater "spirituality" than a happy one, and a groan as indicative of greater holiness than a



laugh; if you value my position as a parson as I value it, you will set your face against this profane enjoyment of the Cinema on Sunday. A "sacred" day, or days, the existence of the "taboo" is one of the oldest things on earth. There is not a savage race anywhere that has it not. Is this town of Slough to set them the example of forsaking an ancient religious institution? We are accused of taking many of the vices of civilization to the primitive peoples of the earth. But at least we can say that whatever else we have robbed them of, we have at least left the conception of a taboo, not merely untouched, but strengthened by all that men like myself could do. We are in line with the past. Let us see that we stray not. We are 100 out of 40,000, but we are the salt of the town, and the other 39,900 must be kept in their place.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Satirical Mr. Swaffer

"Christians themselves are all infidels in the sight of some other Christians; and they who come nearest to them are the most obnoxious. Strange interpretation of 'Love your neighbour!'"—Landor.

EMERSON once asked, where, in all Christendom, a genuine Christian could be found? The question is a very pertinent one, for the nations which profess to worship Christ treat his alleged commands with high-sniffing contempt. From the Elbe to the Spree, from the Seine to the Neva, from Moscow to Madrid, the roads of Europe resound to the tramp of armed hosts. "Peace and goodwill amongst men" proclaim tens of thousands of priests, who also christen battleships and bless regimental colours. To such a pass, after nearly two thousand years of the alleged "Gospel of Love," has the Christian world come.

In such a tempest as this the spark of piety is apt to be blown out, and a search for a real Christian made very difficult. Happily, the newspaper press comes to the rescue. Journalists find out so many things in time. Each summer they discover the whereabouts of the elusive sea-serpent. They are always finding relics of Noah's Ark, and similar corroboration of the legends of Holy Writ. Why should not one of them find such a rare bird as a Christian?

The unexpected has at length happened. Mr. Hannen Swaffer, writing in the *Daily Herald*, April 14, has made the great discovery. He has found, not a common, or garden, Christian, but a great one; a happening which should restore the faith of thousands, and cause the wicked Freethinkers to hide their faces in shame. It is a fearful business to find a real Christian, and comparable to the legendary search for the Holy Grail. And what a fate awaits the unhappy and unfortunate object of the search, for, inevitably, Mme. Tussaud will require a replica for the famous waxworks, and, on decease, he, or she, runs a risk of being stuffed and placed in the British Museum alongside the mummies of old Egypt.

Mr. Swaffer is not only a great journalist, but he is very thorough in his work. He has given an anxious and waiting world the name of this religious phenomenon. And who do you think it is? It is none other than Mr. George Lansbury. It sounds incredible, but there it is. For dear old George is a politician of a sort, and politicians are usually classed with crabs and priests as being unreliable, in the sense that when they seem to be coming they are going, and when they appear to be retiring they are advancing.

What led to Mr. Swaffer's epoch-making discovery was a roundabout story told to him by a Rev. W. Paxton, a Liverpool Congregational minister, who had heard it previously from the lips of the Rev. Dick

Sheppard. The tale goes that the Rev. Richard found a young woman crying in his church, and when he went to console her, she said, melodramatically, that the tears were those of joy and not sorrow. She added she was going to have a baby. When walking about homeless, she had met a lady and gentleman to whom she confided her sorrow. The gentleman had invited the young woman to have the baby at his house. And the gent was none other than Mr. George Lansbury. Mr. Swaffer was so moved that he breaks out, "I call George's the act of a great Christian." Truly, a cry from the heart from a hardened journalist.

It would require the combined dialectical skill of MM. Flandin and Laval to deal with this delicate situation. How dear old George could be a great Christian and also a notable politician at one and the same time requires a lot of elucidation. But that he should also be a gentleman and an agitator is still more startling. For a gentleman is supposed to be a social butterfly, and agitators are usually earnest, not to say iconoclastic. Of course, it is within the bounds of possibility that the young woman would not know a gentleman if she saw one. But that scarcely explains Mr. Swaffer's spiritual snobbery.

For that is what it all amounts to. He suggests that for a man to help a woman in distress is possible only to a Christian, which is simply an expression of urbane insolence. The jibe is like one of the stock arguments of Christian Evidence Society lecturers. Presumably, Mr. Swaffer's own conversion has depressed his levity, for the process reminds us of how Edward Gibbon, the historian, learnt Greek, "at the cost of many tears and not a little blood."

Does Mr. Swaffer know that Florence Nightingale, who ministered to the wounded soldiers in the Crimean campaign, was a heretic? Has he never heard that Walt Whitman spent four years of his life in attending the war-hospitals during the American Civil War, and wrecked his superb constitution by his untiring devotion to his fellows? And what of Robert Owen, who not only built the first infant schools, and improved the dwellings of his work-people, but sought to construct the ideal society of the future? Mr. Swaffer ought to have heard of University College School, which was founded by Freethinkers to further the principles of Secular Education. Even the activities of the Humanitarian League (with which the name of Mr. H. S. Salt is inseparably associated), with its splendid quarter-century record, should be a reminder that virtue is not the monopoly of any single creed.

Other names leap to the memory. Thomas Paine pleaded for the abolition of slavery, and advocated old-age pensions for the poor. He besought the young French Republic not to imitate the bad example of Monarchy, and not to stain itself with blood. The Atheist, Shelley, was a thorough humanitarian. To help the needy, and to relieve the sick seemed to him a simple duty. At Marlow he contracted ophthalmia whilst visiting poor lace-makers in their cottages. So practical was he that he even attended a London hospital to acquire medical knowledge that should be of service to the sick he visited.

Let Mr. Swaffer ponder the case of Stephen Girard, the American Freethinker who endowed a large orphanage. By express provision of his will, no minister of religion was to hold any connexion with the college, or even be admitted as a visitor, but the teaching staff were required to instruct the pupils in Secular morality, and leave them to adopt their own religious opinions. This will has been most shamefully perverted, for the officials are all Christians, and, in order to keep within the letter of the law, only laymen are so employed.



Mr. Swaffer is guilty of the worst form of sentimentalism. As a journalist he should be in a better position to judge of the world and its ways than most men. As a Socialist he ought to know that if the world were run on fair and reasonable lines there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist. If, however, a belief in the Christian God is necessary to make a man a humanitarian, how comes it that so many godless Freethinkers are also philanthropists? And how comes it that the votes of the very Christian Bishops in the House of Lords constitute a shameful record? Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working-classes have been opposed by these god-believing priests. Nothing but the basest self-interest excited their action. None even voted for the abolition of the flogging of women in prison, or for the abolition of the whip in the Army and Navy. Even a modest measure for the provision of seats for tired shop-assistants excited their hostility, and these Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God could never be persuaded that Nonconformists, Jews, and Freethinkers were human beings.

When Napoleon died, his own brother declared that the dead dictator was "not so much a great man as a good man." This may have meant that Napoleon was generous to his own relations. So is Mr. Swaffer's desire to put a halo on Mr. Lansbury's head, due to his wish to canonize a leader of the political party to which he himself belongs? There must be a catch in the story somewhere, for Swaffer quotes Lord Halifax's declaration that there are twenty "saints" in the East-End of London, all of them parsons. Have they not overlooked one saint who used to exhibit himself in a barrel on the sea-front at Blackpool?

In discussing Swaffer's sob-stuff story we have no wish to disparage Mr. Lansbury, who has grown grey in the service of his political faith. We agree with the remarks of the *News-Chronicle* (April 16):—

Mr. Lansbury may not find many people to agree with his brand of Communism. But he is a magnificent example of a gallant defence of time.

Nevertheless, the House of Commons seems a strange place to find "a great Christian," for we recall that those Fathers-in-God, the Bishops, have their own cushioned seats in the building next door.

MIMNERMUS.

## An Open Letter to a Leading Biologist

SIR,—Following the example of a few other eminent scientists who have expounded their religious views in important periodicals, you have an article in the *Hibbert Journal* on "The Scientific Atmosphere and the Creeds of Christendom." In this you inform us that you continue to hold beliefs in deity and immortality, chiefly it appears because there is a residue of psychical phenomena that cannot be explained away. But these two doctrines seem to be the only items of the creeds and the general mass of Christian doctrine you accept. You mention others which are current, but mistaken and useless to later generations; and presumably these include the ancient notions of supernatural creation, virgin birth and incarnation, bodily resurrection, the Devil and Hell, miracles and the like. On the ethical side you express the opinion that the precepts of Christianity form "the only cement which will hold society together"; and this in spite of the fact that, as you point out, a number of the precepts are inapplicable to modern society.

Now, though it is true that a few capable persons who have investigated spiritism and other occultry, think one or two of the phenomena have not yet been naturally explained, it is also true that a variety of other things—admittedly real and natural—are as yet unexplained. But the fact that so many have been explained, and that more and more of them are constantly being explained (including a host of phenomena that were so long regarded as supernatural or otherwise non-natural), has evidently led the great majority of your fellow-scientists to reject your religious beliefs. You may or may not have noted that the only comprehensive and dependable questionnaire which has been issued to intellectualists (in the United States) showed that a large majority of the scientists who replied—and especially those concerned with the human sciences—reject the doctrines of both personal deity and immortality. The percentages of believers in the former were, for biologists and psychologists respectively, 16 and 13, and for the latter 25 and 8. (Psychology touches the latter of these doctrines somewhat more closely than even biology).

As regards these and theological dogma in general, our views must of necessity be largely determined by historic considerations. These include the rise of animism, spiritism, theology and transcendentalism in general, including magic, among our remote ancestors, before they had acquired the knowledge necessary for the natural explanation of a variety of natural phenomena. In one aspect the advance of science has been the constant progress made in such explanation; and this explanation has rather recently exploded the religious cosmogonies, divine government of ordinary human affairs, demonism and many other such ancient errors. Therefore other beliefs which cannot be directly and fully disproved, must, on account of their association with those which have been so fully disproved, be thoroughly discredited.

Again, so far as morality is concerned, we know that the better precepts included in what is usually regarded as "Christian Ethics" were in practically all cases existent before the appearance of Christianity; and the claim that these are peculiar to that religion is now impossible to any one acquainted with the relevant facts. Also there are, as you mention, the inapplicable ones, some of them quite absurd, e.g., "Take no thought for the morrow." Others are harmful, or would be if they were practised—"Return good for evil," "Turn the other cheek," etc. (Essentially these appear to be sentimental, unenlightened perversions of the sound maxim of Confucius, "Return good for good; for evil, justice.")

Do you not think, Professor, that your mild defence of Christianity is calculated to encourage those who regard the system as in the main a collection of ecclesiastical dogma and practices, to neither of which you subscribe, associated with unintellectualism and obscurantism (the *Index*, Fundamentalism), resulting in neglect and contempt of science, and also in a tendency to rely on supernaturalism instead of on rational effort in the consideration and treatment of real problems?

Doubtless Sir, you are familiar with the fact that some people—mainly those of an unintellectual type, but also a few scientists and other inquirers and thinkers—are apt to retain old traditional views for a period subsequent to their widespread or general abandonment. You will recall that for some time after the publication of the work of Darwin and Wallace, a biologist here and there refused to accept the principle of evolution, and that Wallace himself refused to believe that evolution applied fully to the mental as well as to the physical side of life. And we wonder whether in your own case this apparent



bent of mind accounts for the discrepancy between your view on a cardinal point in your own subject and that of practically the whole body of biologists, viz., the cause or mode of evolution. You agree with Lamarck (1774-1829) that the changes in organic forms follow on the inheritance of acquired characters. The great bulk of biologists, on the other hand, believe that the changes are due mainly, if not exclusively, to modification of the germ plasma, the hereditary material resident in the chromosomes of the nucleus of the egg-cell.

Nevertheless, we appreciate the blow (if too gentle, inadequate and apparently somewhat reluctant) you have administered to the more childish of the current superstitions which are still included in the creeds, inculcated in churches, and taught in our public schools; superstitions which have for so long a period stultified the western intellect, hindered the advance of knowledge and rational thinking, and still in this country form an obstacle to a unified and fully progressive system of national education.

J. REEVES.

## Things Worth Knowing\*

### XL.

#### THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

To every man comes, sooner or later, the great renunciation. For the young there is nothing unattainable; a good thing desired with the whole force of a passionate will, and yet impossible, is to them not credible. Yet, by death, by illness, by poverty, or by the voice of duty, we must learn, each one of us, that the world was not made for us, and that, however beautiful may be the things we crave, Fate may nevertheless forbid them. It is the part of courage, when misfortune comes, to bear without repining the ruin of our hopes, to turn away our thoughts from vain regrets. This degree of submission to Power is not only just and right; it is the very gate of wisdom.

When without the bitterness of impotent rebellion we have learnt both to resign ourselves to the outward rule of fate and to recognize that the non-human world is unworthy of our worship, it becomes possible at last so to transform and refashion the unconscious universe, so to transmute it in the crucible of imagination, that a new image of shining gold replaces the old idol of clay. In all the multifarious facts of the world—in the visual shapes of trees and mountains and clouds, in the events of the life of man, even in the very omnipotence of death—the insight of creative idealism can find the reflection of a beauty which its own thoughts first made. In this way mind asserts its subtle mastery over the thoughtless forces of nature. The more evil the material with which it deals, the more thwarting to untrained desire, the greater is its achievement in inducing the reluctant rock to yield up its hidden treasures, the prouder its victory in compelling the opposing forces to swell the pageant of its triumph. Of all the arts Tragedy is the proudest, the most triumphant; for it builds its shining citadel in the very centre of the enemy's country, on the very summit of the highest mountain; from its impregnable watch-towers, his camps and arsenals, his columns and forts are all revealed; within its walls the free life continues,

while the legions of death and despair and pain, and all the servile captains of tyrant Fate, afford the burghers of that dauntless city new spectacles of beauty. . . . Honour to those brave warriors who, through countless ages of warfare, have preserved for us the priceless heritage of liberty, and have kept undefiled by sacrilegious invaders the home of the undaunted.

But the beauty of Tragedy does but make visible a quality which, in more or less obvious shapes, is present always and everywhere in life. In the spectacle of Death, in the endurance of pain, and in the irrevocableness of a vanished past there is a sacredness, an overpowering awe, a feeling of the vastness, the depth, the inexhaustible mystery of existence, in which as by some strange marriage of pain, the sufferer is bound to the world by bonds of sorrow. In these moments of insight we lose all eagerness of temporary desire, all struggling and striving for petty ends, all care for the little trivial things that, to a superficial view, make up the common life of day by day; we see, surrounding the narrow raft illumined by the flickering light of human comradeship, the dark ocean on whose rolling waves we toss for a brief hour; from the great night without, a chill blast breaks in our refuge; all the loneliness of humanity amid hostile forces is concentrated upon the individual soul, which must struggle alone, with what of courage it can command, against the whole weight of a universe that cares nothing for its hopes and fears. Victory in this struggle with the powers of darkness, is the true baptism into the glorious company of heroes, the true initiation into the overmastering beauty of human existence. From that awful encounter of the soul with the outer world, renunciation, wisdom and charity are born; and with their birth a new life begins. To take into the inmost shrine of the soul the irresistible forces whose puppets we seem to be—Death and change, the irrevocableness of the past, and the powerlessness of man before the blind hurry of the universe from vanity to vanity—to feel these things and know them is to conquer them.

. . . The Life of man, viewed outwardly, is but a small thing compared with the forces of nature. The slave is doomed to worship Time and Fate and Death, because they are greater than anything he finds in himself, and because all his thoughts are of things which they devour. But, great as they are, to think of them greatly, to feel their passionate splendour, is greater still. And such thought makes us freemen; we no longer bow before the inevitable in Oriental subjection, but we absorb it and make it a part of ourselves.

. . . United with his fellow men by the strongest of all ties, the ties of a common doom, the free man finds that a new vision is with him always, shedding over every daily task the light of love. The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent order of omnipotent death. Very brief is the time in which we can help them, in which their happiness or misery is decided. Be it ours to shed sunlight on their path, to lighten their sorrows by the balm of sympathy, to give them the joy of a never tiring affection, to strengthen their failing courage, to instil faith in hours of despair. Let us not weigh in grudging scales their merits and demerits, but let us think only of their need—of the sorrows, the difficulties, perhaps the blindnesses, that make the misery of their lives; let us remember that they are fellow-sufferers in the same darkness, actors in the same tragedy with ourselves. And so, when their day is

\* 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.



over, when their good and evil has become eternal by the immortality of the past, be it ours to feel that where they suffered, where they failed, no deed of ours was the cause; but wherever a spark of the divine fire kindled in their hearts, we were ready with encouragement, with sympathy, with brave words in which high courage glowed.

Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned to-day, to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains yet to cherish, ere the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.

*Mysticism and Logic,*  
by BERTRAND RUSSELL, pp. 52-7.

### Freethought in Spain

IN amazing contrast with the character of the recently-elected Spanish Government, together with the scant consideration shown for church-buildings by numbers of the people before and after polling-day, are the facts revealed by Buckle in the section of his *History of Civilization in England*, entitled "Spanish Intellect from the Fifth to the Nineteenth Century."

Here—frankly confessing my utter inability to do justice to the great historian's penetrating, comprehensive review of the period in question—I merely propose to recall a few of his references to developments and events in religion.

Buckle showed that Spain was, naturally, a superstitious country. Naturally, because of recurring famines, epidemics, and earthquakes, "more prominent in Spain than anywhere else in Europe." Thus was induced in the people a fear of—a submissiveness and an appeal to—the unknown. From the outset, "Spain was the seat and refuge of superstition."

Came, in due course, Catholicism—that is, Christianity.

Very largely were the wars in subsequent years religiously-waged wars. Not so much for the protection of the country. First and foremost they were in defence of the Catholic faith.

How understandable it is that, in such conditions, the priests—in other words, the interceders of the day between earth and heaven—should get, more and more, an ascendancy over the people.

"Indeed," says Buckle, in illustration of the position, following the advent of Catholicism, "the rulers of Spain, grateful to those who had shown them the error of their ways, were willing rather to increase the power of the church than to diminish it. The clergy took advantage of this disposition; and the result was that, before the middle of the seventh century, the spiritual classes possessed more influence than in any other part of Europe. The ecclesiastical councils became—not only councils of the church—but also parliaments of the realm. At Toledo, which was then the capital of Spain, the power of the clergy was immense, and was so ostentatiously displayed that, in a council they held there in the year 633, we find the king literally prostrating himself on the ground before the bishops."

Come, now, to a considerably later period.

"The war with Granada, late in the fifteenth century, was theological far more than temporal; and Isabella, who made the greatest sacrifice in order to conduct it,

and who in capacity as well as in honesty was superior to Ferdinand, had for her object not so much the acquisition of territory as the propagation of the Christian faith. Indeed, any doubts which could be entertained respecting the purpose of the contest must have been dissipated by subsequent events. For, scarcely was the war brought to a close, when Ferdinand and Isabella issued a decree expelling from the country every Jew who refused to deny his faith, so that the soil of Spain might be no longer polluted by the presence of unbelievers. To make them Christians—or, failing in that, to exterminate them—was the business of the Inquisition, which was established in the same reign, and which before the end of the fifteenth century was in full operation."

Philip II., who came to the throne in 1555, was "eminently a creature of his time."

"In Spain," proceeds Buckle, "the Reformation, after a short struggle, died completely away, and in about ten years the last prestige of it disappeared. The Dutch wished to adopt—and, in some cases, did adopt—the reformed doctrine. Therefore, Philip waged against them a cruel war, which lasted thirty years, and which he continued till his death, because he was resolved to extirpate the new creed. He ordered that every heretic who refused to recant should be burned. If the heretic did recant, some indulgence was granted; but, having once been tainted, he must die. Instead of being burned, he was therefore to be executed. Of the number of those who actually suffered in the Low Countries, we have no precise information; but Alva triumphantly boasted that, in the five or six years of his administration, he had put to death in cold blood more than eighteen thousand, besides a still greater number whom he had slain in the field of battle."

Emphatic was Philip in his declaration that his aim was the establishment of Catholicism—not merely in Spain—but throughout Europe.

"And his last great enterprise—in some respects, the most important of all—was to fit out, at an incredible cost, that famous Armada with which he hoped to humble England, and to nip the heresy of Europe in the bud, by depriving the Protestants of their principal support, and of the only asylum where they were sure to find safe and honourable refuge."

May we here have a few words as to the loftiness—in outlook and nobility—of some of the model-Christian Spanish Kings?

From 1598 to 1700, the throne was occupied by Philip III., Philip IV., and Charles II. "Philip III. and Philip IV. were idle and ignorant, infirm of purpose, and passed their lives in the lowest and most sordid pleasures." Charles II. "possessed nearly every defect which can make a man ridiculous and contemptible." Further: "At the age of thirty-five, he was completely bald. He had lost his eyebrows; he was paralysed; he was epileptic; and he was notoriously impotent. His general appearance was absolutely revolting, and was that of a drivelling idiot. To an enormous mouth, he added a nether jaw protruding so hideously that his teeth could never meet, and he was unable to masticate his food. His ignorance would be incredible, if it were not substantiated by unimpeachable evidence."

The more ignorant the people, it is made clear, the greater the power of the Church.

"Books, unless they were books of devotion, were deemed utterly useless—no one consulted them; no one collected them; and, until the eighteenth century, Madrid did not possess a single library." Side by side with this, we find that in 1626—when, in point of general enlightenment, the position was even worse, if possible—"there were in Spain upwards of nine thousand monasteries, besides nunneries." In this connexion, Buckle goes on to say: "Davila, who lived in the reign of Philip III., affirms that in 1623, the two orders of Dominicans and Franciscans alone amounted to thirty-two thousand. The other clergy increased in proportion. Before the death of Philip III., the number of ministers performing in the Cathedral of Seville had swelled to one hundred; in the diocese of Greville, there were fourteen thousand chaplains; and the diocese of Calahorra, eighteen thousand. Nor did there seem to be any prospect of remedying this frightful condition. The richer



the church became, the greater was the inducement to enter it, so that there appeared to be no limit to which the sacrifice of temporal interests might be carried."

What, in short, can you do with a nation like this?

Such was the question asked by Buckle, who concludes with these words: "The priests are rather gaining ground than losing it; the slightest attack on the Church rouses the people; while even the dissoluteness of the clergy—and the odious vices which, in the present century, have stained the throne—can do naught to lessen either the superstition or the loyalty which the accumulated force of many centuries has graven on the minds and eaten into the hearts of the Spanish nation."

Buckle, of course, was writing in the nineteenth century. How greatly has the world changed since then! Nor could anyone be more gratified than Buckle himself to learn that, prominent in this forward movement, is no less a country than Spain.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

## Acid Drops

There is very little satisfaction in being able to say "I told you so," but the pitiful collapse of the League of Nations forces us to say it. Ever since 1919 we have stressed the point that the League was bound to fail so long as it was constituted by the old governmental gangs, each of which was trying to steal a march on the others, not one of them ready to trust the others, and continuing the policy of saying one thing in public and another thing in private. We have dealt with this in our *Humanity and War*, as well as in numerous articles in these columns. But the latest proof of the hopeless character of the League as at present constituted is seen in an article written for the *Sunday Chronicle* for May 3, by Lord Queenborough, explaining the reason for his resignation as Treasurer to the League of Nations Union. He complains, justly, of the secret conversations and arrangements that have been carried on, and the plans that were formed in this way, which have turned the League of Nations into a mockery. But his great objection is that Bolshevik Russia was permitted to enter the League, and also permitted to enter into an alliance with France, and to this alliance was added Czechoslovakia. This was too much for Lord Queenborough who, apparently, would not admit to the League any nation with whose form of Government or opinions he was not in agreement.

Lord Queenborough's ideal appears to be Hitler. Of him he says:—

Repeatedly Herr Hitler has made proposals calculated to bring about a better understanding between nations. . . . I am convinced of the sincerity of Herr Hitler.

This of the man who, as the mouthpiece of those who control him, has broken promise after promise, who tears up agreements as it suits him, intrigues to disturb the peace of the peoples around him, and has carried out a persecution of children and aged men and women, which for brutality beggars anything the world has seen. Is it to be surprised that the League of Nations and its auxiliaries have done so badly when some of its leading figures are of the type of Lord Queenborough? Lord Queenborough also approves Japan's action in Manchukuo, and Mussolini's conduct in Abyssinia.

Yet, in spite of the failure of the present League of Nations, one thing is certain. If the world is to be saved from sheer military barbarism a League of Nations is indispensable. But it must be a League in which all nations are represented, in which secret agreements have no existence, in which all treaties are published, and in which the omnipotence of the present governing gangs ceases to exist. It must be, as we said in 1919, a League of peoples, not a League of nations.

Let us make no mistake. Our own fight for the retention of bombing planes, which Lord Londonderry said he had the greatest difficulty in retaining in face of the opposition to them at Geneva, has naturalized their use in the next war. Mussolini has naturalized the use of mustard gas and poison gas in the next war. There will be a frantic rush to get everything in as early as possible in order to steal a march on the "enemy." And there will be less difficulty in the next war than there has been in past ones in finding that the "enemy" began this nefarious game, and that "we" had to follow suit with whatever villainy or brutality is done. It is a question of an international force in control of a real League of Peoples, or the world converted into so many centres of open brigandage with so many galaxies of "killers."

We have not read Hesketh Pearson's *Life of Henry Labouchere*, but judging from reviews, some justice has been done to a man who hated shams and impostures with all his heart and soul. Freethinkers will remember him for the way in which he stood by Bradlaugh, and the rest of the country ought to remember him for the way in which he exposed financial, political, religious and social impostors. And he could not be bought by money or titles or patronage. Unfortunately, for his memory "Labby" was an ardent Radical and Republican—the latter was the greater offence—and his name and work have been quietly buried, but while he lived *Truth* was a living terror to all kinds of swindlers, and many thousands of pounds were spent by Labouchere in defending himself from people of the Bottomley type, who were simply forced into taking action. But he gave great offence to people in power by protesting against the fussy impertinence of Victoria, and the extravagance—and other peculiarities—of Edward the Seventh. The first simply would not permit his holding Cabinet or first-class Diplomatic rank, and Gladstone was not strong enough to stand against her. She called him "that horrible lying Labouchere," and intrigued against him as she did against others. Edward called him "That viper Labouchere." Both were, quite unconsciously, paying compliments.

In these days when vigorous advertising has converted every male of the Royal Family into a model of virtue, gracious in bearing, regal or princely in appearance, a model of wisdom in counsel, and, if a female, beautiful and kindly, while a kindly word to a hospital patient is enough to send newspaper men into ecstasies of admiration, it is interesting to note the following description of the marriage of George the Fifth:—

The Prince of Wales seemed ill at ease and out of sorts; so also did the Queen, who looked exceedingly cross. . . . The bride looked very flushed and rather nervous. . . . Decided absence of beauty among the group of bridesmaids. . . . The Duke of Edinburgh looked even more sour and supercilious than usual and the sullen expression which has become habitual to the Duchess appeared to be accentuated for the occasion. . . . Lord Lorne was in tartans, but certainly looked very common. . . .

However justifiable the description might be, we are quite sure that hardly a newspaper to-day would print a similar description of a similar function. (Compare the stupid gush over the marriage of the Princess Marina). By now the advertising has stereotyped the descriptions of Royal functions, and with the exception of the weather, any newspaper-man could write a report of a Royal marriage or funeral weeks before the event, and only have to put in the weather when the actual ceremony arrived. Mr. Robert Lynd says of the above description, "It is not surprising that some years later she (Victoria) indignantly rejected Mr. Gladstone's proposal to make Labouchere one of her Cabinet Ministers." Not surprising, certainly, but a little bit humiliating that sheer flunkeyism should be one method of advancement, and its absence a preventative of men moving upward in the public service. Neither Victoria nor Edward had much time for men who made war on shams.



Mr. Lynd is readily more severe when Mr. Hesketh Pearson ventures to say something derogatory of established religion. Mr. Lynd says that Mr. Pearson occasionally lapses into "bad taste," thus "In those days people paid a lot of attention to the raving pastors of the Free Churches, for whom Christianity was merely another name for misery and whose highest conception of happiness was a chat about Jesus over a cup of tea." You see, Victoria has been dead for a generation, and some of the truth may be told about her. But Christianity is still strong, and newspapers must follow the fashions and the advertisers and the influence that pays best—and Mr. Lynd is, after all, writing for newspapers. What we should like to read would be (if Mr. Lynd could come back, about fifty years after his death), his critical notice of a Robert Lynd who was writing in the *News-Chronicle* of 1936, taking the passage cited as a text.

Better late than never. The Rev. Henry Guppy has begun to ask the question, "Are the New Testament Books Genuine?" We should smile. Mr. Guppy asks the question only rhetorically. He has positive proofs that they are genuine. One of them is that "the great vellum codices of the New Testament were written some 250 years after the date when the gospels were actually composed." Mr. Guppy is not appalled by this hiatus, and he gloats over "the constant reference to divergent or alternative readings." This is explained by saying that "the early Christians were not likely to trouble about minute accuracy of transcription . . . salvation was not to be secured by exactness in copying." Exactly. Some scribes no doubt believed that human salvation depended on acceptance of dogmas best taught by deliberately falsifying inconvenient contradictions to the scribe's own creed.

At an induction ceremony at St. Thomas' Congregational Church, Exeter, the Moderator, the Rev. H. Jenkins, urged in his address of welcome to the new minister that he should "try and abstain from controversy and disputation." He even added that "the dispute which was going on between Modernism and Fundamentalism was a scandal." The only way out of such an *impasse*, is apparently to take the side favoured by the Rev. Jenkins, and then steadfastly and with both eyes on the Cross, refuse to argue about it. The Reverend Jenkins, speaking from a wealth of experience, knows it to be "the only way."

Dean Inge has been telling us of a brother clergyman who is reported to have said that he would "rather be a devil in hell than not be at all." Well the chance of the cleric being allowed an innings in Hell is very remote. After all, the good quality of the company in Hell has always been admitted, and that extremely high reputation has to be maintained.

Here is an interesting little study of "relative value,"—The *Sunday Dispatch* is running a series of articles pointing out the advantages of joining the Army. We read that a good machine gunner (that is a man who, in the event of war would be a good killer) is worth his weight in gold. Apparently he is worth almost as much as Radium; but then of course Radium is used to cure disease, and it is of secondary importance to a machine gun, which has been designed to kill.

One of our leading engineers, Sir Robert Hadfield, has invented a shell with a velocity of 1,200 miles per minute, and which penetrates iron, to a depth of 18 inches. But even when we read of such an achievement, we do not feel like chucking our hats off and cheering; we should be much more interested if somebody would invent a thought machine that would pierce the thick skulls of the great majority, and make them realize that war and everything it stands for is a barbarous anachronism.

Dr. Henry Townsend, in his Presidential Address to the Baptist Union at the City Temple, called attention to

the fact that Europe "is suffering from the effects of bad religion," and that there existed a "wide impression," that the Christian Church had not "delivered the goods." We prefer the word "conviction" to "impression."

It is "bad religion" that has done all this. Well, it is the preaching of the religion of Christ and him crucified. We will not quarrel about adjectives.

The Mayor of Wisbech had his own suggestion to make to the conference so that the substitution of Bad Religion by Good Religion could be more speedily made. He commented on how dull and unkempt the exteriors of many of their Baptist churches were. "I suggest," said he, "We ought to take a lesson from the brewers, who are brightening up their public houses, and beautify our places of worship." We do not think the Baptist Church, or any other Christian Church, has anything to learn from the brewers, or any other tradesmen, in the art of advertising. By boosting in the Schools, in the Press, on the Air, it has been a case of advertisement, advertisement all the way.

Jesus Christ, we notice, is being described as "The greatest Spiritualist the world has ever seen." Jesus has been described in a thousand ways; a man, a God, a mixture, a Baptist, a Christadelphian, a Freethinker and anti-clerical, a working-class agitator. It is evident, therefore, that to place him unmistakably, is an elusive business. But whatever he was, he was always the Greatest of his kind. There is little doubt that if the non-historicity of Jesus school of criticism clearly triumphed there would arise a number of people in the land who would speak of Jesus, with bated breath, as the greatest figure the world had never seen.

St. George's Day once again brought forward the question as to whether the Patron Saint of England was the hopeless ruffian described by Gibbon and Emerson and rightly lynched. But our religious press is not likely to admit the gentle impeachment. "The history of St. George may be obscure," says one pious writer. "May be," indeed! The fact is that it is the story of the "saint" which is "obscure," or rather, an unadulterated tissue of silly lies, like the stories of most of the "saints." No wonder that St. George is "neglected in his native land," as the pious *Church Times* laments.

The Pope strongly criticized film production control the other day. "Millions of young people," he said, "of both sexes see films containing scenes that are a sheer outrage and a real insult to all that is beautiful, delicate and honourable." That may be so, but it is a fact that if the Pope and his dupes had their way they would put on the *Index* many films that actually are "beautiful, delicate, and honourable"—just as they have banned books and pictures which are classics to everybody but the Roman Catholic mind. Film control may or may not be necessary, but heaven save us from Roman Catholic control!

Water "divining" by means of the jerks of a hazel twig, we have all heard of, but of late years the sagacity of the twig has gone through an evolution and has been extended to precious metals and buried "treasure." We notice that the position of dead bodies can now be located in the same way. In fact, there appears to be little, nowadays, that the hazel cannot "twig."

General Ludendorff has written another book—this time on his religion—the "creed of a mystical dreamer"—and on war. One Catholic critic describes it as "a curious mixture of blood-thirstiness, mystical frenzy and a genuine love of his country." Ludendorff's arch enemies are Jews and Catholics, while he himself is "the Christ of his German Religion of Blood and Race." But however stupid this farrago of nonsense may be, is it after all any more stupid than unvarnished unadulterated Christianity?



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTIE

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. J. HEWER.—Thanks for cuttings.  
W. J. MILES (Sydney).—Thanks for good wishes. We are making progress, but things will not be hurried.  
W. A. ROGERSON (Vancouver).—Change of address noted. We read your letter with great pleasure. It took us back many years. Best wishes.

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

Arrangements for the Whit-Sunday Annual Conference are now complete, and the announcement of the Public Demonstration will be made next week. We hope that the Branches which intend being represented will see that their delegates' credentials are in order; also that those requiring hotel accommodation will write the General Secretary as early as possible. Nothing has yet been fixed for the Whit-Monday, but if enough provincial friends are staying over the Monday an excursion to some place of interest might be arranged. We hope to see a good muster of Freethinkers present from all parts of the country.

Apropos of last week's "Views and Opinions, with our comments on the statements of the Rev. Dick Sheppard concerning the clergy and war, the *News-Chronicle* for April 30 publishes the following figures concerning the number of the clergy who oppose war, as based on the teachings of Jesus. Church of England, out of nearly twenty thousand, 100; Methodists, out of 3,000, 691; Congregational, out of 2,000, 350; Baptist, out of 2,000, 200. What a commentary on Mr. Sheppard's statement that the clergy are with him in his campaign! And even at that, and judging from experience, one may expect fifty per cent of these parsons to "rat" when the critical moment comes. And what a comment on the value of the teachings of Jesus! Either he has attracted to him men who will not play straight, or he has given to the world a set of teachings, of the meaning of which no one can be certain.

For ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain the parson is very peculiar. We apologize to the shade of Bret Harte, for taking liberties with his famous lines, but they fit the case. West Ham Council recently received a letter signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Manchester and the Rev. Scott Lidgett, stating that there was being arranged a celebration of the State injunction issued in 1538, that a copy of the English Bible should be placed in every parish church, and asking the Education Committee to arrange in connexion with the religious instruction in the schools, for teaching to be given dealing with: (1) The Bible, What

it is. (2) The Bible—How England came by it. (3) The Bible—its influence on England. (4) What the Bible should mean to the scholars of the present day. The sub-committee recommended that the suggestion be accepted. But after a discussion by the general committee, in camera, the chairman announced that the recommendation had been deleted from the report. We hope that other Education Committees will have the courage and the sense of fairness to act in a similar manner.

The Bishop of Leicester has a keen eye for the future, and for the collecting plate. Recently he wrote in the Diocesan leaflet, "it was God's will that we should give regularly and proportionately (to the Church). Would that parents gave their children weekly pocket money rather than odd pence or halfpennies, and taught them to give their money to God." We have read of many mean things, but not many quite so contemptible as this. A churchman who can stoop to the suggestion that children should be trained to give their halfpence to God, via the parson, who is never able to show that money reaches its alleged destination, gets about as low as one can get. The Bishop says, "it needs to be widely affirmed that money may be a spiritual force." We imagine that this is already widely recognized; in fact it is often the most "spiritual" force that is operative in the Church.

We have often said that it is the ultra-conservative elements in society which create revolutions, the "revolutionists" only carry them out. The stupidity of those who worship what is often violent opposition to what might be or what ought to be, counting every means legitimate that will prevent new ideas coming to birth, or even to find expression, make revolution by force inevitable. We have had many illustrations of this lately, and the most recent is connected with the refusal to let the Albert Hall to the Communists for a public meeting. The Albert Hall is under the control of a Corporation which exists by Royal Charter. It is let for all sorts of half-crazy religious meetings, and Fascists' meetings. (During the last one the police closed certain streets so that the meeting should not be disturbed, and broke up a quite peaceable anti-Fascist meeting that was being held half-a-mile away). But when the Communists apply for the use of the hall they are refused, although it is quite obvious that the only people who could disturb that meeting is the party to which the hall was let previously, and which would, if it had the power, rule Britain as Hitler rules Germany.

Now we do not say that the Corporation is not within its rights in refusing to let the hall to anyone, but we think this is a matter that might well be raised in the House of Commons. Neither are we championing the opinions for which the Communist Party stands. We are concerned only with the maintenance of freedom of thought and speech, and are protesting against attempts by individuals, by Societies and by semi-public bodies to prevent freedom of propaganda. Legally, the Communist has the same right to advocate his views of social reorganization as any other person. It is quite legal in this country—at present—publicly to advocate any change whatever in the Government or constitution, from the Crown downwards; and any public body which exercises its powers to prevent this right being exercised, by as much force as it is able to wield, is saying, in so many words, that it will use force when it can and will yield only to force. If we had a hall at our disposal we would place it at the disposal of any party, religious or political, that was refused the right of free-speech. And we hope that the well-known men and women who have raised a protest against the action of the Albert Hall Corporation, will induce some of the proprietors of public halls to act in the manner indicated.

Many happy returns to our old friend, Arthur B. Moss, who achieved the eighty-first anniversary of his birthday on May 8, and whose interest in the "best of all causes" is as keen as when he first began to fight on its behalf about sixty years ago.



From the *Observer* for April 26 (100 years ago).

**THE SABBATH.** In the House of Commons, on Thursday, Sir Andrew Agnew moved for leave to bring in a Bill for the better observance of the Sabbath.

Mr. Roebuck said he intended, if the Bill reached a Committee, to put the purity of the honourable Baronet's morality to the test by proposing certain amendments. He would move clauses laying a penalty of £20 on those who rode in their carriages on Sundays; a penalty of £10 on whosoever frequented a club-house on Sundays; also that any clergyman going to his church in a carriage should be fined £100, and any Bishop going in a carriage on Sundays £200; and also that Hyde Park should be closed on Sundays; and he would do everything in his power to make the streets a perfect solitude.

In a division, the numbers were: Ayes 200, Noes 82, being a majority of 118 in favour of the motion for leave to bring in the Bill.

Mr. G. Whitehead began his outdoor campaign with a visit to Birkenhead last week. On Saturday, May 9, he will be at Wigan Market at 7 p.m., also on Sunday, at the same time. From Monday until Friday the meetings will begin at 7.30 p.m. Mr. Whitehead will cover as much of the country as possible until the end of September, and the Executive of the N.S.S. will be responsible for the expenses. Branches will co-operate, and it is hoped that, wherever possible, unattached Freethinkers will make a point of giving support.

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. begins open-air operations to-day, May 10, at the usual pitch at the corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E. Mr. L. Ebury will be the speaker at 7 p.m., and meetings will be held at the same time throughout the season. West Ham has always been an active Branch, and with the large number of Freethinkers in the area another successful season should be added to the list.

## Churchianity versus Christianity

ALL of us who have engaged in religious controversy know how very anxious the "genuine" Christian is that we should make a distinction between what he calls real or true Christianity, and the Christianity of the churches. True Christianity is entirely that of Jesus. It is not even diluted by Paul. Pauline Christianity is anathema to the Jesuine Christian. Paul made it a theology while all we get from Jesus shines with the light of pure love, and is so easy to understand that a babe even can appreciate it. In fact, one must have the fresh innocence of childhood really to esteem the full beauty of the Christianity of Jesus.

The people who take this line are generally most scornful of the religion of the Churches, with their priests, rites and ceremonies. They will tell us that there could be no Atheists if only these unfortunate people realized to the utmost how at one with them in most of their idealism was Jesus. In fact, the only really true Freethinker the world has ever seen was Jesus of Nazareth. The various Agnostics, reverent Rationalists, and other people who talk like this never, of course, say Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus; they always say Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed when anyone protests he or she is as great an unbeliever as I am, but that he stands amazed at the beauty and truth of real Christianity, I know for a fact he is going to add of the religion of Jesus of Nazareth.

I remember some years before the war one of the regular lecturers at South Place, in London, did not turn up, and a member of the audience volunteered to give a discourse. Of course, he was an "unbeliever," but I have never heard a more enthusiastic eulogy of Jesus (of Nazareth) ever delivered even from the pulpit. All the virtues in the dictionary were given

to Jesus; and, in addition, we were told that he was a thorough Freethinker. Did he not oppose the priests?

The fact that Jesus believed not merely in the most childish conception of God one can imagine—would not God send him a legion of angels if wanted?—but also in devils and demons and myths and miracles was really beside the point. He was a Freethinker in spite of these things.

It is when one asks the average "reverent" unbeliever to tell us what exactly is the religion of Jesus, true Christianity, that the fun really begins. I generally commence with this question and the answer is almost always the same. The unanimity on this point is astonishing. The religion of Jesus, undiluted by Pauline theology or Churchianity, is "Love thy neighbour as thyself." When I point out—as I invariably do—that this is pure Judaism and not Christianity, or that it is "pinched" from Judaism, there is a sad, disconcerting pause. The reverent unbeliever gathers up his wits. Even if it is Judaism, it was Jesus who gave it to the world, unfettered by the narrow sectarianism of the Jews. When I point out that no one loved his neighbour less than Jesus—whatever he said—that he actually told his hearers "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, . . . he cannot be my disciple, etc.," and that, in actual fact he treated his own mother and (reputed) father with contempt, that he obviously loathed the Pharisees, there is then another painful pause. Again the reverent unbeliever—particularly if he belongs to the band who are so earnest about roping Jesus into the ranks of Freethinkers—gathers up his wits. Of course, when Jesus uses the word *hate*, he never meant it. He means "love less"—though why this should make Jesus a Freethinker is never quite explained. If Bradlaugh or Foote—or even your humble servant—advised people to hate their parents so as to become Atheists, the word *hate* here would mean *hate*. When Jesus uses the word it has almost the opposite meaning. It could even actually mean love. Why not?

When I point out the famous passages in Lecky, where he describes how some Christians, at least, took the word literally, really did hate their parents, left them and their wives and children to follow Jesus—well, this only proves how everybody seems to have misunderstood the beautiful teaching and marvellous idealism of Jesus. Did not Jesus say with the most sublime love the world has ever seen, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."?

I think I have had this text thrown at me more than most. But I always have some curiosity in these matters; and though it was in the Authorized Version, I found that it actually was not in the *Codex Vaticanus*, the famous manuscript which is the treasured possession of the Vatican, and which shares with the *Codex Sinaiticus* the honour of being the oldest MS. copy of the Gospels known. It is added by a later scribe, I think, to the Sinaiticus. It is omitted in all the manuscript copies of the Old Latin Version—a very significant fact. For the Old Latin was certainly translated at a very early date from the Greek. If this saying had been in the early copies of the Greek gospels, it would surely have been translated. It is inconceivable that the translators could possibly have missed out such marvellous proof of the love of Jesus for his enemies. Why was it omitted? The Revised Version actually relegates it to the margin, and points out that "some ancient authorities omit it. But do these facts matter one iota to the reverent defender of Jesus? Not in the least! To forgive in this way his enemies—even if they did not know what they were doing—was so typical of Jesus that



even if he had not said it, it is quite in order to invent it—as Voltaire said of God.

Then take that well-known story of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery. There is no need to contest the claim of the late Frank Harris that it is one of the greatest of all short stories—or of those who, like myself, see a great deal of dubious morality in the story. The whole incident is admitted even by Christians sadly to lack authenticity. The Revised Version says "Most ancient authorities omit John vii. 53 to viii. 11. Those which contain it vary much from each other." This is delightful, and shows how God's Holy Word can be relied upon. But, in controversy with Christians and reverent Rationalists and Agnostics, one is never told this. The Authorized Version gives the story; it redounds, as it is thought, to the credit of Jesus, and must therefore, be defended tooth and nail.

Whoever inserted both these incidents, that is the "Father, forgive them, etc.," and the story of the woman taken in adultery, must have been very dissatisfied with the Christianity of Jesus as it then stood. Supposing I say that it was the Church—or a Church—which deliberately forged the stories. Or supposing I claim then that here the Christianity of the Church was something better than the Christianity of Jesus, and that the forgeries helped to improve the character of Jesus as it stood then in the gospels.

For notice one fact. The passage in which Jesus says one must hate one's parents to become his disciple is in *all* the ancient manuscripts. They all use the word hate as meaning hate. The Revised Version has no note of any kind on the verses. Nobody seems to have omitted them. They are therefore part and parcel of true Christianity; and—as I have often claimed—it was Churchianity which, by forging stories to give Jesus a better character, actually civilized true Christianity.

Most of the stories, in fact, associated with Jesus which modern defenders hate like poison, such as Jesus cursing a fig-tree, are found in *all* the MSS. The Revised Version gives that other famous passage in John, as "All that came before me are thieves and robbers." The Authorized Version says, "All that ever came, etc." But the Revised Version makes no remark on the passage—though one or two MS. authorities have omitted it—which proves its undoubted "authenticity." Yet if there is one saying of Jesus which is loathed by the average defender of Jesus, it is this.

The very fact that every effort is made to minimize the plain sense of many of the sayings of Jesus is proof, surely, that those who believe in him as the founder of true Christianity, are not quite so sure of their case. If Jesus did not mean exactly what he said, who is to say what he did mean? The Church? Well, is not that *my* case? If the Church, in the ultimate, is the umpire; if the Church says the word hate, in the mouth of Jesus, never means hate; or that when he said all who came before him were thieves and robbers, he never meant everybody, does not that prove that actually it is Churchianity that is endeavouring to establish itself as true Christianity? In other words, the reverent defender of Jesus has to go to the Church after all for his genuine Christianity; and he actually does throw overboard the teachings of Jesus. And if any Freethinker has to face a pious defender who insists that the religion of Jesus is so absurdly simple that almost a babe in arms can understand it, let him try to explain some of the long speeches in John. However, as space is short, I shall defer a few observations on that much-discussed gospel, for another time.

H. CUTNER.

## Some Difficulties in Jeans' Theory

JUDGING from his recent utterances Jeans is becoming less enthusiastic about indeterminacy and more eager to further the conception of mind as the sustainer of existence. The abandonment of indeterminacy would render his system rather less implausible, since he has written in *The Mysterious Universe*, that "the self-consistency of this mind is indicated by the uniformity of nature." It will hardly do to tell us that after all nature is not uniform but indeterminate. After reading his amplification in *The New Background of Science*, one is left with the impression that indeterminacy may indicate no little amount of confusion existing in the mind of the creator, who is represented as a great architect.

With the old physics, says Jeans, "Our minds were left with no more initiative than a sensitized cinematograph film. They could only register what was impressed on them." (Presidential Address, 1934). Yet, as he himself notes, even on a photographic plate the actual position of an electron or a star cannot be accurately registered because of the coarse grain of the plate. This, then, breaks his own analogy by the admission that the sensitized surface is not wholly passive. Why, then, should we expect mind, on a vastly more complex scale, to remain passive? A recognition of its activity in framing concepts does not invalidate naturalism.

Jeans gives little indication that he has considered the logical difficulties of his theism. Natural laws, we are given to understand, were imposed on the universe by the Great Architect. Now if this architect chose the laws for no reason at all, then the sequence of law is broken. Furthermore, we should question the wisdom of a deity who was not actuated by any motive, but merely imposed laws in a careless, haphazard way when the happiness of his creatures was at stake. If, on the other hand, he chose the laws deliberately, then from his own nature we should expect the best possible universe, since he was not limited in either power or goodness, and here the facts of cruelty and meaningless waste in nature strongly condemn him. Again, because he selected from alternatives, we have thereby posited the existence of laws for God to choose from, and he then appears neither omnipotent nor First Cause, and, since the laws already existed for him to pick from, he could not have created them. Again, if he chose good when he could have chosen the bad, the latter must have existed in his mind as a course of action, but if he was all-good how could he generate or entertain ideas of evil?

If then, the laws existed before him we have destroyed God's priority. If they existed subsequent to him then he could not have had them to choose from, and so his choice is devoid of moral judgment. If they arose simultaneously, then he was not the only power at work, and we have destroyed his omnipotence and his priority.

Moreover, who or what determined the difference between the right and wrong laws? If God arbitrarily made the difference between them, then previously to his fiat, right or wrong, good and bad, did not exist, and so he could not have chosen right from wrong, for there was no distinction. If, however, out of his goodness he chose right and eschewed wrong, then right and wrong, good and bad, had previously some meaning, independent of God, whom they precede and endure. They are therefore logically anterior to him, and we have divorced theism from morality.



If it is as Jeans says, that we are best able to express the fundamental structure in the shape of mathematical formula, does it necessarily follow that therefore "creation must have been an act of thought"? Because we can best express it in thought—our thought—does it follow that Thought—a deity's thought—must have preceded it? If Materialism is right, and the universe is self-subsistent, and behaves in accordance with its existential properties, how can that necessarily prevent our ever getting a working conception of that behaviour? These are questions Jeans does not attack. Nor, like Eddington, does he seem to take much heed of what other departments of science have to report on the nature of mind.

The more cautious religionists have not shared the eagerness of many of their brethren in embracing the philosophy of Jeans. Inge has written *God and the Astronomers*, and is not fascinated by what he calls these "not altogether happy excursions into metaphysics"—"with which," adds Prof. G. B. Brown (*Science Progress*), "scientists in general will be in hearty agreement."

G. H. TAYLOR.

### The Rebellicus Staymaker

I have just had loaned to me a very neat little volume, containing a few of Thomas Paine's writings. This volume is bound in calf, size 5 in. by 3 in., and is evidently a collection of writings published at different dates by Richard Carlile. There is, first, *The Age of Reason*, being "an investigation of True and Fabulous Theology," by Thomas Paine, Part I., printed and published by R. Carlile, at 84 Fleet Street, in 1825, then there is Part II., published at 62 Fleet Street, in 1826, at the end of which there is, "A letter; being an answer to a friend, on the publication of the *Age of Reason*"; then "An examination of the passages in the New Testament quoted from the Old, and called Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, to which is prefixed an Essay on Dreams, applying the same to the Account of Dreams in the New Testament, by Thomas Paine," published by R. Carlile from 55 Fleet Street, in the year 1822; then follows a pamphlet entitled *On the Origin of Free Masonry*, by Thomas Paine, also published from 55 Fleet Street in 1822. Then there is "A letter to the Hon. T. Erskine on the prosecution of Thomas Williams for publishing *The Age of Reason* Part II., issued from 55 Fleet Street, in 1822, also "A Discourse delivered to the Society of Theophilanthropists at Paris by Thomas Paine," bearing the same date; and, finally "A Letter to Camille Jordan of the Council of Five Hundred, occasioned by his Report on The Priests, The Worship, and The Bells," by Thomas Paine, published by R. Carlile in 1822.

Many of your readers may not have read or heard of some of the above writings of Paine, and to such the following extracts will no doubt prove interesting. Dealing with Freemasonry, Paine says: "In 1730 Samuel Pritchard, member of a constituted lodge of England, published a treatise entitled *Masonry Dissected*, and in the introduction says, "The original institution of Masonry consisted in the foundation of the liberal arts and sciences, but more especially on Geometry, for at the building of the Tower of Babel, the art of mystery of Masonry was first introduced, and from thence handed down by Euclid, a worthy and excellent mathematician of the Egyptians; and he communicated it to Hiram, the Master Mason concerned in building Solomon's temple in Jerusalem." Upon this Paine says: "Besides the absurdity of deriving Masonry from the building of Babel, where, according to the story, the confusion of languages prevented builders understanding each other, and consequently communicating any knowledge they had, there is a glaring contradiction in point of chronology in the account he gives. Solomon's temple was

built and dedicated 1004 years before the Christian era; and Euclid, as may be seen in the tables of chronology, lived 277 years before the same era. It was, therefore, impossible that Euclid could communicate anything to Hiram, since Euclid did not live till 700 years after the time of Hiram." "In 1783," continues Paine, "Captain George Smith, Inspector of the Royal Artillery Academy at Woolwich, in England, and Provincial Grand Master of Masonry for the County of Kent, published a treatise entitled *The Use and Abuses of Freemasonry*, and in this treatise Smith states: "Egypt, from whence we derive many of our mysteries, hath always borne a distinguished rank in history, and was once celebrated above all others for its antiquities, learning, opulence, and fertility. In their system, their principal hero-gods, Osiris and Isis, theologically represented the Supreme Being and universal nature, and, physically, the two great celestial luminaries, the sun and the moon, by whose influence all nature was actuated. The experienced brethren of the Society" (says Smith in a note to this passage), "are well-informed what affinity these symbols bear to Masonry, and why they are used in all Masonic Lodges."

In the letter to Mr. Erskine, on the prosecution of Thomas Williams for publishing *The Age of Reason*, Paine says: "A book called the Bible has been voted by men, and decreed by human laws to be the Word of God; and the disbelief is called blasphemy. But if the Bible be not the Word of God, it is the laws and the execution of them that is blasphemy, and not the disbelief. My own opinion is decidedly, that the evidence does not warrant the belief, and that we sin in forcing that belief upon ourselves and upon others. In saying this, I have no other object in view than truth. But that I may not be accused of resting upon bare assertion with respect to the equivocal state of the Bible, I will produce an example, and I will not pick and cull the Bible for the purpose. I will go fairly to the case: I will take the two first chapters of Genesis as they stand, and show from thence the truth of what I say, that is, that the evidence does not warrant the belief that the Bible is the Word of God." Then he proceeds to quote the two chapters in full, and states: "Those two chapters, instead of containing, as has been believed, one continued account of the creation written by Moses, contain two different and contradictory stories of a creation, made by two different persons, and written in two different styles of expression. The first story begins at the first verse of the first chapter, and ends at the end of the third verse of the second chapter . . . for the adverbial conjunction THUS, with which the second chapter begins, connects itself to the last verse of the first chapter, and those three verses belong to, and make the conclusion of the first story. . . . From the first verse of the first chapter to the end of the third verse of the second chapter, which makes the whole of the first story, the word god is used without any epithet or additional word conjoined with it, and this style of expression is invariably used throughout the whole of this story, and is repeated no less than thirty-five times. But immediately from the beginning of the fourth verse of the second chapter, where the second story begins, the style of expression is always the LORD GOD. The first story contains thirty-four verses, and repeats the single word God thirty-five times. The second story contains twenty-two verses, and repeats the compound word LORD-GOD eleven times." Then Paine points out the contradiction between the 27th and 28th verses in the first chapter, wherein God is stated to have created man, both male and female, and verse 5 of the second chapter, where it is said there was not a man to till the ground; "and then to proceed in the seventh verse to give another account of the making a man for the first time, and afterwards of the making a woman out of his rib."

In the letter to Camille Jordan, on the question of worship, Paine says: "As everything in your report, relating to what you call worship, connects itself with the books called the Scriptures, I begin with a quotation therefrom. It may serve to give us some idea of the fanciful origin and fabrication of those books. Chronicles, Chap. xxxiv., ver. 14, 'Hilkiah, the priest, found the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. And Hilkiah, the priest, said to Shaphan, the scribe, I



have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord, and Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan, the scribe, told the King (Josiah) saying, Hilkiah, the priest, hath given me a book.' This pretended finding was about a thousand years after the time that Moses is said to have lived. Before this pretended finding there was no such thing practised or known in the world as that which is called the law of Moses. This being the case, there is every apparent evidence, that the books called the books of Moses are forgeries contrived between a priest and a limb of the law, Hilkiah, and Shaphan, the scribe, a thousand years after Moses is said to have been dead."

I should add that in the front of this neat little volume of some of Paine's works there is a splendid engraving of Paine by G. F. Phillips, from a painting by Romney.

H. R. CLIFTON.

### Murder as an Amusement

In tracing the history of man's amusements, we can discover no more popular one than that of murder. To think of murder as a repulsive thing is evidence of a diseased imagination; of a mind distorted and made sickly by civilization. We will not venture to assert that killing with a view to eating can be justified in the light of present-day morality, but a life spent without any indulgence in this innocent pastime is certainly a life partly wasted. We have moralists of so strict a nature as to declare that war is a great evil and should, in the best interests of humanity, be entirely abolished, but surely there can be little harm in a game that has helped to keep humanity down the ages from mischief of a really serious kind.

I think there can be no clearer indication of a providence towards man than those golden chances given him from time to time, of leaving the cares of the world to unbend his mind over this serene and satisfying amusement. To murder for pleasure, not for gain, for nothing but pure love of the sport. Away with those who would make of it a means for ignoble ends.

I am not one of those who believe in having murder reduced to a science. I would even welcome the ancient method of disposal—a good blow soundly applied. None of your sneaking and sjivelling as if it were something to blush for. In this respect at least I think the ancients superior to the moderns. Civilization, whatever its advantages, has robbed man of that simplicity and directness, and has made him a hypocrite ashamed even to own his love of murdering.

With what delight do we not turn to the pages of Homer, where we find murder displayed in all its innocence and charm? Where heroes guilelessly exchange javelin and huge stones, and thus playfully bowl one another over? And when we cease to be satisfied with those toying methods we can always fall back on the angels of Milton where they "Pluck the seated hills," and indulge their appetites for a time with this humane sport.

Of course murder has many virtues. It has already been shown by De Quincey as one of the fine arts. It is the hen that lays the golden egg for editors. Addison somewhere relates of one that he expanded and contracted alternately with war and peace. It supplies numberless readers with matter of the most delightful interest. It provides work to vast hordes of state officials. It has given to history a living interest, and has created that sea of blood upon which float the fame and glory of many a national hero. It has these merits and many more; but I like best to think of murder in its purest light—an amusement. As for those who consider this as being too frivolous, I would remind them of the saying: "A little nonsense now and then, etc."

THOMAS K. SCOTT.

Cheerfulness is like money well expended in charity—the more we dispense of it, the greater our possessions.

Victor Hugo.

### Obituary

G. F. H. McCLUSKEY

ONE by one the Old Guard passes! One more link between the present generation of Freethinkers and the days of Bradlaugh is broken by the death of George Frederick Hugh McCluskey. Mr. McCluskey was connected with the old Plymouth Branch of the National Secular Society as far back as the 'eighties, in the work of which he took a very active part. Since then he has retained his connexion with the movement, although not so prominently of late years. He continued to act as Trustee for the National Secular Society until his death, and he was always ready to do what he could to help the movement along, although much of his time was taken up in hospital work, and other local efforts. He was a regular visitor to Dartmoor Prison, where he gave many readings, followed by discussions, to the inmates. A very keen Dickensian, with a business that made many demands on his time, he led a full life to the end.

My last letter from him reached me while I was in hospital. It was full of his usual cheerful talk, mildly chaffing me for having broken my excellent record by being ill. Then, soon after I had returned home, I heard of his being very ill with a deep-seated abscess. An operation became necessary, and although this was quite successful he was unable to stand the strain, and the end came on April 29.

I have known Mr. McCluskey for well over forty years. I met him on my first lecturing visit to Plymouth, and on subsequent visits I have always had the warmest of welcomes from his wife and himself. We could "yarn" about the old days of the movement, and discuss its present prospects, often till the early hours of the morning. He had a generous nature, and a retentive memory for what he had read. In those years I learned to appreciate his character and to value his friendship. There was a breadth and an intellectual generosity that was well calculated to make him welcome where a man holding his opinions, but of a different temperament, would have encountered cold looks. I shall value the memory of him dead, as I valued his friendship when he was living. I realize that to lose these old friends, one after the other, is the price I am paying for living on. For whatever new friends one makes in one's later years they can never quite fill the niches left vacant by those who have gone. One is left standing like a lonely oak in the midst of a treeless common.

Had it been possible, I would have gone to Plymouth to say a few last words over the body of a dear friend. But I am under doctor's orders, and my travelling and speaking were forbidden. However, Mr. Rosetti attended and gave, judging from the reports to hand, a fine address at the Efford Crematorium. The Crematorium chapel was crowded with friends, relatives, and representatives of the various movements and public bodies with which he had been associated. I must, from a distance, pay this deserved tribute to a dead friend.—C.C.

MRS. S. O. WILLIAMSON

THE remains of Mrs. S. O. Williamson, wife of Mr. E. Williamson, one time Secretary of the South London Branch N.S.S., were interred at Streatham Park Cemetery, on Friday, May 1. After suffering for some time from anaemia, pneumonia set in and death took place in her 69th year. Mrs. Williamson was a Freethinker of many years standing, and in the days when her husband was Secretary of the South London Branch they both regularly attended the meetings in Brockwell Park and other places. In the presence of a number of relatives and friends Mr. G. Bedborough conducted a Secular Service at the graveside, and paid a warm tribute to her character and Freethought principles.

MR. EDWARD GEE

WE regret to report the death of Mr. Edward Gee, and feel that the cause of Secularism has lost a very earnest and popular propagandist, and we, the members of the West Ham Branch N.S.S., a very dear friend.



## Correspondence

AS OTHERS SEE US  
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Our thoughts must be determined, or messed-up would perhaps be more appropriate, by the stuff we dabble in for our daily bread.

My calling may have ruined my vision, for I cannot see the alleged superiority of tone and attitude in "Medicus," detected by "Athoso Zenoo."

To me, there is a touching humility in "Medicus," or in what he wrote, which might becomingly be adopted by Freethinkers in place of that too-exasperating arrogance so common with them.

"Medicus" tells us how this humility was borne in upon his understanding by upstart amateurism criticizing professionalism. When you have acquired parchments certifying to your knowledge and skill in a given vocation, and some untrained person comes along and tells you that you know nothing about it, or that what you know is useless or harmful, one cannot altogether disguise a feeling of pity for the bare impudence showing through the rags of ignorance. If this feeling of pity is called superiority, what is that to be called which drew it forth?

"Medicus" proceeded to draw a parallel. If a Freethinker's views about my profession excite my pity, sadden me by their ineptitude; is there any wonder that a parson passes by with silent contempt the strictures of those Freethinkers who heed not the first commandment of the Book of York: "Hear all and say nowt"? We all know how the parson felt about the bungling amateurism of "Tess," when she baptized her baby to save it from hell-fire.

It is the Freethinker who is showing superiority in prating about things he has not studied from the inside.

It is no use falling back on that old wise-crack: "the looker-on sees most of the game." He does if he has been through the game: not without.

"Medicus" has got us in a pair of pincers. If we have studied medicine from the inside, we shall believe. If we have studied theology from the inside we shall believe. If we take pride in being Freethinkers we must take pride in ignorance on the *outside*.

So it looks as though we must accept authority and pray heaven to keep our confusion to a minimum by cutting out differences amongst the authorities.

Freethinkers may believe the world will be better when parsons are extinct; and no doubt it would be better if there were no use for the other variety of "medicine-man," but if all the humbugs vanish, what are Freethinkers going to do? Only Othello's scimitar left for them!

We must get together—physicians, parsons and Freethinkers—and agree upon a way to keep the old game going. No quarrelling, friends. Let's be "Rationalists"!

H. IRVING.

[We have received a number of letters which all practically traverse well-covered ground, but we have one also from Mr. Don Fisher who began this correspondence, which will appear next week. After that the matter must be closed for the present.—C.C.]

## Society News

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.

At the Annual General Meeting, held on April 19, of the Glasgow Branch, the following members were elected to office: Hon. President, E. Hale; President, Wm. Hamilton; Vice-Presidents, Miss Hale and T. L. Smith; Secretary, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield; Treasurer, W. S. McNeil; Auditors, Messrs. Gough and Wright; Members of Executive, Messrs. Copland, Organ, Shearer, Fletcher;

and Mr. T. Gray was re-elected for the sixth year as Librarian.

The Secretary reported a good year's work, the social side having been very successful from every point; and asked for greater effort in the ensuing year for our propaganda.

## 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

#### INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.1): 11.0, Sir George Paish—"The World Situation: the Way Out."

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, May 11, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, May 13, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. P. Corrigan. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, May 12, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, May 15, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Wood and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. E. Saphin. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON (Grand Corner): 7.0, Friday, May 13, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLACKBURN MARKET: 7.30, Sunday, May 10, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, May 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Wigan Market): 7.0, Saturday and Sunday evenings, May 9 and 10. Monday until Friday following at 7.30, Mr. George Whitehead.

CHEAPSIDE (nr. Padilham): 7.30, Friday, May 8, Mr. J. Clayton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, May 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HIGHAM: 7.30, Monday, May 11, Mr. J. Clayton.

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davidson Street): 7.0, Tuesday, May 12, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Market): 7.30, Mr. Sissons (Bolton)—A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

WHEATLEY LANE: 7.30, Tuesday, May 12, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

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

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

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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.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations; it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

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Name .....

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