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Views and Opinions

Peace and the League

It is on the cards that Mussolini may have done the cause of peace a signal favour. Not consciously, or of set purpose, but because he has so brazenly carried through a supreme example of national gangsterism, in the pursuit of which no consideration of justice or decency has been allowed to play a part. Of course, national brigandage is nothing new in the history of the world, and only in British school-books does this country stand free from the charge. But with us and other countries there has been at least a formal acknowledgment of serving some higher purpose than that of getting a good "rake-off." We have taken land—"shouldered our burden," is the usual phrase—in the interests of civilization, to give the heathen Christianity, for the protection of our frontiers (these frontiers having previously been taken for the reasons aforesaid), or to relieve the native people from a cruel and barbarous Government. But Mussolini has cast aside all pretence. Even the plea that Italy was forced to take action because of the conduct of Abyssinia to Wal-Wal is now discarded by the avowal that Italy has reached the goal towards which it has been striving for fourteen years, and that this is the first phase of the building-up of a new Roman Empire. To this end every restraint has been cast aside. Non-combatants, children, women, hospitals, have been bombed and drenched with poison gas, and whole populations threatened with extermination if resistance did not cease. The world has been shown what kind of war will be waged by Fascist culture, and it has set the pattern for future wars.

In this, Mussolini has been actually aided by the one body that should and could have stayed his hand. Faced with preparations for war, the League of Nations was substantially passive. Faced with war in being, the League, under the influence of Britain and France, remained as passive as circumstances permitted. France in the person of Laval, entered

into private understandings with Italy to delay action as far as could be managed. Britain and France, with hands tied by treaties that had actually promised to Italy part of Abyssinia, did what they could to prevent the open invasion of Abyssinia. It is certain that if France had been told plainly that it must stick to the letter and the spirit of the Covenant, and if it had been faced with the withdrawal of co-operation by both Britain and Russia in case of a refusal, the invasion would have been stopped at the outset. The smaller nations would have co-operated, if only under the influence of self-preservation—for with Germany and Italy dominating Europe none of them can be safe. And no sensible man could have been deceived by the characteristically Baldwinian dishonesty that Britain was prepared to take part in "collective action." It was obvious that "collective" here stood for *unanimous* action, and that the holding back of any nation could be taken as an excuse for quiescence. It was not *unanimous* but *decisive* action that was required. Even when sanctions were applied, it was done slowly and ineffectively, so that Mussolini should not be annoyed too greatly or hampered too seriously. It was said that Mussolini was bluffing. If so the bluff should have been called. But only those grossly ignorant of the man with whom they were dealing could have believed this. Genuine megalomaniacs do not bluff; it is part of their condition that they shall not. The bluff was on the side of Britain and France; and the bluff was directed, not against Italy, but against the British and French people. It was they who were bluffed into believing that their leaders meant something, when they meant nothing at all.

* * *

Reform the League

But the pitiful failure of the League of Nations does not prove the uselessness of such a body, it serves only to demonstrate its absolute necessity, if civilization is not to go down before an onslaught of Fascist gangsterism. But there must be a real League of Peoples, and not a collection of representatives of the old gangs, each playing a double game, making private arrangements, framing secret treaties, and each striving to steal a march on each other. Such a League must:—

(1) Be formed by a representative from every State and all should meet on equal terms. "Sanctions" should be devised against those who refuse to co-operate, just as sanctions operate against those in any community who decline to be regulated by agreed laws.

(2) Disputes between nations should be settled on precisely the same basis as civilized States now settle disputes between individuals. "National honour" must be raised to the level of individual honour, and lying, trickery, double dealing and the threat of force by a nation

should be placed upon the same level as these things stand among decent-minded individuals.

(3) The tribunal which decides disputes between nations should have at its disposal sufficient force to enforce its decision, exactly as the law of a country gives the judiciary, force to implement its judgments. There need then be no greater personal interest in deciding disputes than there is in deciding disputes in our own courts, and no more disgrace in accepting such decisions than there is in accepting a decision of the High Courts in this country.

(4) With such a court in existence national armies, always an invitation to war, would be unnecessary. The existence of a national army is, from the point of view of sane internationalism, an invitation to lawlessness; for, in relation to other nations, a national army is as much a lawless body as a highwayman or a burglar is a lawless person in relation to the rest of the community.

(5) Nations must go to this international body to give as well as to take. All existing treaties should be disclosed for revision or cancellation. There should be an end to these private arrangements between "statesmen," which are not known even to the people on whose behalf these statesmen profess to be acting. With the abolition of large private national armies, and that portion of the original plan of the League of Nations—"open treaties openly arrived at," in operation, one great cause of national hatred and jealousy would disappear. Apart from private exploitation, the only reason for one nation wishing to monopolize an undue share of the earth's surface, is the wish to be safe in wartime. The conditions of the use of the earth by all nations would be laid down by an international court. In this, again, we should only be following the rule that applies within the boundaries of a civilized State. There is not a civilized country in the world where individuals are allowed to use land without regard to the well-being of the rest of the community. However inadequate, the ownership of land is controlled by laws concerning taxation, usage, etc., and in the last resort is subject to compulsory purchase confiscation. We must lift our statesmen to the intellectual and ethical level of ordinary individuals.

(6) If the League is to function usefully the *status quo* of all the nations represented must be taken as open to modification. The existing relations and standings of nation are an obvious cause of war, and a League that stands for the maintenance of the *status quo* dooms itself to futility. Some nations pay so heavily for making war probable that they may well pay a little in the hopes of making war very improbable.

* * *

The Risks of Peace

I know it is said that if nations agree to disband their armies and rely for protection and just dealing, upon the decisions of a non-national court with power to enforce its decisions, we shall be running terrible risks. Well, what are we doing now? Could any risks be greater than those we are now running? Those who warn us of the risks we run if the present situation is altered, are also those who tell us that the next war will outdo all previous wars in its ruthlessness, its cost in money and life, and will probably destroy such civilization as exists. If these are the risks we run by the continuation of existing conditions, could we run a greater one by experimenting

in another direction? The cost of maintaining an international force of the kind described is another objection. This from a country which is spending more in maintaining its own forces than an effective international force would probably cost. The existing method is not merely costly, it is demonstrably ineffective.

I am not arguing against the use of force in certain eventualities. There are circumstances in which the application of force is inevitable. Nor do I see that those who argue against this are loth to avail themselves of the protection of force wielded in their interest by others. There is really no difference in essence between being protected in one's rights by a policeman, behind whom is a stronger force if required, and protecting oneself. I am arguing mainly that the force that is in existence to preserve order and to secure justice, shall be in the hands, or under the control, of a power that shall be as impartial in its activities as is an ideal judge in an ideal court.

At present outside the boundaries of individual nations we have hardly anything but sheer anarchy; a state of affairs in which the same person is plaintiff, judge and jury, and prates of truth while indulging in lying propaganda, and of justice while deciding his own case and determining what damages shall be awarded him. We have a condition of things in which any adventurer, or any body of adventurers who achieves control of a nation's armed forces (a body in which individual thinking is by discipline reduced to a minimum), may plunge a nation, and perhaps the world, into disaster.

The fault of the existing League of Nations is that it is neither judicial in its character nor impartial in its decisions. Before a case is tried, the judges are instructed from the outside as to what decision they are to come to. The judges are forsworn before they take their seats, nay, their appointment depends upon their being forsworn; and their falseness as judges is counted to their honour as "patriots." In a spasm of forgetfulness we erected a monument near Trafalgar Square, bearing the inscription "Patriotism is not enough." Any future League of Nations should have that inscription engraved over its meeting-place, and should read it with complete honesty of interpretation.

So the choice between taking the road that leads to civilization or that which takes us back to barbarism, is before us; and for this we may have to thank Mussolini. He has shown us what barbarism means when it is wielding forces science has placed within its grasp. He has shown us also that for a people to have in its hands the immensely destructive forces provided by modern science, and without control in their use save their own inclinations, is equal to living on an area where a volcanic eruption is certain to occur, even though the date cannot be accurately fixed. The choice lies between an international court, with both authority and power to control the anarchic propensities of nations, or a return to barbarism. I am not sure whether the last clause ought not to be written "a continuation of barbarism."

I had intended to deal with some statements of religious leaders concerning Christianity and war, but that may wait until next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The fruits of Christianity were religious wars, butcheries, crusades, inquisitions, extermination of the natives in America and the introduction of African slaves there. Can anyone maintain that mankind has really been made morally better by Christianity?

Schopenhauer.

Corybantic Christianity

"Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end."—*Carlyle*.

"Nothing useful can be poured into a vessel that is already full of what is useless. We must first empty out of what is useless."—*Tolstoi*.

To an outsider, religion would suggest restraint, sobriety, the dignity of reverence, but things are not always what they seem. The Aimee McPherson Mission, like the earlier Torrey and Alexander crusade, and the Billy Sunday revivals, amply proved the association of the Christian religion with far other things than sobriety and civilization. What is singularly disturbing is that these sacred showfolk gauged their simple public to a nicety. Their audiences were, perhaps, better dressed and possessed more pence than those who listen spellbound to the trombones, tambourines, and tarradiddles of the leather-lunged evangelists of the Church and Salvation Armies, and the howling dervishes of our open spaces, yet they betrayed symptoms of the most rank and fulsome barbarity.

The leading salaried Sons-of-God of the various Nonconformist denominations may use a veneer of culture and modernity in their sermons and platform utterances, but the ordinary pastor of a side-street church, or tin-tabernacle, is under no such compulsion. He tells "the old, old story" in all its old, bad crudity, and so far forgets that he is living in the twentieth century, as to aspirate the "h" in Hell. At Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings, tame politicians are hired, who turn Christian for an hour in order to butcher Democracy to make a Christian holiday. But the ordinary professional pastor is indifferent to such considerations. Half-educated himself, he addresses innocent people who left school at fourteen years of age. A West-Ind minister of the Gospel may define his deity as a "world-spirit," or, like the schoolboy, as "a sort of a something somewhere," but the apostle in the mean streets is more realistic. He prefers to present a medieval Mussolini to his innocent congregation. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," he shouts. "Flee from the wrath to come," is the burden of so many sermons. The Salvation Army, which is the most vociferous of these outsizes in sects, actually has as its professional trade-mark the words, "Blood and Fire." This means, translated into simple language, that all must wash in the blood of Christ, or fall into the flames of everlasting Hell. It may be Christian teaching; it may even be the very quintessence of the teaching of Jesus, but most certainly such ideas do not harmonize with present-day culture, twentieth-century civilization, or common decency.

The hymns used by these apostles of "sweetness and light" in the mean streets are not only silly sentimental, but actually stereotype a lower form of culture which ought to be discouraged and not perpetuated. Some of these hymns are brutal in thought and language, written in the worst possible taste, and are full of sanguinary details, and a glowing satisfaction which is repulsive. "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel's veins," is an example which can be paralleled in scores of hymns.

Tracts are distributed by the ton, and these publications make interesting reading, for they prove clearly that, despite clerical protestations, the orthodox leopard does not readily change his spots. In these pious leaflets the Gospel legend is told in the old barbarous way, which some of us hoped was being discarded by decent people. Just imagine that you are going home after a hard day's work. A tract is thrust into your hand by a kind-hearted Christian

who is anxious for your spiritual welfare. You look at the title, *What is there after Death?* and this is the kind of thing you read:—

I wonder, if you die unsaved, whether you will see your believing wife after death? She, afar off, and happy with her Saviour; and you with the curse of unforgiven sin upon you in hell. And some of your children are in heaven, and others are on their way. And when you die your Christless death, will you for a moment see afar off your little ones with the light of heaven on their faces and the peace of God upon their heads?

Extremes meet, and the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army, the oldest and the youngest of Christian organizations, have much in common. The literature, if, indeed, it deserves that title, issued by both communions is singularly alike. The constant harping on death, the gloating over the Devil and his flaming abode, are morbid in their constant and reiterated insistence. Particularly is this the case in Roman Catholic books and tracts, when the sufferings of Christ happen to be the theme. This balderdash may be a rehash of the writings of the neurotic Fathers of the Christian Church, but it has the merit, from the priestly point-of-view, of having been so often used before, and not without success, in frightening believers and raising subscriptions. For many pious innocents, half unconsciously, believe that theological books are inspired, at least if they are recommended by their pastors and masters. No one, of course, could think most of them inspired as literature, but their matter, if not their manner, is shielded from criticism, probably because they deal with alleged sacred subjects. So they are read with fervour, and their medieval sentiments sink into the mind and are accepted as the sentiments of a minor prophet rather than those of a very minor writer.

In a Catholic booklet, bearing the imprint of Mowbray & Co., and entitled, *The Blessed Sacrament; Drawn from the Writings of the Saints*, the old barbaric views of many centuries ago are once more retailed with unadulterated realism. This publication, it should be borne in mind, is used for children who are preparing for their first communion, and these crude ideas are forced upon them at the most impressionable time of their lives. This is the sort of stuff that the Catholic clergy still teach privately, while, in public, they flatter the "Intellectuals" by a pretended retreat:—

When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, of self-willed sin come to be on their death-beds, they may perhaps feel that awful, impossible wish that they could pass into nothing; for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong grip of Satan, and the intolerable heats of Hell. Dying sinners may feel that their immortality is to be an unendingness of pain, of remorse, of despair, and the deadness and the dumbness of passing into nothing, though it surely would be more bearable than to think of than the life in hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire.

At no stage of the instruction does this manual for young children preparing for their first communion point out what level of barbarism the people have reached who could thus conceive of their deity. In short, the teaching contained in this booklet is simply a rehash of antiquated theological ideas, which are inconsistent with civilization as we know it. Sooner or later such theology will have to be regarded as ancient ignorance, in spite of all the thousands of priests in this country. For Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing their countrymen from the machinations of Priestcraft, and all that it stands for.

MIMNERMUS.

Country Churchyard

I.—THE LONG BOW

FREETHINKERS, as a class, are little given to meditating amongst the tombs. Some, undoubtedly, from impulses not too easily analysed, gain enjoyment from visiting shrines and making pilgrimages. The occasional visit to the graveside of a person who, when alive, had enriched, or endeavoured to enrich, this business of living, is excusable enough; it is perhaps rational enough when one admits the valuable free associations thus released. But he who bothers only with life is little likely to seek concrete evidence, such as a Churchyard affords, of the mortality of man. The mortality of man is to him a commonplace which needs no clinching. He accepts it, and with it the homely philosophy of one of Hardy's rustics that Death shouldn't "rob life of tuppence."

All the same, there are times when a cemetery invites and deserves attention. The wanderer over hill and dale finds occasional inspection of the tombs well worth the minutes spent upon it. The chance encounter with the resting-place of Cardinal Newman in a field at Rednal, near Birmingham, with Swinburne at Bonchurch in the Isle of Wight, and Ebenezer Elliott at Darfield, Yorkshire, for example, gave one something approaching a thrill, which even an in-born tendency to suspect emotion couldn't entirely suppress. Perhaps meeting the illustrious dead on terms of perfect equality (to this complexion must we all come at last!), gives one a mean satisfaction. But there are many emotions that a visit to a Churchyard stimulates. One can find pathos unmistakable, which has got well below the confines of creed down to something fine and large. One can find exhibitions of efflorescent piety which run easily to humour. One meets with Legend. And Love, Vanity, Meanness and Madness—all are there.

At Eyam in Derbyshire a few rude stones mark the burial-place of those of the villagers who died in the Great Plague. No nicety of arrangement and neat slab for them, for Godsacre is apt to get the go-by in times of storm and stress. A plague goes into the category of an Act of God and an Act of God, it is universally agreed, is always something inexpressibly nasty, with fire, flood, famine, plague or boiling oil in it. It is explained to us, by those who profess to know, that God hates Sin, and when he sees Sin he loses his balance. And when God goes on the war-path he forgets the decencies. Then man gets afraid and forgets the decencies as well, and bundles his fellow creatures into a hole in the ground, scamps the funeral charges and damns the consequences. Isn't it natural that our forebears got all hot and bothered? They argued from false premises and those who think more, but still argue from false premises, have the same perplexities to-day. It is known to-day, for example, by the believer, that God makes insects and weevils who, to live, require to eat the same things, unfortunately, as Man eats; he also makes rats, mosquitoes and lice and other disease-bearing minutiae, and sets them loose on the Lord of Creation. This gentleman is advised to protect himself by praying and then the Great Artificer sits back and watches the sorry farce. Pure in deeds the believer may be; perplexed in faith, the believer is bound to be.

A few miles of pathway walk from Eyam and you arrive at Hathersage. This is the *Moreton* of *Jane Eyre*, a place possessing many attractions for Brontë lovers. In the Church there, one can see the recumbent figures in bronze of Robert Eyre, Joanna Eyre, his wife, and fourteen children of differing size, not, one suspects, to any definite scale, but merely to lend an air of verisimilitude. Robert had been informed,

on what he took to be reliable authority, that blessed was the man who had his quiver full, so he did his best to achieve blessedness in this easy, unascetic way. Joanna's share in the blessing is not so specifically vouched for by the Ancient of Days, but that she was blessed with many physical and neurotic disorders was highly likely. It is possible, by the way, that the name Joanna Eyre was responsible for the name *Jane Eyre*, for Charlotte's quick eye could not have helped detecting the tomb and the names thereon.

In the Churchyard is the grave, so the inscription informs us, of Little John, which occupies a quite unreasonable length of earth. Little John was no literary or scientific gent., but he has some slight claim to Freethinkers' respect. He treated most unceremoniously, so we are told, the fat ecclesiastic "in fair round belly with good capon lined" and, as became a follower of merry Robin, reserved his lustiest thwackings and cudgellings for such unseemly corpulence. Freethinkers recommend less "manly" methods of controversy, but they are willing enough to admit that Little John was well ahead of his time in what we moderns call "values." In his capacious bed our contumacious priest-pummeller lies, and multitudes of visitors "pay their respects" to him, whilst his law-abiding, sermon-swallowing contemporaries lie around him, unwept, unhonoured and unstung.

Conversation with the sexton elicited the fact that the bones of Little John had not been allowed to rest in peace. In order to silence the doubter, the grave had once been dug up and bones had been found of such dimensions as would have proved, if required, the burial there of one of the pentateuchal Big Fellows. Still, even after that demonstration, a gentleman from Sheffield had had the temerity to read a paper in Hathersage, destructive not only of Little John's Grave, but destructive, alas, even of Little John.

Those who pray such prayers as "Take, O Lord, take everything, but leave my Little John," will take comfort from the fact that this iconoclast came from Sheffield. We all know the man who comes from Sheffield. As Twain might have said of him: Behold in him no reverence for the things of the past; wherever he goes he slays and spares not. This Sheffielder was not even impressed by the fact that Little John enjoyed the odour of sanctity and lay there in consecrated earth with, and for, benefit of Clergy. The Church has apparently forgiven the indignities he heaped upon it. But the Church will forgive anyone who is Great, and a man who occupies a hole in the ground, 12 feet long, is Great enough without a cavil, and, *ipso facto*, holy enough. *The Great must be Nobbled*, so the thwackings by Little John are overlooked, as were the thwackings of another kind, by Darwin, centuries later.

Let us go back to the Church. For very many years, on the walls of this sacred edifice was displayed the Long Bow of Little John, and the communicants meditated thereon. Thus were the indignities the Clergy suffered at his hands forgiven seventy times seven. This should have given the man fra' Sheffield (no doubt an Atheist, and therefore of ill repute), pause. We can imagine this shameless creature, however, alluding to the fact that the biker and the hiker quite often placed coppers in the offertory box.

What used to be one of the most popular guides to the Peak District commented upon the fact of this Long Bow being exhibited in a Church, in tones of mild surprise. Well, it is common to express mild surprise when it is not politic to express other emo-

tions. Journalists are much abused (and we must admit that some of this abuse they strive hard to deserve), but it is only fair to say that some journalists are rare wags, and this was surely one of them.

Could anything be more appropriate than this desire of a Christian Church to do honour to a Master of the Long Bow? How it happened is an interesting speculation. Was it because of a simple sincerity on the part of some humble cleric of the past—a veritable Daniel come to judgment? Or was it an irresistible bubbling up of the Christian sub-conscious that occasioned such a phenomenon? Whatever the reason was, the delicate symbolism was unmistakable. Anyone blessed with imagination could hardly have gazed upon it without, at the same time, hearing ghostly voices solemnly chanting in the sacred stalls: "He that has ears to hear, let him hear," "He who believeth not shall be damned," "Catholic Truth," "No Faith with Heretics," "Be with us or Burn," "Beloved Brethren, in order that we may be spotlessly moral, before all things let us lie." From the quires and places where they sing, what a divine melody would flow with the Long Bow acting as inspiration and stimulus.

T. H. ELSTON.

"Natural Theology" Again

IN the course of the later defence of discredited and decaying theologies it is natural enough that bodies of actual knowledge should be utilized by apologists; and now, for the first time, so far as I have noted, geography has been brought in as a subject yielding evidence of supernaturalism. In an article on "The Bearing of Geography on Religion," in the Review, *Religion and Education*, a teacher of the subject says that it has for all serious students "the supreme appeal of direct contact with works of God as Creator," and that, as regards the earth, "the home of man, . . . we are able to perceive Him in the preparation and ordering of the home." The relative insignificance of the earth in the universe, the only home of man so far as we know, is dismissed on the ground of "magnificence in spaciousness and gloriousness in design," this being "the true setting in which to view our home."

Now we have for some time been familiar with Hiddington's warning against basing religion on science, and his statement that in his own subject, astronomy, no expert now says that "the heavens declare the glory of God." Of course the idea of order, so far as the earth and other planets are concerned, is at once negated by the accepted conclusion of their mode of formation, viz., the accidental grazing collision or close approach of two stars, one of them being our "ancestral sun," together with the frequent appearance of new stars, probably as the result of such collisions. Here we have pronounced disorder, leading to the conclusion that without such accident there would probably be no life at all.

The writer dismisses mundane cataclysms by stating that the forces producing change are in the main gentle and continuous, such as the fall of rain, the flow of water, variations of temperature, and the like. Possibly this conclusion might have been held with some show of reason in countries such as our own, that are comparatively free from the more intense geological and meteorological events when there was but slow transmission of news, and rather little of that from many parts of the world, but it has now become rather ludicrous. During the week or two in which

this article was in mind and was written, one learned, among other things, of a great storm in South Africa, with hailstorms "as big as eggs," which killed a number of people, followed by a "cloudburst," with a fall of fifteen inches of rain in as many minutes, which drowned people and animals; of earthquakes in Greece and in India; blizzards, accompanied by huge accumulations of snow, followed by great floods; of landslides, moving in a moment as much material (often including houses and their occupants) in a given area as would otherwise occur in, say, a few centuries; of icebergs in the track of ships in the more temperate regions of the world; of 500 deaths in the United States from intense cold; and so on.

One of the sections of information given in geography books, more especially in the larger ones, is that of the different races of men, a feature which has engendered an enormous amount of strife and death, and a feature parallel to that of religious differences. Another section deals with the native animals and plants. And if one extends one's information by some biological reading, one learns, e.g., of the absence in Australia of the higher mammals more especially useful to man; and of the fact that the indigenous flora and fauna of various countries are by no means the most suitable. Australian farmers know very well, and to their cost, that the rabbit flourishes better in the country than the native animals; and similarly the introduction of the American waterweed (*Anacharis*) has resulted in great hindrance to inland navigation in this country, owing to its superabundant growth. To all this we add the innumerable and in many cases deadly parasites, venomous animals and poisonous plants.

Such phenomena should give more furiously to think those who still speak or write of the "preparation" by a deity of a home for man. And we must regard the article as one of innumerable, insufficiently informed and thought-out attempts to rehabilitate the ancient, indeed primitive, and now thoroughly exploded notion of the supernatural origin and guidance of universal and mundane affairs.

J. REEVES.

The Gentle Craft of Happiness

IN the present world crisis, nations, political parties, religious sects eagerly explain their several remedies. The Russians dogmatically assert that it is only necessary for us to subject our social and economic problems to a treatment of cold science, and they will all of them forthwith be solved. The Germans and Italians hold that we would do well to drop "the ideal bluff," and recognize that human beings are what they are, that they will never be dissuaded from rapine, and indeed are best employed in bloody bouts under the time-honoured sporting rules of "catch as catch can." Meanwhile the clergy of all denominations continue to protest that the populations have only to suffer a change of heart and the grace of God will once more descend upon the world.

Amid these contending opinions nobody reminds us that personal pleasure is the most rational aim that a human life can have. Surely there can be nothing reprehensible in devoting our seven swiftly passing decades to the most innocent of all human tasks, the task of being happy, especially when it is remembered that during the whole history of the world no happy human being has ever wished for a political revolution; or ever desired to invade another man's country; or ever made himself inconvenient to his fellows by jostling for a place in heaven.

The resistance felt by Communists, by the followers of Herr Hitler, and by conventional people of every kind against those who have undertaken the arduous disciplines involved in so gay a proposal is based upon the over-hasty conclusion that a universal pursuit of happiness would inevitably lead to an orgy of sexual indulgence. Our object cannot be attained so easily. An unrestrained abandonment to the delights of Eros is liable to bring down upon the head of the greedy one the severest reprisals. This is also the case with the other two primitive appetites—gluttony and drunkenness. Young men and young women soon find out to their surprise that the path of personal happiness, though truly a primrose path, is no easy one to follow. The success of this grand quest depends first of all upon health, and health requires us to be satisfied with a frugal and wholesome diet; the success of the quest depends secondly upon the good luck of possessing an eager and generous disposition, and such a disposition is usually associated with an unusual intensity of spirit; and thirdly its success depends upon ridding the mind of the obsolete prejudices that hamper and perplex an individual's freedom of action.

The fact is, the path of happiness is a narrow path of compromise. Just as that commonwealth is most sound of constitution which has evolved a suitable balance between the rights of government and the rights and liberties of the people, so in a human being that person enjoys most happiness who has best learned to adjust the fulfilment of his desires to considerations for the welfare of people affected by them.

Emerson used to warn us to confine our attention to "one world at a time." There is much wisdom in this. The teaching of Jesus has been of the greatest value to human civilization, but the official interpreters of His doctrines have often done us a mischief by giving the meaning of His words an artificial turn, so that, as Hobbes so shrewdly observed three hundred years ago, they have inaugurated "ceremonies so different that those which are used by one man, are for the most part ridiculous to another." It remains meanwhile an open secret that the most erudite ecclesiastic knows no more about the deep questions of human life, than does the most unlearned shepherd of the hills contemplating the midnight stars from his wattled fold. On his death-bed the prelate may not have the honesty to say with Rabelais, "I go to a great perhaps," yet his warranties for immortality are in no way more sure. It is far easier to discredit the pleasures of this world and to encourage us to look forward to Fairy Kingdoms in some future life than it is to show us how to be happy in our present hour, and yet real happiness is a state of being as independent of ideal pretensions as it is of all those worldly calculations that day and night obsess foolish heads. Happiness comes to those who find their content in the most elemental natural rewards belonging to existence, to those who bless God every time they drink water or put bread into their mouths, to those who have never allowed envy and jealousy to torment their minds, and who never forget that the only true capital that a man can possess from his wicker cradle to his boarded coffin, is his capacity for responding with a healthy mind and a healthy body to every experience offered him during the seventy revolutions of the earth about the sun which constitute the ordinary span of a man's life.

LEWELYN POWYS.

This I can now most truly say, that I have desired to live worthily while I lived, and after my life to leave to the men that should be after me a remembrance in good works.—*Alfred the Great.*

The International Congress of Freethinkers at Prague

THE Congress was held in the Obecni Dum, the Municipal House, a great building completed not long before the war, containing several halls, a restaurant, a warren of committee rooms, etc. The great hall, named after the famous Czech musician, Smetana, is famous for the passing of the constitution of the Republic there, and in it at Easter the public meetings of the Congress took place. On Easter Sunday this vast hall was full.

Except for a snowy Saturday morning the weather was brilliantly fine. The Congress, like the weather was a brilliant success. Its work fell into three categories. The Executive Committee and the Grand Council began work two and a half days before the public meetings were opened. Study Circles prepared resolutions for Congress to vote on. The principal work of the first was the union with the old, or Brussels, International of the International Federation of Proletarian Freethinkers. The latter accepted the basic principles of the former, including the old condition of no politics, which was laid down at Brussels in 1880. Both agreed as a great present aim militant action against Fascism and Nazism and for world peace. This union was adopted by congress, and the following officers were elected for the next two years: President, Dr. M. Terwagne (who came as a delegate from Belgium to the second and last Congress in London in 1887); Vice-President, Professor Lukachevsky (Russia); Hon. Treasurer, R. Clerebaut (Belgium); Secretaries, Mdlle. H. Pardon (Belgium) and J. Jansen (France).

Dr. Terwagne opened the public meetings supported by the Mayor of Prague, the President of the Volna Myslenka (Em. V. Voska) and the members of the Executive Committee. Dr. Milde, Vice-President of the Volna Myslenka and Secretary of the Congress, acted as interpreter. There were 81 foreign delegates and 350 Czech delegates. The opening speech had all the grave dignity, varied with vigour and fire, that we have learned to expect from the old warrior Terwagne. The first day was devoted to Education, the official speakers being Professor Klima of Prague University, Renaud Strivay, a retired Belgian schoolmaster and member of the Executive, B. Curda-Lipovsky, lecturer at the Moravian University of Brno, and C. Bradlaugh Bonner.

On Sunday the Czech barrister, E. Cervinka, gave us an interesting study of Papal policy of recent years; Zadina of Prague, a note on the position of non-religious refugees in various countries; Hoving, the President of the Dutch Dageraad, spoke on the persecution of the Jews, and told the one anecdote of the Congress. This unique story pictured three souls in the presence of Omnipotent God. Being asked by the Almighty what was urgently needed on earth, the first soul, a Roman Catholic, said, without hesitation, that it was the destruction of the Protestants. The second, a Protestant, to the same question, asked for the annihilation of the Roman Catholics. The third, a Jew, explained that he was a humble person and would not venture to intrude any desires or opinions of his own; he merely would suggest to God that the requests of the first two should be granted.

Dr. Milde gave us a thoughtful and moving speech on Fascism and how to combat it, from which a great deal could be learned as it came from hard experience. Every effort is being made by Nazis, Catholics and Imperialists to bring about the disintegration of the Czech Republic and the Freethought Movement is the spearhead of the fight for existence. Professors Schacherl and Zavudovsky lectured us on the present position of Science and Religion, dealing particularly with the physicists and astronomers such as Jeans and Eddington. Professor Lukachevsky told us of the work done by the Union of Militant Atheists in Russia.

On Monday morning the delegates made a tour of Prague, a city worth careful seeing, not only on account of its remarkable antiquities, but also because of its modernities, such as the Masaryk Homes, which house 2,700 poor old people and children. In the afternoon we learned of the difficulties of the Belgian Flemings, of

the Germans, of the work being done in France, and Miss Rehorova told us how of one million Czechs in the United States 80 per cent are Freethinkers, and how they form a thriving community amid that strange boiling of nations that forms the American people.

Among the resolutions passed by Congress, was one to the Roumanian Government protesting against the condemnation of Professor Constantine Jassi and others to several years of prison, merely for the expression of anti-Fascist views.

On Saturday the Volna Myslenka invited us to dine with them, a banquet notable for a witty speech by Dr. Terwagne, and a vehement one by the President of the Czech Senate, Senator Soucoup, to pick out two of a feast of oratory in unpleen languages. On Sunday we were taken to a performance of Smetana's "Bartered Bride," at the National Theatre, which was followed by a supper offered us by the Russian delegation.

On Tuesday the Congress moved to Moravia, to Ostrava, a rapidly growing industrial city of 100,000 inhabitants, near the point where Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland meet. Here a statue to Ferrer was unveiled, and afterwards the delegates were guests at a dinner entertainment. Mr. Bayard Simmons spoke for England at both in well-chosen phrases.

The very efficient organization and superb generosity of our Czech friends made the Congress a memorable one. One of the British delegates said he did not know he could enjoy himself so much. This was due to the care taken of us by Mr. and Miss Voska and Dr. Novak, who were unremitting in kindly attentions.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Acid Drops

Frankness is a rather rare virtue in clerical circles, so we welcome that of the Rev. A. E. Whitham, who tells us: "I went into my vestry on Easter Day and said to my organist, 'Now, my friend, I am prepared to-day to be a fool for the Gospel's sake.'" And the organist met him more than half way, and hereafter the rev. gentleman will "treat jazz music with affection." He compares the Hymn, "There is a happy land, far far away," with the Jazz song, "The girl with eyes of blue who will click with everyone but you." He says he will never understand the meaning of the hymn "unless I equally understand the latest drivél" in the Crooner's song quoted. Mr. Whitham is right.

When is Jesus where? The Rev. John Bevan was asked recently if he believed in the "Real Presence." Mr. Bevan replied unequivocally "Yes." But, he adds, "One hesitates to speak of the Real Presence except in relation to the service of the Holy Communion." Why hesitate to speak? Is it because Jesus hides away at other services? Must there always be eating and drinking before the "presence" becomes "real." And where is Jesus in the intervals of being present? And what is ordinary presence if it isn't "Real Presence?"

New lives of Jesus are always welcome in religious circles—provided that they follow as closely as possible the canonical gospels. But any biographer who has the temerity to rely on the Apocryphal gospels for the "youth" of Jesus is looking for trouble at the hands of pious critics. *The Youth of Jesus* is a translation of a new German work, and one reviewer dismisses it with, "It is hard to understand why this book should have been translated into English." But what is a poor author to do when he finds that the only details of the life of Jesus as a youth are in the Apocryphal Gospels? And are these details any sillier than those found in our Authorized Bible?

Miss M. M. Leigh, in her book, *Highland Homespun*, says: "In God's sight, a thousand years are as yesterday. Nothing that is great, beautiful or dignified descends to hurry." Yes, but man doesn't live a thou-

sand years. If God is too beautiful to hurry, and imagines that a thousand years is only twenty-four hours of a man's life, we begin to understand why nobody ever finds Him at their service during the eighty years or less that they wait for God's help.

Dr. Sidney Berry, in *Vital Preaching* scores a point against the grumblers in the churches who imagine that if Parker and Spurgeon and their like returned to the pulpit they would again fill the churches as once they did. "No," says Dr. Berry: "they would not be surrounded by those overflowing congregations of which older people remind us, sometimes causing us the discomforture of unfavourable comparison." The plain truth is, of course, that these old preachers taught a theology which their congregations believed in. To-day no theology is in itself attractive. Crowds want circuses, cinemas, concerts—and even churches, if they provide the desired entertainment.

The *Star*, which used to be a readable journal has sadly deteriorated. "Philemon" writes about "Myths and Wisdom," especially Myths! The "Creation Myth" for instance. "In ten thousand years we shall know a little more," he says, but for the moment let's call it a Myth. "The worst about the word 'myth'" says Philemon, "is that so many people think that it's something that isn't true." How awful! When Mr. Philemon calls any thing a myth he means something quite different, "the story isn't true of what happened once—it's true of what is always happening." A fact, apparently, is something which only happened once. A myth is something which has happened often. What can a lie be?

The *News-Chronicle* informs us that the two "hostess announcers" recently selected for television work by the B.B.C., both listen a good deal, like theatres and films, and jazz, drink cocktails, enjoy open-air sports, have travelled extensively and go to Church on Sundays. We have little doubt that both of these young ladies will have better qualifications than these for the post. The only quality enumerated in this list that will be at all useful to them in their new position, will be the last one.

A writer in one of our religious papers claims that if the "Ultimate Reality" is personal, then there must be survival after death. If the "Ultimate Reality" is not personal, then "the individual human person must sink back, sooner or later, into the impersonality from which he sprang." But as Christianity "has always affirmed personal survival and continuance in a future state," and as "it is the argument of Our Lord himself," that really settles it. Or rather it settles the question for Christians. For our own part, as neither the authority of "Our Lord" nor that of Christianity has any value whatever, and as neither has produced anything in the way of evidence, it seems that the Christian wish of living always with Jesus, Peter and heavenly angels, is based on a very slender hope. But does any really sane person want to live on for eternity in such company?

The Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis shows a great increase in juvenile crime. Yet it is a fact that religion, in some form or another, is forced on to almost all school children. Whether they like it or not, they have to sing hymns, pray, and listen to Bible stories while churches and chapels are continually squabbling about increasing the dose. Yet the *Church Times* claims that the proper cure for this juvenile crime is more and more religion! The truth is that religion has signally failed in preventing crime at any time. Most inmates of prisons are quite religious and insist on chaplains of their own denomination. Why not give complete secular education a trial? Could the results be possibly worse than those which follow religious teaching?

The Archbishop of Canterbury's advice on the Education Bill is, "Get the Bill amended as much as possible; but, in any case, take it and make the best of it so as to enable the Church to take its proper part in this new sphere of national education." From the Archbishop's point of view, this is obviously good advice. So long as the Church can come in somewhere it would be folly to oppose it. But the Archbishop knows quite well that the battle is not over yet. The solution must be Secular Education in the end, and priests of all sects of religion will unite to fight against that. They at least know what a blow to their power will be the abolition of religious teaching from State schools. It is our duty to hasten the day.

We have had occasion to point out more than once the inexplicable behaviour of "Our Lord" in not protecting his own a little more. For example, the floods in New England recently resulted in £100,000 worth of damage to Roman Catholics and about £25,000 to the Episcopal Church. Even St. Paul's Italian Episcopal Church in Hartford suffered with the rest, "Our Lord," ignoring the fact that St. Paul was the patron of this particular Church. Really, all this is too bad; what in heaven can be the Almighty's explanation? Can it possibly be that he does not care whether a man is religious or not, or that a church is no better in his eyes than a gaming house? Perish the thought!

The way this infernal Modernism creeps in, even among the most holy of men, is very disquieting. For example, the Rev. B. Iddings Bell, in a recent sermon on the Cross, repeats the famous story of Constantine's mother finding, in the year 327 A.D., in Jerusalem, the relics of "Our Lord's Passion"—that is, the very Cross on which "Our Lord" was crucified. He adds, however, "whether what she discovered was indeed the very tree on which Lord Jesus died, we cannot say." Now, why "can we not say"? The idiotic story, as related by Eusebius, was believed in for centuries; indeed, it is still believed in by the Catholic Church. Bits of the cross are found in hundreds of Churches, and have cured all sorts of diseases in millions of people. Yet here comes a pious priest who "cannot say" whether it is the genuine cross or not. What a farce!

Just as there cannot be the slightest doubt whatever that when Christians—following "Our Lord"—talk of Hell, they mean a real burning Hell, inhabited by damned souls and legions of Devils, so when they talk of Paradise they mean a real Paradise, a place and not a state. Proof of this is given by a writer in one of the Catholic journals, who points out that Jesus said to the Penitent Thief, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." The writer adds, that, "In His solemn promise to the Penitent Thief, Christ pledged His word, His honour, His love, a promise which was the endowment of everlasting glory." And that ought to prove the veritable existence of Paradise to everybody but blatant blasphemers.

"Unbelief" seems to penetrate everywhere nowadays. Even in the most unlikely places. Who would guess that Christian Foreign Missions are feeling the stress of Atheistic or Freethought propaganda. Yet Dr. Maltby, the eminent Methodist authority, assured his Methodist audience recently, "How easy it is for Christian work to become secularized. . . . It is very possible to be secular in the church vestry, or even in the pulpit. You can go abroad as a missionary and still be in peril from the secular mind. . . . For a longish time we have been having a time of religious decline. . . . Only one thing interferes, our unbelief." We note the admission. If we do all we want to do, the next few years are going to see a still further decline in this most superfluous of all wasted energies and wasted wealth.

The *Methodist Recorder* gives prominence to an article headed, "Why Not a Dictator-God?" To our astonishment the article has no praise of Hitler and

Mussolini as far-off imitators of the Methodist God. How indeed can Mussolini have conquered the Ethiopians if God had objected? A score of instances leap to our memories of God smiting with instant death those who opposed His Will—not only in fighting on the wrong side, but in comparative trifles such as "touching" the "ark," etc. Now even the *Methodist Recorder* is bound to say, "Either He is on the side of the strong, or He is getting the worst of it." God is a Dictator according to all the inspired records. Either He is non-existent or He is on the side of whatever side wins.

One of the comic Bible pictures which gave grave offence to Christian susceptibilities was an illustration of a Bible text, which plainly states that God showed Moses His "back parts." We learn from the *British Weekly*, that this was merely the ancient writer's way of saying that God did not show Moses His Face, "it was only the Afterglow of God that Moses was allowed to see." We may next expect to read that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of one donkey, and on the "afterglow" of another.

The Rev. J. Alexander Findlay tells us that "God spoke to our fathers by many instalments." This is to explain why God is said to have destroyed a few cheeky children who "guyed" Elisha, by "sending" savage bears to kill them. You see "God could not explain Himself all at once," says Mr. Findlay, who admits he is not concerned with the character of Elisha (nor apparently with the murder of ordinary children), but only with the reputation of Jehovah. "She-bears may have destroyed children who had taunted Elisha, but the one thing had nothing to do with the other." We can easily believe that the whole story is a falsehood, but it is just as true and has equal authority with other Bible stories.

There is not much to choose between the Church plea for so-called Disestablishment, and the Church opposition to it. We recommend disestablishment, because we cannot doubt that it must mean the weakening of religion in this country. But the clerical ideal of an uncontrolled church, maintaining its present position as the wealthiest enemy of truth in the land, is an insult to commonsense. The Bishop of Durham's broadcast is not at all "the case for disestablishment." It is a clerical case for security. Sir Thomas Inskip's "Reply" broadcast, while quite as clearly a demand for continued privilege, at least frankly admits that disestablishment without disendowment will not end State control. It may, he fears, actually substitute the judgments of the law courts for the present cowardly surrender of Parliament, which has only in one single instance, in the last 20 years decided against the decision of the Church bosses.

We cannot all be poets (Emerson's dictum to the contrary notwithstanding), and we sympathize with the Methodist "Festival" congregation which submitted to the infliction of a "poem" by a native of Jamaica, who "entranced" his hearers with the following (we quote the first and—we hope—the last couplets):—

"If Radio's slim fingers can take a melody
And toss it over a continent or sea;
. . . If songs, like crimson roses are culled from thin blue
air,
Then why should mortals wonder if God answers prayer."

The premises and the conclusion sound like a Christian Evidence argument.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, at its Annual Meeting, triumphantly boasted that recent events in Italy have made only the most insignificant reduction in the Italian demand for copies of God's Holy (and very war-like) Word. We are sure that the Italian army took at least the Spirit of the Bible with them in their campaign in Abyssinia.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. MCKELVIE.—Very pleased to know that you are getting better, and shall look forward to seeing you at the Conference. It was bad enough of the editor of the *Herald* to permit so insulting a reference to Ferrer, but to refuse the insertion of protest is contemptible.

A. J. COTTE.—Why not try to work up the movement again. Pleased to have been of service.

MR. JACK LINDSAY writes.—“I have enjoyed your article on the Bishop of London. It's an absolute gem. It is first-class satirical writing. After reading the article I can't but think your health must be progressing satisfactorily.”

T. H. WOODLIFFE.—Thanks for cuttings and compliment.

A. HANSON.—Mr. Beverley Nichols' book is sheer journalism and not of the best. It is unworthy of serious attention, but a notice of it will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.
FOR Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—Mrs. Trask, 10s.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

Everything is now “set fair” for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. on Whit-Sunday. The business meetings will be held at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street. Morning at 10.30 and Afternoon at 2.30. The business is for members only, and admission is by current card of membership. Those who, for some reason, have not received their card must apply to the Secretary at the meeting.

In the evening there will be a public meeting at 7 o'clock in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. A full list of the speakers will be found on the back page of this issue. The President will take the chair at all meetings. A large supply of slips advertising the evening meeting is on hand, and we ask the assistance of London members in helping their distribution. Write to the General Secretary at the Society's Office, or call at the *Freethinker* Office for a supply. But get busy.

On Saturday evening (May 30) there will be a social gathering of members at Anderton's Hotel at 7 o'clock. Refreshments and some musical entertainment will be provided. The President will be there, but as he is still under doctor's orders—at least the doctor gives orders—and as there is a big day to get through on Sunday, he will be present only for part of the evening. But he is looking forward to shaking hands with many old friends from all parts of the country.

We publish in another part of this issue an article from Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner on the International Conference in Prague. A further article on the Conference will appear next week.

Propos of our note in a recent issue concerning the refusal of the Albert Hall Corporation to let the Hall for a Communist meeting, while freely granting it to the

Fascists, we have received a letter from Mr. A. Raven Thomson, who signs himself “Director of Policy.” The letter is—part of it at least—to be read “sarcastic,” but the Fascist movement is not remarkable for its sense of humour, and so one cannot be quite certain on that point. Mr. Thomson expresses his regret that we did not champion the Fascists when they were refused the use of the Town Hall at Birmingham and Oxford. If Mr. Thomson knew the *Freethinker* better, he would know that we have repeatedly and consistently claimed freedom of speech for all, and not merely for one party, and our claim has extended even to Roman Catholics, although they, like Fascists, do not believe in extending it to others. We believe in *free speech*, not merely in the right to free-speech ourselves, and we have no greater sympathy for Communists who refuse Fascists a hearing than for Fascists who refuse it to Communists.

Mr. Thomson says that members of the Fascist Party are strictly forbidden to “attend or interfere with the meetings of opponents.” Mr. Thomson is not a very astute advocate, or he would have recognized that to forbid one's members to attend the meetings of opponents is to breed intolerance in its worst forms. No man or woman with any sense of self-respect should submit to such an order. Mr. Thomson suggests that the Albert Hall authorities “could not use the argument of possible damage by opponents.” This makes the case against the Albert Hall Corporation one of sheer intolerance; for I do not imagine that even a Director of Fascist Public Policy would suggest that the Communists would break up their own meeting out of sheer exuberance of spirit. We know Fascism is committed to intolerance, but we did think they would have selected a more astute publicist than Mr. Raven Thomson. But perhaps they depend upon his never attending the meetings of opponents to have deadened his critical ability to a considerable extent. And one of the consequences of not accustoming oneself to listen to an opponent's opinion, is the intolerance shown to hostile questioners at Fascist meetings. Which is quite in line with what we know of Fascism in other countries.

A move is being made to provide Sheffield with a Branch of the N.S.S., and there are certainly enough *Freethinkers* to form a strong centre there. Mr. E. V. Birkby of 133 Skelwith Road, Sheffield 9, will be pleased to hear from local saints willing to help in the formation. *Freethinkers* in other parts of the country not represented should also take the hint and get a Branch of the Society going without delay.

The marked increase in the number of marriages which take place in register-offices nowadays is a striking indication of the declining influence of the church. One of our readers was informed recently by the superintendent-registrar of marriages for a city with nearly 300,000 inhabitants, that approximately two-thirds of its marriages took place in his office. It would be too much to claim that more than a small proportion of those who chose the secular ceremony do so because of heterodox opinions, but it is at least certain that religion means little to them.

Realizing “the power of the Press,” we note with especial pleasure that the National Union of Journalists, at its Annual Conference, unanimously passed resolutions affirming hostility to Fascism, and deploring “a recent tendency to introduce what amounts to a covert censorship by Government departments on news bearing on foreign affairs.” A member of the N.S.S., who was a delegate to this Conference, assures us that the proceedings throughout had a healthy, secularist tone. What a pity working journalists cannot have a say in deciding the policies of our national dailies. If they had, we fancy there would be less boasting of “splendid isolation,” spiritual truths, fortune-telling, and similar absurdities.

We notice that in its new by-laws Nottingham makes a special concession to street-corner evangelists. Anybody else speaking or playing musical instruments in the street must go away at the request of a householder.

Not so the blood-and-fire brigade. The by-law stipulates that those who are conducting "properly organized religious services" shall be exempt. We should like to know what the Anti-Noise League thinks of this decision.

Mansfield recently had a ballot on the question of Sunday cinema opening. There was, of course, frantic opposition from the churches, with the result that the "antis" won on a small poll. What disquiets us is the attitude which a great many people took over this result. Because those who wanted to be able to go to the picture on Sunday were fewer than those who didn't, many people assumed that Mansfield did not want Sunday Cinema shows. Actually, the fact that a body of people sufficiently large to pack at least one cinema demanded this right by voting for it, clearly indicates the moral obligation, on the part of those in authority, to respect public opinion. There is, of course, no hope that they will do so. When will minorities be granted justice in this respect?

Mr. H. Cutner is lecturing to-day (May 24), at the South London Ethical Society, Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E. His subject is "The Death of Liberty," and should attract a good audience. The proceedings commence at 7 p.m., and admission is free.

Mr. G. Whitehead will spend four weeks in the North Eastern Area, where there is a federated group of Branches of the N.S.S. He will speak in Sunderland from May 23 until 29, and during the remaining three weeks visit Shields, Hetton, Seaham Harbour, Newcastle, Ashington, Blyth, Morpeth, and Newbiggin. The combination of the Branches is working very satisfactorily, and it looks as though some good work will be put in during the next four weeks.

Things Worth Knowing*

XLII.

RELIGION AND LIBERTY

If religious faith is in one sense an agent of liberty, in another it is an agent of tyranny. Intolerance is an essential feature of all belief based on the assumption of having grasped absolute truth and absolute good; for the very fact of their being absolute justifies the means employed to make them prevail, and to root out the sin and evil which obstruct their progress. This cynical idealism is particularly characteristic of dawning or new faith. Such faith has, what may be called the defect of its age, the imperturbable and pitiless logic of the adolescent. Sometimes, after a long series of reciprocal and futile persecutions between the Churches, tolerance appears under the form of lassitude and disgust. It appears, but only for a while, if the society of the age happens to be a religious one; and after a period of relaxation oppression recommences. In short, all living religious faith has, like civil authority, a natural affinity for tyranny. The two powers instinctively draw near together, and nothing is more threatening to the liberty of the subject than such an alliance, when heavenly interests and the welfare of the State are banded together against the individual.

. . . The energy of the Dissenters saved English liberty. They were not either theoretically or instinctively, more liberal than the Anglicans; this they made clear in every place, and on every occasion that they found themselves masters, in Scotland, in Massachusetts, and in Connecticut. Authority, as they conceived it, had the charge of consciences, and a

* 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.

mission to constrain people to the right way of thinking. But the power was in the hands of their opponents; they needed liberty, and had to be content to form the bulk of the army which on two occasions overturned an irreclaimable army.

Under Charles II. there was a terrible recrudescence of persecutions among the Dissenters; they were hunted down in the person of the Roundheads: the followers or partisans of Cromwell. Not until after 1688 did a first measure of tolerance come into force on their behalf. It was in this way that William III. discharged his debt to his political allies, and strengthened the irreconcilable adversaries of the fallen dynasty. It is noteworthy that at the same time, and to their great satisfaction, the Papists were more molested than ever. For reasons of an equally political nature, persecution recommenced against all the Nonconformists under Queen Anne. In the midst of these scandalous fluctuations indifference gained ground, and scepticism took possession of the upper classes. It was inevitable. Religion could only be established by a preliminary period of doubt and strong criticism. Scepticism formed, as it were, an atmosphere around the believers, enveloping penetrating, and imperceptibly mitigating the excessive rigidity of their zeal. It had another merit; it threw into relief, sincerity, disinterestedness, and the social utility of serious conclusions, independently of the purport of the doctrines on which they were based. To the sceptic all religious beliefs are on the same footing and outside question, the value of moral motives and effects are therefore his sole concern, and for that very reason appear to him all the more striking, and set apart for attention and respect. This important change was the work of the eighteenth century.

. . . The philosophy of common sense and humanitarian sentimentality were both urged upon Parliament by the outside world, and forced it to mitigate the rigour of the law. The English Catholics, least favoured of all the denominations, were the first to reap a small benefit from this in 1778; then the Protestant Nonconformists of Ireland (1779), who, scattered among a Papist population, were led by circumstances to be the supporters of the Crown and were admitted to official positions; then the Episcopalians of Scotland, who had been maltreated as partisans of the fallen dynasty. . . . Finally, in 1793 the Irish Catholics obtained the right to vote, and admittance to many official positions. In 1829 the Act of Emancipation granted to all Roman Catholics, without distinction, most of the rights hitherto denied to them, and consequently the English and Scotch Catholics obtained the benefit of civil and political equality—an equality now almost perfect. The secularization of all civil and political appointments progressed in the same ratio. Quakers, Catholics, Dissenters, and Jews were successively admitted to municipal offices, and within the doors of Parliament which now remained closed to declared Atheists. For the first time, a short while ago, an Israelitish peer took his seat in the House of Lords. A profession of Anglicanism was required only from the Sovereign and some great dignitaries. In 1837 and 1852 civil marriage was organized, and divorce cases and testamentary documents which had been under the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical court, were transferred to a lay court (1857). The Universities and all their degrees were opened to Dissenters, who up to now had been excluded from them. . . . Interments in consecrated ground ceased to be the monopoly of the Anglican Church. It was a gradual transposition of the Church and the laity, and little was required to complete it.

The English People,
by EMILE BOUTMY (1904), pp. 260-4.

The Way of the World

THE conquest of Abyssinia being an accomplished fact, it has been argued that the abolition of "sanctions" must follow as a logical sequentia. Otherwise, it is said, their continuance may seriously annoy Mussolini, and so prevent his joining hands with us in carrying on the work of civilization. There is a good deal to be said for this attitude, and we are not surprised to learn that the National Association of Housebreakers and Pickpockets has issued a warning that if sanctions against them are persisted in, serious annoyance may result and reprisals may take place. After all, as the Secretary of the Association points out, "sanctions against them never came into operation until after something has been accomplished, and having accomplished something in the face of hostility, it is ridiculous that what has been won by personal effort and strength, and the unconquerable will to acquire, shall be tamely surrendered. Until these Sanctions have been abolished the members of the N.A.H.P. have decided not to recognize the body which maintains sanctions."

France is now showing us how to do things. We have a film censor who bans films which are too indecent for any but a film censor to see. We have also the B.B.C. censorship, which hunts for suggestive passages in the patter of comic entertainers, irreligious passages in popular talks, and anything that tends to expose religious humbugs at all times. But the efforts of our censors are limited to this country. France has taken a further step. A decree has been issued by the Cabinet, but has not yet been passed by the French Parliament, not merely prohibiting films which the Government consider objectionable, but also banning from France all films produced by an organization which produces such a picture. This is an excellent way of bringing up people in the way they should go, and we are certain there are many Members of our own Houses of Parliament who would like to follow the example of France in this respect. The French are nothing if they are not logical, and when a Government is elected, or when it elects itself, the obviously desirable course is that they should believe in it; and when the belief in God is growing weak there is no reason why the belief in the omnipotence of Governments should not take its place. The same type of mind is operative in both cases. As Sterne said long ago, "They do these things much better in France."

Long ago the benevolence of the British Government established a civil list of pensions for the benefit of those who have distinguished themselves in art, science, or literature, and who in their old age find themselves in need. Sometimes these pensions reach the magnificent sum of £150, but mostly range from £50 to £100. The total sum reaches the colossal figure of about £23,000 annually, and the new pensions about £1,200 per year. Not satisfied with this huge sum, Mr. A. P. Herbert suggested that the expenditure should be raised to £4,000, a suggestion which the Chancellor of the Exchequer treated with deserved scorn. It is not as if these scientists, men of letters, or artists are soldiers. In their case £100,000 may be justly given, but with an £800,000,000 budget, how can the Government be expected to make it eight hundred million and four thousand, merely to rescue broken-down scientists from starvation?

It is not as though the House of Commons is niggardly in spirit. It will soon be voting fifty to one hundred thousand for the popular pantomimic display of a coronation, and it has already decided on voting Queen Mary £70,000 annually to keep the wolf from her door, and it does not fail to look well after all members of the Royal Family. And presently it will decide on raising the salaries of Cabinet Ministers from £5,000 to £8,000 out of sheer gratitude for the magnificent way in which they discharge their duties, and so that they may fittingly maintain the dignity of their positions.

We like that expression "the dignity of their positions." It says so little, and it means so much. Their dignity does not depend upon personal worth, or honourable action, in not unsealing their lips hastily, or in truth-speaking, for all these things may exist without even the paltry income of £5,000. Their dignity is a question of giving expensive entertainments, etc. In other words, in cash—and ten thousand a year is clearly twice as dignified as £5,000. But what would happen if a Cabinet Minister refused to spend large sums of money in society entertainments, or in buying pantomimic court costumes, or dress-swords, and decided to live in a quiet and comfortable manner? Presumably he would soon find himself out of office. He would not be upholding the dignity of his position.

A well known musical critic once said that if we told him what part of a new opera we liked best, he would know at once what was worst. He had discovered that we divided music into two sorts of noises—one we liked and the other we did not like. At all events, it was evident that our judgment never erred. Most people, judging from this, would assume that we were without a musical ear, and decide that we knew nothing about music. But some people are treated with much greater consideration. Thus, the *Daily Telegraph* (May 12), writes of King Edward:—

The King's musical tastes are eclectic. He likes the very new as expressed in Jazz. He is also a lover of the bagpipes, which retain the qualities of the most austere primitive art. In music of the intervening periods he evinces less interest.

It really looks as though there is not very much difference between the King's knowledge of music and our own. But our critical friend did not say that our taste was "eclectic," he simply said that we had "no damned ear for music." But we were not the King, and the King is not

QUONDAM.

How I got Salvation

AFTER the Great War, which we were told was a godly war and was to end all wars, at the time when people were falling off like flies and being buried in fearful numbers, and grave-diggers were working night and day, I fell a victim to the terrible scourge of influenza. This particular germ leaves a virulent poison in the system which causes a most depressed state of mind in the individual. Nothing seemed to be able to rouse me. I went to the Doctor, and he sent me to get my eyes tested; I then visited the Dentist. Having got the physical attended to as well as I possibly could, the depression being still there, I turned my attention to my mental equipment. I felt that if I had some poetry to remember, something to take my mind off the general household tasks it would be helpful, so I betook myself to a teacher of Elocution, whose system of teaching poetry was one which developed the mind, and with the deep breathing employed, the depression gradually left me.

At that time I was Vice-President in a Socialist Sunday School in Glasgow. They had rambles on the Sundays. I used to take a book to read, but the men would play football, and I kept protesting about this all the time. I thought God wouldn't be angry at my sitting out in the open on a lovely summer day reading a book, but to play football on a Sunday! I felt God's wrath descending upon us. These protestations led to discussions, and the men and women of the Sunday School told me the Bible was all wrong. In my youth I had been sent to a big fashionable church in Edinburgh; the Bible Class at 10 o'clock on Sunday mornings, church at 11 till 12.30, then church again at 6.30 p.m. All my prizes and Welfare

of Youth certificates were for Bible knowledge, so I came to look upon the Bible as the infallible Word of God. I felt it was such a sacred book that God had either written it or "breathed" it. I was frightened to touch it. No wonder then I put up such a fight for my Bible.

I asked the ramblers why they didn't criticize other books like that? They replied that there wasn't such contradictory nonsense in other books. When visiting one of the members' houses I asked him if he didn't expect to meet his friends again? He said, "No," and I said, "Well I am done with you," and banged out of the room. In still another member's house I asked, "Who set the ball a-rolling? How did the world start?" and because they couldn't answer me, I answered, "Until you tell me who set the ball a-rolling I am going to stick to my religion." There were still other discussions about the religion of Members of Parliament, as to their putting religion before their politics. I said, "I most certainly would give up my politics before I would give up my religion." Such was my faith in the Unseen at that time.

Shortly afterwards I went with some Socialist friends for a holiday to Wick. The people in the house had all been converted by the Salvation Army. At night the young lads and lassies would gather in the house singing lustily the well-known Salvation Army hymns. How I joined in the singing of them! Here I didn't need to think whether the Bible was true or not. I just had to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all would be well. I asked the daughter of the house if she would take me to one of the meetings. She said she would. Again, how I enjoyed the singing. "Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end."

In the middle of the service a lady officer came round and said, "Would you like to be saved?" After a great deal of persuasion I went out to the penitent form. A fisher lady came to me, and we knelt down and prayed. She prayed for me, then she asked me to pray for myself, and when we rose from our knees she said, "Now if anybody asks you if you are saved, just say 'yes.'"

I went back to my seat full of joy. "Saved in the blood of the lamb"! When I got outside I expected to see a great light such as Paul saw on his way to Damascus, and I expected to hear a voice, as he heard, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." But I heard and saw nothing.

Much to my Socialist friends' disgust I left the Socialist Sunday School. I was determined to follow Jesus. I felt they (the Socialists) were dragging me down.

These discussions had raised doubts in my mind, and I began to study Psychology. I learned there that we have a conscious mind and a sub-conscious mind. This sub-conscious mind never forgets anything that is deeply impressed upon it. This made me more careful of my words, for I realized that anything unkind I might say to a person, although I had forgotten it, a sound or a word might bring back to that person's conscious mind years afterwards and stand as a witness against me. Then again I learned that above the kidneys are two little glands called the adrenal glands, and when one is jealous, angry, worried, or full of hate, these glands discharge a virulent poison into the body. This made me avoid those states as I would have the very devil, if he existed. In other words, I endeavoured to get control of my passions.

Being a person who goes into everything wholeheartedly, I joined the United Free Church Training College, Lynedoch Street. All the students were

seekers after the truth, and all bent on doing missionary work of some kind or another. (All names of Professors and Ministers are available, written on certificates gained).

The first Rev. gentleman started with *Genesis*. He said, "Now don't bother about anything in *Genesis*, except that when a man sins he suffers." Now I wanted to know if God made Adam from dust, and then caused him to fall asleep, and then made Eve from his rib; also whether these two became one flesh, and begat Cain, and where Cain's wife came from. But we were told to take no notice of these things. It was just a story. This was the first of many shocks I got.

Then another Rev. gentleman candidly told us he didn't believe the story of the Virgin Birth, but he left it with us whether we accepted it or not. This was shock number two. In all the instruction I had got on the Bible this subject had never been spoken about. I had just thought that Jesus was a kind of lucky or unlucky chap who had two fathers. Joseph was the one, and God was the other. Naturally, this made me search my Bible diligently for this part, and I found that Mary was conceived by the Holy Ghost. Being a mother myself, I accepted this with a grain of salt. I was beginning to be sceptical.

C. BRYDGES.

(To be concluded)

The Church's Pound of Flesh

THE Church has now rejected the terms of the Tithe Bill. Three per cent on bonds of £70,000,000 is not enough for them. Such a guaranteed gift from the Government (and via the Government from the people) is looked discontentedly in the mouth; there are not enough teeth in it for tearing wealth out of the people.

Three per cent on £70,000,000 gives £2,100,000 a year for nothing. It is admittedly less than the £3,000,000 the Church is now getting in tithe; but it is guaranteed—which tithe privately collected is not; it stays, which privately collected tithe does not.

Bonds are stable. The Government pays on them whatever comes or goes, whether people go bankrupt or suffer poverty. Whereas tithe in private control often cannot be collected at all. The only remedy for the Church when a tithe-payer defaults is to sell him up, when they might get a shilling for a cow, or a few pounds for a house or a farmstead. And that only after a lot of trouble. But when a Government goes short of one source of revenue, it devises another, and it dogs the footsteps of everyone who may be a potential tax-payer. Its sources are many and varied.

Holding Government bonds, therefore, although they may yield a lower income than the present tithe "rights" (which are very wrong) is far better than holding what in many cases turns out to be a white elephant.

And so impoverished is industry becoming under the burden of rates, taxes, and land charges, that the Church should know that as time goes on, the chances of collecting tithe privately will become less rosy.

In fact, they almost said so in one of their reports, and the present Tithe Bill might well have been supposed to be the result of the Church's influence in Government circles. Did not the Archbishop of Canterbury know all about the findings of the Tithe Commission before anybody else outside? That looks suspicious, and the suspicion is confirmed by the fact

that the Church accepts "the principle of the scheme." The only loggole it has is that the percentage is not enough.

One must take a great deal of this discontent with salt. When a great iniquity is being committed by Government on behalf of vested interests, it is always customary for those interests to grumble—and to drive a bargain. They like to give the impression that they are being put down—that they are being badly treated—that they are the injured parties. Such an impression enables the iniquity to go through more easily.

Nevertheless, the Church is no doubt displeased by the size of the fleshpots. It wants its pound of flesh, and is quite careless of the danger of killing the body and is quite careless of the danger of killing the body of industry from which that flesh must come. The Government is clearly more careful than the Church. It knows that the goose cannot be pressed too hard without ceasing from laying the golden eggs. So it puts the percentage at a figure that it can guarantee. The Government knows how far it can go.

The Church, occupied in telling people how to get to heaven by being good, and paying its tithes and taxes, knows not or cares not of the goose-killing stage. It does not know where to stop. It thinks that the pound of flesh has merely to be demanded—and it is there, like manna from the clouds. Concerned with matters spiritual, and only connected with matters material in the way of putting out its hand for material wealth and utilizing it, it demands the flesh from the world, and renounces the devil from its spirit in order that it may calmly contemplate the sphere of Nirvana from the body fed, clothed, and housed by the wicked devilish people who work to keep it standing.

The Conference at which the rejection of the terms of the Bill were rejected talked about the "sacrifices" of the clergy, and about the "heavy losses" that would be "inflicted" upon them by the reduced income. But we thought that the poor were blessed, and were guaranteed a place in Heaven? We were taught by the Church that the poorer one was on earth, the better guaranteed place in Heaven one got. The Church has given us all to understand that wealth is an evil, not to be sought after, but to be rejected with the Devil, and replaced by the great ghostly wealth that the cultivated spirit is supposed to give.

Yes, true. But that doctrine only applies to other people. The Church is above such a doctrine, and will have none of it when its own ill-gotten income is in question.

It wants no blessing of poverty. Nor is it concerned with having a guaranteed place in Heaven.

You can have your blessing of poverty and your expectation of a seat in Heaven. That, the Church freely gives you.

But for itself, from you, it wants its guaranteed tithe. Let it but have that, and the rest is yours for eternity.

For you, the ten commandments. For the Church, the cash.

Ecclesiastical craft is like that. The Church blesses you with one hand and picks your pocket with the other.

And at times like this, when the great Ecclesiastical question of tithe is being thrashed out, it ceases blessing, and uses both hands to get at your pocket.

Your pocket is more important to the Church than your soul. It does not want your soul. It wants your money. You have your soul, and let them have your money, and the Church will thank God, and tell you to be careful or the Devil will have you.

The little boy who thought God had been in his pocket after his marbles was mistaking the Church

for God. It was not God who had been picking; it was the Church of God.

And the citizens who are now blaming "bad times" or natural causes for their poverty are making the same mistake as that little boy. They are blaming God for the robbery which is being practised by men—and among those men are the self-elected ambassadors of God, if we are to believe them.

The Church will have its pound of flesh, if it can. It is relying on the Government to cut it off for it.

Whatever the percentage ultimately arrived at, it will be theft. It will represent the amount of wealth that the Church is to get yearly from the robbery of taxation. And it will come out of the poor.

There are no tithe "rights," and never have been. Tithe is one of the forms of land-rent stealing, which springs from the monopoly of land. It is a dead loss to the people, and whether privately or publicly collected, will keep the people in poverty, so long as private individuals or institutions get it.

The land does not belong to the Church, or to any other group of people. It is common property. No charge for land is rightfully made by the Church or other land lords, therefore, every penny of land rent belongs to the community.

Unless the people of Britain awake to the utter trickery that the Church, and other land lords are practising, they will find huge additions to the debt on their shoulders, which will paralyse them and impoverish them until they completely repudiate it.

ERIC R. JONES.

Good Friday as Spent in Australia

"YESTERDAY'S holiday was spent sedately by the majority of the folk of Sydney, doubtless because of the religious significance of the day."

This is a sentence from our leading daily, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in the issue following Good Friday. Sedately! Let us see, from other parts of the very same issue which contained that remark, how far the word was justified.

For example, we read that at the Royal Agricultural Show (held the previous day—that is, on Good Friday) there were 133,771 people—or 8,918 more than on the same day the previous year. At the Show, there were horse events—hunting, trotting, jumping—and all sorts of side-shows, with a veritable Babel of noise, vocal and instrumental, in the way of attracting patronage. In addition, there were wood-chopping and tree-selling contests. Two of the lyrical phrases from the *Herald*, in this connexion, are "A great shout goes up as the head of the tree falls, just a second or two before the next one," and "The crowd becomes frantic and roars its encouragement."

Sedately!

But there is much more.

We find, still in regard to the same day, references by the *Herald* to "the many city people who sought recreation at distant seaside and holiday resorts"; to "the large crowds congregated at all the recognized surfing beaches"; to "the more than 10,000 persons who visited the Zoo, where the receipts were equal to the record created for any one day"; to the Aquarium, which was "particularly well patronized"; and to "the many people who visited the Mascot Aerodrome, where every available machine was needed to cope with the heavy joy-riding business."

But even this does not exhaust the Good Friday outings and fixtures.

Others that the *Herald* goes on to report, included the bun and ginger-beer feast to children given by Wirth's Circus, and the holding of the Raster Labour Conference. The latter stormy, of course! The Conference, we are told, was "attended by delegates from all parts of the State, and the visitors included a number of State

and Federal Parliamentarians." Further, it "began early in the morning," and "ended late at night."

Sedately!

Deduct from the population of Sydney the number who spent the day in the way that the *Herald* itself indicates.

Merely a few shreds remain—all the more so if we add the innumerable family picnics and privately-arranged parties.

Yet "sedately" is the word used by the *Herald*. Why? To me, it is a most enlightening example of the English daily-press crawlsome efforts, everywhere, to keep up the fiction that intelligence and reason have not utterly displaced superstition and fear.

Good Friday, it will be conceded, is the day-of-days that should be respected by professing Christians.

Why, in Sydney, do they not observe it?

Briefly, the reply—clear and conclusive—is that religion, when it comes to anything in the nature of a practical test, represents nothing to them.

It is like a fading lament from the grave to read, in the same issue of the *Herald*, from which I have been quoting, that "A United Service of Witness—a Witness of the Truth of Christianity" was held in Sydney the same night. But—what "witness" could this semblance of a gathering represent? For those who constituted it to have gone into a court, purporting to testify to the truth of something that happened two thousand years before they were born, would merely have landed them in gaol for blatant, barefaced perjury.

For over a hundred years the Sydney Show-dates have included Good Friday.

Again and again has the Church, without the least success, sought to prevent this arrangement. Following the holding of the Show this year, we have a clerical confession of failure by the Rev. T. E. Ruth, who proposes that—since the Show, so to speak, will not yield to the Church—the Church should bow to the Show by holding services, during the day and night, in the Show Grounds. It is, of course, a clownish suggestion, in every way worthy of its proposer, and just about as likely to meet with the approval of the Show Committee as would be the intrusion of some deadly, devastating pest.

Sunday in Australia, I would like to add, is becoming a great recreation day.

Naturally, there are squeals and howls from the Church.

But so determined are those who desire to spend the day in their own way, that numerous bodies have been formed—known as Sunday Reform Associations—to resist, in every possible manner, all attempts at repression.

In this way, then, is the Freethought movement making great strides—with the Church losing, more and more, its hold on Sunday and Good Friday. Such is, indeed, the point I wish to stress. Comparatively few reject the Bible through sheer reasoning—intellectual and analytical. The great swing comes when religion is found to interfere with the liberty—or, if you like, the personal interests—of the people generally.

Superstition is thereupon cast aside; the mockery and imposture of the clergy become the more clearly revealed; and to a corresponding degree does the world move forward to the day when Christianity, with all that the word denotes, becomes a mere memory of the past.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

The strength of a man's virtue is not to be measured by the efforts he makes under pressure, but by his ordinary conduct.—*Pascal*.

A certain amount of general ignorance is the condition of all religions, the element in which alone they can exist. As soon as astronomy, natural science, geology, history, the knowledge of countries and peoples have spread their light broadcast, and philosophy is finally prepared to say a word, every faith founded on miracles and revelation must disappear.—*Schopenhauer*.

Obituary

THEOPHILUS JOHN DAVIES

ONE of the best known social workers in Abertillery has passed out in the death of Theophilus John Davies, which took place on May 7, from dropsy, in his 59th year. During his forty years of public and trade union service, he became a member, and chairman, of the old Bedwellty Board of Guardians, and was elected to the Abertillery Urban District Council in 1928, being appointed chairman in 1932. He was one of the leading enthusiasts in the Freethought movement in Abertillery during its most active period, and to the end of his life never disguised his robust Freethought opinions and principles. A very long procession escorted the remains to the picturesque Council Cemetery at Aberbeeg, where the interment took place. The large assembly joined in the singing of secular hymns, listened to a tribute paid by Councillor T. Gale, and followed with very close attention a Secular Service read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

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 LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Mr. H. Cutner—"The Death of Liberty."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—"Constructive Pacifism."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, May 25, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, May 26, Mr. C. Tuson. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, May 29, Mr. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, 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): 7.15, Friday, May 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLACKBURN MARKET: 7.30, Thursday, May 28, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, May 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, May 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HATTON: 7.30, Monday, May 25, Mr. J. Clayton.

MIDDLESBRUGH: 7.0, Tuesday, May 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Market Place): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—A Lecture.

SOUTH BANK: 7.0, Sunday, May 24, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead. Mr. Whitehead will speak at 7.30 each evening the following week.

TRAWDEN: 7.45, Friday, May 22, 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.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

MEMBERSHIP

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name

Address.....

Occupation

Dated this day of19...

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A Public Demonstration

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