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• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

Anti-Godism in Spain

EVER since the military and clerical rebellion in Spain the atrocity-mongers have been at work. Civil War is always a fierce and a brutal war. It illustrates the biological law that animals of allied species always fight with the greatest ferocity. And in the beginning of the Spanish trouble the atrocity-mongers lifted their heads and laid themselves out for a spell of enjoyment. We had the early stages of the European War over again, when brutality created lurid happenings and credulity smacked its lips over the feast provided. Political and religious animosity also set to work. Some of our yellow press simply turned up the files regarding German atrocities and gave them new locations. The Belgian women outraged in the public streets with officers looking on, became nuns outraged by "Reds" in the streets to the delight of the "Communist" spectators; and ghouls delighted in swallowing stories of the bodies of nuns that were dug up and pinned on the walls of Churches. Gradually this kind of story died down, but the ghoulish fools had a rare time while they lasted. They had learned nothing from the last war, and they will probably learn little from this one. And in spite of the Spanish populace fleeing before the advance of the insurgents as from the approach of a plague, they can still talk about Franco and his army as the liberators of Spain.

But the two cards that were played regularly were the "anti-God" cry and the cry of Communism. It was taken for granted that to prevent either or both of these causes succeeding any and every kind of action were justifiable. But Communism is to the student, as it must be to the historian, a socio-economic theory, and ought to be discussed as other theories of society or economics are discussed. It should be rejected because it is unsound, not because the critic dislikes it. I fancy I could criticize Communism "a-plenty" without calling its advocates criminals, or questioning their motives, and certainly without arguing that it is something that should

not be tolerated in civilized countries. Countries that can tolerate deliberate preparations for raining poison gas and thermite bombs on old men, women and children, and who openly proclaim that "baby-killing" must be a prominent feature of the next war, ought not to be thin-skinned.

* * *

A Committee of Enquiry

Quite recently a committee of Churchmen and Non-conformists visited Spain—Madrid, Valencia, and Barcelona—to investigate what truth there was, if any, in the stories of there being a fierce "anti-god" campaign at the root of the opposition to accepting the benign rule of the gentle Franco and his Fascist supporters. The deputation consisted of the Dean of Chichester, the Dean of Rochester, The Rev. Henry Carter (Methodist), Mr. P. Bartlett (Society of Friends), Rev. P. Usher (Chaplain to the Bishop of Gloucester), and Mr. H. Brinton. There was no Communist and no anti-godite in the party. They were there on the invitation of Senor Largo Caballero to enquire "into the cessation of public worship . . . the destruction of Churches, the killing of clergy, and the policy of the Government in respect of liberty of conscience and worship." Their report has been published, although the yellow press generally does not appear to have heard about it. Of greater importance to them is the question of how soon the Duchess of Kent's baby will cut its first tooth.

The Committee found a strong anti-clerical movement. The existence of this is well-known, and I leave it for Christians to explain why in all popular risings—right through history—there has been this strong anti-clerical feeling. But they found no organized "anti-God" propaganda. Nor did they hear of the dissemination of caricatures "of God, or Christ, or of the saints." They found copies of the Scriptures offered for sale on street book-stalls, and the committee says there is a strong anti-clerical movement, but no anti-God movement in Spain. I am rather sorry to hear that, but this will come later, perhaps. In the Basque country, where the Catholic clergy are with the people, there is no anti-clerical movement, but elsewhere it exists, and elsewhere Catholic Churches are closed, and many destroyed. Protestant Churches are open as usual. And, in the case of the Catholic Churches:—

Actually some of the Churches and convents had been used to store ammunitions for the rebels and—as we know from eye-witnesses—firing on the crowds took place from them. The Government made a determined endeavour to protect whatever was of artistic value in the Churches.

No anxiety was expressed by any of the Protestant clergy interviewed as to the future of Protestantism under the Republic, and all the Government desires is that the Roman Catholic Church shall separate it-

self from "improper political activity." That is a brief summary of the report of which so many of our papers have not heard. There has been, I may add for the benefit of those who like their news nice and "bluggy," plenty of slaughter in Spain, and there is likely to be much more whichever side wins, with, I think personally, an extra dose if Franco and his army get the upper hand. And if it is only Communists and anti-Godites who are killed there are many English who would vote for the sanctification of St. Francis de Morocco, in memory of General Franco.

* * *

Police! Police!

Having expressed my opinion about the assumption that if Communism is the aim of the Spanish people, then Franco ought to have done what he has done, I must leave that question for the time, and also leave those who if they are opposed to the opinions of the Republicans believe either that action against them is justified, or wink at any action that is taken against them. I hope that is not the attitude of anyone who calls himself a Freethinker, because the very essence of Freethought is to fight for the free expression of opinions with which one does not agree. A Freethought that believes in fighting for the free expression of opinion with which one is in agreement has always been encouraged in the Roman Church. That Church has never, in the whole of its existence, suppressed an opinion that it thought was right.

What I am more interested in here is the pleasure of this committee on finding there is no organized "anti-God" movement in Spain, and the implied assumption of most of the papers that noticed the report that this should remove much of the prejudice that exists against the Spanish Government. I have no doubt that this might do so, but I still protest that this should have nothing at all to do with it. The propaganda of Communism and anti-Godism is in this country quite legal, and that propaganda should have—although it seldom gets—all the legal rights and protection that is given to pro-God and anti-Communist propaganda. The policeman and the prison are as bad arguments against anti-Godism as they have historically shown themselves to be against other forms of opinion. Their principal result is to produce a residuum of intolerance that affects the discussion of all questions, and which creates that horrible mentality which expresses itself in "Well, that is my belief, and I am not going to listen to anything or to read anything against it. I think that anything against my opinion ought to be suppressed." This is a tolerably common type of mind, although generally it is too cowardly honestly to express itself. Usually it shelters itself under a professed concern for "morality," or "decency." It has no intellectual foundation, and therefore it lacks moral straightforwardness. It roots itself in cowardice and expresses itself in humbuggery.

The cry against "anti-Godism" is an unashamed appeal to vested interests and religious ignorance; but religion is always ready to take a big step backward in social and political history; it is ready to back any kind of national or international atrocity if only it can check the movement against the belief in God. Against the arguments of the Freethinker it finds itself powerless. So it appeals to the police force and to the army to stamp out the dreaded thing. And here and there it may meet with a measure of temporary success. It does so with such things as the Sunday Cinema law; with the political terrorism that does what it can to select candidates for Parliament, who are too timid to

avow their convictions on religion or too mentally backward to understand the real position of the God-idea in the modern world. The Freethinker is bound to meet the idea of God with disbelief, but the people who raise the "anti-God" cry as an unavowed sanction for acts of injustice and intolerance teach sensible men and women to treat the whole circle of religious ideas with contempt.

* * *

Anti-Godism

What really is "anti-Godism" and what is it aiming at? Well, in the first place it aims at making it clear that all the gods in the world are expressions of man's ignorance of the nature of the forces around him and within him. It points out that with religion as with other things man progresses by the trial-and-error method. He tries many things before he finds out the best; he thinks many thoughts before he discovers the truth. This is admittedly true in all directions, and the Freethinker asks why it is not true with regard to the belief in gods. The Godites—that is, the better specimens—admit that when man thought of demons as the cause of disease, or imagined the forces of nature to be the expression of a crowd of personal beings, he was wrong. When he thought of the cause of storms, or of the growth of crops, he was wrong. His first efforts at society-building were faulty, and had to be displaced by better ones. Why should there be this readiness to throw off other primitive ideas, and yet treat the rejection of the idea of God as a crime? Anti-Godism merely wishes to apply a law of development to religion that has been found to have application to every other aspect of life.

And in other affairs. The anti-Godist lays down no rule that is more dangerous than this one—that every social institution is born of social need, and is no more than an experiment—more or less prolonged of tenure—in social life. He wishes to destroy the belief that an institution is where it is because God ordained it, or because the Church supports it, or because it supports the Church. It denies the right of any one, of any class, or of any institution, to treat the question of their validity as a crime. It knows only one test of the value of habits or institutions, of education and government, and that is their tendency to promote general welfare in human society. It does not believe that the last word has been said in the shaping of society, any more than it believes that the last idea in physics or biology has been said. Man moves by using his dead self as a stepping-stone; he progresses by profiting from his blunders, and not by perpetuating them. The Greeks had reached this point of view more than two thousand years ago; but Christianity came, and we are now trying to regain lost ground. There are forms of life that exist to-day that are where they were millions of years ago, but they have paid the price of perpetuity by seeing other forms of life get beyond them.

I admit that this kind of philosophy is rather "dangerous." It threatens falsehood and sinister interests and outworn institutions wherever they are found. It puts the salvation of the world into man's own hands, and it tests everything by its value on human life. It is this philosophy that the "Godist" seeks to destroy; and with it all progressive civilization.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

No language of invective was too extreme to be applied to a sovereign who opposed their [ecclesiastical] interests. No language of adulation was too extravagant for a sovereign who sustained them.—*Lecky*.

Prelates and Politics

"Bishops used not to busy themselves with politics."
Daily Mail, February 2.

"Great ideas do not win through academics. They are fruitless until they operate through the living world of men and women."—G. W. Foote.

The clergy are, as a whole, the most noisome of all the Nosey Parkers. Others may poke their noses into public affairs intermittently, but the clergy are always at it. At one time these salaried-sons-of-God gird at Sunday excursions; at another they object to cinemas; at yet another they wish to overhaul the public libraries. In times of peace they roar like sucking doves, in war-time they include the Lion and Unicorn among the most sacred emblems of their religion. But, in their case, precept and practice do not invariably trot in double harness. Charles Spurgeon, the most noted preacher of the nineteenth century, was a hard-shell Sabbatarian on the platform, but it never prevented his own coachman driving him to chapel every Sunday for many years. The Rev. Dr. Horton was a most determined opponent of music-halls, yet he admitted that, prior to his starting his crusade, he had never entered such a place. William Booth encouraged self-denial among his deluded followers, but this one-time pawnbroker's assistant never let a shilling pass him alive. The Bishop of London, who is always voicing the alleged woes of the wretched parsons, basks in the sunshine of £10,000 yearly, a palace, a town house, and a seat in the House of Lords.

And the priests of the State-supported Anglican Church are the chief offenders. The recent appearance of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York into politics, and the eruption of five Bishops at a recent election, amply prove their increasing anxiety to wield yet more political power throughout the country. As a fact, these charlatans have far too much power already. With their twenty-five seats in the House of Lords they can actually control legislation in the Upper House of Parliament, whilst their unique position in the Universities and the Public and Church schools concedes the balance of power in matters educational. Backed by the enormous revenues of their Church, which amount to £16,000,000 yearly, the income of a small country, this Black Army of Priests forms the most formidable of all the opponents of Democracy. For they possess seventeen thousand priests in the parishes of this country, who respond to the ecclesiastical call for reaction at every turn.

These priests are intellectual cave-men. The Thirty-Nine Articles of their religion, to which every Archbishop, Bishop, and priest, subscribes, is based on the teaching of the monastic Christian Fathers of nearly twenty centuries earlier, to whose frauds and follies they willingly subscribe—for a consideration. These precious articles of religion are calculated to make a modern man rub his eyes as he reads them, and even priests, if honest, must boggle as they sign them. They include the grotesque belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that "Adam" and "Eve" were the parents of the human race, and that they ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which death came into the world, and countless generations are condemned to everlasting punishment in fire; that Jesus Christ went down bodily to "Hell"; that the Roman Catholic Church, the oldest of the Christian bodies, is a vain invention of man; that the Christian Bible is the actual word of "God"; and that the reigning Monarch is the head of the real and actual Church of Christ. And we also know that numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them, and

that their real reason for remaining in such a church is a purely financial one. Such a type of man is very unlikely to be other than greedy and self-seeking, and so it has proved, both in social life and in politics. Their treatment of their own staffs of church organists, vergers, choir-boys, and cleaners, except in the case of the great cathedrals, which are show-places, is very nauseous and notorious. And their conduct has been frigid and contemptible in the region of politics, where they have always been the most hide-bound of the Conservatives.

The votes of the Bishops in the House of Lords, as recorded in Hansard's "Parliamentary Debates," shows that these highly-paid priests never supported any measures for the enfranchisement of the people. In the long-drawn battle for the great Reform Bill of 1831, the Bishops were conspicuously hostile, and actually provoked popular reprisals throughout the country. The attitude of the Bishops to the education of the people has been one of steady and pronounced opposition to popular control. This country has waged a hundred wars during the past few generations, yet these Christian prelates in the House of Lords never condemned one of them, although they included the Chinese "Opium" War and the spoliation of South Africa.

The cause of international arbitration owes nothing to these ecclesiastics. Many Acts of Parliament for the amelioration of the condition of labour have been passed, but they aroused little or no interest among the Bishops in the House of Lords. In its days of weakness the Democratic Movement found these Bishops always among its most bitter and determined enemies. To-day, when the Labour Party is a real force in politics, and a power in the country, these consecrated charlatans have changed their tone and speak smooth things of it. But it is a case of "words, words, words," and the silent opposition is still enforced. On the Marriage Laws, and the question of reasonable divorce, the Bishops have been adamant. In all, the House of Lords rejected the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill fourteen times, and mostly the votes of the Bishops secured the defeat of the measure. So one could continue for pages.

Lord Shaftesbury, the social reformer, and himself a Churchman, described the Bishops of his time as "timid, time-serving, and great worshippers of wealth and power." And so exasperated was he, that he broke out: "Of what use are the Bishops in the House of Lords?" Of what use, indeed! In the days of the Church's power the ecclesiastics rode roughshod over the liberties of the people. After nearly twenty centuries of priestly domination, as late as 1870, half of the population of this country was actually illiterate, and the State was compelled to take action by introducing Free Education. Even to-day belated Factory Acts and social legislation have to be resorted to in order to render the conditions of life of working people sufficiently tolerable to avoid an actual revolution. The first quarter of the twentieth century has passed, and England has yet to learn that the Lords Spiritual have repented of their old active antagonism to the Democratic Movement. Yet what else can be expected of these consecrated charlatans, who still pray for fine or wet weather, who offer special invocations for individual members of a Royal Family, and, in times of peace, parade the Union Jack as a symbol of their love for Democracy and Humanity?

Speaking broadly, the Freethinkers have sapped the public faith in Christianity. They have put the people in possession of arguments which have undermined the very foundations of Orthodoxy. Few men or women, if they seriously reflect, realize that our forefathers once implicitly took their ideas from priestly

teachers, of no more real importance than the cunning and unscrupulous medicine-men of savage races. No amount of indignant protest, or pumped-up vehemence, will avail to conceal the plain fact that we stand at the very gates of a new age. Is it not therefore high time that we turned to the Bench of Bishops in the Lords, and, echoing the words of Cromwell, said: Begone, and make way for better men? And an excellent beginning would be the disestablishment and disendowment of this so-called Church of England. For, as Meredith said, "the country that fights Priestcraft and priests is striking deep on behalf of freedom."

MIMNERMUS.

The Cult of the Ancient Celts

THE Celtic invaders of England, France and Spain all arrived from regions beyond the Rhine. Nor were these lands their original homes, for they had earlier migrated to North and West Germany from Hungary, Moravia and other distant areas. They entered Italy in 390 B.C., and appeared a few years later in Greece. The ancient La Thène Culture was mainly theirs, but apart from inscriptions, sculptures and the testimony of Greek and Roman writers little is definitely determined concerning the religion of this remarkable race.

From prehistoric times the Celts venerated stocks and stones, and in rustic retreats they venerate them still. Springs and running rivers were sacred to them. In ancient Gaul gifts to the gods were lowered into lakes, and some of these have been recovered. The ocean was a source of wonder and dread. Tree-worship was devoutly observed, and both the oak and beech were regarded as residences of deities, and when the golden bough—the mistletoe—was seen growing on the oak the tree became especially sacred. The bull and snake were adored as divine, and sacrifices were seemingly made to them. Prof. Carl Clemen of Bonn, an eminent student of the cults of early Europe, concludes that "the Gallic custom of employing animal figures as military badges and helmet ornaments, and the British practice of tattooing animal figures on the person not only originated in the worship of these animals, but still bore this significance at a later time."

The famous statesman and military commander, Julius Cæsar, whose faith in gods of any kind was strictly limited, noted one conspicuous Celtic deity who resembled Mercury, the Roman god of commerce. Indeed, Cæsar gives several Gallic divinities the names of Pagan deities. This suggests that they were all variants of the divinities common throughout Europe as a whole in early ages.

One Celtic god, whose images are still extant, was named Sucellus. Apparently a vegetation deity he frequently figures in association with a goddess of fertility. Isis is another deity sculptured on an altar, who is pictured as severing branches from a tree. On an altar discovered at Reims, a god named Cernunnos is depicted emptying grain from a sack as provender for animals standing near. This god is also represented at Saintes in company with two female figures who carry a cornucopia—the horn of plenty—which clearly indicates their connexion with the rites of fertility.

The goddess Epona is constantly accompanied by the horse, and usually holds a cornucopia on her arm or bears a basket laden with fruit in her hand. She, also, was a procreative divinity in both animal and vegetable realms. Gracious maternal deities were

adored in all Celtic communities, and these presided over the bounties of Nature. They were depicted in groups of three carrying fruit or grasping the horn of plenty, and were apparently local goddesses. Clemen notes that: "After Christianity had been introduced, these fertility goddesses were occasionally interpreted as the three Marys, and as such were adored in Metz till well into the eighteenth century."

The representatives of fertility-gods sometimes suffered death when, with advancing years, their virility became impaired. Other and younger deities with livelier energies were demanded. Within a large hollow framework human victims or animals were enclosed and burnt alive as sacrifices to the greedy gods. Captives were devoted to death to ensure an abundant harvest. These holocausts occurred every five years, and were additional to the annual slaughter to the spirit of vegetation. In earlier and more barbarous times, however, the major sacrifice was, no doubt, a yearly ceremony.

Animals were slain each season on Midsummer Day, and it is asserted that in the Grenoble districts a goat is still sacrificed at the harvest festival. "Its flesh, with the exception of one piece, which is kept for a year, is eaten by the reapers, and out of its skin the farmer has a coat made which is believed to have healing virtue. In Pouilly an ox is killed, its skin being kept till the next seed-time. In former days in Brie, on the 23rd of June, and down to the year 1743, in a certain street in Paris . . . a human effigy was burnt, the people fighting for the *débris*. Finally, there are many phrases still current in France which contain an allusion to the killing of a human being or an animal at harvest time."

Strabo records a curious Celtic custom observed in ancient days on an island near the mouth of the River Loire, where the priestesses roofed over a sacred spot at a stated date each year. But should any priestess engaged in this task permit her load to fall she was torn limb from limb by the others, and the remnants of her body were solemnly paraded around the sanctuary. Thus, apparently, the potencies of the dead woman's spirit were transferred to the sacred edifice.

Cannibalism appears to have been a religious rite among the Celtic settlers in Britain, Ireland and elsewhere. Also, they preserved the skull of a slain enemy as a drinking vessel. Skulls or sections of skulls were valued as ornaments and amulets. Certain animals were sacred, possibly totemic, and certainly *taboo*. According to Cæsar fowls, geese and hares were bred by the Britons, but were never eaten owing to their sacred character.

Dread of the departed played its customary part in Celtic superstition. To ward off the evil influences of the ghosts trenches were made round their graves, or the corpse was decapitated. To appease the spirits the Celts dedicated to the dead the possessions they most treasured in life. In ancient burial mounds these gifts have been discovered and excavations prove that the personal attendants and wives of a dead notability were buried with his remains.

Research likewise reveals the fact that the people sacrificed their most useful possessions, such as axes and wheels to the spirits. The many utilities deposited in the sepulchres of the Stone and Bronze Ages appear to have been offerings to the deities. Animals, and, at a later stage, animal figures were presented to the guardian gods of the quarry when a hunting expedition was projected or after its termination. Effigies of children and representations of parts of man's body have come to light which were presumably substitutes for living victims previously sacrificed to gain or retain the good graces of the gods. But human sacrifices were still in evidence in Roman

times, and continued even when the Imperial authorities had strictly forbidden them.

Images of Celtic divinities have been recovered in many ancient dwellings, which suggest family cults. Divine worship also took place in temples where priestesses occasionally officiated. These women also possessed the power of prophecy, while other female seers foretold future events. The male priests divined hidden secrets by observing the direction of the fumes arising from the sacrifice, by means of dreams and visions, the notes and flights of birds, and the scrutiny of cloud phenomena. Omens were interpreted by the priests to the laity after an examination of the entrails of animals set aside for sacrifice. When human offerings were made the priests divined the meaning of the omens from the manner in which the victims collapsed and vented their blood.

It is probable that the Druids of Continental Europe were largely recruited from the pre-Celtic races. These powerful and masterful priests exercised considerable authority. They participated in the choice of princes, engaged in warfare and served as ambassadors and plenipotentiaries, and their influence seemed equal, if not superior, to that of the monarchs. The Druids usually assembled in the France of that distant day near Orleans, "at a spot," states Professor Clemen, "which was considered the centre of the country, and there they settled all the public and private disputes that were laid before them. Whoever refused to acquiesce in their decisions was excommunicated. At the head of the Druids was a high priest. When he died, the most outstanding of his colleagues succeeded him, or, if there were several of equal eminence the other Druids selected one of them as his successor. Sometimes the office was filled after a series of combats between the rival candidates. This seems to show that the Druids were originally more than priests only. Before they were received as Druids they had to pass through a period of training, which sometimes lasted twenty years."

The Celtic after-life was located in the realm of the setting sun and paradise was pictured as the continuation of earthly existence. The implements and ornaments of the dead were frequently placed in their graves for use in heaven. A warrior's favourite charger, and occasionally his war-chariot, was buried with his remains, and the custom observed until quite recent generations of leading his horse in a dead soldier's funeral-train was a survival of its former sacrifice at its master's tomb. So firm was Celtic faith in a future life that the dead were entrusted with letters for delivery in the land of shades, and the departed were even commissioned to collect debts still owing to the living from dead relatives or clients. The kindred of the departed sometimes committed suicide to rejoin their relatives in the Abode of Bliss, and it was confidently assumed that all those offered up as sacrifices entered into happiness. But heroic death in battle was perhaps the most coveted passport to the Celtic paradise.

T. F. PALMER.

To speak without emphasizing your words—*parler sans accent*—is an old rule with those who are wise in the world's ways. It means that you should leave other people to discover what it is that you have said; and as their minds are slow, you can make your escape in time. On the other hand, to emphasize your meaning—*parler avec accent*—is to address their feelings; and the result is always the opposite of what you expect. If you are only polite enough in your manner and courteous in your tone, there are many people whom you may abuse outright, and yet run no immediate risk of offending them.

Schopenhauer.

The Book Shop

MR. EDEN PHILLPOTTS with his latest novel *Wood-Nymph* (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.) has lost none of his old charm as a teller of pleasant stories, and he has not yet succumbed to the lure of modernity, which in book-form reminds some readers of chewing cotton wool. In this story woven around the life of a little girl named Minna, Mr. Phillpotts has shown his deep affinity with living trees, and with the sure hand of a master can tell us something to be remembered about the graceful objects which at present seem to be a target for man's malignancy. Minna is the daughter of Jacob Rigney, and she leaves home on her father's second marriage. There are in this story reminiscences of Hardy's *Woodlanders*, but Mr. Phillpotts always seems to write facing the sun. It is very evident that the author's knowledge of trees is more real than imaginary, and all who seek for mental good health, together with outspokenness on the obsessions brought about by an intensely religious life will not count it as time lost in following the fortune of the little girl who had trees for her friends. In some far off civilization, when time and leisure would permit beings to think acutely on trees, it may be that we shall find that they are friends in more than a shallow sense. There is, to the writer's knowledge at present, a native of Japan who makes the assertion that strength and health may be obtained from trees in a manner which he is not disposed to shout from the housetops, but in any case, it is a pleasure to recommend this latest novel of Mr. Phillpotts for health and sanity, together with humour which are the only holy trinitities worth consideration.

The name of Sir Richard Burton may not be familiar to the present generation, but as he was one of the few scholars who in the best sense of the term stood for eternal verities, he will be always for the future, a revelation to the serious student. In a note to *The Kasidah*, Burton explains that this work was given to him in manuscript form by a native of Darābhird in the Yezd province. His name was El-Hichmakāni, which was a nickname for "Of No-hall, Nowhere." The note itself is dynamic, and will give the reader much material to think about, but my immediate reason for including this work will be seen later. The form of the work is similar to the quatrains of Omar, and one of many jewels is worth setting in letters of gold. However, as we are restricted to cold print, we give the following stanza, trusting that there will be a magical glow even from type:—

"Be thine own Deus: make self free, liberal as the circling air:
Thy Thought to thee an Empire be; break every prisoning lock and bar:"

This work has the saltiness of real Buddhism, but it is wider in outlook. If any reader should seek to know the cause of Burton's lack of popularity with the society in which he was obliged to move, the *Kasidah* will give the reason. It is sound Freethought from a scholar whose library was the world, and whose books were men and women of all countries.

A friend of mine who should be a cream-skimmer casually read to me in a railway compartment, one or two extracts from a lecture on Krishnamurti. The extracts sounded good, and led me to acquire a book on this man. He suffers from his friends. The expositor is evidently trying to have a foot in both camps, but for those who have patience there is a reward in some excellent aphorisms which conform to the wide or narrow limits of commonsense. Here is a sample from bulk, and although theosophists have tried to "noble" Krishnamurti they will have difficulty in doing so for one who can write the following: "It is the glory of man that no one can save him except himself." And again here is the curfew-bell when Krishnamurti dissolved an association which met at Ommen in 1929. "The majority of you who come to the camp have a private collection of gods, and you want to add me to your collection. I know this sounds funny, but the fact is ridiculously childish. Again, the majority

of you are so embalmed in your newly-acquired prejudices that you hope that I shall comfortably fit into your scheme of things. . . . These are the main reasons which have prompted you to come here . . . only wanting your little longings satisfied. They can never be satisfied, because they are vain and useless. You want to know what is the right kind of ceremony you should perform, what gods you should worship. . . what kind of beliefs you should hold: with these I have nothing whatever to do . . . they are absolutely of no value." And if there are still wanderers looking round for a master, Krishnamurti gives them a straightforward answer on page 44, whether the authority be a guru, a master, or a god. (Krishnamurti, by Lilly Heber: Geo. Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.).

The "Penguin" series almost makes one slip into the platitude of saying they supply a long-felt want. One of the latest entitled, *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*, by Alexandra David-Neel, is good material for the Freethinker on which to try his metaphysical teeth. The authoress made a journey to Tibet, and she frequently stayed in a *gumpa* or monastery, and there is a detachment in the narrative which is not often found in books of this description. Incredible phenomena are witnessed and most incredible stories are told to her, but consistently she maintains a disinterested interest which is a good fault. The book may be summed up as "New lamps for old," and the magic of sorcery and religion in general in Tibet and other places she visited can be estimated for what they are worth, and although Tibet may not be London, New York or Paris, the more the thing changes the more it remains the same. If any reader wishes to test the truth of this statement he should look on page 96, where it will be seen that the imposition of a priestly class is the same in Tibet as in places nearer home. The following extract will prove my point: "That beginning of the day in the *gumpa* gives us an idea of the character of the whole lamaist monastic life. In the latter we find also, always present, the same ill-assorted elements: subtle philosophy, commercialism, lofty spirituality and eager pursuit of coarse enjoyments! And these are so closely interwoven that one endeavours in vain completely to disentangle them." Luckily for us we need not wander abroad to prick the bubble of these illusions. On our own doorstep are Locke and George Meredith. The former stated in connexion with the Rosicrucians, and it will serve the present purpose, that "No definitions that I know, no suppositions of any sect, are of force enough to destroy constant experience; and perhaps it is the affectation of knowing beyond what we perceive that makes so much useless dispute and noise in the world." Meredith in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, has a similar needle for the balloon of illusion: "When people do not themselves know what they mean, they succeed in deceiving and imposing upon others." However, the detachment of the authoress concludes a fascinating and interesting book on the high note of hope in the following passage:—

Psychic research may be guided by the same spirit as any scientific study. The discoveries which can be made in that field have nothing of supernatural, nothing which may justify the superstitious beliefs and ramblings in which some have indulged regarding the matter. On the contrary, such research may help to elucidate the mechanism of so-called miracles, and once explained, the miracle is no more a miracle.

Mr. Donald Culross Peattie tells you frankly that his book is a dramatized life of John James Audubon. His candour about it is rather pleasant, as he never oversteps the mark of probability in recounting the life of a famous naturalist. The title itself, *Singing in the Wilderness* (Geo. Allen & Unwin, 7s. 6d.) excites our curiosity, and reading it does not end in disappointment. Audubon was one of the pioneers in the observation of bird life in America, and what is more, through the medium of art, he was one of the first to bring his feathered songsters to life on paper. The book is easy reading, excellently printed, and the reproductions strike the observer at once with their naturalness and liveliness of the various specimens in their native home. Audubon was the Don Quixote in birdland, and if the melancholy knight tilted at windmills, it would appear to the superficial reader that

Audubon was in the same boat when he was lowered in one to see the fork-tailed petrel between the waves. It may be too much to hope that a good edition of Audubon's pictures will be produced at reasonable cost and as many of the great British public have almost forgotten what a horse looks like, it is possible that they may be interested in birds which have always been with them, but never considered as worth any serious contemplation. Remy de Gourmont was of the opinion that bird-life was one of the highest forms of life, and whether one agrees with this or not, it is very evident to the most casual observer that bird-life is not cluttered up with the unnecessary miseries which civilization confers as benefits as long as civilization is like the girl who took the wrong turning.

It is safe to say that many more people than formerly will now be aware of the existence of Thomas Paine. A friend has made me a present of *The Ego and His Own*, by Max Stirner. Again reading the introduction there is a strong link of understanding between this unorthodox thinker and Thomas Paine, as the following extract will prove: "Stirner loved liberty for himself, and loved to see any and all men and women taking liberty, and he had no lust of power." Not everyone will agree that democracy is a sham liberty, but one may say that democracy is like charity for covering a multitude of sins, and this last note will be found to chime with the one above of Krishnamurti. Without essaying any flights in metaphysics it would be natural to say that Stirner touched the real kernel of liberty in stressing and emphasizing the importance of the individual.

C-DE-B.

The Decline of Secularism in Sydney, N.S.W.

THE passing of the Freethought Hall into the hands of a Sectarian body of Fundamentalists in Sydney recalls memories of the past, when Secularism was a live-wire cause. Charles Bradlaugh had been requested to select a leading lecturer for Australia. Ex-Reverend Joseph Symes was his choice, and he was followed by other gifted exponents of Secularism. But the rise of the Political Labour Party with payment of parliamentary representatives was the cause of the decline of organized Freethought, for the Church vote had to be pandered to by those inoculated with the political microbe. Thus Thomas Walker seceded from the Secular cause and became an M.P. in New South Wales, and afterwards in Western Australia.

To New Zealand went W. W. Collins, to become an M.H.R. in Maoriland Parliament, whilst the veteran, Wallace Nelson, after failing in Queensland, won a seat in the Westralian Parliament. He only held it for one term, for his references to Mirabeau, Danton and Diderot, and opposition by celibate bishops to birth-control, brought about his defeat.

Bold and honest Joseph Symes was no compromiser, and he had no time for opportunist party politicians or theological sectarians. To him "Secularism and Science were the Light of the World." His ultra-Spencerianism was above the mentality of the crowd. After battling for many years against false friends and open foes, in failing health he returned to England and passed on to Nirvana; but his name is worthy of a niche in the Pantheon of Humanity, and his work is esteemed by the few survivors of "the old brigade" as the noblest champion of Secularism that ever voiced the cause in the antipodes.

Wallace Nelson is still alive, and over eighty years of age. About two years ago some jingle from his pen, re his second marriage, appeared in the *Freethinker*:—

"My wife is a holy Roman
Whilst I am an Infidel:
She thinks she is bound for Paradise,
And I am going to Hell.

Wallace Nelson may still be remembered in Aberdeen and Sheffield by a few long-lived Secularists, as he resided in both places before coming to Australia.

GEORGE WAITE.

Acid Drops

A Farnham draper has announced his intention of standing for Parliament. His programme is just "For God, King and Country." This reminds us of the comments of an old schoolmaster friend on the same formula. He said, the first ought to be able to look after himself. The second is already well looked after. It looks as if it is the last that needs most consideration, and with the other two taking precedence, number three seems like getting scant rations.

The advertising managers of the Coronation are not missing any chances. Members of the Royal Family are almost living at the Trades' Fair. They are daily visitors, and are evidently considered as part of the show.

Rearmament as a way to peace is now the standard gospel. One would have thought that the last war should have knocked the bottom out of that doctrine, but fear is the worst kind of teacher, and fear dominates everything to-day. The *Daily Telegraph* headed its leading article the other day, "Armaments for Peace." Which is idiotic. The only reasonable motive in arming is for war, and day by day people are coming to regard war as certain. Mr. Baldwin, with an assumed confusion of mind that sounds as though he is understudying Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, speaks of his firm belief in collective security, and declares that when war does come it will sweep through the whole of Europe. At the same time the only way to peace is for Britain to have forces large enough to wallop the rest of Europe put together. Which being interpreted means that we can only secure collective peace, if we can by ourselves thrash the rest of Europe whenever we feel so inclined.

But less now than ever will the rest of the world sit down quietly to a world, or European, dominancy by a single power. If no other single country can develop enough strength to cope with Britain, then two or more countries will join to that end. In the barbarous state of European tribal thought prestige counts for a great deal, and if the stamp of greatness is made to depend upon strength of armed forces and possession of territory, then none of the "great powers" will rest content with an inferiority in either of these directions. The way to peace lies through the replacement of barbaric pride by a sense of human dignity and the development of a finer conception of values.

Either that, or for us to have the courage of our barbarism. Let us build a greater, an unquestionably greater, armed force than any other possible combination. Then let us demand the disarmament of the rest of Europe to an extent that will prevent any serious opposition to our will, and declare that we intend stamping out by force any attempt to build up competing forces. That will be straightforward, and may get us somewhere. "Collective security" that depends upon individual supremacy, perpetual peace resting upon our being strong enough to "lick creation," evidences a stupidity that amounts to criminality.

Lord Brownlow, a personal friend of the Duke of Windsor, has been having it out with the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archbishop, it will be remembered, strongly denounced, as a part justification for the forced abdication, the vicious circle of friends with whom the Duke, then King, associated. Lord Brownlow called on the Archbishop and asked whether the statement made referred to him. The Archbishop said it did not. And with that Lord Brownlow had to rest content.

But we cannot permit the Archbishop to get off in that easy manner. Neither are we concerned to defend the

character of any or all of Edward VIII.'s associates. The adulation, the flattery, the fawning that go on with Kings, any of them, no matter how stupid, how bad, or how incapable, are obvious to anyone, and one may well be surprised, not that Kings are apt to be what they are, but that they are as good as they are. As we have said before, any King with moderate intelligence, and a character above that of a cheap film star, must look on those around him and upon the ceremonies of which he is the centre, with supreme contempt. We rather fancy that was actually Edward VIII.'s attitude. The human side of his job he took too seriously; the ceremonial side he looked upon with contempt.

But the charge against the Archbishop is that whatever may have been the character of Edward's associates, he knew all about them before Edward was King, and directly after his accession Dr. Lang gave his personal commendation to the character of the King on the strength of his own personal acquaintance. It was the case of Mrs. Simpson that settled the matter—for the Archbishop. Had Edward made Mrs. Simpson his mistress, it may be assumed the Archbishop would have upheld the character of the King, but to do anything so decent as to marry her was apparently more than his archiepiscopal conscience could stand.

The revised form of the Coronation Oath makes the King promise to maintain the Protestant Reformed Religion in the United Kingdom only. The rest of the Empire is to be permitted to go to hell in its own fashion. But if the rest of the Empire can, if it so please, get along without the Protestant religion, why cannot Great Britain be permitted the same freedom?

Mr. Victor Cazalet has just returned from Russia, and says that you might as well talk to working men in England about Confucius and Buddha as talk to Russian working men about God or Christ. We presume he means that one might talk on neither subject with hopes of conversion. But the Russian working-man is certainly better-informed about God and Christ than English people about the two great Eastern teachers. Mr. Cazalet says he had every opportunity of talking freely on the subject, and concludes that God and Christ have been almost eliminated from the minds of the majority.

Having produced a pail of milk, Mr. Cazalet then proceeds to kick it over. He says, notwithstanding the disappearance of religion, there is still the desire to "worship some ideal." Why not? There is a readiness to follow some ideal with all people who have imagination, and it is falling into a misleading phraseology to identify this with "religion." The difference between men does not lie in their readiness to "worship" an ideal, but in the kind of an ideal they set themselves. It may be Christ or cricket, beer or bloodshed, or it may be something of lasting value to mankind. It is a pity that when men write they are not more careful in their choice of terms.

The *Church Times* is very anxious that families as a whole should attend Church. We understand the anxiety. The children will keep father and mother up to scratch, and father and mother will train their children so that they will grow up without showing quite so much readiness to criticize the religion of their parents. But if the advice of the *Church Times* is carried out one reason for sending the children to religious services will have disappeared. It means good-bye to the Sunday after-dinner nap for the parents.

In order to attract children to Church the *Church Times* says that if the services do not attract children they should be modified to do so. It is a case of "whatever service you like" so long as you come to Church. Once

upon a time people were expected to go to Church without any regard to their own personal wishes. It looks like the ordinary business notice to probable customers, "If we have not in stock the thing you want, ask for it and we will get it."

Fact *versus* theory. The Archbishop is calling the country back to God, as a means of salvation. The Government is calling men to the army. The Archbishop wishes us all to place our trust in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Government backs a larger army, a more powerful navy, and an enormous number of aeroplanes. The Archbishop says "Suffer little children to come unto me," but also advises that bombing planes should go unto *them*. The Archbishop preaches, "Come unto me you that are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." He also advises our airmen, "Go unto *them* and give them all you've got." The Archbishop plays both cards, for he commends the preparations of the Government, and bids us place our trust in united prayer, backed with incendiary bombs. Then whatever happens he is on the winner, for if the army, navy and air force are triumphant he will hold that they were inspired in their work of conversion by their trust in God, and if our armed forces are not successful, it will be because we did not rain down incendiary and poison bombs in sufficiently large quantities.

The *British Weekly* praises a saying of Cardinal Newman, who thought that mankind "would be none the worse for a little superstition." Newman was answered at the time, we believe, by somebody quoting the old saying, "He'd be none the waur for a hanging." The *British Weekly* editor's superstition consists (on this occasion) of feeling that "No logic can persuade me that Nature is completely indifferent" . . . to the editor. Well, the editor has a simple and ready test—let him try it out in any fire, flood, avalanche, or by standing in the way when a house is falling.

The *News-Chronicle* is our authority for the information that the Methodist Church "has expressed itself as strongly opposed in general to the presentation of the Divine Figure" on the Cinema film. But there are exceptions. They would tolerate the "Divine Figure" if only the actor would give these prudes on the prowl an "assurance that the person assuming the rôle of Christ should be in some measure, prepared in spirit and purpose by the acceptance of spiritual discipline." We imagine there will be few candidates for pious approval if the actor has first to learn how to "walk on the water," turn water into wine, or—let us say—raise Joan of Arc from the dead.

"I went with the pilgrims to Lourdes three times—but, each time I was brought back on a stretcher," said Kathleen Hickey, of Camberwell, aged 22, to a *Daily Mirror* correspondent. As a result of X-raying at St. Vincent's Orthopaedic Hospital, Eastcote, Miss Hickey is now assured that a ninth operation will give her back the use of her limbs, after eleven years tubercular arthritis following injury to both hips by a fall. Our italics are for record when another holy "miracle" is duly chronicled.

The other Sunday the B.B.C. Announcements Editor was off duty, so another official instructed the announcer of a programme of sea-shanties to "make it snappy." "What shall we do with a drunken sailor," and "Whisky Johnny," were two of the items. The announcer, in fine form, gave out the last item thus: "As it is getting near opening-time let's finish with a drinking song." The *Star* Radio correspondent says "It was one of the brightest Sunday half-hours of the year." But he adds that now "the Jolly Announcer is attending the Staff College," and "will no doubt be instructed more fully in the canons of decorum prescribed by the Corporation." We wonder!

We like to see the advertisements in our religious contemporaries; some of them are, of course, of the ordinary type such as one sees everywhere. Some are addressed exclusively to "believers." Of these we notice the Catholic appeals to the most benighted of all superstitions—asking people to pay money to rescue dead souls from the Purgatory their church has invented in order to ask people to pay money (to the church) to rescue souls from it. Amulets and charms, to say nothing of relics, produce a constant revenue, and will do so as long as anybody with any money believes in so obvious a fraud. In the Nonconformist journals we see "Non-alcoholic wines" advertised as "the original," but how "original" is not stated. We imagine some Christians believe that Christ was the first manufacturer of these imitation "wines," unless indeed the intention is to deceive God into believing that the Faithful are drinking real wine "which maketh glad the heart of man."

A Roman Catholic, the Rev. H. C. Fincham, is greatly perturbed over the ignorance that exists concerning Roman Catholicism. He suggests as a corrective that a number of Catholics should "adopt a child or two wherever they can, the children should be given the truth and nothing but the truth about the Catholic Faith through the medium of talks, Catholic journals, pamphlets, books, and personal letters." Excellent, for the Catholic Church, and if children so kidnapped could be prevented ever reading anything but Roman Catholic writings, and prevented associating with non-Catholics, then we have not the least doubt that the unfortunate children would grow up with an intelligence that could take in nothing above Roman Catholic legends and superstition. Mr. Fincham's plan is one that the Roman Church practised as long as it could, and still practises as completely as it can. But, after all, life is more powerful than the Church, and in the long run beats the Pope and the College of Cardinals. So while some unfortunates may be trapped in this way, the majority will, we expect, escape.

In a little home in Britain there are now living together four brothers and a sister, all of whom are blind, deaf and dumb. "They have no one to look after them. . . ." The reader may have difficulty in believing these words are specially displayed under heavy type on the first page of the *Sunday Express* (21st inst.) announcing this home as "THE HOUSE THAT GOD LOOKS AFTER."

Fifty Years Ago

One's appreciation of the oath is still further increased by watching the various litigants and witnesses as they caress the sacred volume. Here a gentleman wears an expression of countenance which seems to imply "I guess they'll get a good deal of truth out of me," and there another's face seems to promise as great a regard for truth as is consistent with his understanding with the solicitor who subpoenaed him as an independent witness in the interest of justice and a sound client. Hard swearing is the order of the day. So conflicting is the evidence on simple matters of fact that it is perfectly obvious that the very atmosphere is charged with duplicity. The thing is taken as a matter of course. Judges are used to it, and act accordingly, deciding in most cases by a keen observation of the witnesses and an extensive knowledge of the seamy side of human nature. But sometimes the very judges are nonplussed, so brazen are the faces of the gentlemen who have "kissed the book." Very often, no doubt, their honors feel inclined to say, like the American judge in directing his jury, "Well, gentlemen, if you believe what these witnesses swear, you will give a verdict for the plaintiff; and if you believe what the other witnesses swear, you will give a verdict for the defendant; but if, like me, you don't believe what either side swears, I'm hanged if I know what you will do."

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. LEAVIS.—The copy of the paper has been sent you by some friend who was not aware that you were already a subscriber. It is hardly likely that Mr. Cohen will be able to visit Bolton this season, but he will be in Manchester before the end of March.

CINE CERE.—Probably the copy of the *Age of Reason* you have sent may help in his enlightenment. We hope so.

H. DAVIS (Conn., U.S.A.).—Pleased to have your appreciation of our efforts. Some of Mr. Cohen's articles have been reprinted in the three series of *Essays in Freethinking*. Another volume will be issued as soon as possible.

LADY MAUD SIMON.—We agree with your summary. There is nothing left of the Jesus Christ character but pure myth, once the meaning of modern criticism is appreciated. To continue with the moral teacher after the mythical character has been discarded comes very near humbug.

J. CLOSE.—Thanks. Papers are being sent. See answer in last week's issue to the poem you enclose.

M. SIMPSON.—Yes we see the *Observer*, among many other papers, regularly. Paine was, of course, a fervent Deist.

L. BORRILL.—Received and shall appear.

T. FINDLATER.—The rejection of authority in matters of opinion does not mean that one may not accept an opinion which is authoritative. It means only that an opinion is not to be adopted on the mere word, or at the command, of any constituted power or governing person.

F. R. ELSMORE.—Your idea of opening shops for the sale of Freethought literature is quite a good one, but, from the financial point of view, quite impracticable. The *Freethinker* can be ordered from any newsagent or railway bookstall, and we should be obliged if those who have any difficulty in securing copies would communicate with us.

BOY DAVID.—Dealing with this matter next week.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—J. M. (Bolton), 58.

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

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.

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, 3/0.

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.

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.

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

The Secular Hall, Leicester, was well filled on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's address on "What is the Matter with Religion?" It was a "live" meeting from beginning to end, Mr. Hassell occupied the chair with his usual efficiency, and we were pleased to hear from other officials that there were a number of newcomers in the audience.

To-day (February 28), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, on "Paine the Pioneer." Chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. On Sunday next Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow, and will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street. On the evening previous the Branch is holding its Third Annual Dinner, and Mr. Cohen will be present and hopes to meet both his old friends and new ones. Tickets for the Dinner are 5s. 6d. each, and may be obtained of the Secretary, Mrs Whitefield, 351 Castlemilk Road, Glasgow. Early application should be made.

The N.S.S. has just come into possession of a very interesting relic of Charles Bradlaugh, the founder of the Society. This is the roll-top desk at which he worked, which passed into the possession of his daughter, and which has now been presented to the National Secular Society by his son-in-law, Mr. Arthur Bonner. It is a gift that will be highly prized, and the Executive will see that a suitable medallion inscribed with the necessary particulars is attached thereto.

The Bethnal Green Branch, in conjunction with the West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. is running a course of four lectures in the Bethnal Green Public Library, Cambridge Road, on the Thursday evenings of March 4, 11, 18 and 25. The first meeting will be addressed by Mr. E. T. Bryant. Subject, "Christianity and Civilization." Admission is free; lecture commences at 7.30. We hope East London Freethinkers will make it a point of attending, and will bring some Christian friends along with them.

The meeting on "Spain and the Church" at the Friends' House, was well attended and enthusiastic. Emma Goldman spoke of document after document coming from the priesthood that she had herself seen, urging the occupants of large houses and palaces to help the military conspiracy against the rabble, and suggesting that something should be done on the lines of Germany and Italy. In the Churches had been stored colossal wealth, and in many cases the Churches were turned into arsenals, and the clergy themselves were combatants. She spoke with eloquence of the historic rôle of the Church in Spain. Spain had been a country of men eminent in law, science and philosophy; a great example to the rest of the world. Then came the Church of the Inquisition, which, allied with despotism and autocracy, brought ruin to that civilization. The Spanish people had attempted to free themselves; men like Francisco Ferrer had attempted to establish popular schools at the price of their lives. It was the Church that had stood in their way.

An interesting contrast to Emma Goldman was Ethel Mannin, slight in figure, calm in diction, but just as plainly animated by fair play and generous emotion. The press of this country, she said, had agreed that Emma Goldman did not exist. Too much truth had come from her, and our press were not much interested in the truth about Spain or truth of any kind.

The other speakers did well. If at times they left the main theme, it was a stirring occasion, and digressions—in a political atmosphere—were perhaps inevitable. Fenner Brockway was an efficient chairman. Mr. J. McGovern, M.P., spoke as a religious man who had investigated the facts on the spot. Captain J. R. White, the son of the hero of Ladysmith, would have delighted the late Lord Birkenhead in his mastery of invective. Captain White had himself encountered the Infamous Thing and knew that of which he spoke. An enthusiastic and unanimous audience contributed £80 towards the help of the Government Forces in Spain. Nay, not quite unanimous! An idealist had been planted on each side of the gallery to interject "You're a liar," now and again. The story of Man's Inhumanity to Man is always a depressing one, and the audience seemed to be grateful for this little light relief.

Some Notes on Peter Annet

PETER ANNET was born at Liverpool in 1693—a year before the birth of Voltaire. Although these two great Deists lived in different countries, and under different conditions, there is a remarkable resemblance between them for classical knowledge, originality of thought and view-points, and, especially, for the brilliant wit and humour that flow, like sparkling sunlit streams, through the fair fields of their works.

Peter Annet became a schoolmaster; he invented and published a new system of shorthand, which ran through three editions. Wheeler [B.D.F.] states "Priestley learnt it at school and corresponded with Annet."

Among other activities Annet did an amount of public speaking, and his earliest pamphlet, published in 1739, is entitled: "*Judging for Ourselves, or Free-thinking the Great Duty of Religion, displayed in two Lectures delivered at Plasterer's Hall, by P.A., Minister of the Gospel.*" His next work: *The History of Joseph Considered by Mencius Philalethes*, was published in 1744, and is a masterly unmasking of the character and career of that crafty Bible "hero."

In 1744 Annet also published: *The Conception of Jesus as the Foundation of the Christian Religion Considered*, "in which," states Wheeler, "he boldly attacks the doctrine of the Incarnation as 'a legend of the Romanists.'" I have not seen this work, but of that which closely followed it, also in 1744, and ran through three editions during that year, I possess a copy. It is, *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered, in Answer to the Tryal of the Witnesses* (Third Edition, with great amendments, 1744). This work was written to expose the fallacies in Bishop Sherlock's *Tryal of the Witnesses*, and is a wonderfully well-written achievement. This was followed by *The Resurrection Reconsidered*, 1744, and *The Sequel of the Resurrection of Jesus Considered*, and, lastly on this subject: *The Resurrection Defenders Stript of All Defence*; both these last-named appearing in 1745. All these original editions, as also Annet's later works, I am proud to possess, and owe a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Ambrose G. Barker—who has got together the largest collection of Paine literature in this country—for the gift of them.

Peter Annet was the forerunner of Paine. In his next treatise: *An Examination of the History and Character of St. Paul*, written in answer to Iytzelton, "he attacks the sincerity of the apostle to the Gentiles," writes Wheeler, "and even questions the authenticity of his Epistles. In *Supernaturals Examined*, 1747, he argues that all miracles are incredible."

In 1749, Peter Annet, inspired by his own domestic situation, published *Social Bliss Considered*, an argument in favour of liberty of Divorce. He had, as he allegorically explains, experienced Heaven with his first wife, and, after her death, Hell with his second, from whom he separated, but to whom he was still legally fettered, and by whom he was abused, traduced, and handicapped in his career. *Social Bliss* is a brilliantly written brochure, but extremely bold and characteristically daringly challenging in its ethics and expression. Even in our times "Geoffrey Mortimer" has not equalled in audacity the "Polly Baker Anecdotes"—whether authentic or invented by the author. We must remember Peter Annet possessed a strongly-developed sense of humour, and wit as spontaneous and as scintillating as Voltaire's.

It was, however, his periodical, *The Free Enquirer*, of which nine numbers only were published, dated October 17 to December 12, 1761, that brought Peter Annet's name prominently before the public.

In this paper he vigorously penned a tremendous onslaught on the authenticity and credibility of the Bible history. He proved the fallacy of the idea of divine inspiration, uprooting some and rendering insecure other foundations on which Christianity has built its creeds.

Consequently he was hauled before the courts, and finally brought before the King's Bench in the Michaelmas Term of 1762 (or 1763; Leslie Stephen, D.N.B.). He was tried for "Blasphemous Libel," the information stating that he had ridiculed the Holy Scriptures in the *Free Enquirer*. For this he was sentenced to suffer one month's imprisonment in Newgate—to stand twice in the Pillory—once at Charing Cross and once at the Exchange with a label "For Blasphemy" attached to him—then to undergo a year's hard labour in Bridewell, and to find securities for his good behaviour for the rest of his life. This savage, vindictive and inhuman sentence was pronounced on Peter Annet, then in his 70th year, by the professed followers of the "meek and lowly Jesus," and they saw to it that it was rigidly enforced.

When his sentence expired he came out of prison wrecked in bodily health, but his mind as clear, alert and active as ever. He started a small school at Lambeth, which seems to have secured him a sufficiency of leisure and means to accomplish still something more for the Cause so dear to his heart, for, in 1766, he brought out *A Collection of the Tracts of a Certain Free Enquirer, noted by his Sufferings for his Opinions*. In 1768 he was engaged in preparing a volume of his *Lectures* for publication, but it seems almost certain the issuing of the book was delayed by his death on January 18, 1769. Anyway my copy of *Lectures* is printed as *By the late Mr. Peter Annet, corrected and revised by him just before his Death* London: Printed for the Booksellers, 1822.

We are greatly indebted to Richard Carlile for printing and re-publishing Annet's *Free Inquirer* in 1826, when it had a wide circulation.

ELLA TWYNAM.

An Interview with the Living God

SCENE. A sumptuously furnished suite at the Grand Hotel Magnificent, London, W.1. Seated at a large writing desk in the centre of the sitting-room is the Living God, a dapper little man who looks not unlike Charlie Chaplin. A page boy ushers in the Interviewer, who has been specially sent by all the combined news-agencies of the world.

The Living God: Don't be shy. Come right in and take a pew. Have a cigar? No? A cigarette then. Help yourself—the matches are at your elbow.

Interviewer: Thank you. (He takes a cigarette and lights up.)

L.G.: Now, Mr. Interviewer, what can I do for you?

I.: Let me come straight to the point, Mr. . . . er . . . Mr. . . . er, excuse me, but I didn't quite catch the name.

L.G.: God—at your service.

I.: Is that your real name? I mean, was that your father's name, or did you assume it?

L.G.: It is the name given me by all English-speaking people. The French call me *Dieu*, the Germans *Gott*, while in Islamic countries I am known as *Allah*. Despite the variety, however, all the best modern authorities agree that, no matter what I am called, I am who I am.

I.: But what was your father's name and nationality?

L.G.: Since I was uncreated and have existed from the beginning of time—which, incidentally, has no beginning—how could I possibly have a father or a nationality?

I.: Well then, what about your passport?

L.G.: I don't possess one. But what was the point which you said you would come straight to? We seem to have zig-zagged a little so far.

I.: Oh—ah—let me see. Oh yes, I remember. Do you claim to be human or divine?

L.G.: Both—at the moment. To you I am human, just as my Son was when I sent him here two thousand years ago. To myself, of course, I am what I am. But your questions suggest that your theological training has been neglected. Surely you must have been told a good deal about me before you came to see me?

I.: I never even heard of you till three weeks ago.

L.G.: That is strange. Do you not profess monotheism?

I.: No. My profession is journalism.

L.G.: Yes, I know that. But I was referring to your religion. Are you not a theist?

I.: God forbid! I'm a Presbyterian.

L.G.: As a child, did your parents teach you about God?

I.: Of course they did.

L.G.: Then you must have heard of me more than three weeks ago.

I.: The God I was taught about wasn't *you*!

L.G.: Is that so? Well, tell me what your God looks like.

I.: How should I know? I've never seen him.

L.G.: Has anyone of your family or acquaintances seen him?

I.: "No man hath seen God at any time."

L.G.: That explains why you didn't recognize me, doesn't it?

I.: Tcha! You're not God. You're just an ordinary man.

L.G.: Dogmatic assertion is no answer to my question. You forget that God was once made man, and few people recognized him as God. History seems to be repeating itself.

I.: All right. If you are God, what evidence can you produce in support of your claim?

L.G.: The whole of Creation. It's marvellous design, its glory and grandeur, all go to prove my claim. Don't all your ministers say so?

I.: Rubbish! You never made Creation.

L.G.: Again I repeat, dogmatic assertion is no answer to my question. If I, Almighty God, did not make the Universe, then who did?

I.: The God I believe in—the God of the Bible.

L.G.: Then you believe in me. I am the God of the Bible. I defy you to prove the contrary.

I.: You can't prove that you're the God of the Bible.

L.G.: And you can't prove that the God of the Bible made Creation.

I.: Yes I can. It says so in the Bible.

L.G.: It says that God made Creation, and I say that I am God.

I.: No, you're not.

L.G.: Prove it, then. I say that I am God, and when you ask me for evidence, I show you the evidence which all your clergy point to. Yet you refuse to accept that evidence and you refuse to believe my claim. In what respect does *your* God differ from me? Has he ever produced any other evidence?

I.: Well, at least he performed miracles when he was on earth. You show me a miracle and I'll believe in you.

L.G.: Certainly; anything to oblige a Presbyterian—though I think the name Sceptic would fit better.

Miracles are simple things. I perform them every day. Your clergy are often in the habit of referring to them. For example, there's the miracle of wireless and of aviation. There are all the miracles of Science. There's the eternal miracle of the changing seasons, the beautiful sunsets, the . . .

I. (*impatiently*): Yes, yes—I've heard all that before. But I mean a *proper* miracle.

L.G.: Don't you regard those as *proper* miracles? Dear, dear! How tiresome your clergy must find people like you. Of course I know that some people say the Age of Miracles is over, and that I now govern the Universe by immutable laws. But most good Christians are loath to admit this, so they insist upon the miraculous nature of almost any natural phenomenon. You, as a good Presbyterian, ought to be satisfied with the miracles I have described, seeing that your clergy are.

I.: I don't care. I want to see a *proper* miracle, like the ones Jesus Christ performed. Then I'll believe in you.

L.G.: You are very kind. But tell me—have you ever seen a proper miracle, as you call it?

I.: Never.

L.G.: You have never seen your God or Jesus Christ perform a proper miracle. You have never even seen your God or Jesus Christ. Yet in spite of this lack of evidence, you believe in them. Really, your faith is magnificent. I wouldn't destroy it for worlds!

I.: You mean you won't perform a miracle.

L.G.: Why should I do more for you than your faith has already demanded of your God?

I.: I knew you were a humbug.

L.G.: No more and no less so than your God. Has he ever done anything for you to prove his existence? Does your God stop wars, or epidemics, or earthquakes, or unemployment?

I.: God's ways are not our ways. His purposes are hid from us, and we have no right to question his methods.

L.G.: Well spoken! You have taken the very words out of my mouth. I could not have put my case better.

I.: Anyway, my God answers prayer.

L.G.: A simple matter. So do I.

I.: All right, then. You answer my request to change all my . . .

L.G.: Just a moment! You must treat me in the same way as you treat your own God. Get down on your knees, close your eyes, fold your hands, bow your head, then begin with "O Almighty God," and end up properly as you were taught to do.

I. (*wriggles uncomfortably and mutters to himself*): "Dammit, this is a bit thick." (*But he does as he is bid*): O Almighty God, I pray thee to change all my pound notes into hundred pound notes, for the sake of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

L.G.: Your prayer is answered.

I. (*feeling in his pocket, extracts a one pound note*): You haven't done a thing, you . . . you . . .

L.G.: Hush, hush! Don't blaspheme. Isn't it clear that you lacked faith? Put a little more faith into it and try again. Or, as an alternative, try it on your own God and see whether you get any better results. You believe in him—so you say. He answers prayer—so you say.

I. (*angrily*): I've had enough of this tomfoolery!

L.G.: It is lucky for you that I am a merciful God, or I might send you to Hell for your scandalously irreligious demeanour towards your Maker.

I.: Pah! I'm not afraid. Anyway, no good Christian goes to Hell, as you ought to know.

L.G.: Where do they go?

I.: To Heaven, of course—as you ought to know.

L.G.: Are you sure that you will go there too?

I.: Perfectly sure.

L.G.: That settles it, then. I abdicate!

I.: Abdicate? What do you mean?

L.G.: I shall swap Kingdoms with Satan. You may now go and announce the fact in all your daily and weekly rags. No one will believe you, so that suits me down to the ground.

I. (*picks up his hat and makes for the door*): I don't find your humour amusing. Good-bye!

L.G.: Before you leave my presence allow me to make up for your disappointment about the pound notes. All you need to do is to treat me as you do your own wonderful God. Just pray to me at any time for anything you want. If you pray often enough and vary your requests often enough, your prayer is almost certain to be answered sooner or later. You may then tell the world about it. But if any prayer remains unanswered, then you will know from that fact alone that it was not my will to answer it. You may then apologize to me for having the effrontery to pray for something contrary to my will and, of course, contrary to your own best interests. And don't forget what you yourself said—you have no right to question my methods.

(*The Interviewer has already slammed the door behind him.*)

C. S. FRASER.

Masterpieces of Freethought

FORCE AND MATTER

By LUDWIG BUCHNER

I.

ALTHOUGH hundreds of books and pamphlets have put the Freethought case against Christianity, it is a fact that there are—or have been until recently—very few which have put the case for Materialism in a clear and uncompromising light. To say definitely that there is nothing whatever supernatural in the Universe, that it is purely mechanistic, that there is no "directing Intelligence" (with a capital I, of course), that the "laws" by which nature acts are absolutely immutable, and have not been "dictated by some Lawgiver," required a certain amount of courage. It was far easier to say, "We don't know," and to take up an "Agnostic" attitude than dogmatically to assert a "blatant" Materialism.

The eighteenth century had produced *The System of Nature*, d'Holbach's iconoclastic attack on all supernaturalism; and there were also Lamettrie's equally destructive *Man, a Machine*, and Meslier's *Good Sense*. In addition, some of the scattered works of Diderot show his uncompromising Atheism. But Voltaire, bitter opponent as he was of Christianity, never went as far as these contemporaries of his; he would have preferred to invent a God rather than do without one; and indeed, he remained a Theist to the end of his life. In England, the principal attacks on revealed religion came from Deists for the most part. They seemed chary of going the "whole hog"—though in some cases, they would have liked to. But to deny God altogether was a very bold step; it was far easier and safer to say that the word God conveys no meaning, or that the Christian meanings contradict themselves and so on. Most Atheists nowadays find it just as easy to deny Jehovah, as Osiris or Jupiter; no thunderbolt comes from heaven in either case. But unbelievers in the past were not

so fortunately placed as ourselves. The liberating influence of the great fighting Freethinkers had to take time to work.

Among those who deserve our gratitude was the simple-minded German doctor, Ludwig Buchner. Born in 1824, he very early showed a capacity for independent and acute thinking. He was lucky (if I may say so) to be born in a clever family, as his father was a physician and a Privy Councillor of Health, and his brothers and sister all earned distinction in literature. At 24, Ludwig Buchner passed his medical examinations with honours, and thenceforth, devoted himself both to medicine and writing, principally on materialistic philosophy.

It was in 1855 that his world-famous *Matter and Force* was first published. It caused a sensation. Its Materialism was so uncompromising, its presentation of that philosophy so clear and unequivocal, its attack on all forms of supernatural religion so deadly and contemptuous, that orthodoxy took the greatest alarm. It had reason. Not for a long time had such an unanswerable onslaught been levelled at religion in general and the Christian in particular, from the purely materialistic standpoint. It was one thing to attack Christianity through the Bible. A damaging case can always be made against that book's authenticity and credibility. But there was always "God" to fall back upon. Moses may have been wrong in stating that the Universe was created in six days; so may the other prophets and historians have been in error. But this did not do away with the "fact" that there must be "something" behind the wonderful order found in nature. What or who was responsible for the laws of nature—the marvellous mechanism, for example, found in all living things? The Bible as a Divine Revelation could be attacked, but there still remained the problem of Theism.

It was, therefore, quite another thing to approach the question as did Buchner. This was for the believer a very dangerous attack, because "God" was entirely eliminated. The approach, in fact, was by way of "experience" and science.

Says Buchner:—

Science is not idealistic, nor spiritualistic, nor materialistic, but simply natural; she seeks to learn everywhere facts and their logical corollaries, without doing homage in advance to a system in this or in that direction. Systems can generally include not the whole, but only half the truth, and offer to investigation certain hard and fast lines which, in its irresistible progress, it is compelled, or may be compelled, to overstep every moment. "Science," says Grove, "should have neither desires nor prejudices; truth should be her sole aim."

Buchner, it should be observed, did not care at all for the word "Materialism." It had too many wrong connotations in his opinion, and misleading implications. But whether he liked it or not, the fact remains that in the only consistent way in which the word can be used, the only fair and just way, he was a most courageous Materialist. He did not claim that "everything" could be explained away by reference to "matter" alone, if by the word "matter" is meant what Theists say it meant—or used to say it meant. He, in fact, denied that there exists any "Materialism . . . which undertakes to explain all the phenomena of existence by matter alone," to use his own words.

But Buchner, when he wrote his book, could not foresee that in even what he would have called his enlightened age, the religious spirit could only attack by foul vituperation and vilification. He was forced to resign his professorial chair at Tübingen at the out-

set, and go back to his native town and practise medicine for a living; and he spent all his spare time in replying to his critics in succeeding editions of *Force and Matter*, which obtained a surprising success and was translated into most European languages.

The fourth English edition was a translation from the fifteenth German edition which had been enlarged and revised by its author. Twenty-eight years had passed since the first German edition had been published, and Buchner pointed out that "many things had changed since then, both in the intellectual and the material worlds." But as far as he was concerned, all the profound discoveries of science during that time had only more strongly confirmed his original views. As he insists:—

The question whether the universe, as we see it, is the result of regularly working forces, having a causal connexion with each other, and therefore capable of being understood by human reason, or whether it is the work of an automatic, incomprehensible being that admits of no recognition by the reason of man, has long since been decided in favour of the former alternative. Every item of human knowledge, every page of practical experience, every conquest of science gives but this one answer and makes the old theistic theory of the universe, which originated in the days when mankind was still in its first childhood, appear as a mere fable, engendered by the reverie of past ages.

In fact, Buchner pointed out with pride that the epoch-making work of Lyell and Darwin, with scientific discoveries, unknown or only partially known in 1855, had in 1883 thoroughly confirmed the main positions he had taken up when he first wrote *Force and Matter*. Of course, he was obliged to revise certain chapters in the light of more modern knowledge; and he omitted from his last edition many of the polemical prefaces in which he used to answer his opponents—whose arguments were, by then, as dead as, in most cases, they themselves were. As a matter of fact, Buchner presented many of his arguments in more permanent form in his subsequent books and articles. These also had a wide circulation and generous recognition.

Force and Matter is very clearly written, and indeed, for a rather abstruse subject, very fascinating reading. Buchner produced his argument in an interesting way; like Schopenhauer, and unlike many German philosophers, he is extremely readable. This was a crime to the religious mind. Paine was vilified because he made Biblical criticism, in the *Age of Reason* simple to the most unlettered man. And Buchner, managed clearly and simply to put his argument so that almost anyone can understand him. He was never forgiven by the orthodox for that.

H. CUTNER.

On the question of the existence and attributes of God, the decision of the Greek mind was the absolute rejection of all anthropomorphic conceptions, even at the risk of encountering the pressure of the national superstition. Of the all-powerful, all-perfect and eternal there can be but one, for such attributes are absolutely opposed to anything like a participation, whether of a spiritual or material nature, and hence the conclusion that the universe itself is God, and that all animate and inanimate beings belong to his essence. . . . It is conceivable that God may exist without the world, but it is inconceivable that the world should exist without God. . . . God has no relations to space and time. They are only the fictions of our finite imagination. This ultimate effort of the Greek mind is Pantheism.—J. W. Draper.

Correspondence

A CORRECTION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In the article, "China Awakes," there is an unfortunate error. In the last line of the second column, "evolutionary" should be "revolutionary." It may be due to my bad handwriting; but I translated as in the Esperanto, the nature of the "revolutionary" being left to the reader.

I would ask you to insert this correction, as I should not like any reader, who had seen a copy of *Chinio Hur-las*, to think that I had deliberately altered a word.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

NATURE NOTES

SIR,—Nicholas Mere, in his article, "Nature Notes of a Freethinker," which appears in your current issue, slips up badly when he says: "The Juniper tree with its gorgeous olive branches was studded with beautiful red berries." For the leaves of the tree are a silvery, grey-green, while its berries are a smokey-grey-blue. The Yew is the tree he is thinking of.

Re "Dishwasher" as a Cornish name for the black and white Wagtail, that name is in common use in Sussex.

EDWARD PAYNE.

WHY RELIGION?

SIR,—Robert Harding, Atheist, asks in the *Freethinker* of December 20, 1936, "What other English words" (than "Religion") carry the meanings of (1) "a life plan and ethic more sublime than even the most noble . . . popular morality," (2) "organization to (that) end," and (3) "a basic faith that the human virtues, if carried (far enough) . . . would produce in augmented measure (the most) felicitous results."

May I suggest both the words "philosophy" and "ethics" for the first: the reference to his own word "organization" with the alternative words "society" and "association," duly qualified, for the second: and, for the third, a very considerable number of already familiar words now used, by different groups of people, to express precisely the hope there expressed. Among these, the oldest is, perhaps, "philosophical anarchy," the latest is "Communism," with varieties of "Socialism" in between.

Matthew Arnold tried to make out a case for religion as "morality touched by emotion." Mr. Harding is right enough in his claim for transferred meanings of words. But with the world already filled, by institutions, practices, dogmas, literature, and countless verbal pretensions with Religion explicitly and consistently so-called, I hardly see the advantage of tagging one more meaning upon it—as preferable, say, to the choice of "axle grease" or "incentive." Why not use the words we've got?

After all, Religion in both its historical and its contemporary manifestations has implied the supernatural, even specifically termed "God" as an essential.

EDWARD H. DAVIS.

Conn, U.S.A.

WHAT IS REALITY?

SIR,—If analysed, we find that "reality" carries no meaning with it beyond that which is real to humanity, and is continuously unfolding itself before human research. To read into the word the esoteric significance of a reality which is ultimate and transcendental, is a flight of imagination of the same type as that which peoples the universe with gods, goddesses and devils. It is "chasing the shadows" reflected by language suited only for the uses which evolved it and to which we put it.

Ultimate reality, corresponding to some extent to the philosophers much discussed (since Kant) "thing-in-itself which lies beyond the appearance of sense," is in

its essence as much a creation of the mind as the dogma of religion.

In his essay on Hume, T. H. Huxley writes: "... if the details of Kant's criticism differ from those of Hume, they coincide with them in their main result, which is the limitation of all knowledge of reality to the world of phenomena revealed to us by experience."

MAUD SIMON.

Branch News

WEST HAM BRANCH

THE February meeting of the West Ham Branch was the Annual Meeting; and a considerable number of members were present. The Secretary, Mr. F. G. Warner, gave a good report of the year's work. Financially, a somewhat bigger balance at the end of the year; and with a gain of some new members. In spite of bad weather, the summer propaganda had been good, and also the sale of literature.

The officers were re-elected: President, Mr. H. S. Wishart; Vice-President, Mrs. E. Venton; Secretary, Mr. F. G. Warner; Literature, Mrs. Warner; and auditors, Messrs. Venton and Dowson. Several members reported successes in the *Freethinker* circulation effort, the Paine *Freethinker*, *Age of Reason*, and other pamphlets.

The Branch congratulated the Editor on the way in which he had dealt with the King business; and hoped this could be put in pamphlet form.

Great appreciation was expressed for the devoted work of Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Warner, over a period of years, which had contributed so much to the maintenance of the Branch.

H. WISHART.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 18, 1937.

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Rosetti (A. C.), Clifton, Saphin, Tuson, Silvester, Easterbrook, Ebury, Preece, Elstob, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., and the Secretary.

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

New members were admitted to Liverpool, Birkenhead, Kingston, Bradford, Sunderland, Glasgow, North London Branches, and the Parent Society.

Details and correspondence concerning the Thomas Paine Bi-Centenary, Plymouth, Bradford, Edinburgh, West London Branches, International Union of Free-thought Societies, Peace and Friendship with U.S.S.R. Congress were dealt with and instructions given. On the voting by the Branches it was declared the Annual Conference for 1937 would be held in Liverpool. It was agreed to continue the arrangements with Mr. G. Whitehead for the summer season.

Charles Bradlaugh's desk, presented to the Executive by Mr. A. Bonner, is now in the offices of the Society, and instructions were given for appreciative thanks to be sent to the donor.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, March 18, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Religion has ever filled the mind of man with darkness, and kept him in ignorance of his real duties and true interests. It is only by dispelling the clouds and phantoms of Religion, that we shall discover the sources of Truth, Reason, and Morality, and the real motives that should incline us to Virtue. Religion diverts us from the causes of our evils, and from the remedies which nature prescribes; far from curing it only aggravates, multiplies and perpetuates them.—*Meslier*.

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.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH (17 Grange Road, Kingston-on-Thames): 8.0, each Thursday evening, lectures, discussions, etc.

INDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Bethnal Green Public Library, Cambridge Road, E.2): 7.30, Thursday, March 4, Mr. R. T. Bryant—"Christianity and Civilization."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr (Editor *The New Generation*)—"Fascism, Imperialism and Birth-Control."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Underground Station): 7.30, A Lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor T. H. Pear, M.A., B.Sc.—"The Study of Personal Relationship."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Debate—"Has the Idea of God Proved Beneficial to Human Progress?" *Affir.*: Miss O. Levertoff. *Neg.*: Mr. G. Bedborough N.S.S.

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BEDLINGTON (Co-operative Hall): 7.15, Thursday, March 4, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Blood and Fire Brigades."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 8.0, Saturday, February 27, Social evening. Tickets 6d. each. Refreshments. All members and sympathizers assured of a welcome.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street): 7.0, Mr. T. G. Millington—"A Freethinker's Place in Politics." Owing to Mr. Millington's indisposition, Mr. Cottingham will deputize for him.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance via passage facing Burtons): 7.15, Mr. A. R. Beau—"Freedom."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Herbert P. Turner (Burnley)—"How God Grew Up."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. James McLintock (Secretary Vegetarian Society)—"The Ethics of Diet."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner—"Thomas Paine."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"Paine the Pioneer: The Man who Shook the World." Doors open 6.30. Reserved seats 18. Admission free.

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

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If sufficient support is forthcoming a meeting will be arranged to discuss the details of the proposal, and will be announced in the *Freethinker*.

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