

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### The Way of the World

ABOUT a year ago there was issued a bulky volume of over five hundred pages bearing the title *A Short Introduction to the History of Human Stupidity*. The author explained that he intended dealing with some aspects of his subject at greater length in later volumes, and casually referred his readers to volume 52 or 53 of the complete work. The references were, of course, sarcastic, but in all seriousness, if one were to publish a complete history of human stupidity, dealing with the subject in its many aspects and consequences, fifty-two volumes would not be too great a number. Human stupidity is world-wide and is independent of class. There is just as much stupidity manifested in the "upper" classes as in the "lower." The working woman of the East End, who dresses her baby with charms to ward off disease, is paralleled by the Duke and Duchess of York, who delay the registering of the birth of their baby so that it shall not appear as number 13 on the records. The most stupid of all superstitions, astrology, appeals so much to all classes that a number of the Sunday papers—always the readiest and the most blatant in their exploitation of human ignorance and superstition—find it profitable to pay certain writers to explain that on the day that a certain planet is in the ascendant, those born on that date will find it profitable to back their fancy on the racecourse. Affairs are managed in such a way that starvation threatens people, not because there is too little, but because there is too much food in the world; and our commercial geniuses try to cure the evils due to lack of distribution by increasing the methods of production. If we cannot distribute all we have let us make more! Finally, as a means of fostering peace, everywhere people are incited to become more war-minded, although what is the use of getting war-minded if war is never to come no one has yet explained. Dr. Richet also published, some years ago a book with the title *Idiot Man*, and

that too might have been extended to fifty-two volumes if the subject had been fully treated.

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### Stupidity and Birth Control

We are not among those who believe in the right of men and women to determine the number of children they shall bring into the world because there will not be enough food for them, since there does not appear to be any shortage of food, and the possibilities of an increase of food-stuffs are very great. But we do believe that women should be regarded as something better and higher than mere breeding machines, and that it is entirely the business of the man and the woman to say whether they will have two children or a dozen, and when the desire for children is not present, such people are probably, for the child's sake, if not for their own, better childless. It is really much easier to injure a child that has been born than to harm one that has never made its appearance. But I see the *Church Times* is seriously alarmed at the decrease of the birth rate, and seems to regard an increase of population as something good in itself. But I do not in the least see this. Fifty millions of people in the British Isles are not of necessity better, wiser, or happier than thirty millions. The insect population of a cheap lodging-house bed are not better insects because they are numerous; the more there is of them the worse they are for humans. An increasing and a large population has no necessary relation to any single quality that makes human nature admirable; for, as Ruskin said, the important question is not whether a man has two children or twenty, but whether the children he has deserves to be hanged or not. And while there is some relation between the largeness of an Empire and its decay, the main cause of the decline of small States has been the military aggression of large States.

The *Church Times* laments that the fall in the birth-rate is due to the use of contraceptives (as though some form of restricting the arrival of children was not practiced in all the Christian ages of the world) and talks at large about the shirking of responsibility of parentage by men and women who are filled with the lust for pleasure. It does point out that "serious men and women" are afraid to bring children into the world because they are "afraid of war, afraid of insecurity of employment," etc. But its main objection is that the "failure to recognize the dignity and intention of human life," and also that "irreligion has emptied the nursery and filled the garage," and lays it down that "to secure the natural growth of a nation there must be the recovery of the conviction that man is sent into the world to do the will of God." Part of the will of God is evidently that each couple should procreate with as little intelligence or foresight as herrings, and in this way man "will prove himself worthy of his heritage," for "Without God a nation must die."

## Quantity v. Quality

One would seriously like to know whether the *Church Times* really believes that the greater fecundity of the British, and other peoples, say, a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, really indicated a greater sense of parental responsibility than is existent to-day, a greater sense of human dignity, or a livelier appreciation of the "will of God?" If the *Church Times* believes this, then we advise the editor to look back upon the manner in which people lived a hundred and fifty years ago, and the conditions under which they bred like rabbits and died like vermin. But they did have more unshakeable faith in God than exists now, and that is probably a very important distinction.

The truth is that the root objection of the *Church Times*, and of other Orthodox Churches to Birth-Control is not stated. The main reason is that the conscious, the deliberate, the substantially advertised practice of birth-control deals a heavy blow at the hold of religion and religious organizations over mankind. Take away from the priesthood of any religion a dominating influence over the major functions of human life—birth, marriage and death—and its only source of power left is the everyday happenings of existence. But these are obviously being lifted out of the control of religion. The weather, the incidence of disease, the play of economic and sociological forces, all are now plainly matters of science. However slowly it is being done, man is learning to control his own life, and even though he cannot always do this, he is beginning clearly to recognize the methods by which it may be accomplished. And this obviously spells the decline of religion. Take away the religious aspects of birth, marriage and death, and the future of religion is indeed hopeless.

The Roman Catholic Church avowedly aims at numbers, and pays little regard to quality, unless we count as a test of quality belief in Roman Catholic doctrines. Other Churches follow suit, although their desire is not so openly avowed. Politicians also have their eyes on mere numbers, whether, in countries where the vote exists as expressed by the ballot box, or, where it does not exist, for military and other purposes. And the military-minded places numbers above everything, counting individual value in terms of a brute fighting capacity, which really belongs to the levels of mere biological efficiency. So we have the politician and the General urging an increase of population in order that one country may be able to withstand another, and if advisable overrun the other. We must increase population so that we may have colonies, and we must have colonies to find room for our increasing population. The religious analogue to this is the struggle of rival Churches for more members in order to fill new Churches that are built, and new Churches that must be built to accommodate the greater numbers that may be bred. The religious proposition that God gave to this or that nation a certain place in the world with certain privileges and powers, which they must defend and preserve from a sense of duty to God, is stated in political terms by arguing that unless the population increases regularly, the British, French, German, or the Italian nation will find itself snowed under by its neighbour. But this is stating the problem in terms of the politician or the soldier, just as the Roman Catholic Church states it in terms of the Church. They are all like a barber protesting against the development of a hairless race of humans. The biological and sociological problem, however, is not to secure, by sheer weight of numbers, the survival of this or that country, but deliberately to create conditions that will favour survival of the best type of human being; and to do this, is ultimately to lose the

significance of nation, as a separative concept, in the integrative conception of humanity. It is a higher type of men and women at which we should aim, not at the encouragement of a mere animal swarming.

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## A New Slave State

Some time ago it was remarked that the distinction between Italy and Abyssinia was that of a State owning Slaves and a Slave-owning State. Italy by its annexation of Abyssinia has now added one to the State owning slave nations of the world, and the Abyssinians are now reduced to the level of the Italian public. Italy, after one of the most brutal and cowardly wars of modern times, a war in which the black troops stood the brunt of the fighting with the gallant Italian soldiers coming in at the end to do the parading, having largely restricted their activities to pouring poison gas on men, women and children, sick and wounded, is supreme. The Italians had the full blessing of the Roman Catholic Church, and the hardly concealed support of members of our own Government and certain of our newspapers.

It is true that people will no longer be sold bodily in the market places of Abyssinia. But that is really a minor evil. Ancient Rome and Greece, as well as other countries, have shown us that a man may be sold into bodily slavery and still retain his mental independence and self-respect. But the slavery instituted in Italy and Abyssinia is of a different and a more demoralizing kind. Men and women are now told what to think and what to say. They are to be told when to demonstrate, what to applaud and what to revile, and will be "beaten up" by order of the castor oil hero if they disobey. The freedom of the press is abolished; freedom of political activity is denied. Press correspondents are banished from the new slave State, and even in our own press a curtain has been drawn, and Abyssinia no longer appears in the news. As a means of gaining the good will of Mussolini, changes have been made in the British Cabinet that is a direct slap in the face for the home public. Our ships will come home for fear Mussolini will be offended if they are not. Money will probably be lent him so that he can complete the enslavement of the Abyssinians. The King of Italy is the head of a new slave State; his master Mussolini is the director of a new nation of slaves. Before the war there were slaves in Abyssinia. Now there are no free men. That is how civilization is advanced in 1936.

"Idiot Man" has gained another triumph. The author of *Human Stupidity* will have to write another volume to his proposed 53 if he is to make his work complete.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

What the Theist does at every step is to read his own feelings and desires into nature. The design he talks about so glibly is inside, not outside him. As well might a maggot in a cheese argue that the world was designed for him because the agreement between its structure and the cheese is so harmonious. There is a more complex synthesis of forces in the case of the man than in the case of the maggot, a more subtle exhibition of nature's infinite capacity for evolving fresh forms of life, and that is all. It is man who paints a picture of himself on the surface of things and then admires a marvel he has called into existence. To one who correctly visualises the process of evolution the existence of God is to-day hardly a subject for discussion. There is a discussion only of the history of the belief, and in that is found its strongest condemnation.

*Theism or Atheism.*

## The Day After Death

"The miraculous has become absurd, the impossible Gods and phantoms have been driven from the earth and sky. We are living in a natural world."—*Ingersoll*.

"The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip  
To hand the wretch in order."—*Burns*.

WHEN Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the nineteenth century, died, a notice was affixed outside the Newington Tabernacle, in South London, where he had officiated for so many years. It was worded: "Our beloved pastor entered heaven at 11.5." That notice caused a real sensation, almost comparable to the first trip of the "Queen Mary." For the nineteenth century was a very different time from the present, and large numbers of people took religion very seriously, particularly the Nonconformists.

In those far-off days religion was dogmatic, defiant, and definite. To-day, even professing religious people are hazy and indefinite in their theological opinions, and the salaried Sons-of-God, with few exceptions, are as foggy in their pulpit utterances as are their innocent congregations on matters of theology.

Take the question of a future life. Despite two thousand years of Christian teaching, despite two millenniums of priestly control of education, few people can give coherent expression to their ideas on the subject. One man professes to believe in the immortality of the soul; another man insists on the resurrection of the body; whilst a third voices the jargon of Spiritualism; and a fourth chatters of theosophy and reincarnation. Frederick Myers, who wrote books on human survival, once asked a parson what he really thought would happen to him after death." The unexpected reply was: "I suppose I shall go to heaven. But I wish you would not talk about such disagreeable matters." That is a sample of intellectual flippancy, but far other, and more serious, views were prevalent in Victorian times. There is an enormous difference between the current, incoherent ideas of an alleged future existence and the rigid, tragical views of the last century. Spurgeon himself preached and wrote that the majority of human beings were actually destined to eternal torture in full view of the Christian deity:—

In fire, exactly like that which we have on earth to-day, will they lie, asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed—every nerve a string on which the Devil shall for ever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament.

The unfortunate people will:—

Look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written "For Ever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torment they shall say, "For Ever." When they howl, echo cries, "For Ever."

That barbarian theology was what the majority of Christians believed until quite recently, and similar savage ideas are still preached by reactionary Romish priests, Salvation Army officers, and other howling dervishes of our streets and open spaces. Death is, according to these pastors and masters, the "King of terrors." They heighten the effect by appealing to the fears of their innocent hearers, and use the Devil and his fearful fireworks as a lever. And nobody is there to tell people the truth except a small number of devoted Freethinkers, who are anathema to all the clergy and churches of Christendom. The sermons from the clergy, archaic in thought, and inflated with pure nonsense, deal in generalities and gross exaggerations. "The wages of sin is death" is a sample

of their idea of wisdom. Hence the orthodox churches are emptying of men, and some are attracted by the showy pretensions of the Spiritualists. That is one result of the half-beliefs of the half-educated of the present day, and is, in itself, an ironic comment on present-day education.

Since the dawn of a Christian religion the fear of death has been exploited to the uttermost by the clergy for their own sorry ends. Their policy is to keep people ignorant on these matters, and then exploit this innocence. The old Pagans of the Classic era had very different and much saner views, and looked death in the face without flinching. Epictetus the Stoic, says proudly:—

Why should we fear death? For where death is, there are we not; and where we are, there death is not.

No less emphatic is Marcus Aurelius, "the noblest Roman of them all," who says that death is "nothing more than the mere work of Nature," and adds "it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural." Modern science shows that the old Pagans were right.

In spite of the clergy, and the so-called mediums, the riddle remains unanswered, the sphinx is still silent. Couched in plausible and semi-scientific language, presented with all the resources of special pleaders who have had years of experience in spell-binding, the plea for human survival is, in the last analysis, but an appeal to emotionalism. The poet Heine hit the nail on the head when he suggested, smilingly, that the idea of immortality may have suggested itself to a lover in the arms of his mistress, or to a worthy burgher sipping his beer in the cool of a summer evening. It is, in the last resort, but a desire for personal continuance, to be for ever as we are. In spite of man's importunity, "the rest is silence."

"Vain are the thousand creeds  
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;  
Worthless as withered weeds,  
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main."

The new Spiritualism gives no better answer than the older and more savage creeds, and the later alleged messages from the "other side" are as unconvincing as the earlier. Think, for a moment, of the personal equation in all this priestly mirage of guesswork. The poor Indian dreams of his happy hunting grounds; the Mohammedan pictures his Paradise peopled with houris; the prosaic Christian looks for the jewelled streets of a New Jerusalem, with a red-hot poker department for the people the clergy dislike; and Sir Oliver Lodge, and the modern Spiritualists, believe that "spirits" smoke cigars, and pass their leisure in playing accordions and tambourines at séances. The religious world is no nearer a solution than in the far-off days of Lucretius the Epicurean, who reminded his contemporaries that there will be no second self to mourn over our extinction. All the religious oracles are contradictory with regard to an alleged next world, and their guesses are as dead as the people whom they were to have lifted out of oblivion.

All we know for certain is that man is mortal, but Nature is immortal. The world grows old, and we grow old with it; but Nature is ever fair and young. The flowers of the springtime return year by year; lads and maidens are ever wandering in the dusk at eventide. The love of husband and wife is ever consecrated by the coming into the world of the beautiful new life springing from their own. Though our personality be blotted out by the sleep of death, our influence goes to swell the volume of humanity.

After all, death is not so much our concern as life itself. The men and women of our own time have

shown the greatest courage and the highest disdain of death ever shown. It is our present fate, smoky with clouds that hide splendour or doom, to be living at the very apex of the world's history, and in the zenith of man's challenge to fate. The secular solution of the question of human survival is the best and sanest. All spring from the breast of Nature, and have their day, and all return to sleep. Fear of the alleged fearful Devil and his fiery Hell should have no place at all. On the contrary: "Into the breast that gives the rose, shall we with shuddering fall?"

MIMNERMUS.

## Country Churchyard

### III.—THE OMNIPOTENT SCORES

IN the Churchyard of the little village of Tewin in Hertfordshire, there is more than one object of interest to the Freethinker, and, in the mind of one pious scribe, a visit has the possibility of a startling *dénouement*. We are told, "The circumstances in connexion with this extraordinary spot have been so blessed as to bring an unbeliever to the House of God." So the Londoner, athirst for rich psychological experience, knows where there is a possibility of obtaining it next Bank Holiday. It is not half-an-hour's walk from North Welwyn Station.

The major attraction to most people in Tewin Churchyard is the Tomb of Lady Ann Grimston, who departed this life in 1713, in the 60th year of her age, and in rather distressing circumstances.

God has visited the burial-place of this titled lady in puckish vein. An ash and a sycamore have been disputing for more than a couple of centuries the ownership of the site with its occupant. Seven stems of the ash and three of the sycamore have been the unwitting recipients of the Holy Spirit. The Great Arboriculturist has breathed upon the seedlings. In their endeavours to vegetate they have found the stone and iron of the tomb very much in their way. They have played rare pranks with it, in one place cuddling it, and the other place, repelling it, and in some cases actually swallowing both stone and iron. Some there are who speak lightly of this occurrence as a mere "Freak of Nature." It was in one of the years near the beginning of the Big War when I first looked upon this minor cataclysm, but, even then, instinct unmistakably warned me that this was no *freak*. The Spirit of Inquiry possessed me. In those days there was (and still may be), a "Stores" on the Village Green, overlooking which verdancy I lived. This was no modern Emporium; on the contrary, it was a very tiny shop. Still one could obtain there, Postage Stamps, Potatoes, Paraffin, Fly and Evening Papers, Licorice All Sorts and a surprisingly varied supply of other commodities. It even had a corner for bibliophiles from which one obtained a little Threepenny Handbook about Lady Ann, and a very good threepennyworth it was. It related with some circumlocution how it came about that the Spirit of God came to move upon the seedlings:—

On a bed, richly carved, the crimson curtains of which were of the softest texture, lay Lady Ann Grimston. If we might judge from the general appearance of the room in which the bed was placed, she was a woman of considerable fortune, for huge mirrors extended from floor to ceiling, the walls were adorned with the works of celebrated artists, and antique and handsome furniture was tastily arranged with that of a more modern date. But what mattered her earthly possessions, and how could the room look cheerful, when its inmates were

a dying woman, sorrowing friends, and the usual attendants of a sick bed, a minister and a doctor.

The story continues:—

The most casual reader will at once perceive that Lady Ann was that dying woman, and the bed she was on, was her deathbed.

It is excellent to have this difficult point made sun-clear. Proceeding:—

The daughter of an earl, and the wife of a baronet, Lady Ann had lived a life of ease. Fond of gaiety and pleasure to the last, she had paid little attention to religious matters; indeed no one could persuade her that the Word of God was true. It was strange, therefore, to perceive a clergyman in her room; but in this case he had been called without her knowledge. One by one her relatives advanced and bade their last farewell. She answered them with resignation, and even with firmness, and at that time of all others, preserved the stoicism she had so signally displayed during the whole of her life, although she was full aware she had taken her last potion, and knew the sands of her life were decreasing fast. The clergyman at length approached to offer some words of comfort; but when she saw him—

Perfect equipoise Lady Ann possessed, it will be noticed, until she cast her eyes upon the clerical visitor. The sympathies of our readers, up to that point, we feel sure, were all with the lady, but the outburst that is to follow will no doubt impose some slight strain. It can be admitted that it was a pity that Ann's admirable, even enviable, stoicism, couldn't have survived the sight of the clergyman. In mitigation, however, one can urge that the clergyman had called "without her knowledge," which was really too bad of him, for after all, an Englishwoman's House was or ought to have been her Castle, and one of the dignified clergy, of all people, should have respected this immemorial privilege. Still, after making every allowance, one must admit that, for once, Ann failed to express herself with urbanity. This is what happened:—

—her face became that of a fury, and motioning him away, she spoke thus: Begone, vile hypocrite; do you come in my last hours to incense me? Have I not told you often enough there is no God? Bear witness, my friends, to what I say: if there is any truth in the Word of God, as you call it, may seven trees grow from my grave. She sank back on her pillow, and in a few moments all was over. Her spirit had fled.

But God is not mocked. The lady had had her fling, her few moments of bravado; after that the President of the Immortals went in to bat. And, as might have been expected with all the resources at his disposal, he had a lively innings, and the sport provided was first-class. As for Ann, she was passive. She had had courage and spirit when living, but when dead, she was unable to put on any other aspect than that common to all corpses; that which might be described as one of absolute "Go as you please."

All is not Dark Night, however, in Tewin Churchyard; there are signs of the Dawn. Before one leaves one should find the tomb of Alfred Beit. His tomb shows no sign of disintegration—it is on the contrary, tastefully chosen and carefully tended—yet this slab bears a challenge which, if lacking passion, is as plain and unmistakable. For on this slab are the words of Leigh Hunt, "Write me as one that loves his fellow men." Thus have we the Old and the New within a stone's throw. Ancient Belief and Modern Thought! Man versus God, in fact, and such a God! A surly curmudgeon, contemptuous of spirit and dignity in his creatures, and, irascible,

malicious, childish, when his preposterous vanity is threatened. Such a God, but the God of Christendom nevertheless—the One and Always Unchangeable God!

Another name has been added to this stone. It is the name of a boy who, though not fighting in the war, met his death because of the war, and in circumstances so poignant and so dreadful that it is too hard even to repeat them. It is sufficient to say that "ragging" by his school-fellows on account of his father's nationality, proved unbearable to him. Gerald du Maurier, sick at heart because of the wholesale demoralization of his fellow-countrymen at home during the war, would note such cases as these. If there are any now who are inclined to doubt that *Patriotism is not enough*, let them reflect a while on the death of this York schoolboy, descendant of one of "the men who made the Empire," and there they will find a story true and terrible enough to furnish them with ample correction and reproof.

T. H. ELSTON.

## The Era of Enlightenment

In certain superior circles it is quite customary to cavil concerning the optimistic outlook of the Rationalists in the eighteenth century. The evangel of liberty, equality and fraternity was admittedly succeeded by a period of disillusionment, with its aftermath of the Napoleonic campaigns and the miseries of the factory system. Nevertheless, the labours of the many noble men who strove to unshackle the human mind from political and religious delusions were not spent in vain. Indeed, their beneficent activities made all later progress possible, and laid firm foundations for happier ages than ours in days still to dawn.

Even so, the path was prepared for subsequent triumphs in several departments of intellectual life in the succeeding century. Thus it came about that, as the Rev. Norman Sykes concedes in his interesting essay, *The Age of Reaction and Reconstruction*: "In England the publication by Darwin in 1859 of his *Origin of Species* marked the commencement of this revolution, and popular attention was attracted to its meaning in the following year by the debate at the British Association meeting at Oxford, when Huxley crossed swords with Bishop Samuel Wilberforce. In the same year the appearance of *Essays and Reviews* indicated the ready acceptance of the new canons of critical investigation by a group of liberal English Churchmen, and the controversies which followed the publication ensured the domestication of the principle of unfettered study in matters historical and theological within the Established Church."

Yet, all this and very much more indirectly depended upon the pioneer achievements of the depreciated eighteenth century. For the science of Newton and the philosophy of Locke were then carried much further than these eminent thinkers ever dreamed of. As a distinct movement the Age of Reason arose in England, and its advocacy of intellectual liberty, science and philosophy, while in the land of its birth restricted to a thoughtful few, was destined to win its greatest victories as a popular and widespread evangel in the fair land of France. While long indifferent to English influences, the French, during the eighteenth century, manifested an increasing interest in Anglican achievement. Voltaire proclaimed the merits of Newton and Locke, while Montesquieu wrote appreciatively of the English Constitution.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century Fontenelle and Pierre Bayle endeavoured to enlighten their contemporaries, but in the eighteenth, Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Holbach, D'Alembert, Diderot and many other reformers were all engaged in the struggle. Dr. Arnold justly termed this period "the seed time of the modern world," while the Teuton, Troeltsch, has hailed the enlightenment as "the beginning and the foundation of the properly modern period of European culture and history, in contrast to the theretofore prevailing ecclesiastical and theological culture."

That the philosophers of the Enlightenment over-rated the influences of man's reasoning capacity may be admitted, and that their theory of religion as an invention of an interested priesthood is no longer tenable is also true. But these misconceptions, incidental to the age, sink into utter insignificance when compared with the services rendered to humanity by these protagonists of progress and reform. As Prof. Smith so eloquently phrases it: "To Voltaire and his fellows we owe it that abuses were attacked, cruelties exposed, and absurdities shown to be such. The cloud of superstition which had darkened the Middle Ages, and which had burst . . . in a devastating storm of persecution and religious war, rolled away when the sun of reason rose and shone with all its strength. If we esteemed men by the happiness they have diffused and by the noxious oppressions they have destroyed, Voltaire and Diderot would be among the greatest saints in our calendar."

The sage of Ferney and his compatriots won a glorious victory, but it was a long and bitter fight. Every vested interest was at the outset arrayed against them, even in France. Diderot's publications were confiscated, and he suffered imprisonment. Voltaire was twice immured in the Bastille and spent most of his long life in exile. Advanced works were constantly seized and publicly burnt by the authorities. Buffon was compelled to recant his evolutionary opinions. The death penalty menaced the publishers of unlicensed works, while outlawry, the pillory, the lash and the galleys were penalties risked not only by the sellers, but the buyers, of various proscribed publications. In fact, only in the Prussia of Frederick the Great, in England and the Netherlands, were authors and publishers comparatively free from molestation.

Moreover, the French press was mainly inimical to the Enlightenment, and the scribes who assailed the Voltaireans were generously treated by Church, State and traditional scholarship alike.

Amid dangers such as these it behoved the iconoclasts to walk warily. But, encouraged by the voluntary blindness of intellectuals in high places, by writing under assumed names, through the use of secret printing presses and by being prepared to flee at the shortest notice to freer lands, the barbarous legal code was evaded. The heretics' persecuted state stimulated public sympathy, while the marked superiority of their style and logic to that of their adversaries attracted many converts. All forms of literary art were employed in furtherance of the new ideas. Mockery became a powerful weapon, and the reformers' club-footed critics suffered severely when made targets for ridicule. The ready wit of the innovators was bitterly resented by the orthodox party, and in England the indignant comments of Dr. Johnson, Bishops Warburton and Berkeley, all show how successfully the darts of the Freethinkers had found their mark.

The printing press was soon supplemented by oral propaganda. Where wit, grace and beauty reigned in the salons, it became fashionable to discuss forbidden themes. In select circles science and culture

were favourite studies. The sceptical and satirical suggestions of "the malicious Bayle," as Gibbon smilingly termed that philosopher; the materialistic *L'Homme Machine*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and other brilliant writings were eagerly read and keenly discussed.

The clubs, coffee-houses and secret societies welcomed the spirit of inquiry and the doctrines of the Encyclopædists won wide acceptance. Many of these meeting places were freely open to the public while there were private gatherings of those who were engaged in revolutionary activities directed against the Crown and the Church.

The Freemasons established a lodge in London in 1717 of considerable importance, and despite certain mummeries incidental to the Order, this body seems to have served the cause of liberty and progress. Once founded, the masonic lodges spread very rapidly in Europe, while two lodges were in being in America, in 1727 at Philadelphia, and at Boston in 1735. Whatever the Masonic Orders may have since become in Protestant communities they were at their inception hostile to sacerdotalism. The Freemasons have ever been anathema to the Roman See, but while their public influences may have been exaggerated, one may perhaps subscribe to the view that, at least in its earlier stages "the work of the Masons in educating the masses cannot be regarded as negligible." Again, Charles Bradlaugh was a Freemason.

Excellent libraries now became available to the reading public, and aided in the spread of knowledge in England, France, Germany and Italy. In the eighteenth century the British Museum began to amass that priceless collection of books and manuscripts that has since made it the leading library in the world. Yet, America seems to have led the way in providing a wide public with access to literary information, and in establishing the library at Philadelphia, the sceptic Franklin earnestly participated.

It is difficult to determine the percentage of the population that profited through the use of these institutions. But an enlightened minority most certainly came under their influence and widely disseminated the message of the apostles of modern thought.

Voltaire's readers throughout Europe were estimated by Frederick the Great at 200,000, and despite its cost the *Encyclopédie* ran through seven editions. Nineteen editions of the complete works of Voltaire were sold between 1740 and 1788, while the writings of Rousseau and other heretics enjoyed very extensive sales.

T. F. PALMER.

### Young Scotland and the Church

THINGS are not quite as bad in Scotland as many of our Freethinking friends across the border think.

The Rev. Nevile Davidson of Glasgow Cathedral has just been bewailing the fact that "Thousands of young people in the present day are growing up in Paganism, never having known the comforts and benefits of Christianity." Young workers, like myself, who remember the dismal parades we used to have, will smile at the latter part of the Reverend Gentleman's statement.

I remember, as a boy of fourteen, having my well-earned Sunday morning's rest disturbed by well-meaning but misguided parents who honestly believed they were doing me a good turn in packing me off to Church. When we got there an old fire-eating Presbyterian minister would keep our hair standing on end for two hours as he shouted to us a description of all the terrible scorings and singeings that would befall us because of the outrageous way we youngsters were sinning. Another Hell-fire sermon had to be listened to again at

night, and it was a stunned and terrified pit-boy who stepped on the cage the next morning and was dropped a hundred fathoms nearer the awful place described so vividly the previous day.

It seems, according to Mr. Davidson, that a recent census in a large town revealed the fact that fifty per cent of the adolescent population did not go to any kind of divine worship. This calculation may be right, but if he were to come to the coal-mining districts of Lanarkshire, he would get an even more unpleasant shock. He would there find that the church non-attendance figure is nearer ninety per cent.

The healthy young miner, who works hard for six days in the gloom and darkness of a coal mine, has neither the time nor inclination to sit in a stuffy church, listening to the superstitious outpourings of the modern witch-doctor. Most of the parsons nowadays discreetly omit to emphasize the brimstone part of their stock-in-trade, but the mythical Heaven they offer us, with its raucous singing, its trumpet-coughing and harp-strumming, seems to be an equally terrible place, and in the majority of cases we wisely decide to concern ourselves with the only place we know of.

Yes, if Mr. Davidson comes to our town in Lanarkshire and counts the youths who enter the chapels and churches, and later sees the crowds who leave for cycling and hiking tours, not to mention the boys who are in the backyards playing football or having a quiet game of cards, he will have still better reasons for moaning.

So far as the industrial centres of Scotland are concerned, we may correctly say that the Church's octopus grip on social life is gradually being broken, and that young people have been in the vanguard of this civilizing process.

D. G. MOWBRAY.

### Acid Drops

Exactly what type of degeneracy has the editor of the *Daily Express* in mind when he pictures his readers? In the issue of that paper for June 9, the front page is decorated with the portrait of a cat that "is certain to have seen the murder of Stephen Gilbert, grocer and Church-warden of Cardiff." We may expect this to be followed by a visit of a special reporter to interview the cat, the *Express* astrologer to cast the cat's horoscope, and Mr. James Douglas to write a special article describing the cat's emotions when he saw the "dastardly deed." Sir John Reith might also be induced to permit the cat to make noises before the microphone expressive of its feelings when it saw the murder.

Without any extensive advertisement as to the huge crowds that would greet the Emperor of Abyssinia on his arrival in London—a trick which, whether the person concerned be a King or a film star, has the calculated effect of causing a crowd to assemble to see the crowd that they are themselves making—there were, it is estimated, about twenty thousand people assembled to greet the Emperor when he arrived. There was no mistake about the warmth of the welcome, although officialdom did what it could to prevent a demonstration by sending the Emperor by back streets to where he is staying. Mussolini sent Signor Grandi at once to the Foreign Office, asking, according to the papers, for assurances that the Emperor would not be permitted to "make anti-Italian propaganda while in London," although Mussolini has all the time been using the British Post Office and other means for conducting an anti-Abyssinia propaganda ever since he invaded Abyssinia. The required assurance was given by Mr. Eden, and as the British Government is now expected to obey Mussolini to the extent of not standing out for sanctions, and will bring part of the Fleet home, it may be that Mr. Baldwin's lips will be unsealed enough to announce his consent to money being raised in London to enable Mussolini to exploit his new nation of slaves.

The *Christian World* asks the Prime Minister to kill with a "categorical denial" the story that there is any intention to introduce in the near future some form of conscription. We are with the *Christian World* in believing that no form of conscription is contemplated—unless war breaks out. The public simply would not, in its present humour, submit to it. But with regard to the "categorical denial" of Ministers we are on a different level. The two Fascist States in Europe have set the example of elevating lying, and the right to break treaties whenever it is thought desirable, to the level of a primary ethical right, and at the same time open and deliberate lying has been given a recognized place in public life. This is not merely the rule in Fascist countries, it is being copied in all other countries. No one to-day seems to be more surprised when a Statesman is found out in a lie than they are in the case of a parson. The parson lies in the name of religion, and the statesman lies in the name of "King and Country." We would not give a row of pins for the "categorical" statement of any statesman. The only guarantee we can have of right-doing and truth-speaking is an informed, critical and independently-minded public.

From the *Daily Telegraph* we learn that one of the most famous thoroughfares in the world, the Unter den Linden of Berlin, is to be denuded of its lime trees. We do not know whether it is "writ sarcastic," but the *Telegraph* says that one reason for this is the intention to see that all the trees in the thoroughfare are of one size. A friend suggests that this is likely because as all men and women in Germany are supposed all to read the same books, say the same things, and think the same thoughts, it is only carrying out the same rule to see that trees grow the same size. After all, if men see trees enjoying the freedom of growing how they will, they may get inspired with the desire to extend this freedom from the plant to the human world. And in a slave state such reflections must be stopped at their source.

With reference to our review last week of "English Messiahs," Dean Inge writing in the *Evening Standard* says after noting the character of the "Six":—

Is this the way in which Messiahs are born? It is an uncomfortable thought for Christians. I wonder that the Rationalist Press does not publish these biographies; they would do us more harm than most of their propaganda.

If Dean Inge read the *Freethinker* regularly (he is probably only carrying on the policy of silence concerning a paper that must not be named, although as widely known as any weekly in the country) he would know that these biographies have been noted in these columns for half-a-century and the logical inference drawn therefrom. Twenty-five years ago Mr. Cohen devoted a series of articles to the subject, afterwards republished as *Religion and Sex*, giving the scientific interpretation of the phenomena. And as was said last week, allowing for differences of character, there is not the slightest ground for a distinction being drawn between a New Testament character who believes he is a messenger from God, and that of the founder of any religion, and the persons mentioned in the book the Dean is noticing. A delusion is a delusion, whether in the case of a founder of a religion, or in the case of an attempt to found one. There is as much, and as little, justification for accepting the "divine" mission or character of the "English Messiahs," as there is for accepting that of Jesus Christ. And the *Freethinker* is the only journal in this country that has always had the courage to say so. Our columns are open if Dean Inge would care to attempt to establish a distinction. But that he is not likely to do. It is safer to write in a paper where no real reply would be permitted.

Britannia, the yacht of George V., is to be broken up, and tearful letters have been written to the press protesting against this treatment of a yacht of which George the Fifth was fond, and which had "been trodden by the

feet of four monarchs." We join in the protest. One of three things might be done. It could be placed by the side of the gun-carriage on which the dead body of the King was carried, and which is on exhibition at Woolwich; it could be exhibited in all the ports of the Empire with enlarged photographs of the finger-prints of the King (this would give a fillip to the feeling of imperial unity by establishing an identity between *our* Kings and ordinary human nature); it could be broken up and pieces preserved throughout the country and "touched" for the cure of diseases. This was one of the powers of the King about two hundred years ago, and we are sure that the cures would be as numerous as those at any faith-healing mission. But is it not a national scandal for a boat that has been trodden by four monarchs to be treated as though it was just an ordinary vessel?

Sir Hubert Murray, Governor of Papua for the last thirty years (and elder brother of Prof. Gilbert Murray), relates the following, among other interesting stories with which he regaled an evening paper's representative:—

Owing to the natives' propensity for dashing in and reporting false murders, we have had to make it a crime to spread a lying report. One village constable came to see me, and said: "The missionary in our village told everybody in church that there was a big fire somewhere that would burn up everybody who didn't come to church. I came to see you about it first, but I suppose I should have arrested him for spreading a lying report."

Oh Hell! is the apt comment on that!

God's Churches all over the country are suffering from the ravages of the Death Beetle. Two old churches near Tonbridge, Kent, are now reported to be seriously affected, but even the Cathedrals are attacked, and the pockets of the Faithful are likely to be seriously and unexpectedly taxed. In the ages of Faith, every pains was taken and no expense spared so that these tabernacles would for huge periods successfully brave the elements, but vain man forgot that God in his infinite wisdom had made this little creature (which bids fair to be Church Enemy No. 1) to make man's plans "gang all agley."

Mr. Beverley Nichols has explained to us why God made the Death Beetle. It was to make Faith *hard*. God saw and was pleased with the erection of magnificent buildings to his honour and glory, but he also saw that man by his brains was circumventing the necessity for such exercises of Faith by the future generations. So God made a little beetle. The faithful must get their hands down, but for all that they do in this way Jesus has promised that God will reward them. It is faith when difficulties are enormous that God likes best. It is teaching like this (which Mr. Nichols has just discovered) that the Churches have always known and perpetually preached. *Faith* sounds well, but Freethinkers have another word for it.

God is also making faith hard for the pious near Ashby-de-le-Zouch. The Church steeple at Blackfordby has been struck by lightning, the brand new weather-cock was swept from the spire, and the clock stopped at ten minutes to three. What God means exactly by stopping it at that time is a problem only to the faithful, but it appears that the clock at Granchester Church has a clock where the hands stand at ten to three. The problem does seem rather *hard*, but the dogs of Faith are on the scent, and the explanations will no doubt follow in good time. They will not agree with each other but that is one of the time-honoured prerogatives of Faith.

Only two days afterwards, God wrecked the steeples of Crocombe Church, near Wells, Somerset, and South Croxton Parish Church, near Leicester. In this way God clinches his point whatever it may be.

What the Glasgow *Daily Record* terms a "stirring call to the Church of Scotland," was given by the Rev. Daniel Lamont to the General Assembly. The world must turn to God, said he, or the state of affairs in the world will get worse. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." In short, what the world wants is more Presbyterianism. Well, Scotland has had more Presbyterianism, and alongside with it, the general acceptance of the Christian teaching that the masses must be content to remain in all humility in the position that the Lord has thought fit to place them. Inhumanity to man reached its height when the Presbyterian God was preached with pailsful of perspiration by Scottish pulpiteers. The Church has had its chance, and a ghastly record is left in history for all honest men to note and draw lessons from. It is possible that "Scotland, small as it is, will lead the world out into a better day." But it will certainly not be by a return to the demented dogmas of a despairing creed.

The Vicar of St. Jude's, Newcastle-on-Tyne, in his Parish Magazine, announces his sapient discovery that the Cinema Industry "is in the hands of those whose chief end is profit-making." "The real motive of the cinema proprietors is not the humbug and cant they talk about the people's pleasures, but financial gain." No one in connexion with Cinemas would dream of denying their commercial basis. The industry can however claim that they supply a useful public want, and one not unconnected with the pleasure of the people. They are no more "greedy" than other business people are when they endeavour to increase their customers. The Reverend Ralph Rummey invites a retort so obvious that we shall not trouble to make it.

Although it was actually Archbishop Hinsley who took 800 pilgrims, including many sick and stretcher cases, to Lourdes, and although the prayers of the faithful to "Our Lady" were loud and fervent, she seems to have been very strong-hearted in the matter of cures. Not a single miracle cure is reported! All we can get from the rev. gentleman is that "the great miracle of Lourdes is the patience, no, the *cheerfulness* of the sick." Ye gods, what a miracle! We have an idea that this is not exactly the kind of miracle, a breathlessly expectant world hopes from "Our Lady"—or one which will be religiously reported by our converted *intelligentsia*. However, the Archbishop does admit there are no policemen at Lourdes—"everybody lives and moves and prays in perfect security." Evidently "Our Lady" does something after all.

The hopes raised in the sick by all the Lourdes nonsense is often paralleled here. For example, a procession of poor little crippled children with their crutches, sticks and irons, was held at Eastcote the other Sunday. The suffering kiddies came from the St. Vincent Orthopaedic Hospital, and they were obviously made to follow "a beautifully decorated statue of Our Lady" by the nurses of that institution. Here again was there a single cure reported? Could anything be more infernally cruel than this kind of thing?

Dr. W. E. Orchard is replacing G. K. Chesterton as the Playboy of the Catholic World. His jokes are good—at the expense of his former bedfellows in the household of faith. In a lecture at Caxton Hall, on behalf of Catholic Schools, Dr. Orchard recently said, in the presence of Archbishop Hinsley and a crowd of other priests:—

"Religious people, are a queer lot. Many are never happy to be going to heaven unless they are sure that some are not going there. An old Presbyterian lady whose minister had preached Universalism remarked with a sigh, 'Some of us had hopes of better things.'"

We had no idea that Dr. Orchard's conversion had so quickly converted the Ancient Rock of Peter to discard Purgatory and Hell-fire from its petrified creed. But perhaps it is only built on a SHAMrock!

Professor Findlay must be a courteous sort of college product—when amongst his fellow-pietists. The following gentlemanly references to those who dare to differ from his creed are worthy of his primitive outlook. They are quoted from his column in the *British Weekly*—presumably with the full acquiescence of the editorial successor of Sir W. Robertson Nichol:—

The civilization of centuries is in danger; when thoughtful people begin to realize that it is so, we may see a change, but not till then. There is stinging truth in our Lord's words, when He said He would have a better chance in Sodom than in Capernaum. When they realize that the alternative to Christian faith is Sodom and poison gas, there may be a turning. Meanwhile, we must be content to nurse the "little ones of Jesus" back to health, and wait till the others wake up to reality.

Not quite an ideal "nurse," we imagine, for ordinary decent "little ones." He may be an authority on "stinging," but as a controversialist he is outside the pale.

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, who recently wrote in the *Christian World*, that "the Christianity we know now cannot be the final religion of the world," very indignantly denies that this is what he meant: what he really meant, it seems, is that "It is not that Christ is not unique. It is, rather, that we do not yet know Him fully," and that "we shall understand Christianity even more fully, and see the amazing Person and work of Christ more completely when the undoubted truth found in other religions is contributed to the whole." So that after Mr. Weatherhead's own twelve published works, and the millions of other Christian books written about Jesus, it is most intriguing to find that we still don't know Christ.

It is still more interesting to find Mr. Weatherhead agreeing that there is "undoubted truth" in other religions. This is what we have always said. There is as much undoubted truth in the religion of the most primitive savage as in Christianity. The reason is simply that with a little modern polish rubbed off Christianity, one finds it exactly like primitive religions. Their origins are precisely the same as well as their reasons for belief. A prayer to a ju-ju idol brings about exactly the same result as a prayer to a Christian idol. Prostrating oneself to a Pope or a Cardinal is of exactly equal value with prostrating oneself to a Zulu witch-doctor. Our congratulations to Mr. Weatherhead. He is getting on.

The Bishop of London, speaking recently on the Church's Marriage Report, "confessed he was somewhat weary of the eternal marriage question." As a bachelor himself, this was perhaps to be expected. But he still held that "no one, whose husband or wife was still living" (but divorced) "could go through a form of marriage in Church." For our part, we hope the Church sticks to its guns. Figures show a larger and larger percentage of marriages taking place in register offices and by rigidly adhering to the "plain" teachings of Jesus on the question, the percentage will continue to go up. The fewer marriages in Church, the less the hold religion will eventually have on the people. And what can be better than that?

The Rev. C. Hallett, M.A., is very shocked that "while in this country many hundreds of million pounds are spent on sports and games and cinemas and tobacco and sweets and betting and 'pools,' all that the Church of England can raise for all the work of the Church overseas is one paltry million pounds." A good many people think this is a million pounds too much for any Church "overseas" work. It could be put to much better use in this country—even if it joined the millions spent on sports and games. We pray for the good time coming when the Church of England won't be able even to raise ten pounds, let alone a paltry million pounds for "overseas."



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. T. MUSTY.—Sorry we had not the opportunity of meeting you at the Conference. Perhaps on some other occasion.

A. MILLAR.—Note what you say about the *Freethinker*. Kindest regards to your father, of whom we often think. Best wishes in new environment.

G. WALLACE.—We share your high opinion of Spencer, and are of opinion that when there is a little more strength in what so often passes for philosophical thinking to-day, and a little more courage in the thought expressed, and when due allowance is made for the state of science in Spencer's day, there will be a return to the high position in which he once stood. Much of what passes for philosophy to-day is mere journalese with only a half-understanding of the questions at issue.

R. V. BIRKBY.—Many thanks for addresses of likely new readers. Paper being sent for the next four weeks.

J. TAIT.—Thanks for cutting, which you will notice has proved useful.

R. B. KERR.—The date of the *Universe* which contained the quotation you enquire about was May 22.

J. MCCORRISKEN, SENR.—The price of *Tim Healy*, is 12s. 6d., and the Publishers, Jonathan Cape, Ltd. We shall be pleased to obtain the book for you.

To Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—A. F. Stringer (India), 5s.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A.A.M., £1.

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

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

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

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9. All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

## Sugar Plums

We have received a copy, No. 3, of a publication issued and circulated in the U.S.A., and edited by Haldeman-Julius, the whole of each issue being written by Mr. Joseph McCabe. The title of the pamphlet serial is *The Freethinker's Library*. But we have also received a handbill advertising the pamphlet, which has for its sole title the *Freethinker*. Anyone sending for the pamphlet on the strength of the advertisement would be surprised to receive the *Freethinker's Library*, which is apparently the publication meant. Now we have many readers in the United States, this paper is well-known there among Freethinkers whether subscribers or not; and the advertisement seems to us to be drawn up with the intention of giving the impression that it is our *Freethinker* that is now being wholly written by Mr. McCabe, and which they are asked to purchase at 50 cents a copy. For all we know the advertisement to which we have referred is being sent wherever the addresses of Freethinkers can be obtained. We have written the above to emphasize the fact that we have nothing whatever to do with this publication, and we leave it to our readers fittingly to describe such conduct. We have no copyright in the U.S.A., but we fancy that the English and American Freethinkers will think alike concerning what has been done.

Mr. Cohen has a number of congratulatory messages on his twenty-one years editorship of this journal. He can only say now how much he appreciates them, and how greatly he values them. Next week he will pub-

lish a special suggesting a manner in which at the cost of very little time and money everyone who values the *Freethinker* can help to give it a lasting service. People who pay compliments ought to be ready to make them good.

The New York *Truthseeker* is the only Freethought paper in the world that is older than the *Freethinker*. We have much pleasure in publishing this letter *apropos* of the N.S.S. Conference:—

Once a year for a great while I have read in the *Freethinker*, that the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. would be held on Whit-Sunday. I have often felt the impulse to consult a church calendar and ascertain what Whit-Sunday stands for in terms of secular months and days. Now at last I have looked it up, on the chance that from its origin the day might this year be especially appropriate to the proceedings, or part of them—the congratulations and the jubilation over the President's re-appearance in his accustomed good health. Here I met with disappointment, for it turns out that Whit-Sunday commemorates Pentecost, when the apostles were mistrusted of taking too much new wine. I had hoped it might be associated in some manner with the raising of Lazarus, since one passage of scripture tells us that a certain man of that name was sick, while another passage describes his financial condition as such that he may have been the editor of a Freethought paper.

I break a habit of reserving my personal thoughts until called for, and incur the risk of speaking out of turn, when I write you to say that in its fiftieth year the National Secular Society has reason to rejoice not only in its survival, but in the circumstances that its members as they gather in Conference are not faced with the problem of the vacant chair.

My greetings to them of to-day, a reverence to those the yesterdays knew, a cheer in advance for those of tomorrow.

Dr. Norman Haire's latest work, *Birth Control Methods* (6s. net., George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.), is certainly one of the best manuals on the subject ever written. It is so because the author has made the question one of intense clinical study. All the methods in vogue have been tested and the results very carefully tabulated and collated. Dr. Haire has thus been able to give the reader his findings based on the hundreds of cases which have passed through his hands.

The question of birth-control and of artificial contraception, came particularly before the public during and after the war. Before then it was difficult to speak openly of the various methods, but the work of many pioneers (to whose services to the cause Dr. Haire gives generous tributes) forced attention on the methods then in use and the reasons for their sometime failure. Since then many books, both by medical and lay men have been published, mostly excellent and informative. But for those who want the information, Dr. Haire's book will be found one of the clearest, and most up-to-date, dealing as it does with the very latest knowledge. There is an interesting foreword by Aldous Huxley and many diagrammatic and photographic illustrations.

A great many of our readers are keenly interested in the question of Divorce Law Reform, and these will be interested in the Annual Meeting of the Divorce Law Reform which will take place on Wednesday, June 17, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. The meeting will commence at 8 o'clock, and among the speakers will be Mr. A. P. Herbert, M.P., and Sir Francis Acland, M.P. Admission is free. Those who wish for further particulars can get them by writing Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman, at the offices of the Union, 55 Chancery Lane, W.C.2.

The Birkenhead (Wirral) Branch is having an Excursion to Delamere, on Sunday. Members will meet at Woodside at 10.30 a.m., the train leaving Woodside at 10.40, Rock Ferry 10.45, Bebington 10.49. Liverpool friends and others will be welcome. Fare 1s. 3d. They should bring their own refreshments.

Freethinkers resident in Leeds and surrounding districts, who wish to do something for the cause, are asked to get in touch with Mr. M. Feldman, 58 Meanwood Road, Leeds. There must be quite a number who would like to give their support, and a few enthusiasts willing to work could make a big impression this summer. Mr. Feldman will welcome anyone calling at the above address, where there is always some Pioneer Press literature for sale.

## National Secular Society

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

HELD AT ANDERTON'S HOTEL, FLEET STREET, LONDON,  
ON MAY 31, 1936

PUNCTUALLY at 10.30 a.m. the President's hammer called to order the members and delegates assembled in the Masonic Hall, and he asked the Secretary to call the Roll. The following delegates were present:—

Ashington, J. Seibert; Birmingham, C. H. Smith, F. Terry; Bethnal Green, G. F. Green; Bradford, Mrs. H. Revitt, Mrs. M. Bulmer; Bolton, H. R. Clifton; Blackburn, G. R. Cordwell; Birkenhead, W. Fletcher, Miss H. Wilson; Brighton, J. C. Keast; Burnley, J. Clayton; Chester-le-Street, J. T. Brighton; Chester, E. A. Sandys; Edinburgh, A. C. Rosetti, Mrs. M. Rosetti; Glasgow, Mrs. J. D. Macdonald; Hants and Dorset, Mr. Owen; Hetton, J. McKenzie; Liverpool, W. McKelvie; Leeds, D. Fisher; Manchester, Councillor G. Hall, C. McCall, W. Collins; Newcastle, T. H. Elstob, S. D. Merrett; Nelson, F. G. Warner, Mrs. E. M. Warner; North London, G. Stewart, R. Spicer, L. Ebury; North Shields, G. E. Rowley; Plymouth, W. J. W. Easterbrook; Pontypridd, L. Ellis; Preston, T. Bayard Simmons; South London, F. P. Corrigan, Mrs. R. Seibert, H. Preece; South Shields, F. Keyes; Swansea, J. Marsh; Sunderland, Miss E. Mocre, A. Flanders; Stockport, G. Barker; Seaham, W. H. Copeland; Tees-Side, R. Perry; West London, E. Bryant, G. Bedborough, H. J. Savory, A. Leacy; West Ham, H. S. Wishart, Mrs. E. Venton, F. C. W. Dowson, M.A.

The President then asked that the minutes of the last Conference be taken as read. This was proposed by Mr. Brighton and seconded by Mr. Fisher. As he was still under doctor's orders, the President asked the Secretary to read the Executive's Annual Report. Its adoption was proposed by Councillor Hall and seconded by Mr. Terry. Mr. Fisher thought that reference should have been made to the Shop Restriction Bill, and Mr. Black to the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment. In reply, the President admitted that many things may have been omitted in what was after all, only meant to be a general survey, but the necessary mention should be made. Mr. Savory then proposed the adoption of the Financial Report, and Mr. Stewart seconded. After Messrs. Collins and Wishart had asked for explanations of one or two items, which were satisfactorily dealt with by the President, the Report was adopted.

The Secretary then took the chair for the next item of the Agenda, which was the election of the President. He made a moving speech on the loyalty to and affection for Mr. Cohen by all members of the Society intensified by his recent illness, and was followed by Mr. Corrigan, who moved, on behalf of the South London, West London, Manchester, Liverpool, West Ham, Chester-le-Street, Burnley, and North London Branches:—

"That Mr. Chapman Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S."

Mr. Corrigan said he was glad that the Branch he represented was first in the field with the Motion, for Mr. Chapman Cohen always made a special appeal to its members. Everyone felt it would have been a great loss had he not been with us to-day. It was his personal contact with the Society and its members which endeared him to all, and no man living to-day had contributed more to the cause of Freethought. He hoped that Mr. Cohen would with regard to his health so govern his conduct that they would have the pleasure of his leadership for many years to come.

Mr. Bedborough in seconding the Motion, was in full agreement with both Mr. Rosetti and Mr. Corrigan in that Mr. Cohen had no rival whatever in our affections; and, in support, Mr. Brighton recalled the magnificent work done by Mr. Cohen in the North, and the great personal debt he himself owed to the President. After Councillor Hall interposing that all present would like to speak also in favour of Mr. Cohen, the Motion was carried with great enthusiasm.

Resuming the Presidential Chair, Mr. Cohen said he had to thank the members for the twentieth time for electing him as President—next year would be his coming-of-age in the post. Although he had actually never sought the office, he felt it a great honour, and hoped that he would never forfeit the good opinion of the members of the N.S.S. They had helped him quite as much as he had helped them, and whatever he may have given to the Freethought movement, it had been amply repaid. On behalf of the Executive he then moved that Mr. R. H. Rosetti be elected Secretary. No one, he said, could have done the work of the Society more efficiently and with more devotion. Councillor Hall, seconding, said Mr. Rosetti was "a great lad," and the Motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Ebury moved that Mr. C. G. Quinton be re-elected Treasurer. Mr. Warner seconded. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Collins moved, Mr. Elstob seconded, that Messrs. Theobald & Co., be re-elected Auditors. Carried unanimously.

Councillor Hall proposed, and Mr. Savory seconded, that the nominations for the Executive be voted on *en bloc*. This was agreed to, and they were elected unanimously, after some questions had been raised and answered.

Councillor Hall then proposed on behalf of the Manchester Branch that the office of Vice-President be instituted. He realized that the Society was up against a big proposition, and everyone realized the great difficulty of finding a worthy successor if the President were, for some reason or other, incapacitated. The time had arrived when we had to face the question. He recognized that the office would be a very difficult one to fill. Mr. McCall seconded. He also realized the great difficulty we should have in finding the right man, and hoped Mr. Cohen would help. Mr. Savory pointed out that there was nothing in the Constitution of the Society which permitted the election of a Vice-President, and he thought that the Executive could carry on quite well enough without one. Mr. Wishart wanted the Motion to be thoroughly discussed. A man may do quite well as the Vice-President, but may be unsuitable for the post of President. Mr. Ebury said there were serious difficulties to be faced—what exactly would be the duties of a Vice-President? Could he act as Editor of the *Freethinker*, even temporarily? Mr. Preece thought the motion too "flippant"—in the sense that we could not discuss the question without time and names. Mr. Collins pointed out that the Motion

was concerned only with the N.S.S. and not with the *Freethinker*. It did not follow that a Vice-President would necessarily become President of the N.S.S. Mr. Flanders felt some successor to Mr. Cohen was a necessity, but there was no need to make a decision quickly. Mr. Bayard Simmons opposed the Motion, on the grounds that responsibility would be weakened by adding to the Executive, while Mr. Leacy said that Mr. Cohen had set such a high standard that we seemed to take it for granted that we may not find the right man. He thought that perhaps Mr. Cohen had someone in mind. Mrs. Grant said she felt that a slight had been made by the discussion on the work of the Executive as it had worked excellently during the President's absence. In her opinion, a paid official might prove the best solution of the difficulty.

The President said there was something to be said both for and against the motion. He did not think calling somebody a Vice-President instead of a member of the Executive would help very much. He had many offers of casual help, but pointed out of what little use this was. Nor would a paid official solve the problem—it was extremely difficult to get anyone who could both write and speak, and conduct the business of the Society as well as the general business of a publisher. We used to have Vice-Presidents, appointed as a mark of honour; this was abolished by the new constitution. More discussion followed, particularly whether three or five Vice-Presidents should be appointed. Messrs. Wishart, Fisher, Hall, Savory, Black and Mrs. Venton, all spoke, and finally it was proposed by Mr. Savory and seconded by Mr. Black, that the Motion be referred to the Executive to report to the next Conference, changing the word "Vice-President" to "three Vice-Presidents."

On the Motion by the Executive:—

"That this Conference offers its sincere congratulations to its President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, on reaching the twenty-first year of his editorship of the *Freethinker*, and desires to place on record its sense of the debt that British Freethought owes to its courageous and continuous advocacy of freedom of thought, speech, and publication."

Mr. Bedborough said it was of crowning importance that we should be definite in our appreciation of Mr. Chapman Cohen's great services to the cause of Freethought. He proposed to add to the resolution the words, "and that steps be taken suitably to recognize at an early date Mr. Cohen's services to the Freethought cause."

Mr. Clifton, who had been a member of the Society for over 46 years, seconded the proposal. He heard Mr. Cohen lecture as far back as 1890, and had always been inspired by his lectures and his editorship. Mr. Hornibrook gladly concurred and read out to the Conference an extremely appreciative letter from a New Zealand journalist, in which Mr. Cohen was acclaimed as the greatest advocate of Freethought this century had produced. "Hell was full of brainy people but the devil could wait."

Mr. Cohen demurred to the addendum, which on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

On resumption, the Secretary again called the Roll.

Mr. Bayard Simmons asked permission to move the suspension of the Standing Orders for the purpose of calling attention to a matter of importance.

Mr. Simmons said it was a great privilege to propose that the Conference be asked to send its heartiest greetings to our comrades in Czech-Slovakia. He considered that the fight against reaction would have to be settled in Europe over the body of Czech-

Slovakia, for if that country were beaten, practically all Europe would go over to Fascism. Mr. A. B. Moss heartily seconded the proposal, and he was supported by Mrs. Grant. Carried enthusiastically. The wording of the resolution was:—

"That this Conference of the National Secular Society assembled in London, representing the militant forces of Freethought in Great Britain, sends its fraternal greetings to its Freethought comrades of Czech-Slovakia; congratulates them on the vigour and health of the Freethought movement in that country; thanks them for the splendid hospitality accorded the British delegation to the Prague Congress of the International Union of Freethinkers; and wishes them triumphant success in their struggle against reaction and superstition in Central Europe."

Mr. Fletcher then put the Motion by Birkenhead Branch:—

"That this Conference deprecates the undue time spent on Motions during the Morning Sessions and resolves:—

(a) "That the Annual Report be printed in the *Freethinker*, one week prior to the Annual Conference.

He deprecated the way in which a great deal of time was often given to Motions which were not very important, before lunch, while later, as time went on, other and perhaps more important Motions were rushed throughout without discussion. He criticized last year's Conference on this score, and suggested that the Executive's Annual Report be published a week before the Conference, thus saving the time spent in reading it.

Mr. Bedborough seconded (a) coupling it with Motion 14 on the Agenda.

The President said the Agenda was very carefully prepared by the Executive so that time could be given to items which demanded most discussion. Those upon which almost all members were agreed were generally left to the last.

Mr. Bryant suggested that the Report be circulated to "delegates." Mr. Collins said the Report could not be printed till passed by the Conference.

The President objected to the Report going only to delegates and not to members as a whole. He explained there was no difference at all between either, except when it came to the question of a Poll Vote. Messrs. Fisher and Leacy also spoke, and eventually the Motion (a) was carried as amended "That the Annual Report be circulated to Secretaries and individual members one week before the Conference," the Motion 14 being withdrawn.

Mr. Fletcher then proposed:—

(b) "That a time limit be adopted for motions.

(c) "That Branch Motions should take precedence over individual motions.

(d) "That Motions which have a direct bearing on the activities of the N.S.S. should take precedence over Motions which affect the Society only indirectly."

and Mr. Bedborough seconded.

Mr. Ebury, opposing, said Motions should be fully discussed on their merits regardless of a time limit. Messrs. Savory, Hall, Goldman, and Green all took part in the subsequent discussion.

(b), (c) and (d) were then put to the vote and lost.

The President said it was his duty to allow the fullest possible discussion on all the Motions. He thought what the Conference wanted was "Standing Orders," but he pointed out that the N.S.S. was not a Trades Union, or a Town Council. If the Conference wanted Standing Orders they should appoint a Committee to draw them up. After further discus-

sion it was agreed that Standing Orders be adopted by the Society for the next Conference.

Mrs. Venton moved on behalf of West Ham Branch :—

"That Freethinkers be asked to offer the most strenuous opposition to the efforts being made by ministers of religion, to secure greater influence in the control of municipal government."

but altering the words "ministers of religion" to "religious interests." She strongly felt that Freethinkers should take greater part in local government. Mr. Goldman seconded and the motion was carried.

The Motion by E. Saphin :—

"That this Conference protests against the special advantages given by the B.B.C. to religious bodies for sectarian propaganda, while excluding all deliberate and direct criticism of religious teaching."

was seconded by Mr. Sandys.

Mr. Millward asked whether it was any good to write to the B.B.C.? The President said it was very necessary to register our protest, and the Motion was carried.

Mr. Ebury then proposed :—

"That in view of the growing tendency of the police in many parts of the country to interfere with and to restrict the rights of public meeting in the open air, this Conference urges upon all the necessity of preserving freedom of speech as an essential part of reform propaganda."

He said that it seemed as if special facilities were given to Fascists with police protection, and instanced his own case, where only after very vigorous protests, was he allowed to speak on certain occasions on Hampstead Heath. Mr. Collins seconded, and after Mr. Wishart had spoken in favour, the Motion was carried.

In proposing the Motion by West London and West Ham Branches, and North Eastern Area, and Mrs. M. Saran :—

"That in view of the Education Bill, now before Parliament, this Conference, in protesting against the further extension of grants of public money for sectarian religious teaching, calls upon Freethinkers to press for the establishment of Council Schools adequate to local demands in all areas, and to the restriction of the education given in such schools to purely Secular subjects."

Mr. Savory gave an able speech, showing how the Churches had been in Conference with the Government to capture, as far as possible, the schools for religious teaching.

Mr. Fisher wanted certain alterations in the wording of the Motion, altering the words, for example, "in protesting" to "emphatically protests," and calls upon Freethinkers "to demand" instead of "to press for." Mr. Smith seconded. This amendment was carried.

Motion No. 17 was withdrawn by Mr. Bedborough. In proposing the Motion by Leeds Branch :—

"That this Conference in the interests of the development of sound citizenship and in vindication of the principle of equal liberty for all, urges upon all Branches of the Society to promote intensive local activity with a view to secure the same liberty of opening for places of amusement or recreation on Sunday that exists on other days of the week."

Mr. Fisher asked whether the Executive would give its moral support, for example, to any member who opened a cinema in Leeds on a Sunday? Mr.

Bedborough, seconding, said he felt we should make more use of cinemas in general.

The President said that he fancied the old laws about opening on Sunday would still obtain. If the admission was free any cinema could open on Sunday, but it was police pressure which frightened cinema proprietors. After Mr. Smith retailed his experiences in Birmingham, the Motion was carried.

Mr. Fletcher then moved the Motion by Birkenhead Branch :—

"That a Committee be elected for the purpose of revising the Immediate Practical Objects of the Society."

He thought this should have been done years ago. While there were some Practical Objects on which we were all agreed, there were others on which members greatly differed. Would it not be better to formulate those upon which we were all in agreement? Mr. Bedborough, in seconding, said we could all submit our ideas to the Committee. Mr. Wishart thought a large number of members would be ready to abolish the lot. After Mr. Goldman had spoken, the President explained that many of the objects for which the N.S.S. stood had been realized, and their retention was therefore valuable. The members were never all of one mind, but were in substantial agreement on many things. After Messrs. Wishart and Millward had spoken, the Conference proceeded to the next business.

The Motion by Executive :—

"This Conference views with the greatest apprehension the suicidal competition in armaments now being pursued by the leading nations of the world, which demonstrates the breakdown of European statesmanship, and can but end in a second world-war; it also regards the existing international situation as a crowning proof of the ineffectiveness of the Christian Churches—which still represent the greatest single organized force in Europe—and their inability to contribute anything effective to the development of civilization; and, finally, affirms the conviction that only by the establishment of a non-national court which shall exert the same authority as is exercised by courts of law in civilized countries, can the era of national wars be brought to a close."

was moved by Mr. Saphin and was seconded by Mr. Millward. Mr. Fisher suggested drastic alterations in the wording, which were not accepted by the meeting. Mr. Leacy also objected to some of the clauses as, he contended, they were not accurate. He said sufficient attention had not been paid to other causes of war. The President pointed out that the clauses were quite accurate, and they aimed at indicating both the inefficiency of Christianity as an instrument of war, and its influence in promoting war. It was also clear that if Christians in Europe genuinely opposed war, there could be no war. After further discussion the Motion was carried.

Mr. Fisher then moved the Motion by the Leeds Branch N.S.S. :—

"That the abolition of the State supervision of Broadcast Services should be added to the Immediate Practical Objects of the N.S.S."

and was seconded by Mr. Simmons. Messrs. Wishart, Ebury, and Mrs. Venton opposed. The Motion was then put to the vote and not carried.

The President then brought the Conference to a close with a fitting and final speech.

H.C.

To be disinterested is to be strong, and the world is at the feet of him whom it cannot tempt.—Amiel.

## Evening Meeting

CONWAY HALL, on the evening of Whit-Sunday, was packed with members, friends and sympathizers. In addition to almost all those who attended the Conference were a large number of new comers, a gratifying feature of the movement. The Demonstration was obviously a great attraction, and the hearty applause given to all the speakers proved the meeting to be an unqualified success. The President of the N.S.S., Mr. Chapman Cohen, received quite an ovation as he led the other speakers on to the platform. And it was evident that all present were delighted to have him again with us as a leader in the best of all causes.

Although each speaker was limited to a ten minutes speech—and some obviously like a little longer to get going—they managed to get a surprising diversity of solid thought, information and criticism in their speeches. That this was to the liking of the audience was evinced by their hearty applause and laughter. Rarely indeed has a Demonstration proved so interesting and inspiring.

The President's opening speech briefly referred to the beginnings of the National Secular Society over 70 years ago, and the work of heroic champions of freedom of speech and thought like Carlyle, Hetherington, Watson and many others. The work so bravely fought for by them had more than ever to be fought for now—and this was the justification for a body like the N.S.S.

Mr. George Bedborough then took the platform. His excellent diction and phrasing were never to better advantage. He rapidly dealt with fearless fighters like Charles Bradlaugh and the Annie Besant of the old days, as well as Foote, Ramsey and Kemp.

Mr. L. Ebury, who followed, dealt admirably with the necessity for Freethought. He was surprised at the stupidity and inanity of many questions addressed to him by people who seemed to have the advantages of education.

Mr. Alan Flanders then spoke particularly on the utter inability of the Churches to deal with war. It was only vague sentiment which made religious people pacifists, and therefore they were of no use whatever to end the terrible scourge.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti after tracing very briefly the progress of religious thought, examined the statement that it was Christians who opposed war. He had no difficulty in proving that, in the main, it was the genuine Christians who composed our Governments, and not the people (most of whom were, to say the least, apathetic with regard to religion) who were responsible for war.

Mr. E. C. Saphin, who has for over thirty years been one of the most popular of our outdoor speakers, spoke strongly in favour of more outdoor work. Make it vocal, he cried, and it was evident a good many of the audience agreed with him.

Mr. J. T. Brighton, also a popular outdoor speaker and debater, particularly in the North, followed with a humorous whimsical speech on the inanities of Wayside Pulpits. It was much applauded. Mr. Jack Clayton, another most popular Northern speaker, gave an exceptionally intriguing description of the way in which people can be gulled by the non-sense of fortune-telling in all its branches.

Finally, the President rounded off the speeches with one of his best efforts, dealing logically and ruthlessly with many of the things which Christianity stood for. His calm reasoning, excellent illustrations, and final peroration brought a great Demonstration to a close amid hearty applause. But it was almost an hour later before the audience slowly dispersed.

H.C.

## Peace and the League

THOSE who study Mr. Cohen's words in regard to peace can have no doubts about his good intentions, but they may become paving stones, it seems to me, unless one offers some interpretation of some of the phrases used. How is one to gain the meaning of sentences like "a supreme example of National gangsterism" "National brigandage is nothing new."

Is it likely that the word "National" that is used here will convey Mr. Cohen's thought to his readers? What do they mean?

He may be right when he uses words like gangster and brigand in association with Mussolini, but I fear it is not helpful to imply that these are characteristics to be found in all Italians. The absence of widespread or effective criticism does not mean that this is non-existent, it would not be surprising to find that it had been stifled, bearing in mind that the Italian Government had fuller control of the channels to popularize a war policy than those of the Governments who made war in 1914-1918. I may be inviting a further charge of using a far-fetched simile, but am I not right in believing that the Nation that he writes about is really his "Ghost of a God" that he is host to: each person's idea of the nation is shaped in his own image.

His usual clarity of thought clearly stood him in good stead to see the falsity of a League of Nations which was in fact only a League of Governments; I sincerely recommend that he subjects his alternative concept of a League of Peoples to further examination and thought.

For instance, what does he mean when he writes: "Disputes between nations." Are we to read for this "disputes between Governments?" And if so how can the new organization settle these disputes? I respectfully submit that if he gives these proposals further scrutiny he will come to realize that a League of Peoples as outlined is as illusory as the organization that it is hoped to replace.

The social qualities, Honour, Trust, Sympathy and Tolerance arise from repeated personal contacts between large numbers of peoples in adjacent or separated areas, but the channels for such contacts are not merely silted up by disuse owing to geographical difficulties and lack of transport; they are blockaded by restrictive ordinances imposed by our rulers who believe (I think rightly) that thereby they will increase their opportunities to further their calling which is *to govern*.

The efforts of individuals have overcome physical and space difficulties, and put time and distance annihilating transport at our disposal in wonderful fashion, but one will agree, I think, that these aids to wealth have to a large extent been nullified by Governments, which so far it is beyond our wit to overcome.

Our social life has grown by and depends on mutually desired friendships, mutual exchange of services, personal fulfilment of obligations, and the exercise of tolerance between neighbours, multiplied in every direction by every device of man's ingenuity.

The power of the civil courts to arbitrate between individuals comes, not from extraneous power, but from recognition by all who value a continuance of a highly developed gregarious society; both the aggressor and the aggrieved accept the decisions of those whose profession has steeped them in traditions of communal behaviour. But justice and honesty are alien to modern Governments; they exist for power which derives from extorted revenue; the chief means of securing tolerance for this extortion is by keeping alive the belief that they are securing the safety of the governed. It is an old, but by no means played-out ruse; they can even induce you to fall into the trap of using their meaningless words in the belief that they make sense. Take—"At present outside the boundaries of individual nations we have hardly anything but sheer anarchy." The resort by the Governments to the deadliest forces is the very antithesis of anarchy, but how many of your readers are likely to assess these words at their proper value? I am tempted to think that possibly the meaning was "At present those who desired and achieved power to coerce in one particular territory are by reason of their success unable to behave with the decency that governs ordinary

conduct, when confronted with their like from some other territory, consequently their meeting can only result in sheer chaos."

The chances of Peace which we all desire so strongly can come not from additional interference outside the boundaries of England, but a diminished acquiescence in interference within. Early in the restoration of some lost freedom we ought to sue for the removal of tariffs, the removal of passports. Give back to us the chance to induce our friends abroad to develop their aeroplanes and their ships; let us be able to tell them, by telegraph, telephone and wireless, how much we want them to bring the fruits of their lands and their industry, for mutual enrichment.

My firm belief is that our only hope of recovery from the chaos which is wrongly called anarchy, is by setting the example of encouraging intercourse between man and man, which multiplied a thousandfold would give rise to a League of Peoples in fact, which could with truth be call a "LEAGUE OF NATIONS."

W. DON FISHER.

[Mr. Don Fisher's criticism hardly touches me, since I have never, either in writing or speaking failed to point out that to speak of English or French or Italian opinion as being this or that is fallacious, inasmuch as there is no such thing as a single opinion representing all the members of a nation. But one cannot continually state that whenever such a phrase as "national brigandage" is used the term does not apply to all Italians. There are certain people who are in a position to pledge the whole of a people to this or that, and this is all that one properly means when the collective term is used. Mr. Fisher's explanation is, however, quite warranted by the misunderstanding of the terms he picks out for treatment.—C.C.]

## Correspondence

### SHELLS AS SATELLITES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—According to my information, which is at least as authentic as a divine revelation, Sir Robert Hadfield's invention is simply an armour-piercing projectile noteworthy only for its superior power of penetration. Definitely the invention is not a gun as Mr. Beadnell suggests. The shell's peculiar virtue (or vice), is due to the manner of its construction and the nature of the material from which it is made. The muzzle velocity really has nothing to do with this invention, for it concerns not the shell but the gun that projects it—in any case the estimate of 1,200 miles a minute is obviously nonsensical.

Mr. Beadnell's remarks about the so-called "escape velocity" of 417 miles per minute (not per hour as printed), are most interesting. Has it struck him that the escape velocity at the Poles is higher than at the Equator, due to the latter's slightly greater distance from Earth's centre of gravity and to the centrifugal force created by Earth's axial rotation?

I wonder if Mr. Beadnell knows that power enough to lift an object off the ground can also transport it to Mars, even at walking pace, providing that power can be maintained without interruption. This latter fact has given birth to several active and flourishing rocket societies who toy with highly efficient explosive compounds such as liquid oxygen and methane. It is the pious hope of members of these societies eventually to provide faith with a firm foundation by exploring the cosmos by rocket and discovering the geographical location of heaven—*maybe*.

ERIC F. RUSSELL.

Member: British Interplanetary Society.

### SUNDAY CINEMAS

SIR,—To those who advocate the general opening of Cinemas and Theatres on Sundays, here is an aspect of the situation which seems to be ignored by such enthusiasts. What about the hours and conditions of labour of those in and associated with the film trade? In most

spheres of employment those engaged are assured of a six-day week at the most. What guarantee have we that proprietors of Cinemas and Theatres will not victimize those of their staffs who object to working seven days a week?

And it can and may be done, seeing that there is a glut of idle labour ready to step into their places if they refuse to do "Sunday Shows." In other trades, where there is a weekly half-holiday there is Sunday too; in the film trade, of which I have experience, there was the weekly half-day, but I had to work Sundays too in order to supply country Sunday shows. I had to leave because of my objection to Sunday work, for which I received only 2s. extra pay. It is all right talking about opening those places on Sundays and leaving it to the public to attend if they wish; but one must consider the point of view of the members of the staffs, and film distribution workers, who may possibly object to giving up their Sunday at the bidding of a boss. It is hard work carrying film tins about; six days of it a week is quite plenty, without being compelled to do it on a Sunday.

NORMAN CHARLTON.

[The danger stressed by Mr. Charlton can easily be overcome. The legislation that permits the opening of places of amusement and recreation on Sundays could, and should, also place a limit to the number of hours per week, and per day, on which individuals might be employed.—E.P.]

## Obituary

PAUL PARDO

OUR sympathy goes out to Mr. and Mrs. J. Pardo of Heathview Road North, Grays, Essex, on the death of their beloved son Paul, which took place on June 3, at five years of age. The interment took place at Grays Cemetery on Monday, June 8, where before a number of relatives and friends a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. R. H. Rossetti.

WILLIAM HOLLINGWORTH FINNEY

AT 17 Ladbroke Drive, Potter's Bar, Middlesex, William Hollingworth Finney passed away on April 6, and was cremated at Golders Green on April 9.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

### LONDON

#### INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Har Dayal, M.A., Ph.D.—"Chinese Art: Its Spirit and Message."

#### OUTDOOR

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, 7.0, Monday, June 15, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, June 17, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, June 16, Mr. E. C. Smith. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, June 19, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

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

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.

(Continued on page 383)

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(Continued from page 382)

### COUNTRY

### OUTDOOR.

- ACCRINGTON MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, June 14, Mr. J. Clayton.
- ASHINGTON (Grand Corner): 7.0, Friday, June 12, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Thursday, June 11, Mr. J. Clayton—"Russia."
- BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane): 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. D. Robinson. Literature for sale.
- BRIGHTON LANE: 8.0, Tuesday, June 16, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Grant Street): 8.0, Friday, June 12, A Lecture. Grant Street, 7.30, Sunday, June 14, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield.
- HETTON: 8.0, Wednesday, June 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- HUNCOAT: 7.30, Monday, June 15, Mr. J. Clayton.
- LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, Opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, A Lecture. St. James Mount, 8.0, Wednesday, A Lecture.
- NILSON (Chapel Street): 8.0, Tuesday, June 16, Mr. J. Clayton.
- SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- WEST HARTLEPOOL: 7.0, Saturday, June 13, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
- WORSTHORNE: 7.30, Friday, June 12, Mr. J. Clayton.

## The Secular Society Ltd.,

CHAIRMAN: CHAPMAN COHEN

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 68 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4  
Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £ free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, R. H. ROSETTI, 68 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

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