

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### More About the Bible

I LEFT off last week after citing a particularly foolish passage from T. H. Huxley, in which he eulogized the Bible as a book that had been woven into the best and noblest in English history (ignoring the fact that it had been equally woven into much that was vilest and ugliest) that it was a national epic, that it was written in the purest and noblest English, and that it has given to the "veriest hind" a sense of his community with past and other civilizations. I cited from Huxley for two reasons. First, because he condensed into his eulogy things that are said about the Bible by numbers of people; second, because he was a non-Christian, and illustrated the way in which a certain type of Freethinker drops into repeating things in favour of the Bible, either because he has never taken the trouble to examine for himself, or on account of less creditable reasons. Last week I dealt only with the first statement that the Bible had been woven into all that was noblest in English history. The question of Bible English I have already dealt with in a previous issue (*Freethinker*, November 1, 1936). I may say here what I should have said last week; the italics of the passages in the quotation from Huxley are mine. The italics are not in the original.

Huxley said, as one reason for our keeping the Bible in the schools, that it has been to the English what Dante and Tasso were to the Italians. If that were granted it completely removes any credit due to the Bible for its being woven into the life of the English people. It would be a mere accident, and any other book might have occupied the same position. But when one remembers that until the end of the fourteenth century there was no English Bible to be read, that it then was only to be found here and there, and the majority of the English people could not read, that it was not read in the Churches for long after 1500, and that in the latter part of the sixteenth

century there was a full blown literature (I will give evidence of this later), the statement of the Bible in its English dress being "familiar to noble and simple from John o'Groats to Land's End" is extravagantly absurd. It is too much on a level with those who take the tract pictures of the old woman in a cottage reading the Bible to her family, who gaze at her with the adoration which the inhabitants of the stable at Bethlehem are depicted as giving to the newly-born saviour, as a picture of cottage life in the eighteenth century. It is a fit companion to the statements that are made concerning the unapproachable beauties of the English Bible, without producing any samples from bulk.

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### The Bible and Science

The one thing the Bible did not do for the English people, the one thing that it prevented developing, was the consciousness that they represented a figure in a "vast historical procession." On the contrary, it developed a narrowness, and egotism, the sense of their being a "chosen" people, of being by necessity above all others, that is the mark of the true Christian even to-day. The geographical position of the English people has, of course, a deal to do with the characteristic egotism of the average Englishman when brought into relation with people of other countries, white or coloured. But so far as other influences can be said to have played a part, in the development of this characteristic, the Bible must be given a prominent place.

To be told that the Bible served to remind the veriest hind of his relations to other civilizations is, if possible, still farther from the truth. The effect of the Bible on a sense of the oneness of human life has always been to narrow, not expand, it. It is in direct opposition to the facts. Instead of a feeling of kinship to all civilization being induced by Bible reading, so far as this was effective, it served as a block to an understanding of human affairs and relationships outside Christian countries. The world began, it was held, in the manner described in the Bible. The age of mankind was placed at between four and six thousand years B.C. This was laid down by Augustine, by Isidore of Seville in the seventh century, by the Venerable Bede in the eighth century, by the great Jewish Rabbi Maimonides in the twelfth century, by Luther, who said, "We know, on the authority of Moses that six thousand years ago the world did not exist," and this was finally settled by Usher for orthodox Protestants in the seventeenth century. His chronology regularly appeared in the margins of the Bible, and it had been worked out so exactly, that the great Dr. Lightfoot, at the end of the seventeenth century, was able to announce to the world that "Heaven and earth, centre and circumference, were created together, in the same instant, and clouds full of water. . . . This work took place and man was

created by the Trinity on the twenty-third of October, 4004 B.C., at nine o'clock in the morning." Christians may ask with pride, What science has ever been able to attain this degree of exactitude?

It is an old, a familiar, and at this day, an amusing story of the way in which the Bible was used to prevent the development of scientific knowledge with regard to the antiquity of man, the beginnings of civilization, the origin of language, and the existence of human beings on the other side of the globe—even when the rotundity of the earth was admitted as a mere speculation. The beginnings of all phases of civilization were laid down in the Bible, the utmost age of everything was determined by the Bible, the origins of the different races of men were declared by the Bible, and the moral value of everything was decided by the Bible. One would have liked to hear Huxley explaining in detail the way in which the influence of the Bible made "the veriest hind who never left his village" realize his relation to "the existence of other civilizations, and of a great past that goes stretching back to the oldest nations in the world." The oldest nation in the world was the Jews. Everything was derived from their Bible. The origins of them all were to be found in the Bible, and this was held, not by the "veriest hind," but by men who considered themselves among the best educated and the most enlightened of their time. Huxley need not have delved very deeply to have discovered evidence of the influence of the Bible on the narrowing of man's thought, and as the main cause of the obstruction to enlightenment. If he had paid attention to the Bible-reading people of Cornwall, Devonshire, and other remote parts of England, Scotland and Wales, he would have found what an absolute bar the Bible was to men realizing that human civilization stretched back to a very distant past, that Bible times represented a comparatively late period, and that its story was derivative and not original.

I do not question that had Huxley been forced to face the situation in a scientific gathering he would have freely admitted the truth of what I have said. There were, of course, many others who said exactly what he said—that may have been part of the reason why he said it. I stress Huxley because he was an avowed non-Christian, and because I wished to illustrate the manner in which so many Freethinkers have foolishly, or weakly, followed the Christian lead in their handling of the Bible. There never is need for a Freethinker going out of his way to praise the Bible. That is being done by millions of Christians, and by writers who aim at interesting or pleasing the public, rather than enlightening them. There are so few that have the courage to tell the whole truth, that it is a pity for those who know better, even by implication, to do anything that strengthens a harmful superstition. It is not impartiality they show, so much as timidity and loose thinking. And I emphasize this dissension from Huxley, because I have a full appreciation of his almost invaluable services to advanced thought.

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#### A People of a Book

Not content with making extravagant claims for the literary and cultural importance of the Bible, Huxley concludes his panegyric with a praise of its moral value. He says that the moral influence of the Bible (actually non-existent) served to convince the English people "from John o' Groats to Land's End," that they earned "the blessings and the curses of all time," according as they came to "do good and hate evil." This picture of the British people, not an individual, or a few individuals, but the whole of the people being so affected by the Bible, or

even a sufficient number so affected, is really amusing in the light of what we know of the actual life of the British people during the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. J. R. Green, with whom we shall deal at length next week, also talks of the great "moral change that passed over," the nation from the middle of the reign of Elizabeth to the Long Parliament (1640-60). Modern Puritans have also dwelt upon the great moral change that came over the English people during this fifty or sixty years, and with Green attribute it to the influence of the Bible. Then, says Green, the English people became "the people of a book, and that book the Bible." I do not know whether Huxley was blindly following Green or not, but in any case the statement of the English people becoming a people of a book, and his estimate of the moralizing value of that book are both demonstrably wrong.

Let anyone turn to the literature of the times, including the religious literature. They will find the Puritans, always a small minority of the English people, crying out against the immoral lives that the people were leading. The "other people" were retorting in kind, and charging the Puritans with hypocrisy and cant. Preachers were, as ever, fulminating against the wickedness of the people as a whole. Satirists were writing plays and issuing broadsheets dealing with the crimes of robbery and lechery and murder and so forth, that were then very common. The moment we get away from the professional or the popular praise of the value of the Bible, we do not see the English people as devoted to one book, the Bible, and being lifted by the influence of that book to an hitherto unknown level of morality; we find, so far as Puritan and Biblical influence (and the Puritans were a people of the "book," or they were nothing) life getting harder, uglier, more intolerant, and the Puritan sowing seeds of wrong living which have not yet exhausted their power for harm. Green himself damns his own praise of Puritan morality by confessing that as regards these people of the book, the Puritan's "bond to other men was not the sense of a common manhood, but the recognition of a brotherhood among the elect"—that is, the development of an overbearing egotism, and the cancelling of a healthy moral tone. Further:—

The absolute devotion of the Puritan to a Supreme Will tended more and more to rob him of all sense of measure and proportion in common matters. . . . Life became hard, rigid, colourless, as it became intense. . . . The self-restraint and sobriety which marked the Calvinist limited itself to his outer-life. In his inner soul, sense, reason, judgment, were often overborne by the terrible reality of invisible things.

In other words, the Bible-soaked Puritan, instead of developing a healthy morality, practically abandoned a genuine morality altogether, and was willing to sacrifice everything, his own happiness and that of other people, if he could only save from hell his own soul, and that on any reasonable calculation was neither worth man saving nor the Devil collecting.

When we add to this the narrowing and the frustration of a healthy human nature, the revival of an intense belief in witchcraft, involving the torture of many hundreds of innocent old women, the impetus placed upon intolerance, and the robbing of young lives of the sunshine that should have pervaded them, it requires some little courage to talk of this Bible conduct as filling men with the conviction that as they did right or wrong they would earn the blessings or the curses of all time.

It was well for human nature that this Bible-soaked morality lost its extreme power in the country in little more than a generation. It was left for after-

generations of religionists to create a myth that has endured, with the crowd, until this day. Pity it is that from their graves this band of narrow-minded self-centred bigots should still make it difficult for even those who are professedly without religion to deal with history impartially.

Next week we will see what truth there is in the claim that the English people became a "people of the book."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Lesson of Loretto

In religion,

"What damnéd error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text?"

*Shakespeare.*

"You do not believe, you only believe that you believe."—*Coleridge.*

PRIESTS are the cleverest showmen in the world, and they are as adaptable as any boneless wonder. In the piping times of peace they bid their followers think of a "Gospel of Love," but, if war should break out, they talk of a "God of battles." Bayonets or beatitudes, all is grist that comes to their capacious mill, and they see that the grist does come. The Romish priests are even cleverer than their rivals. A Protestant pastor cadges money from believers from childhood to old age, but the Romanist actually cajoles money from the widow and orphans of a dead man in order to alleviate his sufferings in an alleged after existence. And this pleasant deception can go on for years and years.

Hence, when aviation became popular, it is not surprising that the astute Roman ecclesiastics promptly found a patron-saint for airmen. Doubtless the Pope hoped, by this smart action, to give additional popularity and a bigger income to a very famous and very profitable shrine. For the "Virgin of Loretto" was selected as the "Madonna of the Airmen."

To solve the riddle of the Loretto shrine is to essay an examination into religious psychology. It is easily read by all but Roman Catholics, who have succumbed to the bamboozlement of their priests. The Catholic faithful are actually invited to believe that the house in which the "Virgin" Mary brought up her family at Nazareth remained there for thirteen hundred years. This in itself is a remarkable story, but religious faith is capable of even greater strain and stress. The story continues that some of the "angels," at long last, became alarmed for the safety of the old homestead, and, apparently, ignoring any appeal to the landlord, they intervened on their own sacred account. One day the house was there; the next day it had vanished, leaving not a brick behind. The compassionate "angels" had carried the structure right across the Mediterranean Ocean to the coast of Dalmatia, where it remained for three years, whilst the angels recovered their breath and went into training for a further effort. Then the angels again pulled together and took the old house on another journey across the Adriatic Sea to Loretto, where it was fixed without a solitary brick being out of its place.

Of course, Loretto possessed not only the Virgin's house, but a statue of the lady herself, which was almost as old as the sacred building. The story goes that this particular image was carved by an old friend of the family, better known to innocent Christians as "Saint" Luke, and reputed to be the author of one of the New Testament gospels. With such a manu-

factured pedigree, this particular shrine became one of the best-paying religious show-places of the world. Among other adornments the sacred image had a gold crown with over three hundred diamonds, and eighty-eight rubies, the gift of the "ever-to-be-respected" Queen Christina of Sweden. During the French Revolutionary wars the shrine was sacked, and the sacred image stolen. This time there was no angelic intervention. The image was restored later when Napoleon made terms with the Pope, and the shrine again became a paying proposition.

It is worth noting that this Loretto image has been credited with similar "miracles" to those of Lourdes, and countless other shrines. These so-called "miracles" can be easily explained by those who have made a study of psychology and faith-healing. All miracle-workers, however, whether Roman Catholic or otherwise, stop short at the restoration of an amputated limb.

Although priests will never admit the soft impeachment, this preposterous shrine is, in the last analysis, simply a branch of commerce, and a very profitable one at that. A few years ago the revenues of this particular shrine were estimated at £12,000 a year. Europe is studded with similar impositions, and some, like Lourdes, must be veritable gold-mines to the priests. Chain stores, multiple combines and big business are supposed to be the products of comparatively recent years. How the priests must laugh in their dainty lawn sleeves, for they have been at the game of big business for thousands of years. Compared with the financial gains of Priestcraft, the ordinary business-man is but an amateur.

Observe the clever cunning of the clergy. Realizing that an ignorant audience will be more readily deceived, they have obtained control of education. Let there be no mistake on this point. Even in our own England so-called "Church" schools are badly staffed and worse equipped, whilst the wages paid are unworthy of the scholastic profession. As late as 1870, half the population was illiterate, and the State was forced to step in and make education free and compulsory. On the Continent, in Roman Catholic countries, things were even worse. A few years ago, in Spain, letter-writing was a profession. If a young lover wished to write to his mistress, he paid the scrivener for his services. She, in turn, had to employ another man to write the reply. If she wished to say it with flowers, the price was higher. Business communications had a scale according to importance. What a commentary on the priestly care for education!

Not only are Roman Catholics mainly ignorant folk, but even their priests are only half-educated. With few exceptions, the priests know the abracadabra of their sorry profession, and precious little otherwise. They may mouth Latin, a dead language, but few know the rudiments of modern science and culture.

As the blind cannot lead the blind, the poor Catholic believer is in a parlous state. He is not allowed to read any books or publications criticizing Romanism. He is told that by doing so he is in danger of eternal damnation and a literal hell-fire. He may not become a Freemason, because priests object to all secret societies other than their own. If a Catholic attends a Freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he stole his employer's money. Even colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are often ill-treated in Roman Catholic countries, for a zealous Papist will no more read a Protestant version of the Christian Bible than he would read the works of Voltaire or Darwin.

This child-like credulity, at which cultured men-of-the-world raise their eyebrows, is passing wonderful

in grown men and women. But this ignorance is largely a manufactured article. In Catholic schools the object aimed at is not so much education as the making of Romanist believers. Everything is subordinated to that one end. The unfortunate teacher is subjected to the priest. Saints' days are observed, and the pupils are taught to reverence the Romish Church, and the duty of implicit obedience. The whole thing is calculated to a hair's breadth nicety, just as a sausage-machine is made to produce sausages. So much impression is made on innocent children in their most impressionable years, that few of them in after life ever fully realize the priestly impostors for the sorry charlatans that they are.

What is the lesson of Loretto to Catholics and Non-Catholics alike? A prime aim of Democracy should be the secularization of education. Priests are satisfied with the present system which gives them nearly everything, and leaves them a sacred caste apart from their fellowmen. But the living cannot walk for ever in the very footprints of the dead, and the present system of priestly control only makes half-men and not real men. With all the parade of present-day learning at our schools and universities, the scholars are, when tested by modern standards of thought and action, only the children of Feudalism, and not of the twentieth century. They know little or nothing of the "mighty hopes that make us men." He who runs may read the lesson of this example of the exhibition of Loretto.

MIMNERMUS.

## Converted Atheists

FROM time to time we read stories of Atheists who have been converted to Christianity. Since all such stories serve as object lessons to emphasize the wickedness of Atheism and the goodness of Christianity, it is not difficult to guess the probable nature of their authors. The fact that the persons who repeat them most often are priests, parsons or pastors, is a coincidence so striking as to make the guess well-nigh a certainty. The details given in these stories show that their authors are pitifully ignorant of the mentality and usual behaviour of Atheists. And from internal evidence of other kinds, one would be safe in gambling that a hundred per cent of such tales are the concoction of some Christian, whose livelihood or position would be imperilled if the truth concerning Atheism were to become widely known.

The question of authorship, however, is incidental. The point of real interest is to discover what truth, if any, is to be found in these stories. And herein lies the snag. For when we pursue our investigations with a view to verifying the alleged facts, we usually meet with several difficulties.

The most common difficulty is that all names, dates and places which might lead to identification are conspicuous by their absence. Again, many of the yarns are so old that all trace of their origins has been lost. Yet again we find that the so-called Atheist often turns out to have been no Atheist at all. A Deist, perhaps, or a believer in some sort of Something Behind Everything—but not an Atheist. The heroes of these tales are seldom alive to confirm their reputed conversions, and equally seldom are they well-known Atheists. When a well-known Atheist is the alleged convert, we invariably make the sad discovery that the yarn is a palpable untruth. Indeed, experience shows that the more we expose these yarns to the

searchlight of investigation, the more do their alleged facts vanish into thin air. The phenomenon of a converted Atheist seems to have about as much foundation in fact as the Indian "rope trick."

My own opinion is that, short of being in a state of physical duress or mental abnormality, it is not possible for a genuine Atheist to be converted back to a belief in God. The grounds for this opinion are exactly the same as those which persuade me that a man who understands the true nature of thunder will never revert to the belief that it is the actual voice of some demiurge in the sky. A correct explanation which is properly understood cannot be ousted by a false one that has been previously held.

If belief in God depended solely upon existing evidence in favour of it or against it, then the world today would be full of Atheists. It is, however, not the *existence* of the evidence, but the *knowledge or ignorance* concerning the evidence, which is responsible for our beliefs. The true facts about God are not so widely known as the true facts about thunder. In this respect the former false belief about thunder is exactly on a par with the present false belief in God. They both depend upon ignorance of the true facts.

One potent cause of public ignorance is that we are taught to believe in the existence of God at an age when reasoning, experience and the critical faculty are wholly undeveloped. It may be argued that this, in itself, should not prevent our growing intelligence from accepting counter-arguments at a more mature age. For example we do not continue to believe in the existence of Santa Claus when we grow up. If we can discard the one belief, why do we not discard the other?

The answer is simple. Santa Claus makes actual physical appearances. At first we are deceived. Later on we find out that he is some friend or relative in disguise. But God always remains well out of sight, touch, smell and hearing. Moreover we are taught that he is invisible and intangible. How can our undeveloped powers of criticism and observation be expected to tackle a handicap like that? Finally—and this is the crucial point—we are taught that it is wicked to question the existence of God or the justice of any of those acts which are usually attributed to him.

This immoral doctrine, which parents and priests instil into the plastic minds of children, does not merely check our curiosity about God. It damages our whole intellectual outlook. For the God-idea has, for untold generations, been mixed up with social and moral questions. And because we believe it wrong to doubt the God-idea, we acquire the disastrous habit of refusing to apply our normal modes of thinking to any point of view which may upset that idea or any other ideas associated with it in our minds. There is no other explanation than this for the bigotry and dogmatism which so frequently accompany discussions involving religious beliefs.

The process whereby this stubborn and childish mentality has been developed is quite easy to follow. In primitive times the leaders of various human groups were either the strongest or the wisest. The latter were men who put forward explanations of natural phenomena which, in view of the prevailing ignorance, were accepted as satisfactory. Naturally few of these explanations were correct, but they were sufficiently ingenious to provide their inventors with a reputation for superior wisdom. They became the priests, prophets and sooth-sayers of the people, and acquired a dominance which they have ever since been careful to fortify. They made laws and invented taboos which protected them on all sides, while seeing

to it that they gathered into their own coffers the first-fruits of the land and other profitable revenues. In order to camouflage their own greed, all this was done ostensibly for the benefit of those mythical powers they professed to represent—the Gods. One has only to read one's own Bible to recognize these facts. And they are emphasized in actual life by the behaviour of all existing witch-doctors, medicine-men, and their counterparts in the religions of "civilized" communities. Any new knowledge which threatens their privileges or power they do their best to suppress. The voting of our own Bishops on educational measures in Parliament bears witness to the truth of this statement.

The net result of these taboos and repressions is that the public has been kept persistently in the dark about the true facts of religion. It also explains why we are apt to manifest resentment towards those who would enlighten us. Being unable to offer any reasonable arguments against the Atheistic evidence, we fall back upon the stubborn and childish habit of refusing to listen, and even go so far as to declare that the Atheist and his arguments are wicked. A few there are who, for family, business or other ulterior reasons, will adopt the ruse of pretending to be too ignorant or unread to be able to accept the Atheistic arguments. Yet these very persons will not admit that their ignorance of the subject makes them equally unfit to accept arguments for God.

In view of this widespread and deep-rooted attitude towards the God-idea, it is extremely rare to find anyone whose mind has not been tainted to some extent by religious preconceptions. For this reason it would be well-nigh impossible to discover any adult Atheist who, at some time of his life (usually in childhood) had not been impregnated with a bias in favour of some religion. There should be nothing surprising, therefore, to discover an Atheist who had been induced to return to his original religious beliefs. But the facts indicate that no such converted Atheist has yet been found. Why is this so? The reasons must now be fairly obvious. It is in the nature of things that truth must ultimately prevail over falsehood. Life could not persist if false explanations and conceptions were for ever to bear the same practical value as true ones. Consequently we find that when a true explanation has been put forward and *understood*, the person accepting such an explanation does not readily revert to his previous false conception. And it is only a matter of time for the truth to become general knowledge.

We no longer believe in demoniac-possession, or witches, or creatures that are half horse, half man. We no longer believe that the Earth is a flat disc or rectangle. We no longer believe that gods or demons are responsible for diseases, earthquakes, typhoons or volcanic eruptions. We have almost ceased to believe in a personal Devil and a literal fiery Hell. So when the true facts and arguments about God become properly known and understood, the last stronghold of our ignorance and bigotry will vanish along with the rest of our erroneous explanations of natural phenomena.

An Atheist is a person who has been fortunate enough to reach such a stage of knowledge. And, having reached that stage, do you think it is likely that he would revert to his more primitive beliefs?

C. S. FRASER.

Science has done more for the development of western civilization in one hundred years than Christianity did in eighteen hundred years.—*John Burroughs.*

## The Late A. E. Housman

(A Freethinker's Tribute)

WHEN one has read the history of mankind and refused to allow his eyes to be blinded by tears of pity at the senseless and needless miseries inflicted on it by superstitions of all kinds, the finest compliment an upright human being can pay all religions is to live and die without them. A. E. Housman did this. As he was not a mere driveller in rhyme nor a half-baked scientist, nor a place-hunter, nor yet a man who wanted to be in two camps at once, it is worthy to be recorded in letters of gold. There is in all his works, including *More Poems*, a brackish flavour which no-one resents, whose palate tells that that life is not a comedy. When Bagehot wrote that "poetry should be memorable and emphatic, intense, and *soon over*," he crystallized a fact of workmanship in poetry that Housman must have had continually before his mind. His belief, as expressed by himself, may be summed up in the following statement: "The tree of knowledge will remain for ever, as it was in the beginning, a tree to be desired to make one wise." His life, from all the available material we have, would seem to have been a striving to knock some value into his own existence. That he succeeded can never for one moment be in doubt.

In his Leslie Stephen lecture, delivered at Cambridge, on May 9, 1933, his subject being, "The Name and Nature of Poetry," we get a clear view of his spacious ideas, and probably it can be found that he refers to himself as one among the Atheistic admirers of beautiful poetry. "To begin with a very obvious instance. I have been told by devout women that to them the most beautiful poetry is Keble's. Keble is a poet; there are things in the Christian Year which can be admired by Atheists; but what devout women most prize in it, as Keble himself would have wished, is not its poetry; and I much doubt whether any of them, if asked to pick out the best poem in the book, would turn at once to the Second Sunday after Easter. Good religious poetry, whether in Keble or Dante or Job, is likely to be most justly appreciated and most discriminatingly relished by the undevout." Here is a man sufficiently at home in the world to tell an audience that he would drink a pint of beer at luncheon, and then have enough confidence in his strength to twit another audience with the following statement about himself. "It was credibly reported that Wordsworth was once drunk and Porson was once sober. A sounder scholar than Wordsworth and a better poet than Porson, I stand before you this evening, betwixt and between." Here was a Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge sufficiently individualized as a man, at home in the world, and giving his colleagues a lesson in courage and an example of a human being under the professorial gown. There is no evidence that his example has been followed, or if there is, such cases are hidden among the doings of the wise men of Gotham.

*The New Yorker*, October 31, 1936, notices "More Poems," and Housman himself, knowing the temper of his mind, would have been glad to know that an American writer was capable of saying so much in so few words. Louise Bogan is the contributor, and the passage is as follows: "A. E. Housman went to his grave having produced less rubbish than any poet of the modern era." The remainder of the article in question perpetuates this quality.

From the *Last Poems*, published in 1922, he answers finally all the bogey men and bogey women of religious worlds in whatever robes they are apparelled, in the following two verses:—

"I took my question to the shrine that has not ceased from speaking,  
The heart within, that tells the truth and tells it twice as plain;  
And from the cave of oracles I heard the priestess shrieking  
That she and I should surely die and never live again.

Oh priestess, what you cry is clear, and sound good sense I think it;  
But let the screaming echoes rest, and froth your mouth no more.

'Tis true there's better boose than brine, but he that drowns  
must drink it;  
And oh, my lass, the news is news that men have heard  
before."

For the reader with one eye only, here is sufficient guidance to enable him to steer a straight course during his grand voyage. When this volume of verse was published there was not what one might call an uproar in the literary world, for the simple reason that such things are not popular, and beneath the banter of these eight lines there was more than a sneeze of reason. "It is not done," say the lily-white-handed literary eunuchs of the present age. Much better to hide one's lack of thinking in clouds of mystic nebulousness.

Hardy is dismissed by those who, if they have read him, have failed to understand him, and in the same way the charge of pessimism is flung at the work of Housman. The reader who cares to dip his hands in the waters of reality and face the world as it is, and not as he would like it to be, will find this out for himself by reading the three volumes of this poet. He was a stoic in every word he wrote. At times there are gentle pictures even of the noble old giant Epicurus. Housman appreciated beauty, but he carried the burden of resentment. Even a genius must live many lives before he can say that he has grasped the sorry scheme of things entire. Housman would be perpetually in the company of Latin writers, and from this contact he had the dyer's hands. To take from the work of this pessimist and to stand his critics on their heads, we quote the following:—

"Oh many a peer of England brews  
Livelier liquor than the Muse,  
And malt does more than Milton can  
To justify God's ways to man.  
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink  
For fellows whom it hurts to think."

And if sweet humour be your fancy, read in the same volume (*A Shropshire Lad*) the four verses entitled, "The New Mistress."

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam said that he lived "out of politeness"; Housman embodied, in our opinion, this sentiment in the three verses which he wrote and entitled, "For My Funeral":—

"O thou that from thy mansion,  
Through time and place to roam,  
Dost send abroad thy children,  
And then dost call them home.

That men and tribes and nations,  
And all thy hand hath made,  
May shelter them from sunshine,  
In thine eternal shade:

We now to peace and darkness,  
And earth to thee restore,  
Thy creature that thou madest,  
And wilt cast forth no more."

Lean thanks, no regrets, quiet resignation, and a lack of the boisterous certainty of immortality mark these lines; cold comfort enough for theological busybodies who cannot imagine an intelligent being living without incessantly troubling God.

Herrick, in *Hesperides*, had sensed the fact of the fleetingness of time; in his sweet and tuneful way he sings:—

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying:  
And this same flower that smiles to-day,  
To-morrow will be dying."

In the same way, Housman could sing of earth-beauty and its ephemeral life in the second poem of "*A Shropshire Lad*," for which we make no apology in giving complete:—

"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride,  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,

And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom,  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go,  
To see the cherry hung with snow."

These lines breathe the beauty of nature with the magic of Meredith, and (to conclude), here is a poem of beauty for any man, whether he regards life as a sacrament or a gift. It is the answer to pessimism; it is the poet's early insight into the frailty of life with the sense of taking gratefully whatever gifts the Gods let fall. We may borrow a phrase of Villon to epitomize the wish of the writer of "*A Shropshire Lad*," who called the bluff of ancient and modern humbug.

"Repose eternal grant to him."

C-PR-B.

## Acid Drops

The Autobiography of Margery Kempe, probably one of the earliest of printed Romances, has been reviewed in *The Tablet*, by Father Thurston. The casual remarks of the Jesuit Father throw us a hint of the spirit of true toleration for which his Church and Order are famous. Margery had the bad luck to live early in the fifteenth century. Father Thurston says:—

She was a woman of very eccentric behaviour, clad in strange attire, who, under a quite undeserved suspicion of Lollardry, had been brought a score of times before the ecclesiastical authorities in all parts of the country and was repeatedly threatened with burning.

This is said of an obviously pious Catholic, and a woman of whom this Catholic reviewer has to admit "her real goodness," but, he adds—

One carries away the conviction that a really Christian spirit must have prevailed among a large proportion of both clergy and laity, seeing that she met with so much indulgence as she did.

A good woman and the author (says Fr. Thurston) of "a picture of the more religious side of English life in the early fifteenth century with which there is nothing to compare," had to be considered fortunate at not being burned alive by the Christian church!

The American Catholics have decided, with the Pope's consent, to imitate Dr. Moffatt and the authors of the Twentieth Century Bible. A Revision Committee of American Catholic Bishops has been formed to replace the Douai-Rheims version of the Vulgate by an edition in Modern English. Those who expect to see a "Jazz-Bible" are warned by Bishop O'Hara, that the "Thou and the Thee" will not be supplanted by the usual "You," because "that would destroy much of the measured beauty" of such passages (we suppose) as "Thou Fool" (Luke xii. 20). "Thou shalt hough their horses" (Josh. xi. 6), and "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." (Psalm 137.)

The Archbishop of York clearly made plain to Mr. Howard Marshall, in a *Listener* interview, that while the attitude of the people is at the best purely negative toward the Church, the Church has absolutely nothing whatever to offer mankind. As regards questions involving War, Peace, Communism, Fascism, Property, Rearmament or any other secular question some Christians say one thing, some another, and the Church would "falsify its mission" if it sided with one more than another on the only important questions which divide mankind. A Medicine-man in the Cannibal Islands could at least offer some indication of which way the Gods would vote.

Mrs. G. C. Davies writes in the *Tablet*, saying that "a Study Circle has been formed for Catholics who wish to study what is the true teaching of the Church with re-

gard to the lower creatures of God." This surely is a queer position. Is a microscope needed for extensive researches to be made on a not very new topic? Is the Church so vague about the treatment of animals that a "Study Circle" is required to discover what it is? There seems something sinister and threatening in one of Mrs. Davies's sex investigating what the priests are teaching. Also what does she imply by the phrase "TRUE teaching of the church"? Is there a choice? Do some priests act on its FALSE teaching?

Colonel Harry Day, M.P., and Mrs. Houdini, friend and widow respectively of the "escapologist," may expect to be pestered by spiritualists claiming to have succeeded where they have failed—i.e., to get in touch with Houdini, now ten years dead. Nay, the claim has been made already by some readers of the story of a mutual pact made by the trio named, that the first to pass-out should try to communicate with the surviving two, from "the other side." None of the principals was a spiritualist: their only idea being to test the occult. Those who claim to have established "touch" are fittingly dished by the Colonel's retort: "I am sceptical because . . . the message was to be in a special code. In addition, I am positive that if Harry (Houdini) had desired to speak from the spirit world he would have reached his widow or me, not strangers." Of course, that will not prejudice the spiritualists' "proof"—*once they discover the code.*

Whenever the question of religious carnage crops up, this British United Press message concerning the "relic" of Oviedo will be worth recalling:—

The Anti-Government forces had taken refuge in the Cathedral and other buildings. The Cathedral tower . . . housed a machine-gun nest which kept the Government forces at bay. Artillery fire wrecked the famous building, in which millions of pilgrims had knelt for the past 500 years to kiss the silver chest containing two thorns from the Crown of Christ.

The application of this is that the rebels are the favoured of the Roman Catholic Church, which will not miss a couple of thorns in so good a cause. The thorns can always be replaced from the forest which adorned Christ's head—to judge from the number of relics of this type preserved.

A new book by the Rev. K. E. Kirk, D.D., is entitled *The Crisis of Christian Rationalism*. Now what exactly is *Christian Rationalism*? We know that the word "rationalism" is by no means easy to define, that is in a sense, to which all who call themselves Rationalists can subscribe. But *Christian Rationalism*! It is a pity that some of those who throw overboard all religious beliefs are afraid of the honest-to-goodness word *Atheist*; for there is a clear, unequivocal designation, the meaning of which no man can mistake. And it is one they should be proud to use if only for its magnificent historical associations.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc has now come to the conclusion that most of the Guy Fawkes story is myth. Of course, there was a Guy Fawkes, a Catesby and other conspirators. It is true also they were all Catholics—as, indeed, were perhaps 50 per cent of the population in James I.'s reign. There was also a plot, and there was even the gunpowder in the barrels "under the room where the King was to have met Parliament the next morning." Guy Fawkes was also apprehended when he was awaiting the moment to blow them up. But all the rest of the story is simply a Protestant lie. The eagle eye of Mr. Belloc has easily spotted that.

It seems that the real bad angel was Robert Cecil, who "had been trained by his father, the great William Cecil, and both men had pursued their policy of downing Catholicism by a series of plots or pretended plots, discovered at the right moment. Each was thoroughly unscrupulous, and each was steeped in the practice of official falsehood." Therefore, while it is *not* proven by

Mr. Belloc, or anybody else, it must be obvious that the conspirators (who were Catholics) were ready to blow up Parliament because they were told to by a Protestant. It is just as simple as that, and English Protestants who can't see this are horribly biased against Catholicism. Oh, Mr. Belloc!

Terrible consternation is reigning in official religious circles in Dublin. It has just been discovered that "Jewish import agents" are sending to the Irish Free State statues and crucifixes made in Japan; and the Secretary of the Religious Goods Wholesale Traders Association is up in arms against such sacrilege. He nearly fainted himself when he discovered a statue for sale in Ireland of the "Infant of Prague" made in Japan and sold by the Jews; and he is now imploring all the faithful to shun like poison their pagan-made religious images and relics. Even the clergy are asked to prohibit them from being sold on missionary and sale of work stalls. But what is one to do when a genuine statue of Mary in guilt and colours can be obtained for 2s. 6d. from Japan (via the Jews) which would cost 10s. if made by holier hands? We give it up.

The way in which Christians themselves are disintegrating their own Bible is shown by the number of "commentaries" constantly being published by Doctors of Divinity and other reverend gentlemen. A late example is in the series known as the "Moffat New Testament commentary"—on the *Pastoral Epistles* by Dr. E. F. Scott. According to a reviewer, these epistles, instead of being written by Paul, and, of course, inspired by God, "are the work of an admirer of St. Paul, who has possessed himself of some unimportant fragments of St. Paul's correspondence, and builds upon them, with the help of the genuine Epistles, an attack upon the false teaching of his own day. The familiar arguments against the Pauline authorship are put clearly." This must be very pleasant reading for the large number of Fundamentalists in this country—that is, if they have the pluck to read Dr. Scott's book. But though Free-thinkers are well aware of the arguments against the Pauline authorship of the *Pastoral Epistles*, they are also aware of the strong case against the "genuine" Epistles; and the time may not be far distant when—as is almost always the case—pious commentators may again agree with perspicacious infidels.

A leader writer in the *Church Times* thinks that when the history of "English Thought in the Twentieth century" comes to be written, "a principal chapter will doubtless deal with the decay of belief in these post-war or inter-war years." This surely ought to be an alarming admission from a pious writer? For at all hands we are told how the heart of England remains steadfastly true to the Faith, how millions of people, who cannot go to church listen fervently to broadcast services, and how ardently billions of Bibles are brought up every year by the spiritually hungry, proving beyond dispute that England is still an impregnable Christian country. Yet here we have a leading orthodox writer protesting that "the real disease in English society to-day is an inability to find anything worth believing and holding fast in the teeth of all opposition!"

The same writer admits that the "damage to Christianity" was done by the "new methods of Biblical criticism," and the "new emphasis on natural selection as the predominant factor in the evolution of the species." But he is puzzled as to why people believed these attacks wrought any damage to the traditional beliefs. On the contrary, he contends that the attacks actually vindicated the Bible, which is now of greater authority than ever; much in the same way as the friends of a beaten boxing champion, knocked completely out, sometimes claim him to be a greater champion than ever—why, the Lord only knows. The truth is, of course, that even pious writers cannot always bury their heads in the sand. The Freethought attack, logically, historically, and analytically, has pulverized Christianity; and the instructed Christian knows this as well as we do.

Father Martindale, that pious and credulous defender of religious nonsense, exhorted his hearers, the other day, not "to bank on what we call the moment of death. Let us," he added, "prepare for our own last hours, by doing all that is possible for the souls in Purgatory, and help them to rise soon and reach the Blessed Presence of God. They, in turn will help you." The best way to help the souls in Purgatory was, of course, to pray for them; and the prayers, duly and properly performed by professionals, cost money. The bigger the cheque, the more hope for the poor dear souls; only Fr. Martindale didn't put it quite that way.

Dr. Letitia Fairfield, who is an M.D., a D.P.H., and a C.B.E., recently told a crowded and intellectual audience that "witchcraft implies a fully-developed surrender to Satan; the witch became Satan's human agent without whose aid he was almost helpless." It was a great mistake to regard witchcraft, she added, as "harmless nonsense." "Nonsense it may be, but harmless—never!" In other words, Dr. Fairfield believes in the reality of witchcraft, in Satan, in the Devil, in "pacts" with his Infernal Majesty, in the transformation of women into cats, in witches flying across the heavens on moonlight nights on broomsticks, in sorcery to produce evil spirits—in fact, in everything of the kind that the most stupid and ignorant and credulous believer in Roman Catholicism believes. Of course, Dr. Fairfield is a Catholic.

According to Fr. Woodlock, 322 Anglican ministers have been converted in 25 years; of these, 17 had been reconverted back. Although the Church was making 12,000 converts every year, Fr. Woodlock sadly confessed that "England had, as a whole, ceased to go to church." A "modernistic" form of Christianity had spread among the clergy of the Anglican and Nonconformist bodies, and "had taken the place of true belief in the Gospels and the Creeds." The "true belief" is Roman Catholicism, and we quite agree here with Fr. Woodlock. It is the most primitive, and the most credulous and superstitious, of all Christian beliefs, and is the only "genuine" Christianity left in this vale of tears. It is a pity, however, that Fr. Woodlock did not give figures of the Catholics who "drop out" every year. Are they not considerably more than 12,000?

Here is an authoritative statement about the Devil from the *Universe* :—

We know very little of angelic creatures . . . but angels were, like ourselves, raised to a supernatural destiny. Further, we know that some of them fell, headed by the one we call Satan, or the Devil. . . . There is good reason for thinking that the precise sin they committed was one of pride, and that Satan in particular was so overwhelmed at the contemplation of his own marvellous perfections that he even wished to dethrone the Almighty Himself and take his place.

No wonder the Almighty Himself was very angry at such presumption on the part of a mere Devil. We should be just as angry ourselves; and we hope Satan's long sojourn in Hell will be a salutary lesson to any other angels with the besetting sin of Pride.

Colonel Sanborn—a declared enemy of Communism, and a friend of Fascism, has turned the peaceful Valley of Salinas, California, into a bloody shambles. The sole ground of offence as far as can be ascertained was that the 3,200 Fresh Vegetable Gardeners formed a trade union to which the "dictatorship" objected. Salinas City is ruled with an iron hand; 800 workers have been forcibly "deported" to starve or find other districts to work in; the Town Hall is barricaded; the streets sprayed with poison gas; Boys are armed to "defend" the Fascist Mayor; and children in the schools are engaged in making "clubs" for the police and unofficial "helpers." The *Literary Digest*, says this is exactly what Sinclair Lewis described as "It can't Happen Here." To the same paper we are indebted for the following description of Colonel Sanborn :—

A soldier of fortune, who said he served as chaplain with both the Canadian and American Expeditionary Forces in France, a reserve officer, a whilom Episcopal rector who was unfrocked by his Bishop for a juicy morals crusade in Alaska, the Editor of a weekly called *American Citizen*, published, in the language of its mast-head, "in order that Fascism may not become necessary to prevent Communism becoming a reality.

Another horror added to life in our cities! The Rev. W. H. Blunt, of Mare Street Chapel, Hackney, has fixed loud speakers to the front walls of his church so that the service can be relayed to the outside public in addition to boring the inside listeners. It is not unlikely that thousands hitherto indifferent may become active opponents of Mr. Blunt and his sermons, but we hope the law will be capable of restraining any preacher from inflicting these noises on those who are unfortunate enough to have occasion to pass the door of such invasive nuisances.

Of course it is good to know that Sir Stafford Cripps is in favour of peace. He has written a book: *The Struggle for Peace*, which in many respects is valuable propaganda against the war-mongers. The author, however, spoils his case when he suggests that "the Christian faith which is predominant in our own country definitely lays down that we should regulate our relationships on . . . 'the brotherhood of Man.'" It does nothing of the kind.

Sir Stafford Cripps's reference to "the predominant" creed might deceive some people into thinking that Sir Stafford Cripps's religion was something else. But on the next page (page 13), he hastens to speak of "that higher nature which we Christians pronounce as proof of the divine nature of the God in whom we believe." It would be instructive—and perhaps amusing—to know the "we" to whom Sir Stafford Cripps refers.

Both these ridiculous symptoms of superiority are shattered to bits when we read in Cripps's Appendix what greater historians than Sir Stafford Cripps have said about English "Colonial Policy" of the days when "Christian Brotherhood" and Christian "higher nature" had full power of self-expression in an England which devoutly believed in the Bible and its God, and His inspiration to his pious soldiers of fortune. Here is Lord Olivier's view of the predatory "freebooters" who (*inter alia*) decimated the Matabeles: "There was nothing that was not discreditable in the fraud, provocation and slaughter by which the destruction of the Matabele dominion was engineered." This quotation from pages 173-176 (where the full story is told) may be set against whatever satisfaction Sir Stafford Cripps derives from a contemplation of the Christian creed, in which these and many similar ruffians believed.

### 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 to secure some of them?



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—D. Fisher 4s.

W. H. MORLEY.—We are sending on copies of the paper.

R. HARDING.—The basic objection to the use of the word "Religion" is that ninety-nine per cent of the people who hear the word associate with it a very definite meaning, and that not the one you have in mind. There certainly is not much benefit derived from using a word, and then having to explain that you do not mean by it what he understands.

G. WARD.—The stories of the death-bed conversions of Voltaire, Bradlaugh and Foote, are all part of the stock of traditional Christian lies. It is rather depressing to find many men have not advanced farther than this "wait till you die" stage.

C.D.—The statement that the heads of the Church of England are compelling by law the poor to keep them in luxury, is sound enough if taken in a general sense. After all, these men are living at the cost of the community, and so far as the existing state of things is perpetuated by law the statement holds.

J. MCKENNA.—You have misunderstood the passage in question, probably owing to the wording. If you read for "brought forth an immense number of books," an immense number of replies, "some of which do not even deserve the penny box," everything will be clear. Mr. Cutner has the fullest appreciation of the value of the Deists named.

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

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

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

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

There is just time for this reminder of the Social and Dance at Caxton Hall, on Saturday evening, November 28. The Social is under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive, and is usually a very enjoyable affair. The proceedings commence at 7 o'clock. Tickets, which include refreshments, are 2s. 6d., and can be obtained at either the *Freethinker* or the N.S.S. Offices

Last Sunday in Manchester was a day of days. A thick fog overhung the city, so thick that all traffic in the streets was suspended. It was a personal compliment to Mr. Cohen that in such circumstances the Picture House was about three-fourths filled, and the lecture was listened to with great interest throughout. The only

bad patch on the meeting was supplied by two very Christian questioners, who appeared to think that it was a meeting of a religious Sunday School. Perhaps they had lost their way in the fog. The chair was taken by Mr. Blainey, the President of the Branch. The Branch has a course of lectures by well-known speakers, and we wish them all success, and hope that Manchester Freethinkers will give all the help they can.

The Birkenhead Branch has arranged for a lantern lecture by Mr. C. B. Bonner on "The Life and Fights of Charles Bradlaugh." Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner is a very interesting lecturer, and this address on the life of his grandfather should prove more than usually attractive. The meeting is on Saturday, November 28, in the Beechcroft Hall, and will commence at 8 o'clock. Liverpool Freethinkers please note.

With sartorial duties to be done, a Bishop's lot is not a happy one:—

First they put on their breeches, which are buttoned at the knee; then the gaiters, which are buttoned all the way down. Then there is the apron. This is fixed at one shoulder by two inside "jigger" buttons, and then wrapped over and buttoned on the outside with two more buttons at the other shoulder. The collar goes on top. The apron ties in the small of the back by a tape on either side.

On top comes the belt, which is also tied with tapes, but the wise bishop ties this up in front and then twists it round so that the tapes are at the back. There is no waistcoat, so then he puts his cross round the neck and slips on his coat.

Yet there are some poor mutts who grudge these dignitaries their few thousands a year.

To-day (November 29) Mr. H. Cutner is visiting Leicester. He will lecture at the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, at 6.30 p.m., on "Communism and Free-thought"—a subject which should provoke plenty of discussion. We hope it will attract a good audience.

We have been discovered. Mr. Byrne writes from Paris to know if it is true, "what people are whispering, that when you were so seriously ill you asked for a priest to administer the last sacrament." As Mr. Cohen has been found out he may as well make a clean breast of it. What he asked for was a meeting of representative Christian preachers in order to determine which was right so that he might adopt their creed. But as he was ill only five weeks, the discussion had not ended by the time he left the hospital.

An Old Street magistrate discharged a prisoner charged with being armed with an offensive weapon—a metal cylinder head. The defendant stated that he had no intention of attacking anyone, but of defending himself if necessary. Evidently a keen student of politics!

## RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

(Taken from the "Annual Register," July 14, 1791)

THE mob next attacked the New Meeting House (Dr. Priestley's) [the Unitarian] and, after trying in vain to tear up the seats, etc.; they set it on fire, and nothing remained that could be consumed.

The old meeting house was completely emptied of pulpit, pews, etc., which were burnt in the adjoining burial-ground, and afterward the building was levelled nearly with the ground; it being considered dangerous from its situation to set it on fire.

Dr. Priestley's house at Fair-hill (a mile and a half from Birmingham) next met a similar fate, with the whole of his valuable library, and more valuable collection of apparatus for philosophical experiments. Here one of the rioters was killed by the falling of a cornice-stone.

On Friday morning the mob continued their depredations; for there was no armed force, and the civil power was not sufficient to repress them. Armed with bludgeons, etc., and vociferating "church and king," they spread terror wherever they appeared.

## The Story of Tea and Coffee

HUMAN life is conditioned by a complexity of phenomena over which the individual exercises little or no control. The very food we eat or the beverages we imbibe are almost entirely dependent on long preceding causes.

Tea and coffee were unknown in Europe until the sixteenth century, when beer, mead and wine were the usual beverages of Western Europe. But to-day one half of the earth's inhabitants drink tea, the cups that cheer but not inebriate.

The cultivation of the tea plant is mainly confined to far Eastern countries that enjoy a warm and humid climate such as India, China and Ceylon. The Japan current flows in the Pacific Ocean from equatorial regions and bears warmth and moisture as it travels. Its vapour-laden air passes over the south-eastern shores of Asia, and is later arrested by the Himalaya and other mountain ranges which separate the low-lying coastlands from the vast plateau of the Asian land-mass. In ascending these slopes, the warm air contracts as its temperature reduces, and its vapour content is condensed into clouds which discharge as copious showers of rain. This rain penetrates the soil, but returns to the surface in the form of springs which are the source of rills and larger streams that become the tributaries of the great Chinese rivers—the Hoang-Ho and Yang-tse-Kiang—along whose fertile and densely-peopled valleys their waters flow back to their ocean home.

The tea bush will prosper in any tropical or sub-tropical region with a yearly rainfall of 70 inches, fairly uniformly distributed throughout the four seasons. China, Assam and Ceylon are the leading tea-producing countries, but the plant is also cultivated in Japan, Java, Sumatra, Kenya, Georgia in the Caucasus, and Natal, while attempts have been made to introduce it into Brazil. In Natal, however, its culture has proved unprofitable owing to the high labour charges.

The Indian crop is enormous, and some 400 million lbs. of tea are annually exported. Ceylon has been transformed from a coffee plantation into a tea-garden. In the early 'eighties when the coffee industry was nearly ruined by the leaf disease, cultivators turned their attention to tea, now the staple product of the colony. The rapid progress of the undertaking is illustrated by the fact that while 2,105 lb. of tea were exported in 1877, in 1924, 205 million lb. were shipped from the island. Whitaker, in 1932, estimated the world production at 840 million tons, while the consumption per head of population in Great Britain and Northern Ireland had increased from 1.22 lb. in 1840 to 10.15 lb. in 1932.

Tea has been cultivated in China from very remote times, but the plant is never found growing wild in Cathay. Still, an uncultivated form which attains the dimensions of a tree flourishes in the jungles of Assam, which is apparently the original stock from which the cultivated form has been evolved.

The Japanese seemingly obtained their knowledge of tea from China, and they first planted it in the southern island, whence it gradually spread northwards. Curiously enough, Marco Polo never mentions tea, despite his extensive eastern travels. Not until 1517, when the Portuguese began to trade with China was tea made known to Europe. Even then it received little notice, until Dutch voyagers in the seventeenth century acquired the habit of tea-drinking from the Chinese.

In his *New Geography*, Prof. Trotter tells us that: "The tea-gardens of China are generally situated

on hill slopes, where the soil is loose, deep, and not easily washed by the rains. The leaves are picked four times during the year: early in April, early in May, in July, and again in August or September. The leaves are dried and roasted, a different process of handling giving rise to the two varieties known as 'black' and 'green' tea. The leaves compressed into blocks form 'brick tea,' much used by the inhabitants of Central Asia, who eat it as a vegetable." Russia is a great tea-drinking country, and it is computed that the Chinese alone consume at least 200,000,000 lbs. of tea every year.

When first introduced into England its price ranged from £6 to £10 per pound. No duty was placed on the commodity, apart from that levied on the beverage when sold in coffee-houses until the reign of William and Mary when it became subject to taxation. In the eighteenth century, the East India Company after experiencing difficulties in its commercial transactions with China, decided to cultivate tea in India and from very primitive beginnings the vast tea industry of Assam has since developed.

Children were told that the good Lord made the wide sea, for ships to sail on and bring us our tea. But nothing was said concerning the devastating array of insect and fungoid pests which so pitilessly prey on the plant. Then there are various blights of vegetable origin and the plant's stems, roots and leaves are all assailed.

Another beverage of world-wide fame is coffee. It is derived from an evergreen tree extensively distributed in Africa, where it grows wild, in Abyssinia and other regions. The plant flourishes in well-watered hilly areas from 1,000 to 4,000 feet above sea level, and succeeds when cultivated in other continents where the temperature is sufficiently high. Its blossoms which are of the purest white, grow in dense clusters, from which a beautiful perfume emanates, and when the coffee-tree is in bloom it is a striking spectacle.

The fruit is a round berry resembling a cherry, and each berry contains two seeds, the incorrectly termed coffee "beans" of commerce. The plant's early history is obscure, but coffee seems to have been little known as a beverage outside Abyssinia until comparatively recent times. The Crusaders were unacquainted with it, and its use appears to have spread beyond Abyssinia in the fifteenth century. The Arabs perhaps first cultivated the plant, and coffee-drinking gradually became customary in countries adjoining Arabia such as Egypt, Persia and Asiatic Turkey.

Coffee arrived in Europe from the East in the seventeenth century. In 1690, the Dutch Governor of the East Indies secured seeds from Arabian merchants and planted them in Java, and this was the inception of the present plantations of that celebrated island. One of the first plants raised in Java was sent to Holland, and set in the Botanical Gardens in Amsterdam. A few young plants reared from the seeds of this were subsequently despatched to the Netherlands' colonies in South America. The plants prospered so well that coffee cultivation was soon extended to the West Indies and other parts of the New World Continent.

Tropical conditions in Southern America closely resemble those of the countries bordering the Indian Ocean. An equatorial stream flows in the Atlantic, and is traceable to the same causes which occasion the streaming of the Japanese Current in the Pacific. The former current runs westward and separates into two large streams near the eastern extremity of South America. The current which travels northwards corresponds to that in the Pacific, and it courses through the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of

Mexico into the North Atlantic. This is the beneficent Gulf Stream. The second current which flows south along the eastern coast of Southern America is the Brazil current, and corresponds in its influences on adjacent lands to that of the Mozambique stream in the Indian Ocean.

Brazil is now the premier coffee producing country of the world, and its prodigious plantations have all arisen from the few seedlings originally sent to Holland from Java in the seventeenth century. Coffee is at present produced in most parts of the tropical zone where the white races have penetrated.

The earliest European coffee-house appears to have been established in Constantinople, and the beverage made its way to Venice in 1645. In England, the first was opened at Oxford by an enterprising Hebrew named Jacob, in 1651, and another was established in London on Cornhill about 1652, and at the Rainbow a little later. These were the pioneers of the celebrated coffee-houses which played so signal a part in the political and social life of the eighteenth century.

Tea and coffee may be considered more as stimulants than as foods apart from the milk and sugar taken with them. Macaulay overcame somnolence when burning the midnight oil by consuming floods of tea, while Carlyle, who usually insisted on his two cups in the evening, constantly complained because he could not sleep. The action of coffee in preventing drowsiness is proverbial, and its antisoporific properties induced pious Moslems to imbibe the wakeful beverage when attending their protracted religious services. This custom was, however, severely censured by the Moslem ministry, who stigmatized coffee as an intoxicant, and therefore plainly prohibited by the Koran. Yet, coffee has become the staple drink of Arabia and Islam generally, indeed, as much so, as tea is in China.

In most European countries coffee is highly relished as a stimulating beverage, especially in France. Voltaire was an insatiable consumer, and the late Lytton Strachey concluded that the deistic philosopher might have lived longer and continued his good deeds had he drunk less of it. Coffee, as commonly served in England, is usually indifferent, and one reason assigned for this is, that the commodity is mostly under-roasted "probably to escape the loss of weight, as the roaster is also the retailer." It is also suggested that in countries where excellent coffee is always available, such as France, Germany and Norway, it is prepared by the housewife, who roasts the seeds until they become dark brown in colour. To this, as well as to the use of newly ground and roasted coffee, its marked superiority in foreign lands is probably to be ascribed.

T. F. PALMER.

Belief in a personal God seems no longer possible. It is no longer the conscience of God, but the conscience of Man that is a power making for righteousness.

James H. Leuba.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all the Christian priests and preachers to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth, and as the Word of God they have disputed and wrangled, and have anathematized each other about the supposable meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another, that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it meant neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they have called *understanding* the Bible.

Thomas Paine.

## A Spiritualistic Novel

CAN a great novel be at the same time a novel "with a purpose"? That is, does the novel, as a work of art, suffer because it is didactic, or is it a great work of art because it is didactic, because it does enshrine some great thesis, felt passionately by its author, who feels, therefore, that the novel is the only form through which he can approach a larger audience?

One can, of course, name a number of great novels with a purpose. *War and Peace*, by Tolstoi, *L'Assommoir*, by Zola, *Dead Souls*, by Gogol, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens, and many others perhaps, can be classed as great didactic novels, novels which did a tremendous work in calling attention to great evils, and which, at the same time, had that unmistakable stamp of genius that made them, apart altogether from their didactic themes, stand out as great works of art. A noble cause can inspire a genius; it can inspire a mediocrity also; but can anybody but a genius produce a great work of art? Genius cannot be explained. How is anyone, for example, going to explain Charles Dickens writing, at the age of 24, a masterpiece like the *Pickwick Papers*, with its wealth of character, its wonderful observation, its marvellous humour, its extraordinary descriptive and narrative power, and which, at the same time, could satirize the absurdities of many breach of promise trials, and inveigh against the horrible iniquities of our debtors' prisons?

No matter, therefore, how passionately or sincerely one may feel about a cause, it requires just that spark of something else we call genius to bring to life the world before us, if, through that world, the intention is to propagate our beliefs. That is why I am always suspicious, for instance, about a Freethought, or an Anti-Vivisection novel. I am, personally, convinced of the righteousness of both these causes, but I doubt very much if the truth of either is better advanced by a book in novel form than by a serious essay.

Some readers will perhaps remember *Ralph Cricklewood*, published by the Pioneer Press nearly 30 years ago. It professed to be "a twentieth century critical and rational exposé of Christian mythology"—and, in so far as the principal characters dealt with this, it really was an excellent "exposé." But as a novel, the less said the better. What is the good of one of the characters giving a lecture or lectures showing the absurdities of Christian claims, with members of the audience chipping in, either for or against—and imagining that this kind of thing constitutes a novel form? Or that descriptions of tea parties and "Critical Societies" however well done make the writer a distinguished novelist?

Before me lies Mr. J. Arthur Findlay's latest contribution to Spiritualism, *The Torch of Knowledge* (Psychic Press, Ltd., 5s.) described on the book-jacket as "Spiritualism's Greatest Novel." This it might well be, though quite a number have been published, some for, and some very much against. Mr. Findlay is fearless and sincere and, no doubt, a courageous fighter for his cause. He has written a "trilogy" explaining "summerland" very fully—though he prefers to call it "Itheria," and it should be noted that he has no delusions about Christianity, which he smites hip and thigh in vigorous language. In this, he is more like the older generation of Spiritualists, many of whom were strongly anti-Christian and ridiculed the Christian heaven and hell quite as much as Freethinkers. And he has certainly read widely a great deal of Freethought literature. But whether *The Torch of Knowledge* will ever be classed as a great novel is quite another matter. Many characters are introduced, they often indulge in amusing

and instructive talk, there is a certain amount of love and narrative interest, and there are pages and pages of the usual kind of spiritualistic "revelations" which have impressed so many people, and which, for Mr. Findlay, constitute undeniable proof of the reality of, not only spiritualistic phenomena in general, but of the actual existence of "Etheria" in particular.

The point to note is that "all the psychic phenomena which run through this story have actually happened." Mr. Findlay insists, for example, that after the death of his mother this year, through two mediums, neither of whom knew her, he was able to obtain "one hundred and forty-six facts of an intimate private nature which were only known to members of my family." Some of these things were new to him, but he later discovered they were true. Moreover, "she told me where some old letters which she had hidden away before her death, had been put, and how entrance could be effected to the secret place of concealment." And, of course, Mr. Findlay found the letters.

Now, how is one to deal with positive statements of this kind? It is extraordinary how often so many writers on spiritualism, fervent believers, will fill page upon page of their books with similar stories. I have in mind at least a dozen authors, all of whom have collected the most weird and wonderful happenings, which, if true, must put Materialism for ever out of court. If "Summerland" or "Etheria" really exists, if people after dying here on this earth are gently wafted to this other plane and live—more or less—happily ever after, there is an end to so many of the positive statements of Materialists; and we all should prepare for that happy time when financial or marital worries cease to exist, when life is just one long phase of happiness to which not even the coming Communist paradise can be compared.

The unfortunate thing which has to be faced is, that when properly investigated, a good many of the statements made by thorough believers are shown to have no more basis in fact than similar Christian stories of angels in heaven. Take away a good deal of the Christian imagery which goes to decorate and furnish heaven, take away the wings and beautiful white dresses of pretty angels, insist that sex is not apparent in "Etheria," and in what way does Heaven differ from Mr. Findlay's other world? Numbers of Christian writers—look at Swedenborg as a supreme example—have described heaven and other planets with the most minute details. They are just as positive as is Mr. Findlay; and are we to say they are mistaken?

The marvellous happenings which he has experienced seem to have passed by many other earnest investigators. Very, very few have managed to get hold of the dead as easily and as confidently as has Mr. Findlay. If I say that, in my own case, nothing has ever happened, I am only repeating what crowds of my friends have told me. Some of these have sat for hours without even such a common experience as table-moving or rapping ever taking place; for me, the table never budges an inch, except when I push it. I never get a slate message, I have never been given the winner of any race, let alone the Derby. Nobody has ever prognosticated a single event for me either from cards or a crystal which has come true.

Not only that; I have tried for years and years to get a spirit photographer to obtain a genuine spirit on negatives taken with my camera; I have tried my best to get a message tapped out on my typewriter by the same kind of spirit hand that moves a planchette; all to no purpose.

Now, I am far from saying that because I have never experienced anything whatever from "Etheria"

or whatever "summerland" is called, that other people never have. I cannot, for the life of me, see why Mr. Findlay should not have seen his mother after her death, when we have the positive statements of dozens of Christians that they have seen some particular devil or apparitions from Hell. Their statements are just as emphatic; and there are large numbers of these stories showing how the devils—or apparitions—took people to hidden places in which were concealed last wills or lost treasures.

Are we to say that the people who saw, with their own eyes, witches riding on broomsticks, or women turning themselves into cats are lying, while similar stories of ectoplasm turning into recognizable babies or wonderful materializations of ancient Chinese philosophers or even into "Katie Kings" are quite true?

I shall perhaps go more into detail in a future issue of this journal, describing how people can not only be deceived, but can deceive themselves. But it does seem to me, reading Mr. Findlay's experiences, that the days of recording marvellous happenings not experienced by ordinary folk are by no means over.

For the rest, one can only say that his book gives an excellent account of modern spiritualism; and served up in the disguise of a novel, will no doubt make a much wider appeal than if it had been, like his "trilogy," a serious essay. In addition, there are many talks and discussions on other subjects as well as a few chapters on "looking forward." I hope some of his prognostications will be realized; for Mr. Findlay, like myself, loathes cruelty in any shape or form whatever the reason given. And I think even those who disagree with him about "Etheria" will perhaps agree with his concluding words—"our life-story never ends."

H. CUTNER.

## I Believe . . .

"I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth."

THERE was a stage in my mental development when, if visiting a Church of the Establishment, I would recite this portion of the Apostles' Creed, and keep silent during the remainder.

I had abandoned the traditional faith, with its miracles, its doctrine of a blood sacrifice for sin, etc., etc., but I *wished* to believe that, in some way, the Universe was "friendly"—that within the cloister of my secret thought I could come into contact with the "Infinite," and that "in spite of all that seems at strife," at the "centre of things" was "Infinite Love."

That was my Unitarian creed. It involved no dogma of personal immortality. "He giveth His beloved sleep," and, if a dreamless sleep, even so. "Life, Death and Immortality" were "in my Thought of God."

That nebulous belief has gone. I see it now—apart from its illogical basis—as a form of self-indulgence, a mental drug.

And when closely examined, what a contradictory statement is that first declaration in the Apostles' Creed! The Almighty Creator, if such there be, can have none of the better attributes associated with the idea of a father. Nature, "red in tooth and claw," shrieks against the assumption.

Some time ago I visited a medical museum and saw there representations of some of the foul diseases that beset humanity. I have seen friends dying of cancer, and have read of the terrific sufferings of hapless human beings as the result of earthquake, flood, tempest and famine. And when to these things I add the incalculable sum of misery due mainly to

man's ignorance of what is best for him, I can no longer think of a "friendly Power" controlling the Universe. Rather with the Persian Sage I repeat:—

"Ah Love, could'st thou and I with Fate conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things, entire,  
Would we not *shatter it to Bits*—and then  
Remould it, nearer to the Heart's Desire?"

Many fine Unitarians I have met, and I surmise that some would answer me by repeating the last line of the stanza, continuing: "'The Heart's Desire.'—don't you see that it is *this* we mean by 'God'?" What is the craving for the good and the beautiful but the voice of God within the heart of man? Granted that you are dissatisfied with the world as you know it, that you consider life as lived by the mass of mankind mean and ugly—whence *comes* this dissatisfaction? Surely it is the appeal of the Highest? And may we not think of It as the Universal, as *God*? And, this granted, may we not, for our comfort, think of God as Our Father—not as one who has to be placated, or whose help we need to beg in prayer, but, rather, as one whose Perfection, when made the subject of our contemplation, will aid us to higher endeavour and 'nobler life?'"

This view, honestly held by many (I know that I, quite honestly, held it myself at one time) demonstrates the great need for clear thinking.

My first objection is that a super-human interpretation is given of a human phenomenon. The "Heart's Desire" is a product of the power which, in the process of evolution, man has acquired, to compare and classify experiences, and thence to form images of possible achievements. The picture exists first in the *mind* of the artist, the edifice in the *mind* of the architect, the successful "deal" in the *mind* of the merchant, but no one claims that these "visions," are other than human in origin.

Why then should those pictures called ideals, pointing to nobler modes of life, be considered super-human, or divine? I submit that the fact of so classifying them is apt to lead to neglect in their development from the realm of Fancy to that of Reality. If they come from God, then, although we may be "workers together with God," we do not take all the responsibility. And this brings me to my second objection. So long as we believe, even in a flimsy and poetic manner, in some Power, outside ourselves "making for righteousness," we shall not be likely to put our energies entirely into the task of shattering and rebuilding. Time and attention, worship and adoration, given to God, mean that there is less for Man.

Remark how, in many cities, the Houses of God stand, well built and richly decorated amidst a wilderness of hovels in which men dwell. Think what might be done for mankind if the clergy of all denominations were enrolled as workers for a better social order, and if as much study had been given to the attempt to understand and satisfy the needs of mankind as has been devoted to theology and religion.

And, in view of the sense in which the great mass of mankind uses the word "God," can one quite escape a charge of obliquity when one employs the word for some other idea than that of a *Person*?

If in some periods of emotion and ecstasy one seems to rise above one's personality and to sense a relationship with the whole of nature, or of union with admired leaders and heroes, would it not be wiser to seek an explanation of this fact in the realm of mental science, rather than to associate it with anthropomorphic conceptions of primitive man?

I think so, and therefore I can no longer recite even the first sentence of the Apostles' Creed.

A. H. MILLWARD.

## The Great Artificer

CHRISTIAN: "What a wonderful world this is, and how perfectly its great designer controls it."

Sceptic: "I do not agree."

C.: "Why?"

S.: "Because, in the first place, an Almighty and Omniscient being who wished his people to acquire a knowledge of him, and to follow a code of morals dictated by him, should have taken the earliest opportunity of revealing himself to them in a manner that all could understand."

C.: "He did this when he sent his only begotten Son to die for them."

S.: "This is alleged to have happened thousands of years after the creation of the world and its inhabitants, and in the interval millions of souls could not possibly have heard of him. It is now nearly 2,000 years since the incident, nevertheless millions have never heard of him, and millions who have derived their knowledge of him through the medium of the Bible have either denied him or have entertained grave doubts of his existence. The futility of his message communicating his code of morals is reflected in the large number of different religions in the world, each satisfied that the rest are deluded. A human being who staged a revelation intended for the universal benefit of mankind, which produced such meagre results would by general consent be deemed a failure."

C.: "Apart from this instance, to which you appear to attach more importance than it warrants, you must admit that the Almighty could not be surpassed in his design and direction of the world."

S.: "Again I disagree. If it had been possible to invest a human being with the power wisdom and benevolence ascribed to the Almighty, and he had created and controlled the world, I am satisfied that it would have been better for all concerned."

C.: "I should like to know how."

S.: "In place of the deserts and other ugly spots which disfigure large parts of the globe, I believe this human being would have made fertile and pleasant regions, and ensured that climates generally were so salubrious that the necessity for prayers on behalf of harassed cultivators and others for rain or sunshine would never arise. He would have made us immune from blindness, deafness, muteness, lunacy, and the malignant diseases which cause so much suffering, and take such a heavy toll of life. He would have stifled at our birth our cardinal vices, and endowed us with sufficient intelligence to avoid wars, civil disturbances, and other kindred evils, and to devise economic laws ensuring ample work, food, and leisure for all. He would have given us a code of morals which all would have understood and followed without hesitation, and without priestly interference, and at the same time conferred upon us the blessing of a universal language. He would not have tolerated the class inequality, with its uneven distribution of wealth, which now dishonours civilization, and the cruelty so prominent a feature in nature would have had no place in his scheme. Reptiles and insects would have been non-poisonous, and noxious weeds and other deterrents to husbandry would have been excluded from his project. He would have had no use for earthquakes, floods, and the other disasters which so afflict the human race, and his control of affairs generally would have been regulated by a desire to promote the well-being of all sentient beings. And being human, the monstrous institution of Hell would not have disgraced his programme."

C.: "In a world such as you depict, what would happen to those who now derive their livelihood by preaching the various gospels and administering the numerous religious societies and Institutions? Their name is legion."

S.: "They would be provided with more useful work."

PRO REASON,

## Correspondence

### THE CORONATION OATH

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Probably many readers will share in appreciation of your outspoken Editorial in the *Freethinker* for November 15, on the Coronation Oath as still adopted in our country, pointing out as you have done that from most points of view it is out of date and involves doubtful positions. The Oath was no doubt worded when it was necessary to reckon with the Papacy not merely as a religious but also a political power wielding influence on the fate of nations. But now it strikes modern ears, attuned to liberty of conscience and religious toleration, mainly as an anachronism. The temper of our nation with its deep-seated love of liberty and free expression of the most diverse opinions, may be relied on, oath or no oath, as the safeguard from setting Roman Catholicism on the Throne.

MAUD SIMON.

### JEWES AND CHRISTIANS

SIR,—You kindly noticed something I said about the Jews. And no doubt you meant to be kind when you said something about the Jews who became Catholic. Your words were: "The greater number of *convert* Jews generally remains Jews privately to the end of their lives."

Now, Sir; it is against all the laws of debate and courtesy that you should attribute any duplicity to an opponent. You will at once see the validity of this law if you apply it to yourselves. Many Catholics, I believe, become Atheists.

Would you not think it intolerable if I used the columns of a Catholic paper to say: "The greater number of Catholic converts to Atheism generally remain Catholics privately to the end of their lives."

All discussion worthy of the name can be carried out only on the principle, "Do to others only what you wish others to do to you."

FR. VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

[The two cases are not parallel. A man who becomes a Freethinker has nothing to gain in the way of financial benefits, and may stand to lose much. His "conversion" is evidence of sincerity. But Jews converted are usually poor ones, not infrequently have drained their co-religionists dry, and they receive material benefits from their conversions. The sincerity of an opponent is one thing, that of a convert where material profit may follow is another. Fr. McNabb may have heard of "Rice Christians."—EDITOR.]

## National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 19, 1936

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Saphin, Tuson, Silvester, Ebury, Preece, Elstob, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to North London, West London, Glasgow, Kingston, Bradford, Tees-Side Branches and the Parent Society.

Correspondence was dealt with from Bradford, Plymouth, Bournemouth, London, and Switzerland. Mr. H. R. Clifton was appointed as delegate to attend a Conference of the National Peace Council.

The resignation of Mr. L. M. Werrey-Easterbrook from the Executive for reasons of health was accepted with extreme regret. Appreciation was recorded of his attendance at meetings in the past, also appreciation of the assistance given to the conduct of the business of the Society during his membership of the Executive.

Details in connexion with the Annual Dinner, and forthcoming Social were discussed, and suggestions

made. The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, December 17, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

## Branch News

### BIRKENHEAD (WIRRAL) BRANCH

THOUGH seriously hampered by lack of means, this year promises to be a record for the Birkenhead Branch, and every effort has been made to advertise the movement in Birkenhead by the distribution of handbills and specimen copies of the *Freethinker*. With a view to advertising the Branch still further, a special meeting has been arranged for Saturday, November 28, in the shape of a free public lantern lecture, entitled "The Life and Fights of Charles Bradlaugh," when the speaker will be Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A., of London. For details see Lecture Notices. Saturday is not a good night for a meeting of this kind, but no suitable hall can be engaged on a Sunday owing to the bigotry which operates in Birkenhead. This fact should be sufficient to spur all Freethinkers to rally in support of this effort. It would be decidedly encouraging to see a good muster of friends from Liverpool and Chester, to whom a very hearty invitation is extended. Members of the Branch have worked hard in the cause, and deserve the moral support of all Merseyside Freethinkers on this occasion.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Evans, Barnes and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment. *Freethinker* and *Spain and the Church* on sale outside the Park gates.

#### INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30, Debate—"Is There any Guarantee for the Authenticity of the Old Testament Writings?" *Affir.*: Mr. A. M. Sheveshevsk (Master of the Hebrew Language). *Neg.*: Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station Underground): 7.30, Capt. B. Acworth, D.S.O. (Evolution Protest Movement)—"Evolution and Social Order."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John Katz, B.A.—"National Destiny and the Individual."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, A. Burall—"The Idea of Progress."

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Hall, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Saturday, November 28, C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A. (Grandson of the late Charles Bradlaugh)—"The Life and Fights of Charles Bradlaugh." Lantern Lecture. Reserved Seats 6d., obtainable at meeting. Nos. 60 and 64 buses stop outside hall and leave Woodside and Central Station every 10 minutes.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, O. B. Sweeney—"The Law of Human Progression."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Livery Street): 7.0, Debate, "Is Democracy the Best Form of Government." *Affir.*: Mr. C. H. Smith. *Neg.*: Mr. T. Millington.

(Continued on page 767)

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(Continued from page 766)

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture. Literature for sale.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance facing Burtons): 7.15, Mr. M. Kline, B.Sc. (Leeds University)—A Lecture.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Co-operative Hall): 7.15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Men and Their Muddles." Workers and Friends please note.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Jack Clayton—"The Rev. Noel Calvin's Hell."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Dr. P. Gray, Lantern Lecture—"The Nature and Origin of Life."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. R. R. Gunn—"The Case for Homœopathy."

HETTON (Workmens' Club): 7.30, Tuesday, December 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Gods."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Communism and Freethought."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, W. A. Atkinson—"Fascism, Communism and Freethought."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Havelock Rooms): 7.0, Wednesday, December 2, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Faith and the Future."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. A. Planders—A Lecture.

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