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Views and Opinions

Pious Mendicancy

CHRISTIANITY is a mendicant kind of a creed, and although it often enough illustrates the adage of the fate of the beggar who is set on horseback, yet it gives us an example of mental mendicancy in its most pious moments. The orthodox attitude of the true Christian is on his knees, with his eyes closed. It is the attitude of a slave before his master, of the servile courtier before an autocratic monarch. The closed eyes are symbolical of mental somnolence, the kneeling attitude of unquestioning submission. Men, real men, do not kneel in front of anyone; they stand. They do not close their eyes when they are addressing anyone; they keep them open and give those to whom they are speaking "gaze for gaze," as Lucretius wished people to treat the "monster" religion. And in his petitions to his God the Christian shows a definite mental and physical mendicancy. Listen to any prayer by any parson, High or Low church, Roman Catholic, Anglican or Nonconformist, and there is seen, or heard, the same thing. It is all a case of "oh, Lord, give us"—this or that, or something else. It is always a whine as to one's own worthiness or helplessness, and a begging for something. It is the attitude of the beggar in the gutter holding out his hand to the passer-by, and whether what is asked for be "spiritual" benefits or material coppers, the mental attitude is the same. No, not quite the same, for the beggar in the gutter may have privately a very poor opinion of those from whom he is soliciting alms, and that may to some extent preserve his self-respect. But the Christian mendicant on his knees in Church or at home, would never permit himself to form a poor opinion of the God from whom he is asking favours.

One longs for the sight of a godite who has the courage to stand up with his eyes open, and to tell the Lord things. To point out to him that as a father has duties towards his children, so God has duties towards those whom he has made and from whom he

asks worship: that it really is not man's duty to beg God to give him understanding and courage to think rightly and live properly. It is God's duty to see that all his children have these things, and when he sees them thinking or acting wrongly it is his duty to see that they are set on the right path. I do not know whether it is correct to say that worshippers get the god they deserve, or gods get the worshippers for whom they ask. All I am certain of is that at present neither reflects credit on the other. If men have the same rights against their father in heaven that children have against their parents on earth, they should stand up and demand them. If they have no rights whatever, then they should at least have enough manliness to express their opinion of the one who planned to fill the world with a population of mendicants, and has only fallen short of realizing his plan by the incurable heresy of some of his children. But, oh men, Stand up!

* * *

Quantity or Quality

The *Daily Herald* claims a circulation of two million copies daily. And it is certain that no paper in this country could have anything more than a fraction of that sale if it appealed to people who were in the habit of mentally standing on their hind legs looking things straight in the face. To gain huge circulations a paper must write down, not up. It must give their readers little to think about, and "tell them things," rather than excite them to a mental activity that enables them to find things out for themselves. In other words, a paper that wishes to have a circulation running into millions must take full advantage of the training that some fifty or sixty generations of Christianity have given the people. If the *Herald* believes, as it appears to profess to believe, that God made the world and made man, and that there is a plan through it all, then it must show its gratitude to God by taking full advantage of the human material he has placed within their reach. The eyes of the people must not be opened too widely, nor must their understanding be raised to the level of realizing that their religious training has been wholly on the wrong lines. Above all they must not be encouraged to believe that if there is a God such as Christians picture, he ought to do what he can to help man without any asking, and if he does not, then man had better try what he can do for himself and not bother any more about a deity who will only do something if man becomes a mendicant.

The *Daily Herald* for September 15 prints what is called in these two million a day papers a leading article dealing with the Address by Sir William Beveridge on trade cycles, and his forecast of a turn of bad trade in the near future. The article consists of just about 250 words—about twenty-five to thirty lines of one of the columns of the *Freethinker*, and which a man might dash off while dictating a letter,

or in between cigarettes. Papers that aim at big circulations must not strain the mental capacity of their readers too much, and 250 words is a reasonable tax. The article points out the obvious truth that forecasts about economic changes are all based upon the existence and persistence of the present economic system. And then come this brilliant passage:—

There is nothing ordained by Providence about the trade cycle. Providence would not ordain anything so foolish as the throwing out of productive employment, at regular intervals, of anything up to a fifth of the working population.

Now no parson, not even the Bishop of London with his superb capacity for saying idiotic things, could better that. The *Herald*, we admit, knows as much concerning the ways of Providence as an ordained parson, who has been "called" by Providence to explain its ways to man. And it is a tribute to the gallantry of the *Herald* that as it probably believes that Providence has helped it to get two million readers, it stands up for Providence when Sir William Beveridge, even by implication, blames it for cycles of trade depression. It says that Providence would not ordain our present economic system. There may be some authority for this, for there are occasions mentioned in the Bible and the New Testament when Providence sent ravens to feed some of its prophets, rained down food from heaven to feed its worshippers, while on one memorable occasion a "multitude" of people were fed with a few loaves and fishes, and there was actually more food left at the end of the feast than there was at the beginning. But those days were long ago, and perhaps the game of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" was then played more strictly.

* * *

The Ways of Providence

The *Herald* is sure that Providence would not ordain anything so foolish as the throwing out of productive employment a fifth of the working population. I suppose we must all take the *Herald's* familiarity with the ways of Providence for granted, and yet, even taking its word for it, the thesis presents certain difficulties. For if Providence did not ordain the present economic system, who or what did? Are we to believe that Providence overlooked a thing so important as an economic system? I think this is hardly a reasonable proposition, for although I have not the cheap and easy-going philosophy that is able to reduce everything to a system of economics, which like the religious system, saves a man a devil of a lot of thinking, still, the economic system is a thing of importance, and a providence that could overlook its significance exhibits marked shortcomings. Or is Providence a kind of departmental rule in the sense that it looks only after certain things, and lets the rest go to the devil? This would imply Providence is only a degree less foolish, than most of its worshippers; for life, after all, functions as a whole, and it is not much use if Providence first arranges a bountiful harvest, and then permits certain people or things to prevent it being enjoyed as it should be by a fifth of the population. Really I shudder to think what would be said by the *Herald* of a government that arranged for a liberal out-of-work pay, and then permitted the clerks in the labour bureaus to take nine-tenths of the allotted allowance. Again, will the *Herald* be good enough to explain (I am willing to make a substantial bet that it won't, for I would never hesitate to back a really "dead cert,") if Providence did not ordain the present economic system, who did? And also if Providence did not design it and, apparently, cannot redesign it, what is the use of Providence anyway? Does the *Herald* wish us to believe that Provi-

dence can only help when man can do the work himself, and that by itself it is about as helpful as wings to a locomotive?

And, after all, if there is a Providence, and from the *Herald's* knowledge of it, I gather that it actually exists, it does some very peculiar things. Consider a few facts. We live in a day when the belief in Providence is more discredited than it has ever been in the history of mankind. It is a time when Providence should do its best to commend itself to the better instructed intelligence of to-day, and should see that it had the best representatives in official positions in the Churches. Yet at this critical time it actually selects for the pulpits of the Church men, the majority of whom are mentally poorer than the parsonry has ever been. It provides fish in the sea that may be used for food, and after it has been caught it permits men to dump tons of it back into the sea or use it for manure. Of course it may be suggested that in using the fish for manure to grow other foodstuffs, we have an example of the way in which Providence tries to outwit the upholders of the present system. But, alas, Providence is again outwitted, for the food-stuffs that are grown by the use of the fish that were bred for food, is again destroyed by those who wish to keep the present economic system in existence. Providence creates one animal to live, and then creates another animal to eat it. It grows the plant from which we get quinine in one part of the world, and then permits a disease, for which quinine might be used, to develop in another part. It reminds me of the comment of a Yankee sailor to whom, while walking on the South Shields pier, I was describing the huge quantity of meteorites, from pin-head size up to those weighing tons in weight, that fell upon the earth. "Why," he said, "the darned things might kill people." I agreed. Well, he replied, "God's kind, but careless; god-damned careless." I assured him that many a man had written a volume without saying more. He had spilled a mouthful. I am therefore unconvinced that Providence would not do anything foolish. It is always doing foolish things—perhaps that is to show that it is in intellectual harmony with what our "national" papers say.

I suppose it is no use suggesting to the *Herald* that it might be well to drop its foolish talk about providence, and to show a little less eagerness to stand in well with the more stupid of its religious readers, and to do more justice to those movements that are outside all religion and will not play to the religious crowd. It might point to its two million circulation and reply that two million readers are not picked up following the suggested line, and the pennies of a million fools are more satisfactory than those of a thousand philosophers. So I expect in spite of all I may say, and in spite of the letters it so often gets protesting against an obvious playing to a very cheap form of religious belief—letters which are never published—the *Herald* will go on expounding the purposes of Providence, and feel that in its two million circulation it has evidence that Providence agrees with all it says.

CHAPMAN COURN.

Without free speech no search for Truth is possible.
Without free speech no discovery of Truth is useful.
Without free speech progress is checked and the nations no longer march forward to the nobler life which the future holds for man.
Better a thousand fold abuse of free speech than denial of free speech. The abuse dies in a day, but the denial slays the life of the people and entombs the hope of the race.—Charles Bradlaugh.

The Hall-mark of Hinduism

"Once men saw phoenixes; they are gone; the world is not therefore disenchanted."—Emerson.

"A man must stand erect, not be kept erect by others."—Marcus Aurelius.

ACCORDING to the *Indian Year Book*, the population of that huge country is given as 353,000,000, and it is said that Bombay can show 70 different styles of clothing, each of which tells the racial or social position of its wearer. It is a Continent rather than a country, for its population is actually three-fourths of the British Empire. And it has also been pointed out that India is the most godly country in the world, for there are almost as many deities as there are inhabitants. India is now part of the British Empire, and its higher castes, so some anthropologists say, are of the same Aryan or Indo-European race as ourselves. The Aryan family has spread widely, and now one branch, inhabiting a little island thousands of miles distant from its cradle, rules over the teeming millions of its kindred who found a home in India.

Hence the religions of this vast country are of interest as of those of our own fellow-subjects. Its population includes nearly two hundred millions of Hindus, more than fifty millions of Mohammedans, and many millions of other faiths, including Buddhism. Hinduism is not only the most important, but the oldest of existing faiths. It is so old that its origins are lost in the twilight of history, and we are relegated to a varied literature extending over such vast periods of time that the imagination boggles at the recital.

This religion is not identified with one name, as is the case with Buddhism or Mohammedanism. It counts poets, prophets, priests, law-givers, and philosophers past computing. It has no one Bible, but it has a long series of sacred books, so contradictory that they may be used to support any kind of doctrine, deistic, tritheistic, polytheistic, or pantheistic. The oldest of these sacred writings is the Rig-Veda, consisting of over a thousand hymns, composed fifteen centuries, or more, before the Christian era. In addition to these, there are the Bralmanas, subsequent writings that explain and elaborate the ritualistic use of the old hymns; and also the Upanishads, intended to systematize the earlier writings. It is noticeable that the older Vedas are poetic, and, in this connexion, we recall similar hymns imbedded in the Christian Bible (Numbers xxi. 14-30.) These songs, or poems, were originally handed down orally from generation to generation, and at length men believed, or were taught to believe, that they had been supernaturally revealed. Critics have learned to regard the "gods" themselves as mere diseases of language. Conceived, it may be, in fevers of poetic fancy, in process of time the deliriums became personified. The old Hindus were poets, but they were children as well. The Rig-Veda proves it beyond cavil. It is a bundle of hymns, tied together thousands of years ago, for the glorification of Fire. It led, in due time, to the worship of the Sun, and so ignited many altars of the ancient world.

To primitive peoples the approach of darkness was like the coming of death, and the dawn was resurrection. The potent forces which produced night and day they regarded as beings whose moods genuflections could affect. This view persisted through the centuries. Millenniums later, when the early Christians prayed, they turned to the East. Their holy day was, as the holy day of Christendom still is, Sunday, day of the Sun.

In plain English, this primitive religion was largely nature worship. Idol worship, caste, suttee, enforced widowhood, self-mutilation, transmigration of souls, became connected with Hinduism at much later stages. At one period in Hinduism the monistic note was struck, but not for long. The order and oneness of Nature came home to them, and the fundamental note was struck—"There is but one being, no second." They called this Brahma, but, later, two other deities were associated with him, Vishnu, the preserver, and Siva, the destroyer. Thus originated the idea of the Trinity centuries before the Christian religion was dreamed of. The extravagant sacerdotalism was the work of the Brahmans, whose position became almost unchallenged. For millenniums, not centuries, they were the counsellors of the Hindoo princes and the tyrants of the Hindoo people.

Caste is one of the curses of India. Originally introduced as the natural outgrowth of one condition of society, it has long outlasted its usefulness. It now divides Hindoo society into innumerable classes and cliques. It fosters exclusiveness and kills ambition, enterprise, and combined adventure, and sets one part of the community against another. We have caste here in England, but a keen Oriental critic has pointed out that the lines of our social division are horizontal, and range in the social strata one above the other. In India these lines are perpendicular, and run from top to bottom of the social body, dividing and separating one social stratum from every other.

Hinduism, like the religion of the Ancient Egyptians, was aristocratic in type. It taught that a mortal could not attain divinity until annihilation was complete. Of the elect, that is, of the higher castes, of the priests, of the princes. But not of the people. The ideal was not for them nor was salvation. Twenty-four lakhs of birth separated the people from the prelates and the rajahs. It was because Gotama challenged this that Buddhism attracted so many devotees from the ranks of Hinduism.

Scholars are not free to tell all they know. They would lose their positions if they did. Max Müller, who edited the English versions of Sacred Books of the East, would not include the Christian Bible in the collection. Sir James Frazer did not pursue his investigations too closely into the New Testament, and Sir Oliver Lodge reads the "lessons" in a church. Even the guarded admissions scholars make are written in scientific language, and published at extravagant prices. At this the clergy smile, for they realize that mere academic debates never threaten their position. Had Voltaire attacked bigotry and superstition in the dry-as-dust method of professors, we should not know his name to-day. Had Paine's *Age of Reason* been written in Latin, instead of plain English, it would never have influenced the living world of men.

There are whole libraries of books on Sanskrit, the first stammer of European speech. Yet how many people are aware that the name for the sun to our remote ancestors was "deva," derived from the Sanskrit root "div." In time this produced "deus," "devi," "divinities," numberless, accursed, adored, forgotten. The bed-rock term applied to all abstractions that are still, or have been, worshipped, means "That which shines," and the name which in the early Orient signified a sun-god designates the triune priest-made deity of Christians to-day. "The wheel has come full-circle," and the association between the earliest form of superstition and the debased money-grabbing religion of our day is clear to the discerning.

What a divine comedy it all is! And what a long, weary journey has man been led by priests. Men have prayed to blocks of stone, invoked scorpions, sung hymns to scarabs, coaxed the jackal with psalms, placated the ibis with dances, and bent knees to cats, crocodiles, and dolls. It is so ridiculous that it almost makes one ashamed of one's species. Yet, had man not looked down but up, had man stood erect instead of kneeling, he would soon have learnt the tricks of the priests. Religions' brightest days were always in the dark ages. Today, in the half-empty temples, from which the gods have long since fled, the priests wait anxiously. It is the beginning of the end of Priestcraft, which has ridden roughshod over the liberties of the people for so many centuries. For Time, the father of all the gods, is also their destroyer.

MIMNERMUS.

Notes on the Higher Cynicism

MAN is a spiritual being; his souls pants after the infinite mysteries of the spirit, as he thirsts for a cooling draught of beer on a scorching day. He soars on his spiritual wings to rest in peace on the sheltered bosom of the absolute. In spite of empty churches, and because of empty churches; by the fact that he is better, by the fact that he is worse; in the face of the competition of the cinema, Sunday games, cheap travel and hiking; man has still that divine spark in his breast that needs but to feel again the fanning breeze of faith to burst into a glow of religious fervour.

Thus runs the message of our modern prophets; they speak with the tongues of angels, and broadcast with the miracles of men, by radio, and press, and pulpit. List again to the old old story, in a new, form. It is the spirit that matters, do not mind the form it takes; science cannot explain religion, science can only destroy the form, cry these busy vendors of religion without theology, politics without party, spirit without matter, mind without body, and omelettes without eggs.

Our civilization is based on Christianity says one; Christianity is a product of our civilization says another. By its aid we have risen from the corruption of Paganism to our present state, whatever it is; also we have made our life one that enables the Christian flower to blossom. Without Christianity we would be nowhere; without a society formed to foster religion we would be somewhere else.

Christianity has freed the slave and tempered the rigour of barbarous laws and customs. Christianity has given to thousands that patient spirit and humility to withstand the cruelty and contumely of tyrants. In short, Christianity is the religion of slaves and fools; the slaves like it, and the fools believe in it.

Christian morality is the highest yet known in the world. It prevents a Christian from doing wrong; and when he has, forgives him his sin and makes him as good as before. Morality is not the fear of doing wrong, but what other people will think is wrong. Christianity also teaches us to do what is right; anything a good Christian does is right.

The garb of the Christian is humility and suffering; the Christian is humble and other people suffer for it. When a priest talks of the necessity for virtue, he forgets that for most people the only virtue possible is the virtue of necessity.

Christianity brought the spirit of tolerance into religious controversy—tolerance for itself. Christianity being true, and other religions being false, it allowed tolerance for the truth only. The Jews have

always had the benefit of Christian tolerance; what is not tolerated is the false Hebrew faith. Christians do not hate Jews because they are Jews, but because Christ was one.

Religion and poverty have always gone together, like whisky and soda, bread and cheese, and Christian promises and pies. It is easier for a poor man to go to heaven than a rich one; but the rich seem satisfied, and the poor forego their right when they have the chance. As the poor have no choice, they make the best of a bad bargain. Jews and Christians have not yet decided who made the legal bargain; whether Moses or Christ secured the contract.

Heaven and Hell are not places but states of mind. Heaven must be a hell of a place; and the minds of those who think hell is a state of mind must be in a hell of a state.

Some think everyone will go to heaven; others say only a select few. If everyone goes to heaven, the life there will not be very different from the one we know; if only a chosen few, then it will be so different that we will want it to be the same.

Religion teaches us the brotherhood of man; Christianity breathes the spirit of universal love and peace. It teaches the doctrines of David in the name of the Prince of Peace. When Christians fight Christians they do so in spite of Christianity—and to spite the other Christian.

Christian morality depends on the Christian family; and the Christian family on the Christian marriage. In heaven there is no marriage or giving in marriage; marriages are made in Heaven—to judge from some the importers ought to be prosecuted under the Merchandise Marks Act.

Catholics are gulled by the priests; Protestants by themselves. Catholics have one Pope; Protestants a million. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Every church has been ready to make martyrs—for other churches. Without the help of Catholics, Protestants would have no martyrs. Without the help of Pagans, Catholics would have no martyrs. Making martyrs is the only thing in which Catholics have been of use to Protestants, Protestants to Catholics, and Catholics and Protestants to each other.

Christians are divided by the problem of evil. They say man is conceived in sin and born in iniquity. God made man perfect, and perfect man then chose the evil path. Perfect God, after failing to make perfect man, sent sin into the world to try and make man see the error of his ways. Priests say afflictions are sent by God for our own good, and then say they don't exist for God's.

Man cannot live without God. Without God man would be as the beasts that perish; without man God would have no reason for existing. The purpose of man is to carry out God's will. The purpose of God is to have a will for man to carry out. God exalts the humble and brings low the mighty—and then begins again.

The priest is the go-between twixt man and God. Without the priest God forgets man, and man, God. God is useful to the priest and the priest to God, but without man they would be of no use to one another. When good fortune attends man it is due to the priests' intercession with God; when bad fortune falls on man, the priests say it is due to God's anger with man. The priests get the benefit of the good, and man gets the blame for calamity.

One minister said we are in danger of forgetting God. If the priests would only let us forget we could put up with it. Some writers say we can have religion without a God; others that we can have God without a religion. A religion without God is like a

motor-car without a driver; God without a religion is like a driver without a motor-car. The belief in God is well-nigh universal—amongst the unthinking, and the exception with the wise. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; but the beginning of wisdom is the end of God.

IDRIS I.L. ABRAHAM.

Things Worth Knowing*

LV.

SCIENCE AND LIFE

A FIRST and quite blameless way of criticizing science is to point out that science is incomplete. That it grows fast is indeed its commonest boast; and no man of science is so pessimistic as to suppose that its growth is over. To wish to supplant science and to regard its conclusions as largely provisional is therefore more than legitimate. It is actually to share the spirit of enquiry and to feel the impulse towards investigation. When new truths come into view, old truths are thereby reinterpreted and put in a new light; so that the acquisitions of science not only admit of revision, but loudly call for it, not wishing for any other authority or vindication than that which they might find in the context of universal truth.

To revise science in this spirit would be merely to extend it. No new method, no transverse philosophy, would be requisite or fitted for the task. Knowledge would be transformed by more similar knowledge, not by some verbal manipulation. Yet while waiting for experience to grow and accumulate its lessons, a man of genius, who had drunk deep of experience himself, might imagine some ultimate synpathesis. He might venture to carry out the suggestions of science and anticipate the conclusions it would reach when completed.

The game is certainly dangerous, especially if the prophecy is uttered with any air of authority; yet with good luck and a fine instinct, such speculation may actually open the way to discovery and may diffuse in advance that virtual knowledge of physics, which is enough for moral and poetic purposes. Verification in detail is needed, not so much for its own sake as to check speculative errors; but when speculation is by chance well directed and hits upon the substantial truth, it does all that a completed science would do for mankind; since science, if ever completed, would immediately have to be summed up again and reduced to generalities. Under the circumstances of human life, ultimate truth must forego detailed verification and must remain speculative. The curse of modern philosophy is only that it has not drawn its inspiration from science; as the misfortune of science is that it has not yet saturated the minds of philosophers and recast the moral world. The Greek physicists, puerile as was their notion of natural mechanism, had a more integral view of things. They understood nature's uses and man's conditions is an honest and noble way. If no single phenomenon had been explained correctly by any philosopher from Thales to Lucretius, yet by their frank and studious contemplation of nature they would have liberated the human soul.

Unfortunately the supplements which most philosophers supply in our day are not conceived in a

scientific spirit. Instead of anticipating the physics of the future they cling to the physics of the past. They do not stimulate us by a picture, however fanciful, of what the analogies of nature and politics actually point to; they seek rather to patch and dislocate current physics with some ancient myth, once the best physics obtainable, from which they have not learned to extricate their affections.

Sometimes these survivals are intended to modify scientific conceptions but slightly, and merely to soften a little the outlines of a cosmic picture to which religion and literature are not yet accustomed. There is a school of political conservatives, who, with no specific interest in metaphysics, cannot or dare not break with traditional modes of expression, with the customs of their nation, or with the clerical classes. They accordingly append to current knowledge certain sentimental postulates, alleging that what is established by tradition and what appeals to the heart must somehow correspond to something which is needful and true. . . . But once indulged, divination is apt to grow arrogant and dogmatic. When its oracles have become traditional they are almost inevitably mistaken for sober truths. Hence the second kind of supplement offered to science, so that revelations with which moral life has been intertwined may find a place beside or beyond science. The effort is honest, but extraordinarily short-sighted. Whatever value these revelations may have they draw from actual experience or inevitable ideals. When the ground of that experience and those ideals is disclosed by science, nothing of any value is lost; it only remains to accustom ourselves to a new vocabulary, and to shift somewhat the association of those values which life contains or pursues. Revelations are necessarily mythical and subrational; they express natural forces and human interests in a groping way, before the advent of science. To stick in them, when something more honest and explicit is available, is inconsistent with caring for attainable welfare or understanding the situation. It is to be stubborn and negligent under the cloak of religion. These prejudices are a drag on progress, moral no less than material; and the sensitive conservatism that fears they may be indispensable is entangled in a pathetic delusion. It is conservatism in a shipwreck. It has not the insight to embrace the fertile principles of life, which are always ready to renew life after no matter what natural catastrophe. The good laggards have no courage to strip for the race. Rather than live otherwise, and live better, they prefer to nurse the memories of youth and to die with a retrospective smile upon their countenance. . . .

Unfortunately a searching disintegration of dogma, a conscientious reversion to the immediate, is seldom practised for its own sake. So violent a disturbance of mental habits needs some great social upheaval or some revolutionary ambition to bring it about. The transcendental philosophy might never have been put forward at all, had its authors valued it for what it can really accomplish. The effort would have seemed too great and the result too nugatory. Their criticism of knowledge was not freely undertaken, with the pure speculative motive of understanding and purifying human science. They were driven on by the malicious psychology of their predecessors, by the perplexities of a sophistical scepticism, and by the imminent collapse of traditional metaphysics. They were enticed at the same time by the hope of finding a new basis for the religious myths associated with that metaphysics. In consequence their transcendentalism was not a rehearsal of the Life of Reason, a retrospect criticizing and justifying the phase of human progress. It was rather a post-rational system of theo-

* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

logy, the dangerous cure to a harmless disease, inducing a panic to introduce a fable. The panic came from the assumption (a wholly gratuitous one) that a spontaneous intellect cannot be a trustworthy instrument, that appearances cannot be the properties of reality, and that things cannot be what science finds they are. We are forbidden to believe in anything we might discover or to trust in anything we could see. The artificial vacuum thus produced in the mind ached to be filled with something, and, of course, a flood of rhetorical commonplaces was at hand, which might rush in to fill it. . . . For a time, being of a buoyant disposition, they might feel that nothing could be more exhilarating than to swim in the void, altogether free from settled conditions, altogether the ignorant creators of each moment's vision. Such a career evidently affords all sorts of possibilities, except perhaps the possibility of being a career. But when a man has strained every nerve to maintain an absolute fluidity . . . he can hardly be blamed if he lapses at last into some flattering myth, and if having satisfied himself that all science is fiction he proclaims some fairy tale for the truth.

The Life of Reason,
by GEORGE SANTAYANA, pp. 303-11.

Another Holy War?

APPARENTLY the German antagonism to Russia envisages an early war. German emphasis on its desire for "peace in the North-West of Europe," and the German protest against the Franco-Russian Pact, must be taken as evidence of the Nazi animosity to Russia and perhaps its attack on Russian territory.

This antagonism is scarcely denied. It is implied indeed by the specious and absurd pretence of Hitler (on March 7, 1936): "I do not reject co-operation with Russia but with Bolshevism." A White Russia, a Nazi Russia, a Fascist one, such a Russia could only be created by war or revolution.

No doubt a German-Russian war would be as economic in aim as war usually is on one side or the other. But Hitler's party is preparing its propaganda, and that propaganda is RELIGIOUS. Once more religion will be the inspiring ideal pleading its right to crush into dust its fellow-beings who refuse to accept their assailants' religious faith.

The official Manifesto against Russia is entitled *Communism with the Mask Off*. It is written by Dr. Joseph Goebbels. It is circulated in all countries in all languages. The English edition is advertised appropriately in Lady Houston's *Saturday Review*. Equally appropriately the English edition is prefaced by quotations from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna and other high ecclesiastics.

We need not notice the political aspects involved, but from the first page to the last "the attack on religion" figures amongst the main justifications of this Hitlerite anti-Russian crusade. Dr. Goebbels objects to "the grotesqueness of any parallel" between Russian Atheism and the mild friendly "religious controversies in Germany which arise from profound questions of conscience."

Dr. Goebbels quotes (with no sort of reference to any source of his alleged authority) "the Jew Gubermann" as saying that religion must be extirpated even if it involves "the destruction of ten million human beings," and says that "Bukharin declared that religion must be destroyed with the bayonet."

Where Goebbels gives the actual (or alleged) source of his quotations—particularly from the militant

Atheist organ, *The Atheist*—we need the context before we can regard them as unreasonably violent. They are anti-religious certainly, but breathe a hopeful optimism common to most propagandist writings and speeches. The worst one quoted is, "We shall burn down all the churches and raze all the prisons to the ground." In all probability the words "Some day" have been omitted in quoting, and we could supply numerous similar expressions from the Bible and the ordinary Missionary literature—and the Howard League would agree about the prisons.

Goebbels has also to excuse the ghastly persecution of all the German Freethinkers. Freethinkers are never included in any "conscience" clause. He therefore recapitulates the dreadful heresies of his fellow-countrymen, whose homes have been destroyed, and whole families either murdered or tortured in concentration camps, or as Goebbels puts it: "whose forces we have overthrown." He quotes the programme of the German Freethinkers (760,000 strong he says they were). Kaiser Wilhelm II. could tolerate the "wickedness" which Goebbels calls "Methodical Insanity."

Unfortunately Goebbels quotes the worst of their dreadful programme ("from a pamphlet," he says) which shows the German Freethinkers to have stood pretty well where British and American Radicals have stood for years in regard to sexual ethics. The programme of Dr. Norman Haire's Sex Education League and Janet Chance's ordinary public lectures, leave this programme far behind.

"Bolshevism," declares Dr. Goebbels, "is the declared enemy of all religions." He warns France that "whoever makes Pacts with Bolshevism will have reason to rue his act." The chief importance of the present Manifesto is that it clearly shows Germany's will to embark on a war on behalf of God and religion. We are happy to think that this is one more movement into which no Freethinker would be permitted to enter.

Dr. Goebbel's oration fitly leads up to its climax: anti-Semitism. We note how passionately the Nazi's indiscriminate virulence against Jews harmonizes with the Nazi's animus against political and religious liberty:—

It was the Jew who discovered Marxism. It is the Jew who for decades past has endeavoured to stir up world revolutions through the medium of Marxism. It is the Jew who is to-day at the head of Marxism in all the countries of the world. Only in the brain of a nomad who is without nation, race and country could this satanism have been hatched. And only one possessed of a satanic malevolence could launch this revolutionary attack. For Bolshevism is nothing less than brutal materialism speculating on the baser instincts of mankind. And in its fight against West European civilization it makes use of the lowest human passions in the interests of International Jewry.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

WAR

What becomes of, and what signifies to me, humanity, beneficence, modesty, temperance, mildness, wisdom and piety, whilst half a pound of lead, sent from the distance of an hundred steps, pierces my body, and I die at twenty years of age, in inexpressible torments, in the midst of five or six thousand dying men, whilst my eyes, which open for the last time, see the town in which I was born destroyed by fire and sword, and the last sounds which reach my ears are the cries of women and children expiring under the ruins, all for the pretended interests of a man whom I know not.—Voltaire.

Acid Drops

We have got so accustomed to the clergy having a finger in every pie, that we mostly pass it by as something to be expected. And from the start it was certain that whatever credit could be gained from the formation of the League of Nations the parsonry would duly collect. It would not bother them that all the trouble, against which it was hoped the League would successfully function, had arisen in nations with which Christianity was the dominant creed, and that even the threatened militarization of China and the actual militarization of Japan had been forced in their growth by the influence of Christian peoples. Nor had the world learned the lesson even when Japan wished to perfect itself in the art of machine slaughter; as was the case with other peoples, it was to Christians they had to come for instruction. They did not need our religion, but they could do with our science, and it was only by perfecting themselves in the art of slaughter that the Christian Powers would agree to their being placed on an equality with themselves. Even to-day they do not consider Holland, Sweden, Denmark and such countries on a level with themselves. These have no huge army, no huge navy, no huge air-force, and that settles their status according to Christian notions. Women and children are not likely to shiver in their homes at night from fear of bombing-planes. Therefore they are not one of the "Great Powers."

So of late years there has been a regular "Assembly Sermon" before each session. This time the Bishop of Bristol officiated. He said—a sermon. That was all, and any newspaper man might have printed the sermon before it was delivered. The Bishop did not express the hope that the League would refuse to recognize the brutal conquest of Abyssinia, although they had disapproved the Italian "aggression." He did not say a word against anything, except against war, as war, in which he would have the support of everyone, and would be giving help to no one. All he said was that he hoped men would master the problem of how to live wisely and justly (without giving any hint as to how wisdom and justice were to be achieved), and if the assembly met in the right temper "it would be guided by the Divine Spirit towards the truth."

Now that was very helpful. God cannot, or will not move men to come to the League in the right temper, but if they do come in the right spirit and with the right ideas of what is to be done, then the "Divine Spirit" will lead them towards the truth. Bless the man, is he knave or merely fool? Why cannot the Divine Spirit get the men into the right spirit and pack into their knavish or foolish heads the right ideas on which to work? Why does God only do for man what he is able to do for himself? We do not know how many delegates attended the service, but we are quite certain that anyone who was impressed by such empty balderdash is unfitted for a parish meeting, let alone a gathering of the nations.

The steamer from Folkstone to Boulogne was crowded with Irish pilgrims on their way to Lourdes—doctors, nurses, and, of course, priests galore accompanied the contingent. Cot cases, sick and maimed, formed a goodly percentage of the faithful. The trip across was rather choppy, and a great number of the pilgrims got rid of their breakfast; while the unbelieving heretic felt quite comfortable, smoking his pipe. He entered into conversation with an Irishman, and remarked to him that it was a pity that the power of the Virgin did not apply as far as sea-sickness was concerned. One startled look, and the unbeliever found he had lost his companion; he was too busy looking over the side, to reply, although by the heaving of his back, he was feeling intensely.

Now, in the old days it was thought that the power of witches was broken if they came into contact with

running water: perhaps the same thing may apply as far as the Virgin is concerned. Here were some hundreds of people, many scores of whom were ill and believed that by going to Lourdes they would get well, and yet before they reach there they proceed to get sick. Perhaps it is all part of the Divine dispensation. Some people tell us that people with a sour stomach feel better after being sea-sick. Add to this a mass of hysteria, prayer and self-hypnosis, and probably they will feel some measure of relief. It seems rather an expensive way, when they can pray at home and get sick by putting their fingers down their throats.

Three hundred Catholic missionaries from all parts of the world have been taking part in discussing magic and witchcraft in all their forms from the early times. Their modern forms, such as leopard men and voo-doo dances and many native superstitions, were all keenly discussed and it is particularly interesting to note that "the missionaries are inclined to oppose the new legislation proposed to make witchcraft illegal in the Belgian Congo, and to ban the possession of charms, the wearing and selling of amulets and the casting of spells." All these form part and parcel of the Roman Catholic religion as well as the complete recognition of witchcraft and black magic. No wonder missionaries are opposed to any banning of these childish superstitions.

The Modernist, the Rev. John Bevan, fares badly at the hands of his Fundamentalist critics in the *Christian World*. One, a Liverpool Minister, says to Mr. Bevan: "You have raised my ire by your dishonest replies." Mr. Bevan imperturbably answers: "The miracle of the Four Thousand is a variant of the Five Thousand, and neither incident ever took place." Mr. Bevan adds to his heresies, "I do not believe in the Day of Judgment." Another of his critics in the same journal attacks the naughty infidel thus: "Either you do not believe there is a God, or else you have arrived at the state in which you know as much as God." The joke is that expositor Bevan and his amiable critics all believe in the same God, the same Bible, the same Christ, and the same church!

A writer in the *Methodist Times* condemns his fellow-Methodists for not patronizing Methodist Churches when taking a holiday. He names a celebrated Nonconformist minister, who when at the sea-side—actually committed the crime of habitually ignoring the ministrations of pastors of his own denomination and worshipping at a fashionable episcopalian church "to the great grief of his own church." No wonder St. John, in his famous "Revelation" records that "there was war in heaven." The "Lamb of God" was probably seen attending the wrong prayer meeting.

The Rev. Donald Soper, in his latest book: *Answer-time on Tower Hill*, absolutely challenges "Question-time," by his so-called "Answers." To give an instance characteristic of all Christian apologists: Mr. Soper shows himself—in Matthew Arnold's words—as one of those "light half-believers of our casual creeds." He believes in the Sermon on the Mount—to some extent—with certain provisos. First declaring categorically that "If you obey God to-day, God will take care of you to-morrow"—he adds, "it does seem that there are so many burglars and dangerous criminals . . . that human beings are not ready for the full application of the Sermon on the Mount, and we must go on with the expurgated edition for a little longer." God's will is frustrated because God manufactures so many burglars, apparently.

The Bishop of Rochester announces that on Wednesday, October 28, "my appeal for new churches will be brought to a close at a great Service." We understand the Bishop's (and everybody else's) fatigue—"fed up" as they must be at the constant demand for further useless buildings. But how awkward it will be if God has made up His Mind to dump a nice big Church into the

Bishop's lap, let us say on Thursday, October 29. Would the Bishop refuse to accept it on the ground that the list closed the previous day, or would he arrange for another "Great Service"?

Except in the case of pronounced Freethinkers, it is often most difficult to find out the truth about the religious beliefs of our great men and women. For example, the late Sir Edward Elgar was always hailed as one of the brightest stars in the Catholic firmament; and quite possibly he thought it best not to contradict the belief. But in *Elgar as I knew Him*, one of his greatest friends, Mr. W. H. Reed, tells us that:—

He never talked about his religion; but he was obviously more sceptical as a widower than he had been during Lady Elgar's lifetime and, as we shall see, turned finally to opera and secular music only.

This is really too bad. Elgar, giving up religious music, becoming "sceptical" and turning to opera and "secular" music only—why, we might find out he had even been reading the *Freethinker*! At all events, whatever he was, the fact remains that Elgar was not quite as good a Catholic as he was supposed to be.

In spite of the fact that there are a few Church dignitaries who do not believe in prayer quite to the extent of, let us say, a sweet Salvation Army lassie, we note that there is still a sturdy and wholesale belief in its efficacy by that great man of God, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He wants prayers to be offered in all places of worship throughout the country for the League of Nations, so "that the spirit of God may give to the representatives of our own and other nations, wisdom, courage, largeness of mind, and a strong determination to seek peace and ensure it." The worst of praying to the Lord about these things is that if peace does last for some years, the prayerful people will believe it is all due to the way in which they have prayed. If, however, war prevails, the Archbishop and his disciples will contend that the prayers were not fervid enough; or that God turned a deaf ear because the people had hard hearts. The Church wins either way. But fancy a League of Nations that has to be prayed for!

A recent sermon—preached, by the way, in Jerusalem—commenced with the words, "One of the saddest features of modern life and modern religion is that we are fast losing what used to be called the conviction of sin." The Rev. W. A. Parker, who is responsible for this bit of original wisdom, must have felt that he had just made a great discovery. It is a pity that some of his Freethinking friends did not tell him that the "conviction of sin" he talked about was merely nonsense, and had no real meaning except in a very religious mind. Hell and similar places, which were used as bogeys to frighten "sinners," only cause them to laugh these days. Sin in a theological sense is as dead as hell.

But Mr. Parker did one good thing in his sermon, and that was when he spoke of the conditions prevailing in Palestine. The effects of the disorders there "are only too terrible and obvious: bereavement, hunger, thirst, destitution. In Jaffa alone there are more than 6,000 destitute and homeless Arabs. The poverty among the Jews in Tel Aviv is so acute that in some cases beggars are crossing into Jaffa to beg from the Arabs." Mr. Parker's solution of the trouble is the usual Christian one. Once again God may "speak to a distracted world from Jerusalem. But he will only speak through a Church which bears upon it the imprint of the wounds of Christ." Could nonsense go much further?

"God is called Almighty," we are told in a "refresher" course of the Catholic catechism, "because he can do all things. With God all things are possible." In trying to explain and comment upon this assertion, a Catholic editor admits that "it is a difficult doctrine to grasp," and that the majority of mankind "when left to themselves have floundered in error on the point." We can quite believe it—especially when we are further told that "God can bring things into existence out of noth-

ing." We advise people who can swallow this drivel to join the Roman Catholic Church at once. It will save them a lot of thinking.

Mr. Leslie Weatherhead has been attending various country churches during his holiday. He says, "Frankly, some services I have attended during holidays make me wonder that people do go to church at all." Probably most people who "listen-in" to sermons anywhere find themselves asking the same question. Mr. Weatherhead most modestly tells a story of how he obtained a congregation of 400 young people on a Summer afternoon to attend a discussion, when, he says, "The archangel Gabriel wouldn't have drawn 40 to hear him preach."

Mr. A. P. Fitt has written a book called *Moody Still Lives*. No doubt the dead D. L. Moody lives—like all the dead Salvation Army officers who are described in the *War Cry* as "Promoted to Glory," but are wept over by all their friends much the same as if they had merely died. As the negro in the story said, on reading an inscription on a tombstone: "I am not dead, I only sleep"—"Big boy, you is deceiving nobody but yourself, you is DEAD."

The New Zealand *Truthseeker* informs us that:—

Mr. M. Washbourne of Riccarton wrote with due solemnity to lay a complaint before the Canterbury (N.Z.) Education Board. A teacher had been reading to his pupils extracts from a book of Jack London's, *When God Laughs*; this book, Mrs. Washbourne alleges, is banned and it is also "unedifying, morbid, and gave a spirited defence refuting all these charges."

The Board in all its majesty referred the matter to a Committee appointed to investigate. The Chairman finally gave his learned verdict. The Committee, he said, had been unable to express an opinion on the alleged coarseness because they had not read the book. The Chairman, however, is not the man to be deterred by a trifle like that. In his opinion, "I am sure any of us would not like to have books of that kind read before primary children. . . . We can only object to the title, for we do not know the contents."

We have the same type of bigoted Christian ignoramus in England and in multitudes.

In 1889 one Nunn was charged at Sydney Central Court with sawing wood on the Sabbath Day. The evidence was conclusive; but it was found that the penalty for this horrible religious crime consisted of two hours in the stocks. As the stocks had long before passed into oblivion Nunn was of necessity discharged, and now, *pace* Christianity, wood can be chopped or sawn with impunity on the Sabbath Day.

The "Freethinker" Circulation Drive

It is proposed to celebrate the coming-of-age of the present editorship by an attempt to create a substantial increase in the circulation of this paper. The plan suggested is:—

(1) Each interested reader is to take an extra copy for a period of twelve months, and to use this copy as a means of interesting a non-subscriber to the point of taking the *Freethinker* regularly.

(2) So soon as this new subscriber is secured, the extra copy may be dropped by the present subscriber. Until this is accomplished, he will regard the extra threepence weekly (for one year) as a fine for his want of success.

The plan is simple, and it is not costly; but it does mean a little work, and whether or not it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is certainly easier for most to give than it is to work. But in this case it is the work alone that will yield permanent benefit. There are many thousands of potential readers in the country; why not try and secure some of them?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. H. PRIEST.—We do not in the least agree with you. To attribute the "beautiful lives" of the Christians named to Christianity, leaves you faced with the problem of explaining the "beautiful lives" of those who are not Christians. You appear to forget that man is a human being before he is a Christian, and also that even his Christianity is subject to the play of the better influences of human society. With regard to Spain there is no question whatever, except with Roman Catholic apologists, that a very powerful cause in the ruin of Spain in the past, and the worst evils in Spain at the present are due to the capacity and intolerance of the Church. Its present attempt to establish a military oligarchy in the country is not the least of its ill-deeds.

F. C. HOLDEN (U.S.A.)—Many thanks for your effort in obtaining new subscriber. Paper being sent.

A. MEALOR.—We are obliged for the address of a likely new reader. Paper being sent for four weeks.

FRED HOLDEN AND E. PARIENTE.—We much appreciate your efforts to increase the sales of the paper; copies being sent.

G.P.—The texts you require are to be found in Isaiah xlii. 16 and Psalms cxxxvii. 9. Judges xxi. 7-14 might also be useful.

C. STEVENSON.—The only justification for Zionism is that it provides a place where some Jews may escape persecution. The best thing that could happen would be to secure the complete social and political equality of Jews, and then in a few generations Judaism would disappear. Judaism has been kept in being by Christian persecution, and both the vices and virtues of the Jews are products of their dominantly Christian environment.

H. S. WALTERS.—Full particulars of the cost of cremation, as well as the crematorium nearest will be supplied by the Cremation Society, 23 Nottingham Place, London, W.1. Thanks for the poem, but it has been in the *Freethinker* on several occasions.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 48.

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

On Sunday next (October 4), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, at 7, on "Aspects of Life and Death." Tickets for the meeting may be obtained from Grant's Educational Company, Renfield Street, the Worker's Bookshop, High Street, or from the Branch Secretary, 351 Castlemilk Road, Glasgow.

A new edition, the fourth, of Mr. Cohen's *Christianity, Slavery and Labour* is now in the press, and will be on sale early in October. This work is generally recognized as the most complete Freethought work on the subject, and the new edition has been carefully revised, and greatly enlarged. The book is an armoury of facts, well documented, and carefully arranged. The published price will be as before 1s. 6d. paper, 2s. 6d. cloth.

We have to apologize to those who had written for further supplies of *Spain and the Church*, and who were kept waiting for their parcels. All orders have now been discharged. The pamphlet has turned out a splendid instrument of propaganda. We have other things in view.

We are always ready to listen to advice; we do not always find it worth adopting; but in all cases recognize the spirit that prompts it. A friend sends us a letter from a lady who thinks that we hardly go the right way to convert Christians. This lady thinks that we ought to change the name *Freethinker* to *Thinker*, because Freethought is disliked by most people, and if the name were changed the paper would find its way into very many houses from which it is now excluded. Further, this lady would never talk about Freethought, but only about "thought" or "freedom of thought." We seem, in this lady's view, to be lacking in "gumption"; or else, she remarks, psychology is not our strong subject. The capture of Christians seems to be very easy, according to this lady, if one will only call everything by some other name, and never say anything that the reader can clearly understand.

We cite this letter because we come across similar ones from time to time, and generally have discovered that they originate from those who are rather more concerned with keeping on good terms with Christians than they are with turning them into good Freethinkers. And the Christians usually reward them by treating their Freethinking opinions with contempt. It really does need an expert psychology to realize that before the world treats a man or a woman with respect it has to discover they are worthy of it, and the respect of even Christians, has never yet been gained by hiding one's own opinions and treating Christians as though they were born fools who could realize that they were being "sold a pup" every time so transparent a trick was tried as wrapping Freethought up in non-committal terms. Christians are not really such transparent fools as to be taken in by this subterfuge. It is the thing they dislike, not the name, and the Church never yet mistook a profession of Freethinking for a confession of faith. The *Freethinker* is the oldest Freethought paper in Europe. It has won its way and its place by its fearlessness, and it can only retain both its place and the respect of right thinking men and women by the same methods.

One other point. This lady thinks it is a mistake to have the name of Chapman Cohen on the cover of *Spain and the Church*, and to advertise Freethought works on the back page. We should not put people off, if we did neither of these things. Probably it is thought that if we said it was published by the "New Religious Society" we might do better. All we can say is that a large edition has been sold out in record time, and an edition twice the size of the first will be on sale by the time this is in the hands of readers. Finally, it has brought many new enquiries about our literature, many sales and some new regular subscribers to the *Freethinker*. Our lady correspondent may doubt it, but honesty in propaganda does pay, even with Christians, who are, after all men and women in addition to their being members of a Church or chapel.

Plymouth saints are asked to note that Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at the back of the Market every evening at 7.30 for the week commencing to-day (September 27). The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate. Pioneer Press literature, including the new pamphlet *Spain and the Church* will be on sale, and Freethinkers in the area are asked to make the meetings a rallying point with a view to increased activity in the future. It will be the last week of Mr. Whitehead's summer campaign, and Plymouth must see that the season's work is brought to a successful conclusion.

In spite of the damp conditions Mr. R. H. Rosetti had a very good meeting at Kingston-on-Thames last Sunday, and the prospects appear to be very promising for the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. there. A meeting to further that object will shortly be called, and all interested are asked to communicate with Mr. J. W. Barker, 92 Canbury Avenue, Kingston-on-Thames. With local talent, and within easy reach of London speakers, a flourishing and active Branch should result.

In *Green Pastures*, Noah reminds De Lawd that if they're going to take snakes along on the ark, they'd better take a keg of liquor along too, just in case of snake-bite. De Lawd agrees to this, but then Noah scratches his head and says that maybe, because "they sho' is lots of differ'nt kinds of snakes, come to think of it," they'd better take along *two* kegs. This brings on the following discussion:

De Lawd: "I think de one kag is enough."

Noah: "No, I better take two kags. I kin put one on each side o' de boat an' balance de ship wid 'em as well as havin' 'em fo' medicinal uses."

De Lawd: "You kin put one kag in de middle of de ship."

Noah: "Er, it's jes' as easy to take de two kags, Lawd."

De Lawd: "I think de one kag is enough."

Noah: "Yes, I know, Lawd, but you see, fo'ty days an' fo'ty nights—"

De Lawd: "One kag, Noah."

Noah: "Yes, Lawd, *one* kag!"

A History of Birth Control

It is not so long ago that the words "birth-control" were considered quite shocking—particularly in the mouth of a "young person." It is true they are of comparatively recent date; but the corresponding term a short while back—neo-malthusianism—had exactly the same connotations. It referred to a subject that decent people only discussed behind closed curtains, so to speak. The people who were not decent, some of whom called themselves Free-thinkers, were doing their best to "corrupt" the young generation with open and unashamed reference to what after all was *sin*. They were to be shunned as something unclean; they were, indeed, only hopeless Atheists.

Some of us are old enough to remember this attitude; and to note, not at all with surprise, the complete change which has taken place with regard to a subject that concerns most people very intimately. Love, marriage, children, are the perennial topics of almost all people at some time in their lives. Normal men and women cannot escape them; it is, therefore, not surprising that the question of birth-control is such a big one, and one which, whatever narrow-minded people may think or do, was bound to be thoroughly discussed.

As a matter of fact, many attempts have been made so to discuss it. From the day Malthus published his famous—and, in my opinion, unanswerable—work, the literature on the subject has slowly but surely increased. Those reformers who saw further than their noses were by no means satisfied with the remedy—late marriage—which Malthus proposed for over-population. Malthus was not, I think, particularly enthusiastic about it himself; at least not when he first dealt with the subject. But as a Christian and a "gentleman," it was his duty to assert the dignity of self-control, or late marriage, remedies which were obviously impossible for the majority of people. And from that simple fact rose a movement which has profoundly changed the face of the world. Its history and vicissitudes form, in some ways, a moving human document, absorbingly interesting; and through Professor Norman F. Himes, has now been given to the world in a magnificent volume of over 500 pages, packed with rare encyclopedic research.*

That a history of birth-control is now a desideratum must be admitted on all hands. As Sir Humphry Rolleston says in the Preface, "Without a full

knowledge of the history, such as presented here, it is impossible to understand thoroughly the modern significance of the force underlying the demand for birth restriction." Never was this demand more imperative than in these times of uncertainty and economic distress. And to trace its history has occupied Prof. Himes many years of long and arduous work.

Moreover, this is not the kind of book made to order, so to speak. The author has *lived* with his subject; he has hunted far and wide for its literature; he has particularly studied various editions of the same work. In addition, he has tried to answer "in what respects conception control—or the use of given anti-conceptual measures—is old or new." And if the reader wants the answer, he will discover that the book shows that "contraception, as only one form of population control, is a social practice of much greater historical antiquity, greater cultural and geographical universality than commonly supposed even by medical and social historians. Contraception has existed in some form throughout the entire range of social evolution that is, for at least several thousand years. The *desire for*, as distinct from the *achievement of*, reliable contraception has been characteristic of many societies widely removed in time and place." All the same, Prof. Himes insists that "only within the last century do we find any organized, planned effort to help the masses to acquire a knowledge of contraception."

It must be evident to write a history of contraception required not merely great perseverance but special aptitude and a "nose" for finding the right material—qualities which I was personally aware Prof. Himes had in abundance. This makes his careful survey of birth-control in the past all the more valuable. For birth-control in the Talmud and in Islam he had the assistance of Dr. Solomon Gandz and Dr. M. Meyerhof, M.D., both experts; and many other scholars helped with the special chapters on the subject in Oriental countries. I should have liked to dwell on these, as they are—because the facts are so little known—of great interest; but I must pass on to what will interest readers of this journal most, the chapters dealing with the early birth-control movement in England beginning with that stout Atheist and radical Francis Place. For it was he who was the father of the early organized dissemination of methods in this country. Prof. Field had already shown this as far back as 1910, but it was not *generally* known; that is, it was known only to those who had made a special study of the population question. Place's work, *Illustrations and Proofs of the Principle of Population* (the new and fully edited edition by Prof. Himes was reviewed in these columns in 1930) was "the first treatise on population in English to propose contraceptive measures as a substitute for Malthus' 'moral restraint.'"

Place followed up his book with a series of "contraceptive" handbills—some of which can be seen in the British Museum. Reproductions are given by Prof. Himes, who adds, "the handbills were in advance of modern medical opinion in maintaining that economic indications held a co-ordinate place with medical indications for contraception. Place argued that birth limitation among labourers would make them scarcer in the labour market and raise the rate of wages." In fact, one could fill columns on the place the great "radical tailor" holds in the history of the movement, but I must pass on to his great contemporary, Richard Carlile. The latter's *Every Woman's Book* (1826) had a large circulation, and it is curious to note that the author, though he spent nine years in gaol for publishing Freethought works,

* *The Medical History of Contraception*, by Norman F. Himes, Ph.D. 25s. net. George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

was never prosecuted for this. Prof. Himes was lucky enough to come across an unique copy (it is possibly the only one in existence) of *Every Woman's Book* abridged by Godfrey Higgins, the author of the famous *Anacalypsis*. Two of Place's disciples, Richard Hassell and William Champion, who were also Carlile's shopmen, and who, in consequence, were also gaoled with him, discussed the subject in the *Newgate Monthly Magazine*. "Both were self-taught working-men," says Prof. Himes, "yet their treatment of birth-control is often illuminating and well reasoned."

Then followed the issue in England of two American pamphlets, *Moral Physiology* (1830) by Robert Dale Owen, and *The Fruits of Philosophy* (1832), by Dr. Charles Knowlton—both of which became famous for the prosecution of Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, and Edward Truelove, over forty years later. This particular lust of Victorian puritanism did more to circulate contraceptive methods than anything else I know of. From the point of view of puritanism they were the most ill-advised persecutions of the century.

I was glad to read Prof. Himes' well deserved tributes to pioneers like Owen and Knowlton. He says, "Both made consistent, conscientious efforts to follow the scientific point of view. This cannot be said of most of their successors." Dr. George Drysdale, the author of the *Elements of Social Science* is also given his full share in the movement. He "occupies a most significant place in the medical history of contraception." Both Dr. G. Drysdale and Charles Bradlaugh get full notice in Prof. Himes' book, replete with bibliographical notes. This is one of the most interesting traits of the book. Nothing seems to have escaped the author's notice; he spares no pains to give correct titles and dates—both so valuable for subsequent researchers. An example may be profitably given. Dealing with the many rare pamphlets by Bradlaugh, Prof Himes says:—

Bradlaugh's *Why Do Men Starve?* is exceedingly rare. So far as I know no copy exists at the present time in any public repository, not excepting the British Museum, Bodleian, Library of Congress, etc. My copy bears the date 1882 (London, Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, p. 8), which suggests that it was occasionally reprinted many years after its first appearance. Another early, rare Malthusian article by Bradlaugh, and which in tract form is not known to be on public deposit, is *Poverty and its Effects on the Political Condition of the People*. It is announced in the *National Reformer*, April 25, 1863 (p. 5, col. 3). Shortly afterwards, Bradlaugh relinquished the editorship on ill-health, to Watts [John Watts]. The article appears in the issue of May 30, 1863, on the first page, unsigned, which would erroneously suggest that Watts was the author. It is first advertised as a pamphlet in the *National Reformer*, January 16, 1864, but it may have been reprinted in 1863.

This little extract will show how painstaking Prof. Himes has been in securing data for his book, which is packed with similar bibliographical notes.

It is impossible in the space at my disposal to give more details of the large number of writers who have dealt with practical contraception after Owen, Knowlton and Bradlaugh. The reader is referred to Prof. Himes' work which is a veritable encyclopedia. I thought I knew a little of the history myself—I have dealt with it more than once in these columns—but Prof. Himes has written a *standard* work. It will be, I am sure, the authority on the subject for many years to come. And it ought to be pointed out that this is the *medical* history only of birth-control. On Malthusianism as such, it hardly touches.

For those interested in bibliography there is given a very full one occupying many pages. It seems to be almost complete. Perhaps Prof. Himes has not come across *L'Education Sexuelle*, by J. Marestan, which is an excellent manual of contraception in French. So is *La Préservation Sexuelle*, by Lip Tay, which is also not noticed. Prof. Himes jumps a little, in dealing with Casanova, from one edition to another. However—though it is but a very small point—of the two editions of the world-famous *Memoires*, the one known as the Rosez edition is in six volumes; the Garnier edition is in eight volumes. Prof. Himes, in the bibliographical chapter, credits the Garnier edition with six volumes. This makes the confirmed Casanovist—I belong to the fraternity myself—squirm, because it is still argued as to which are the genuine *Memoires*, the Rosez or the Garnier editions.

A final point. Prof. Himes, in dealing with birth-control in erotic literature, seems to have forgotten the well-known *Memoirs of a Singer*, by, it is claimed, Madame Wilhelmina Schroeder-Devrient, the celebrated operatic prima donna. It would prove very interesting if he could trace the work on contraception she mentions.

I can only repeat my admiration for the immense labour and original research Prof. Himes has put into his exceptionally valuable work. For those interested in sociology *The Medical History of Contraception* will be found one of the finest treatises of its kind so far written.

H. CUTNER.

The Materialist Basis

(Continued from page 603)

PART of this argument, it will be seen, is based on the fact of the unequal development of capitalism: which Lenin has analysed at length. Capitalism could never have developed far without markets of exploitation, enslaved peoples who could be made to work at raw materials on a starvation-level, and who could be used as dumping-grounds for manufactured products. All seemed easy for capitalism while England was the manufacturing centre, and the supply of slave-peoples almost inexhaustible. But the development of rival imperialisms, in chief, U.S.A., Germany, and Japan, coupled with the liberation movements among the oppressed races, has shaken to the roots the capitalist system. Once the climacteric was passed, a steady shrinking set in. Naturally, the states on the economic verge have felt the first effects; their old economy gone, the capitalist economy not even firmly set, they no sooner entered the markets of world-competition than they found their advance impeded by the general contraction of the system into monopoly-forms.

Hence the fact that the new society first got a hold in Russia, where the bourgeois development from feudalism had only reached a very imperfect stage and was smashed to fragments by the stress of the 1914 War. Hence the fact that it has been the states still largely feudalistic (peasant economy) that have shown capitalism most obviously in decay and brought the social conflict to a sharp edge—Italy, Spain, Germany and Turkey. Germany is a special instance. Though highly industrialized, she had many feudal inheritances (such as lack of political unification) and had been reduced to a vassal-condition by the "slave-treaty" of Versailles.

How is Mr. Cohen going to explain this sudden collapse of liberal capitalism into Fascism, unless he accepts the analysis made by Marx of the self-destructive nature of the profit-system?

I claim that if he follows out this analysis he will see that Communism is more than a mere "contingent possibility." For instance, from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries there were many theorizers on the

form that social and political relations ought to take. All the theorizers could claim that they were dealing with contingent possibilities, but history has shown them all to be wrong. Yet to us looking back, it is obvious that *only one* development was possible—that into commodity-capitalism. It is obvious to us because we can see the "whole" of the mass of factors driving society on, though to no one, at the time, would that "whole" have seemed a true statement of the forces in action. For the individual was in the grip of all the various formulations which Mr. Cohen arrays against the economic factor; to the individual the latter could seem only a comparatively trivial one, not to be compared with the questions of religion, art, enjoyment, sex, etc., that obsessed him. Yet it was the changing production-relationship, the technic development, that made the new world, made history, made human movement.

In the same way, if we grasp the dialectical "whole" of our society, we can be in no doubt as to the direction we are going in. We can then cut through all the superstructure, cultural, emotional, political, and touch the essential driving-forces, which are based in the productive mechanism, the social relations of work.

For these reasons I protest against Mr. Cohen's description of Marx as dealing with an "ideal capitalism." I fear that Mr. Cohen has been afflicted at some time by some of the English "vulgar Marxists," such as Hyndman, who presented the most objectionably doctrinaire version of Marx. Marx never said that Capitalism developed in a straight line, filling the exploiter's pockets and reducing the worker's earnings with regular precision. Such a picture is, of course, childish. What Marx did say—and said it as early as 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto*—was that the profit-mechanism must inevitably clog, and that this clogging expressed itself in recurrent crises, in which the contradiction of profits and plenty solved itself by the destruction of a portion of the surplus-goods, so that a new start was gained. At this early date Marx had thus put his finger on the essential flaw of Capitalism—a flaw blatantly obvious to us nowadays since crisis achieved a capital letter as the Crisis. Capitalism, on an expanding market, could continue to solve itself brutally by artificially induced scarcities—but when the world-market began to shrink, then the transformation also began.

I ask Mr. Cohen if this analysis (brief as it is in the shape I give it, and lacking the meticulous fullness of Marx's exposition) is an analysis of a concrete historical process or of an "abstract Capitalism."

Mr. Cohen ridicules the idea of "proletarian biology," etc. But let us consider what is meant by such a phrase. If, as I hold as a Marxist, there is a detectable relation between all expression and its environment, then science has its social relations like everything else human. Every past scientist was closely related to the state of technics in his day—that is, to the productive mechanism, and therefore to its class-relations. It is for this reason that I say that only in a classless world-society can science be fully free, that is, fully rational. If one traces out the relations of Newton's ideas to his environment, one sees that one would be quite justified in calling him a bourgeois scientist. That does not mean he lacks his "truth," his element of objectivity, or that one despises him or scraps him. Communism only scraps Capitalism in the sense that it uses its mechanism as the basis for a higher socialization.

The relations of, say, Newton to his social-economic basis are, of course, very subtle, and cannot be solved by crude pronouncements of a mechanistic "vulgar Marxism"; but they are there, nevertheless, and can be examined. Marxist criticism is only now embarking on this kind of analysis, and there is an enormous amount yet to do; but it can be done, and must be done.

Try to imagine Darwin at any other moment of time than that of nineteenth century Capitalist expansion. Or take an example where the relations of thought and the economic system are easier to see at a glance. One may claim that Locke's *Letters on Toleration* did important liberating work. Yet they have no constructive argument; they are built on ignoratio elenchi; Locke merely assumes that toleration is good. (His argument would have seemed not only subversive to any medieval

thinker; it would have seemed childishly irrational as well.) Locke's basis lies in the fact that liberalism was already stirring under the skin of mercantilism, that material development had already produced a class convinced of the beneficence of toleration. (Mercantilism had to pin down the comparatively-scarce worker; liberalism, coming after the huge criminal expropriation of the land by the ruling-class, dealt with a society possessing a vast horde of "free (starving) labour," and therefore could develop a philosophy of "free choice.") To understand Locke on toleration one must therefore turn to the great seventeenth century economist Petty; and the connexion is indeed provided by Locke's own *Considerations on the Lowering of Interest and Raising of Money*.

Dialectics must seek always to relate mental with material, or it loses touch with reality. The idealist method (based always on social obscurantism to a lesser or greater degree) severs the roots and presents the "secondary elaboration" (in politics, art, religion, philosophy—even science) as something living its own in-breeding life quite apart from the social "whole" expressed in the totality of productive relationships. Idealism is therefore never "detached" or "disinterested," as it loves to assume. It severs the roots because it wishes to falsify relationship, to preserve privilege—whether this wish takes the usual crude form of academic futility, or divagates into more nebulous attempts to withdraw from life, to achieve the ivory-tower of "contemplation." The fear of implication is always an anti-social (and therefore irrational) element; and though in the individual we may diagnose the psychological ingredients, in dealing with history, with the human "whole," we must turn first always to the economic bedrock and make that the determining factor in all our analyses.

Mr. Cohen writes: "In the earliest stages of human society the material environment exercises a dominating influence, indeed, it is only when the physical environment contains certain favourable conditions that human society can establish itself. But it is a far more important truth that the development of the intellect of man exerts a continuously increasing force, and supplies the condition of progressive social life."

With these statements I, in a sense, agree. With the advent of social organization man passed into a new world—from nature into society, from the direct application of the "natural selection" method to a method involving co-operation; and, of course, man's intellect is an instrument active at every point of this latter development. But I do not accept the contrast if it is to be used to abstract the intellect from the conditions among which it functions. As soon as we do that, we are verging on idealist confusions, falling into a world not-understood, a mystery.

And how is this generalization to deal with "progressive social life" as it is *here and now*? Will our English Hitler-Mussolini-Franco, when he comes, be crushed with a pious hope? I take it that Mr. Cohen is not a pacifist, that he believes there are things worth fighting for, though Capitalist nationality is not one of them—that he hails, for instance, the heroic fight which the Spanish people are making against the murderous attack of the feudal oppressors.

How is he going to explain the rise of Fascism, except in terms of Capitalist decay? If it is clear then that the only "revolutionaries" now are the Capitalist reactionaries, who have shown themselves ready for any brutality and repression, how are we going to defend freedom except with a gun in our hand?

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be concluded)

A PROVERB, REVISED AND EXTENDED

"Man proposes," but nature, with its climatic conditions and catastrophic contingencies, "disposes," and will finally dispose of him altogether on this planet. "In the beginning" the temperature was too high for life. At the end it will be too low for it.—Regular Reader

"Miracles in the World To-day"

The title quoted is that of a long article in the *Listener* (May 6, 1936), in which the writer apparently endeavours to exploit modern scientific ideas in aid of his superstitious views. The sections, in leaded type, include "A New Force Entering into Nature's Laws," and "A Sacrament of the New Law."

To begin with, mention is made of some purely natural psycho-physical phenomena, such as turning pale, blushing, etc., in certain circumstances. But this naturalistic reference is soon abandoned; and we are told that in "faith healing" (the subject of the article) there is "something else," to wit, that "God as a free agent does, in response to the supplication of his creatures, sometimes act outside the normal ways of nature," and that "faith healing is miraculous healing." Emphasis, however, is laid upon the idea that the alleged effects concerned are "outside" of and "not contrary to the laws of nature," that "none of nature's laws are broken," but that "a new force enters." There is further empty suggestion: "Iron sinks in water, except indeed when I put my hand underneath it and hold it up" (does the writer know that iron also does *not* sink—if it is in the form of a sufficiently capacious vessel, a ship or other?). And, he continues, "What I as a free agent can do, God can do. Not that God has hands. . . ."

These notions can be bracketed with others made in a letter in the same periodical of the same date, evidently referring to a previous article or talk on "Spiritual Healing." Here we find a discussion on points such as whether "healing, not disease, is the will of God"; and the correspondent avers that "God does in a very true sense will suffering . . . for the good that comes to the soul." And so on.

How are we to argue with such people—supposing that they may read or hear of our arguments? We can say (1) that science has sufficiently shown that miracles do not occur, nor any other intervention in or governance of mundane affairs; and that this is as certain as the fact that no objective effect (e.g., on weather or crops) is or ever has been produced by magic, or by prayer, blessing, cursing or other witchery. We can also point out that anthropological and historic investigation has shown equally well that supernatural interference with the course of natural phenomena, including the evolution of mankind, has not occurred.

In addition to this we can (2) discredit the persons who hold, and have held, such beliefs—except, perhaps, so far as the Roman Catholics are concerned, whose credulity is notoriously fathomless. We can call attention to the allied belief in demons and their antics, such as that of the Abbe Richalm (thirteenth century) who in a book attributed all his ills to these hovering spirits, stating that they produced drunkenness, fleabites, etc. We can point to beliefs not less preposterous that are held even by a few eminent men, e.g., that of Hilaire Belloc in magic and talking statues (see *Conversations with an Angel*).

We can also (3) point to the theory of and the practice adopted to cure disease from primitive times onward. These evidently began in the New Stone Age with the removal of a piece of bone from the skull (trepanning) in order, it is concluded, to let out the evil spirit which caused the disease. This demonic or other irrational view of sickness and of cure was evidently general in the earlier civilizations. Though the Greeks made a good beginning with rational explanation and treatment of disease "There is," writes Dr Singer (*Greek Biology and Greek Medicine*) "ample evidence that the Greeks inherited a whole system of magical or at least non-rational pharmacy and medicine from a remoter ancestry." Hence the "cures in dreams" or visions, in the Temple of Asklepias: e.g., of a woman suffering from tapeworm, who dreamt that, as the god was not present, his sons cut off her head, but could not put it back again; that the priest actually saw her head cut off; that they sent for Asklepias, who fastened on her head again; that he cut open her belly and stitched it up again. "So she was cured," concludes the record. (Why her head was cut off does not appear.)

It hardly needs saying that Christianity brought back to a considerable extent the old demonic and other irrational notions and practices; and these persisted for more than a thousand years. Indeed we still hear of cases, even in the outlying parts of civilized countries, in which sickness of people or animals is attributed to evil spirits, including those inhabiting witches; and correspondingly irrational remedies are applied. We may reasonably believe that the vagaries of some of our freak religions in respect of health and its restoration are lineal descendants of the old superstitions, beliefs and practices.

The general cure for this and other kinds of superstition doubtless lies in education, and chiefly in more and wider instruction in science. When to the physics and chemistry now taught in (some) secondary schools are added biology, some geology, anthropology and psychology we may expect to see traditional superstition—theology, as well as the remnants of magic, witchery, demonism, "flat-earthism," astrology, palmistry and other divination wane more rapidly.

This advance, however, will doubtless be seriously retarded by the Church (non-provided) schools, not only because of the superstition they inculcate, but also because many are not, and probably will not be for a considerable time, re-organized. Until that is done the pupils are not likely to have the advantage of a suitable, adequately furnished and equipped science room for the necessary demonstration and practical work. And it seems probable that in the case of some Anglican schools, and all schools run by Roman Catholics (as this body refuses to take part in the joint re-organization with any other schools), the lack will remain until church schools are abolished. The seriousness of the religious obstacle is well shown in London, where, according to a recent report of the L.C.C. Education Committee, rather less than a quarter of the church schools had been (to about a year ago) re-organized or grouped for the purpose, while nearly nine-tenths of the provided (council) schools had been organized or grouped.

There will also, unfortunately, be another residue. It is well known that many private schools—probably the great majority of them—could not possibly provide a science-room (not a few are held in ordinary houses, with notoriously inefficient accommodation). Their widespread poverty follows inevitably from the fact that the average fee of private schools of secondary type is about equal to the cost of maintenance only (equipment, lighting, heating, cleansing, etc.), of provided secondary schools, while from the fees of private schools the far heavier cost of (suitable) premises and salaries of teachers has to be found in addition to the cost of maintenance.

J. REEVES.

Obituary

MISS ETTIE ROUNT

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. F. A. Hornibrook, better known to readers of the *Freethinker* as Ettie A. Rount, on September 17, at Rarotonga, one of the Cook Islands in the Pacific.

Ettie Rount was born in Tasmania fifty-nine years ago, but previous to her coming to Europe, had lived in New Zealand from the age of ten.

A woman of forceful personality and of great independence of views, she adopted the profession of journalism at a time when woman journalists were rare. She was also an authorized reporter to the New Zealand Government. For a time she was attached to the *Christchurch New Zealand Times*, and was afterwards editor of the *Maoriland Worker*, the first Labour paper in New Zealand.

On the outbreak of the European War she organized a New Zealand Sisterhood for service in Egypt, afterwards transferred to France. She threw herself wholeheartedly into the campaign against venereal disease, encountering great opposition from the clergy. For her work in this direction, Mrs. Hornibrook was decorated by the French Government.

After the war she settled in London with her husband, and became an ardent advocate in the propaganda of Birth-Control, one of her books, *Sexual Health and Birth-Control*—which enjoyed a wide sale—being issued by the Pioneer Press. She also made a number of appearances on the Freethought platform, her lectures always meeting with appreciation.

She was uncompromising against anything which she considered wrong, a thorough-going Freethinker, never hiding her meaning under indefinite language. In private life her advice was always freely given to all who came to her—mostly in connexion with her various books on birth-control or physical culture.

During the war she contracted malaria, and in a recent visit to the United States had a further attack of the same complaint. She returned to England, but seemed quite unable to recover her health. Last May she made a trip to New Zealand, a country which had a great attraction for her, both as regards its natural beauties and its native population, but was again taken ill. On the advice of her doctor she took a sea trip to Rarotonga, where she died.

Her husband was informed of her death by cable, and we tender our deepest sympathy with the loss he has sustained. The world of fearless thinkers and speakers is the poorer by her death.—C.C.

Branch News

BIRKENHEAD (WIRRAL) BRANCH

We are nearing the end of our outdoor session, which is, incidentally, the first of its kind attempted by the local Branch. The meetings have been very successful, and are certain to affect our indoor meetings. The Branch has decided to follow up this effort by advertising on an ambitious scale the indoor session. By the end of next week we hope to have distributed no fewer than 4,000, specimen copies of the *Freethinker*. The following week a further 3,000 handbills are to be circulated. For this purpose we intend to form a distributing squad at the next Members' Meeting to be held in the Bakers' Hall, 36 Cloughton Road, on Sunday, September 27, at 8 p.m. Any unattached Freethinkers who would like to help in the work are cordially invited. An excellent Syllabus of Lectures has been arranged for the Winter months. A Syllabus will be gladly sent post free on request to the Secretary, Mr. W. Fletcher, 9 Thornton Road, Rock Ferry, Cheshire.

BLACKBURN BRANCH

The Blackburn Branch had two very good lectures last Sunday from Mr. J. V. Shortt of Liverpool. The evening lecture (in which he dealt with the origin and development of all religions), was listened to intently by a large audience. At the close a useful contribution was made from the platform by Mr. Joe McLellan, of Bury, an old Freethought stalwart, which was also much appreciated. Altogether a capital day for the Branch.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH

The North London Branch N.S.S. has overcome the difficulty of finding indoor accommodation, and a course of lectures will begin on Sunday evening, October 11, in the Primrose (we think we have the name correctly) Restaurant, Heath Street, near Hampstead Underground Station, at 7.30. A good syllabus is being prepared, comfort is assured, and it is hoped that Freethinkers in the surrounding districts will make full use of the opportunity to fill in their Sunday evenings during the winter.

A man who has not anything to boast of but his illustrious ancestors is like a potato. The only good belonging to him is underground.—*Sir Thomas Overbury*.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 17, 1936

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the Chair.

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. The monthly Financial Statement presented and passed.

New members were admitted to Bethnal Green, West London Branches, and the Parent Society. The term of office having expired, Mr. T. M. R. Robertson was re-elected as a Trustee of the N.S.S. and Mr. H. R. Clifton was elected to the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. F. G. H. McClusky. Correspondence was dealt with from Bradford, Brighton, Chester-le-Street, and other sources. Lecture reports were noted from Messrs. Brighton, Clayton, and Whitehead. A pocket calendar for 1937 was approved. Motions 9 and 10 remitted from the Annual Conference were again discussed, but no decision was reached. The Chairman drew attention to a number of penny pamphlets which were in course of preparation, and would soon be issued. The Secretary was instructed to proceed with arrangements for a Social to be held in London during November. The President reported the Society's interest in a will just completed by one of its members.

The Meeting then closed.

The next meeting of the Executive will take place on Thursday, October 15, 1936.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, John Katz, B.A.—“The Battle of the Ideologies.”

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, September 28, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Wednesday, September 30, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 6.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, September 29, Mrs. E. Groul. Cock Pond, Clapham, 8.0, Friday, October 2, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans, Tuson and Carlton. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Wood, Evans, Tuson, Leacy and Carlton. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin and Wood. Friday, 7.30, Mr. A. Leacy and others. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BANKHEAD : 7.0, Thursday, October 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton. BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane) : 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. D. Robinson, A Lecture. Literature on sale. CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge) : 7.30, Friday, September 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, A Lecture. St. James Mount, Liverpool, 8.0, Wednesday, A Lecture.

NELSON (Chapel Street) : 8.0, Tuesday, September 29, Mr. J. Clayton.

(Continued on page 623)

BOOKS WORTH HAVING

The History of Government

By SIR CHARLES PETRIE. Published 7/6.
Price 3/-. Postage 4½d.

Primitive Law

By E. SIDNEY HARRIARD. Published 7/6.
Price 3/-. Postage 4½d.

The Growth of Civilization

By W. J. FERRY. Published 6/-. Price 2/9.
Postage 4½d.

An Introduction to the Physiology and Psychology of Sex

By S. HERBERT. Published 6/-. Price 2/9.
Postage 4d.

Essays on Love and Virtue

By HAVELOCK ELLIS
The Renovation of the Family—The Function of Taboos—The Revaluation of Obscenity—The Control of Population—Eugenics and the Future, etc. Published 7/6. Price 3/-. Postage 4d.

The Task of Social Hygiene

The Problem of Sexual Hygiene—Eugenics and Love—The Significance of a Falling Birth-rate, etc. Published 6/-. Price 2/9.
Postage 4½d.

Impressions and Comments

Essays. Published 6/-. Price 2/9. Postage 4d.

Affirmations

Literary Essays. Published 6/-. Price 2/9. Postage 4½d.

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The Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

(Continued from page 622)

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday, September 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Back of the Market) : 7.30, Sunday, September 27, to Friday, October 2, Mr. G. White. Head will speak each evening.
PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.45, Mr. J. CLAYTON (Burnley).
READ : 7.30, Friday, September 25, Mr. J. CLAYTON.
SHEWAN HARBOUR (Church Street) : 7.30, Saturday, September 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.
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