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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
Religion and Life—The Editor	193
The Cry of the Curates—Mimnermus	195
The Poets and God—Edgar Syers	196
Language, Logic and Truth—J. Reeves	197
Catholic Lawyers Forbidden to Act in Divorces— J. F. Anderoney	198
Ingersoll and Paine—H. Cutner	202
Luxury—George Wallace	203
A Trade Union for Parsons?—George Bedborough	204
God Must Go—Athoso Zenoo	205

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

Views and Opinions

Religion and Life

THERE is an interested and ignorant superstition abroad that Freethought propaganda is concerned only with the truth or falsity of specific Christian beliefs. That is not and never has been the case. There is not a single Christian or specifically religious doctrine that is in itself worth anyone wasting five minutes of his time over. Naturally, in the earlier stages of the struggle, religious doctrines received the greater share of attention, because they were accepted by the overwhelming majority as being true, and upon their alleged truth rested much social injustice and obstruction to intellectual advancement. So the first attack had to be delivered against the *truth* of religious teachings. Ideas of God, of a future life, of the validity of prayer, of the truth of miracles, occupied first attention. They were the first because they were the outworks that protected social wrong and intellectual obscurantism. In themselves these questions were of no greater social importance than discussions concerning the possible inhabitants of Mars.

But as Freethought made its own position more secure, and as the Godites surrendered one position after another the situation underwent a change. The Freethinker began to stress more the social advantages of Freethought, and the social evils of religion, the Godite began to argue that the truth of religion mattered less than its social value. From arguing that the question of man's immortal destiny mattered above all things, he took to accusing the Freethinker of wasting time in discussing the subject. The truth is that the Freethinker desired to get religion out of the way because it hindered the development of life. It perpetuated abuses and unjustifiable privileges, it sustained institutions that ought to have been wiped out, and it presented obstacles to the proper discussions of social and other problems.

Christianity and Divorce

An illustration of this occurred the other day in connexion with an application for judicial separation that came before Mr. Justice Swift. The hearing of the case involved the calling of a child as a witness—a thing which should not be done at any time, and would not be done if the law was properly humanized. The application was for separation only, as the wife had a religious objection to divorce. The judge refused the application, and in delivering his judgment said:—

To my mind it is most terrible that these unhappy people, who have long since made up their minds that they cannot live together—in this particular case they have been separated for 16 or 17 years, and have both made fresh alliances—to my mind it is dreadful that, having been separated for all that time, so that one side or the other may regularize their position, it is necessary that a daughter should have to be called to prove her mother's adultery.

Dreadful—I think it is dreadful. Why cannot some means be devised by those who made our marriage laws to begin with—by the bishops and curates, and those who undertake the task of joining people together—why cannot some means be devised by them of permitting their separation without having to bring the product of their union to prove the adultery of one or the other?

Nobody seems to think; nobody seems to care, about the individuals.

Those who talk about the sanctity of marriage, those who talk about "Whom God hath joined together," those who lay the greatest emphasis upon "let no man put asunder," do not see, or do not realize, the pain and suffering which comes into the witness-box.

You talk light-heartedly of 84 or 88 undefended divorces at the Birmingham Assizes. They each take four minutes to be dealt with—a little more, if there is somebody who wants to know things—but at the average rate four minutes, and long enough to weigh out the pain and suffering, the broken lives, the misery of years which those cases mean.

What dreadful stories I have heard to-day. A woman married for 12 or 14 years, who never had sexual intercourse with her husband after she was married. What was married life to her? How had God made them "one flesh," when, indeed, they never were one after they went through the priestly ceremony?

And now this wretched petitioner, separated from his wife, and she from her husband for 16 years—both of them, having made other alliances—come here and tell me they want to be separated.

Why should they not be? They have, in fact, in truth, been separated for 16 years. They want to be separated in law. But in order that they might be separated in law the wretched daughter has got to be brought here to tell me on oath that she knows that for 14 years her mother has been living with a man who was not her father, and that her father has been living with a woman who is not her mother.

These people ought not to be subjected to the dreadful indignities to which they are subjected, and I wish some of those learned ecclesiastics who have so much concern for the well-being of society would come and sit—here the judge pointed in front of him—where they would be mere spectators, or come and sit here, where they would have to deal with matters.

It would not be long before the Divorce Laws of this country were altered.

I think this one of the most human notes that has ever been heard in a law court. And there is not a single sentence in what was said to which, on grounds of humanity and common sense, anyone can raise the shadow of a valid objection. No one can say that the two people in the case were husband and wife in any but the legal sense of the term. In any moral sense, in any decent sense they were not. And to add to the infamy of the situation a child has to be dragged into the court to act as witness against her mother. Common decency ought to rise up against such a thing. It is religion and religion only that perpetuates so vile a situation.

Father Woodlock, the Jesuit preacher, a man whose opinion no one would have thought worth getting or reporting had he not been a preacher, says that the "outburst from Justice Swift, does not help towards respecting his Majesty's judges." Not from men such as Father Woodlock probably, but from every man and woman of cleanly and decent feeling, who have not been brought up under the unwholesome influence of the Roman Church, Justice Swift's words will receive the fullest endorsement. For note that the infamy of the situation is entirely a product of the Christian Church. The old Roman law, which was displaced by the Canon law of the Church, would have agreed that when a man and a woman can no longer live together in affection and harmony they are, as Justice Swift said, already divorced. It is ecclesiasticism which either declares that there shall be no divorce, or if there is there shall be no remarriage of the divorced parties. This is what that champion of marital harmony, the Archbishop of Canterbury, recommends to us as the Christian conception of marriage. And all because a celibate preacher, who is believed to have lived in Jerusalem a couple of thousand years ago, said that those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder. God has, or should have, nothing to do with it. Marriage is a social, not a religious fact. It is Christianity that has by its attitude towards sex, and its disguised sensuality, done so much to make sexual relations a subject of winks and sniggers. We thank Mr. Justice Swift for having so plainly indicated the essential social evil of Christianity. How annoyed Dr. Lang must be that he cannot play the same game with Justice Swift that he did with Edward VIII. We fancy he would if he could.

* * *

Another Example—and a Moral

One other example of the harm religion does when it is permitted to interfere with social life. The Blackpool Education Committee has just adopted a scheme at the obvious instigation of the parsonry. It has been arranged that school children shall attend Church services during school hours. The scheme is "voluntary" on the part of the children and also of the teachers. But we know quite well what "voluntary" means in this connexion. Unless parents definitely object to their children being marched off to church when they should be in school, silence will be taken to give consent. The teachers also will be "asked" to march with the children, and will be afraid to refuse for fear of exciting prejudice amongst those in authority and so prejudice their chances of promotion. Those Councillors who do not agree with this method of

breeding customers for the Churches, will be afraid to stand out against it for fear of exciting the antagonism amongst the less thoughtful section of the electorate. Religious cunning, political cowardice, and lack of professional dignity will thus combine to sacrifice the welfare of the child and of the State.

The Blackpool Education Committee is within its legal rights in acting as they have. It is a product of one part of the retrogressive legislation of recent years, which again is the result of the back-stairs bargaining that has taken place between the Churches, the chapels and the Government. It is useless appealing to the Government, and it is equally useless trying to instil a sense of justice into the clergy where their sectarian interests are concerned. It is also certain that the children do not wish to go to Church to listen to a religious service—that is, unless the Blackpool children differ very considerably from the children in other parts of the country. But there are quite a number of people in Blackpool, as elsewhere, who can act, if they will. And I am appealing to them to smash the whole scheme and appealing also to the teachers who ought to summon up enough courage to decline to be used as cats-paws of sectarianism. If only a very moderate proportion of the parents refuse to allow their children to be offered as a "sacrifice to Attis," the plan will soon peter out. For the fact of a number of children *not* leaving the school for Church will give the churches and chapels quite the wrong kind of advertisement. And if some of the teachers will refuse to march with the children this may help to encourage other teachers to stand out against the pressure of the parsons.

But here are two very pertinent matters in which one may see the direct evil resulting from permitting religion to interfere with social life. The Rev. Dr. F. W. Norwood says, commenting on Justice Swift's denunciation of our Church-made marriage laws, "I have thought for a long time that the Divorce Law needed careful overhauling." I do not know how long Dr. Norwood's "long time" is, probably not *very* long, but had he not been a Christian minister he might never have had any other opinion than that the divorce laws needed overhauling. He is an example of the Christian reformer—one who discovers late in the day that something is wrong, but meanwhile will not say quite openly that the great trouble here is a religious one. At law the only marriage recognized by the State is the civil contract, whether that contract be made in a Church or in a Registrar's Office. And it is monstrous for the State having gone so far, not to throw over the Church-made laws of divorce. Toned down the influence of the Church has been. It is high time it was altogether erased from the laws of the country.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Certain Bishops

We are not Christian gentlemen :

We cannot all subscribe,
To Kingdom Come whilst there's a shun
Kept by the Church's bribe.

We are not Christian gentlemen :

We have not reconciled
The thermite bomb with sermons from
A Man who loved each child.

We are not Christian gentlemen :

We never can be won
To such a creed, when children bleed
Because "Thy Will be Done."

We are not Christian gentlemen :

Fools, can you ask again?
When words of love come from above,
Dropped from a bombing-plane.

W. A. RATHKEY.

The Cry of the Curates

"Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee."

Shakespeare "Hamlet."

CURATES, in spite of their alleged sacred calling, are usually regarded with amused tolerance. Dramatists and popular song-writers have made them the butt of their satire, and the public never seem to tire of the jest. It is all very ironic, for these long-faced young men take themselves far too seriously as heaven-sent messengers commissioned by "Omnipotence" to reclaim a saucy world from naughty ways. Styling themselves "reverend," these salaried sons-of-God have always endeavoured to keep their sacred caste separate from the world of ordinary men and women. Now, fallen on evil days, these consecrated young men have been attempting to form a trade-union, or a guild of employment, in order to better their financial position. Singularly, these young sons-of-God are not relying upon miracles to help them, but are adopting purely secular methods. They are playing the sedulous ape to the members of the great trade unions, and are as mundane as bank clerks, or shop-assistants.

The curates are beginning to look with longing eyes on the solid "loaves and fishes" of their profession. Perhaps it is only natural that they should rub their eyes and wake up in a time of incipient revolution. For they are as much "on the shelf" as the most elderly spinsters of their congregations. Indeed, in the race for the flesh-pots of Egypt, the curates have been left far behind by the vicars, rectors, canons, deans, and the Fathers-in-God who cumber, rather than adorn, the Bench of Bishops. Prayer is said to be able to move mountains, but it takes dynamite to move the hearts of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Lords Spiritual. Truly, it must be galling for the curates to see men of not superior intelligence living in palaces, styled "My Lords," legislating in Parliament, and drawing incomes ranging from £2,000 to £15,000 yearly.

It has even been said that the "poorer" clergy are "starving." At least, that is how the Bishop of London puts it, and he quoted the horrid instance of a son-of-God, who fed a whole family on sixpence a meal, and the still more distressing case of a reverend who lost whatever brains he possessed for the want of a respectable bank-balance. It is very sad, but there is always balm in Gilead. The Bishop of London is always collecting money from believers to protect the sacred persons of the clergy from the blessings of poverty.

The Bishop of London should be an authority on poverty. For a short time he was a curate at Bethnal Green, and he must have seen Christian civilization at its shadiest. Yet, strange to add, he is more oppressed by the woes of the rich, and is always very anxious to rebut the charge of wealth. Some time ago he explained to an astonished congregation that, after drawing his episcopal salary of £10,000 for fifteen years, he was £2,000 on the wrong side of the ledger, and actually worse off than when he started the fearful experience of following in the footsteps of the poor carpenter of Nazareth. On such spendthrift bookkeeping it is abundantly clear that had his lordship's salary been that of His Grace of Canterbury, his loss must have been relatively greater, and he must have finished his career selling bootlaces on the Thames Embankment, or blowing a tin-whistle in the West-End of London.

Whether the clergy are really starving is a very open question. No inquest has been held on a man-of-God, where a verdict of death from want of food has

been returned. Indeed, the statement regarding starvation may be a mere piece of rhetoric used to induce congregations to open their hearts and their purses. Why, indeed, should the clergy be in such a condition of dire distress? The ancient ecclesiastical endowments of this State-supported Church of England are far more solid than the golden streets of heaven, and the clergy know the difference between bucket-shops and gilt-edged securities. Lord Addington's Parliamentary return of 1891, showed that the annual value of these endowments was £5,469,171, exclusive of modern private benefactions, which amounted to £284,000 a year. And this is only part of the income of this plutocratic church.

Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see that the average reverend enjoys a comfortable livelihood. In addition, he lives in a decent house, often larger than most of his neighbours'. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in household expenses. And very many of these parsons have a month's holiday in the summer, or exchange duty with a brother-in-the-Lord who lives in the country or seaside.

Curates are to the Anglican Church what junior clerks are to a big-business bank, although curates like us to think that they come "trailing clouds of glory" from the Celestial Regions. These young men eventually grow up, and become rectors, vicars, and canons and even deans. But their lack of faith is very unsettling, for they are relying upon purely secular methods for the betterment of their position. They look with disdain upon the ravens who fed the prophet Elijah, and evidently regard the feeding of the five thousand as a mere story. Remembering that religion is but a business, they are imitating the trade-unionists as a tangible solution of their financial difficulties.

Hard-up curates should be interested to know that they are treated better by their pastors and masters than the average church-organist, choir-master, vergers and church-cleaners. And that a bishop's costume costs £200, and fancy that a curate's wife could have stitched together something as good at far less cost. Episcopal hospitality to the tune of thousands a year should stagger them, for much bread, meat, and beer can be procured at a moderate figure.

There is a way of providing money for the curates which will, doubtless, find favour in the eyes of the Right-Reverend Fathers-in-God, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the trustees of Queen Anne's Bounty. It is to act on Shakespeare's lines, adapted from King Lear:—

"Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what curates feel;
That thou mayest shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just."

These ecclesiastics could easily afford to "show the heavens more just," and could, if they wished, prevent the poorer clergy from watering their dry crusts with their tears. One cannot think for a moment that these descendants of the "twelve disciples" would act like the greedy boy with an apple, who, when his brother asked him for the core, replied: "Get off. There ain't going to be any core!"

Curates are men, and should behave as men and not as automata. They should realize that they are doing the "donkey-work" of a sorry profession, and that their ecclesiastical superiors are feathering their nests to some purpose. They know the game from the inside, and should contrast their own meagre salaries

with the opulence of the bishops. It is, indeed, a far cry from the fishing-nets of the legendary twelve disciples to Lambeth Palace, with its guard-room; Fulham Palace with its pleasure-grounds; Farnham Palace with its deer-park; and Wells with its moated garden. If present-day curates are badly paid, let them note that right-reverend Fathers-in-God may be consecrated to the Christian Ministry and yet have never been converted to decency and civilization. Also that there are more honest ways of earning a living than by being a consecrated charlatan.

MIMNERMUS.

The Poets and God

SOME references to the poets by the Bard of Colophon in a recent number of the *Freethinker* suggests a brief survey of their views on religion. A long list might be compiled with excerpts from their works, but such an enumeration would constitute an extensive chapter in the history of Freethought, which I will leave to some more competent and industrious scribe.

I shall allude only to a few poets of modern times, whose views on religion and the Deity have been expressed by themselves, or commended upon by their biographers. For this purpose Chatterton, Gray, Shelley, Keats and Swinburne may be chosen as representing different schools of poetry.

Chatterton, whose precocity of genius seems to me an incident in the history of literature even more amazing than the plays of Shakespeare or Milton's verse, was in his writings, and in the records left by his contemporaries shown to be quite unorthodox.

Dr. Gregory, in his life of the "marvellous boy," said: "when or how Chatterton was unfortunate enough to receive a tincture of infidelity we are not informed." Early in the year 1769, it appears from a poem on *Happiness*, addressed to Mr. Catcott, that he had drunk deeply of the poisoned spring. And in a letter to the same gentleman, after he had left Bristol, he expressed himself: "Heaven send you the comforts of Christianity; I request them not, for I am no Christian."

Happiness is a satirical poem, and the following lines were, probably, those which called forth the strictures of Dr. Gregory:—

Where's the foundation of religion placed?
On every individual's fickle taste.
The narrow way the priest-rid mortals tread
By superstitious prejudice misled—
This passage leads to heaven; yet, strange to tell!
Another's conscience finds it leads to hell.

Conscience, the soul-chameleon's varying hue,
Reflects all notions, to no notion true;
The bloody son of Jesse, when he saw
The mystic priesthood kept the Jews in awe,
He made himself an ephod to his mind,
And sought the Lord and always found him kind:
In murder, horrid cruelty, and lust
The Lord was with him, and his actions just.
Priestcraft! Thou universal blind of all,
Thou idol, at whose feet all nations fall.

The usual explanation of the gifted lad's fall from grace were that he erred for want of a true system of instruction and without a guide, save the illumination of his own intellect, and that had he lived longer he would have known "the fear of God, and have been found clothed and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus."

In the poetry of Gray there is no indication of religious feeling, and we are assured by a biographer

that a shade rests upon his religious principles, and the writer deploras that "we discern no angel in his churchyard sitting on a tomb." Doubtless Gray saw too many counterfeit presentments of angels, and mention of them, in "the uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture" which he described in the immortal *Elegy*.

If the oft-quoted "on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" had been written by a religious poet, he could not have refrained from introducing some pious platitudes for the edification of the idle progeny, whose ignorance was bliss.

Here again an orthodox critic deplored that the poet did not attempt "to raise our thoughts to a better world, and the ever-watchful providence of our Heavenly Father, who makes all things work together for good."

Gray was content to give us poetry devoid of pious platitudes, and for this we are thankful.

Shelley's Atheism is so well known that it need not be emphasized; his uncompromising sincerity being the cause of the calumny and abuse with which he was assailed during his brief life, and the atrocious obituary notices which announced his tragic death. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* stated, "we ought as justly to regret the decease of the devil as one of his coadjutors. Percy Bysshe Shelley is a fitter subject for a penitentiary dying speech than a lauding elegy; for the muse of the rope rather than of the cyress."

An equally infamous notice appeared in the *Literary Gazette*:—

We feel as if one of the darkest of the fiends had been clothed with a human body to enable him to gratify his enmity against the human race, and as if the supernatural atrocity of his hate were only heightened by his power to do injury.

Writing to his friend Horace Smith, Shelley asked that gentleman to assure Tom Moore, "that I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron in this particular, and if I had I should certainly employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity. I differ from Moore in thinking Christianity useful to the world; no man of sense can think it true."

Apparently Moore had warned Byron of the danger of Shelley's society. It did not occur to Moore that the temperate pure-living Shelley might suffer from his intercourse with the selfish sensualist. The biographers have even attempted the whitewashing of Shelley, and Gilfillan assured us, in the same words as were used of Chatterton, that had the poet been "more wisely educated and enjoyed opportunities of intercourse with religious-minded companions he, too, would have been discovered sitting at the feet of Jesus."

But Shelley must be judged by the verdicts of those who *knew* him, among whom, three, of widely divergent character, may be quoted: Leigh Hunt, in *My Books*, wrote: "Dear Shelley, in all thy actions, small as well as great, how sure was the beauty of thy spirit to break forth." Byron, who was not given to eulogy of his friends, wrote to Tom Moore, "he is to my knowledge the *least* selfish and the mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of." Trevelyan in a letter written in old age to Claire Clairmont said "he was of a bountiful and loving nature; everything that came in contact with Percy, especially women, loved him at sight."

The deities of Keats are those of Greece, his worship was at classic altars and his invocations to Pan, to Diana, to Apollo.

The lines "Written in disgust of Vulgar Superstition" are omitted by disingenuous editors:—

The church bells toll a melancholy round,
 Calling the people to some other prayers,
 Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
 More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
 Surely the mind of man is closely bound
 In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
 Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
 And converse high of those with glory crown'd.
 Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp—
 A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
 That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;
 That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
 Into oblivion; that fresh flowers will grow,
 And many glories of immortal stamp.

It is pleasant to think that Keats had at the last the ministrations of a devoted friend, the artist Joseph Severn, to whom he addressed the beautiful *vale*: "I am dying—I shall die easy; don't be frightened." His wish to—

Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever and the fret.

—was fulfilled.

The contest which raged round Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* was not aroused by their irreligious tendency, but by their frankly erotic treatment, by which Victorian society in the 'sixties and 'seventies professed to be profoundly shocked.

Reviewers, as virulent as the writers who maligned Shelley's memory, described the master of craft in melody as "an unclean fiery imp," and "the libidinous laureate of a pack of satyrs."

But Swinburne had many influential champions, among them Lord Lytton, Ruskin, who, when asked to associate himself with a movement for the prosecution of *Poems and Ballads*, wrote: "He is infinitely above me in all knowledge and power, and I should no more think of criticizing him than of venturing to do it to Turner if he were alive again." D. G. and W. M. Rossetti, George Meredith and other well known authors also defended the youthful poet.

Swinburne's views on religion and a deity are vigorously set forth in a letter which he wrote to E. C. Stedman:—

A Theist I never was; I always felt by instinct and perceived by reason that no man could conceive of a personal god except by crude superstition. . . . man with a difference with some qualities intensified and some suppressed, but we who worship no material incarnation of any qualities, no person, may worship the Divine humanity, the ideal of human perfection and aspiration, without worshipping any god."

My old friend, Mr. Watts Dunton, with whom Swinburne passed his later years, informed me that no change took place in the poet's attitude towards religion.

I am not aware that any biographer has been hardy enough to attempt the whitewashing of Swinburne.

EDGAR SYERS.

Christian Governments do not exist for the good of the governed, still less for the good of humanity or civilization, but for the aggrandisement and greed and lust of power of the ruling classes—kings and kaisers, ministers and generals, nobles and millionaires—the true vampires of our civilization, ever seeking fresh dominions from whose people they may suck the very life-blood.

A. R. Wallace "The Wonderful Century."

Language, Logic and Truth

OUR attention has again been drawn to the advance and organization of thought by a book written by A. J. Ayer, a research student at Oxford. The work is the subject of a lengthy essay-review in *Science Progress* by Prof. Dingle, the well known philosophically-minded astrophysicist at the Imperial College of Science and Technology; and he expresses the view that the system adopted "appears unassailable when closely examined." This, in brief is as follows:—

Genuine propositions are of two classes:—

- (1) Analytic (comprised in the term Logic).
- (2) Synthetic (broadly scientific).

Analytic propositions include those of mathematics, though these are in a sense "tautologies," because they state nothing about the world of fact, but express only relations inherent in the definitions they employ. They must, however, be accepted as valid, as they cannot be denied without self-contradiction.

Synthetic propositions, on the other hand, emerge from actual experience (observation, experiment), and, of course, when suitably verified, must be accepted. This section, however, must be sufficiently wide to include propositions of a historical kind. For, as occurrences of the past cannot now be submitted to the direct test of experience, we have to admit recorded observations when these are "relevant" to the determination of questions at issue.

For the rest, propositions are put in a category called "Nonsense"; and this spurious mass of ideas includes metaphysics and theology. (It may be mentioned that Prof. Dingle reasonably takes exception to the name given to the class, as it tends to engender feeling and prejudice. And we know well what a devastating effect on intellectual discussion results from the intrusion of those qualities.)

Mr. F. S. Marvin's lately issued work on *Comte* has again brought us into contact with the earlier of two great intellectual synthesizers of the nineteenth century. Apart from his *Religion of Humanity* (which was, of course, wholly naturalistic), Comte's work was based upon science and history. His classification of the sciences, culminating in Sociology (a term he originated), was a splendid achievement, and his work for peace and progress can hardly be over-rated. He rejected all theology, but did not attack it, preferring to let it die out spontaneously.

Herbert Spencer followed, adopting in various respects a similar mode of procedure (though having "reasons for dissenting from the philosophy of M. Comte"), re-classifying the sciences, stressing scientific sociology, and especially ethics, insisting, like his great forerunner, on the natural and inevitable replacement of the more military politico-social regime by an economy of peaceful progress, accompanied by intellectual and social advancement. His book on education marks him as one of the world's greatest educationalists (in the sense of an originator and expositor of principles), worthy to rank in this respect with Plato and Comenius. Like Comte, he was a complete rationalist.

Then came Lester Ward, the American sociologist, who also worked on a scientific foundation; and it is hardly necessary to say that he was also a Secularist, and a very outspoken one.

All of the three giants, then, were "prophets" of evolution and progress, though Comte lived too early to have the advantage of the established principle of biological evolution. It seems that all of them, but especially Spencer, have been largely neglected, and have had their work denigrated—especially in this country, as compared with the appreciation shown in the United States and pre-war Germany—a feature

doubtless largely due to their heterodox attitudes toward supernatural religion.

Of other organizers whose books I have read or tried to read, the general lack of the definitely scientific, "positive" and historical basis renders it difficult to "lay hold" of their multifarious arguments and conclusions.

As regards science, we have for some time been fairly assured that the great majority of its devotees are Secularists. And now we have Prof. Sir Arthur Keith's appreciation of a recently published scientific-rationalist book, *Life in a Nutshell*: "You have put into words what most modern scientific men really believe, but which so few of them care or dare to own in conversation, lecture or book."

We have no comparable pronouncement in the case of historians, who seem more loth even than scientists to speak out. But we have had a few to whom we can refer as examples, such as Gibbon, Lecky and Bury; Frederic Harrison, the leader of the Positivists, was, and F. S. Marvin is, a complete secularist; and we suspect that there are a goodly number among our university historians.

In America there were until the recent death of Dr. Breasted also at least three eminent examples, the other two being Professors Robinson and Shotwell. And we may note with appreciation the following from *The Religious Revolution of To-day* of the last mentioned writer: "Philosophy gives up its absolutes and interprets phenomena in terms of evolution. History, in form as well as in content, mirrors the change, as the myths of the gods give way to the epic of the hero; and then, through lessening miracle, the chronicle . . . becomes at last the purely human story of purely human things.

A few sentences from a following passage of the same book may fitly conclude this article:—

Augustine's dream of the City of God has not been realized. The City of Satan—of primitive and primal religious belief—was stronger than he dreamed. But the City of Religion . . . is now giving way to the City of Man. And the new city is a *civitas terrena*; it gives up ideals that suited a world to come for practical politics in a stern present. . . . It is less interested in heaven and hell than in unemployment and sanitation. It is cleaning streets and tearing down our slums. If religion blocks the way to its reforms, it labels that religion superstitious and brushes it from its path. Even its evils are purely human—its lust for power, its rivalries, wars and armaments, the idleness and luxury its industry produces. . . . We are responsible for them and we know it. We can no longer escape by claiming that its good or ill is God's or Satan's. The City of Civilization is in our hands.

J. REEVES.

Catholic Lawyers Forbidden to Act in Divorces

SYDNEY (N.S.W., Australia) has just been afforded a striking example, first of Catholic audacity, and then of Catholic dissembling.

Following a long-observed custom, the re-assembling of the courts for the business of the present year was preceded by religious services—at one church for the Catholic members of the legal profession, and at another church for the adherents of all other denominations.

The hypocrisy of these proceedings has been dealt with in previous articles in the *Freethinker*.

Primarily, the purpose is to confer the blessings of the churches on the members of the legal profession. Everyone knows that the services of a solicitor or barrister are at the command of the person who can pay for them, and

that it then becomes the duty of the individual so engaged to do the utmost he can to win his client's case—however guilty that client may be, or whatever the injustice that may be done to the opposing party. Still, blessed are those whose ways of life compel them to espouse alike the cause of the just and unjust, provided that the payments are duly forthcoming.

A discredit, it may be, to those who seek such a blessing; but it is certainly a disgrace to the churches that bestow it.

Very much in the air of late has been the Catholic attitude with regard to divorce. Perhaps it was this fact that prompted Father Murphy, this year, to seek to get in a little work for his church in this connexion. At any rate, in the course of his remarks he frankly declared that no Catholic member of the profession could have a hand—could act or take part in—proceedings for a divorce. "Surely," he remarked, "you cannot hold with the contention that an Act of Parliament can directly deny the positive teaching of Christ?" God-made law, he added, must come before man-made law.

Here, let me interpose, the direct implication of Father Murphy's pronouncement would be that—since a Catholic solicitor or barrister could take no part in a divorce—no Catholic could figure as a Judge in a Divorce Court, for in that capacity he would be required to play even a more important rôle in any divorce proceedings than a solicitor or barrister appearing for one of the parties.

Consequently, Father Murphy's outburst was altogether too much for the Catholic members of the profession.

The lip protestations of these is one thing. Religion, to that extent, is all very well. But when it touches their pockets—in fact, goes right down to the bottom of their pockets—it becomes an entirely different matter. The result was that there were immediate protestations from the profession. Quietly yet firmly were these made. Nor could they be resisted, without the church emerging the worse for the conflict. Briefly, the material interests of the church were in danger; and, of course, these had to be preserved at all costs.

The outcome was that, within a few days, the impudent demand made by Father Murphy was publicly withdrawn.

But this had to be more or less tactfully done. Father Murphy himself remained discreetly silent. The crawl-down was deputed to other members of the church. Foremost among these was the Very Rev. Edmund O'Donnell, described as the promoter of justice in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Characteristically jesuitical, in its labyrinth of entanglements, is the Rev. O'Donnell's statement.

At great length, he appears to argue that the Catholic Church approves—that is, where it does not disapprove—of Catholic members of the profession taking part in divorce proceedings. But in the end there does emerge something definite from the confusion of his sentences. Possibly he realized that this was demanded by those whom he was seeking to placate.

"Catholics and many others understand," he says, "that if a lawyer acts for a client in seeking a divorce, or if a Judge grants such, neither intends to violate his conscience but the one asks and the other grants only so much as they believe the civil power can validly concede. In many cases, therefore, material co-operation by a Catholic Judge or lawyer would be permitted."

There is no need for me to elaborate on the way in which the Rev. O'Donnell even here tries to square the requirements of the church with the practices of the profession—in other words, his futile attempt to harmonize two utterly opposing demands.

Just one further sentence.

"When in doubt," remarks the Rev. O'Donnell, "the practical course for a lawyer to take would be to consult his parish priest, or any other ecclesiastical authority."

A pretty thought, that—the enlisting of a priest or parson in the course of the State-fixed law as between the parties to an action!

Sydney, I might add, has been greatly stirred—particularly the legal profession—by the controversy started by Father Murphy. It reveals to what extent the Catholic

Church would direct our every-day affairs, if only it had its own sweet way. Further, the whole proceedings have evoked a resentment—Catholic and Anglican—which must be all to the good in the community getting more-and-more to see the whole religious imposture in its true light.

J. F. ANDERONEY.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Acid Drops

The new Russian Constitution does, at least theoretically, permit freedom of worship. But the *Universe* sees something sinister in the fact that in the new census that has been taken questions are asked as to religion. Everyone knows that there has been a tremendous shrinking in the number of believers in Russia, and that religion has but a very slight hold on the younger generation. But in view of the shrinkage that will be shown when the figures are published, the *Universe* says, without the slightest attempts to prove the statement, that "vast numbers of believers are in prison, and multitudes of them are engaged in slave labour." This would not, if true, affect the number of the religious in Russia, but at all costs the *Universe* must make it appear that man is a religious animal, and that religion cannot be seriously weakened.

The *Church Times*, which has a much greater sense of intellectual responsibility than has the *Universe*, is much nearer the facts when it says, in its issue for March 19:—

We fear that religious interest, except among the old, is very rare in Russia. Persecution has ceased because it is no longer necessary. A new generation has grown up that has no concern with religion. They will not be bothered with anti-God propaganda. . . . For the present young Russia feels no need for God.

Take religion out of the schools, secularize the State, leave religion without the patronage of "Society," or the support of the State, let the clergy become mere ministers of religion, with no special privileges; and in a couple of generations religion would become elsewhere almost what it is in Russia.

A little while back the *News-Chronicle* published one or two photographs depicting the bodies of children killed by General Franco's gallant army. Hundreds of these photographs have been sent; but the bulk of the papers decline to print them. The Roman Catholic organ, the *Universe*, charged the *News-Chronicle* with having used a faked picture that originated in France. The *News-Chronicle* replied by demonstrating the authenticity of the photograph, and the *Universe* in its issue for March 19, withdraws its statement, admits the correctness of the pictures and offers the *News-Chronicle* an "unequivocal apology." So far so good.

But the Roman Church is admittedly behind Franco and his army, and has said no word condemning the atrocities committed by the insurgents. These are well evidenced by the manner in which the civil population run from Franco, by the few prisoners he has, and by the fact, that not daring to kill Sir Chalmers Mitchell, or keep him in prison, his personal parole was demanded not to say what he saw at the taking of Malaga. The promise was more damning than any statement could have been. The *Universe* has also published various accounts of the massacres and outrages committed by the Government of Spain, but none of the witnessed atrocities of Franco and his Moors appears to have come under its notice. It has, of course, shielded itself by the fatuous remark, "there are atrocities on both sides," and that may generally be taken, in the case of Spain as a kind of apology for those who are butchering in the name of the Church and Fascism.

Nor, be it noted, has a word of condemnation been said by any leading Catholic of the recent brutal mass-

acre of Abyssinian men, women and children, after the throwing of a bomb at the Italian general. There is no chance of "they are bad on both sides," in this case. The wholesale slaughter of thousands because someone threw a bomb is obviously indefensible. So "There are wrongs on both sides" will not apply here. And as for Spain, it must be remembered that at the beginning of the outbreak, that royal gangster, the ex-King of Spain declared that every one of the "left" must be "exterminated." So far as it can be done, this has been done.

Prayers for the safety of the Fenland were offered on Sunday (March 21) in Ely Cathedral and other Churches. The clergy have shown great patience, and some amount of judgment, in waiting till the floods had reached their worst. But one wonders why they did not pray to the Lord not to send such floods, instead of waiting till the disaster happened. After all there is no sense in praying to God to stop the rain if he had no hand in starting it. It is bad enough to have to remind him that the floods are here, but to wait until they actually do come before reminding him that at this time of the year he is apt to lose his head and let things rip, is showing little consideration for those who live where floods are likely to be, and who are dependent upon the vagaries of the divine intelligence.

There is, of course, a set prayer for rain in the Church Prayer Book, but, as though the compilers had in mind the casual way in which God was likely to do things, he is told that all that is required is "such moderate rain and showers" that will revive the fruits of the earth. There is also a second prayer in which God is reminded that he did once drown the world, and the hope is expressed that he will now be more careful. Looking at what floods have done in America, England and elsewhere, the Lord appears to have been "going of it." Why not hand the job over to a committee? That could hardly be worse than the present plan. These autocratic governments are seldom to be trusted.

It is said that the salary of the Prime Minister is to be raised from £5,000 to £10,000. It is pointed out by the *Daily Express* that Gracie Fields gets £100,000 a year. The comparison is a bad one. The Prime Minister does not amuse anything like the same number of people as does Gracie Fields.

It has often been remarked that "frankness of speech has the advantage that it enables us to understand what a speech is about." For the past four weeks a discussion has been going on in Broadcasting House on the "population question." On the whole some good sense has "emerged" as well as commonplace nonsense. But the main point of objection is that all words synonymous with "Birth-Control" have been very rigidly tabooed. The consequence is that the debaters might have been talking about Infanticide or Illegal Operations for Abortion, instead of what they properly were referring to, namely decent humane scientific methods of Birth-Control. One of these days somebody will be assassinated merely because the word "criticism" is forbidden, and therefore no distinction is made between proper criticism and the murder of the person criticized.

The Archbishop of Canterbury gives us the "not just" about God. He was addressing Members of Parliament in Room 14. "God is not so much denied," said Cantuar, "as crowded out." We should have imagined that in a finite world it would be difficult not to "crowd out" an Infinite Deity. If it really pleases the Primate to think that God "is not so much denied," we cannot expect God Himself to feel highly gratified at being merely "crowded out." We presume it would be blasphemous to suggest that God should show Himself occasionally and perform a few miracles as of yore. Is it possible that people have been more anxious to "crowd out" the Archbishop than to take the trouble to deny a deity who hides behind the Archbishop's gown.

Dr. Fosdick writes in the *Christian World*, suggesting that the present state of Europe is due to a denial of the belief in one and the same God. "Nationalism and Racialism are the great denials of Monotheism . . . with fearful prejudice and slaughter they say to all the world, There is not really One God. . . ." We utterly deny the view that Monotheism offers any hope. There is more "Monotheism" to-day than ever there was. Germans may believe that God is not a Jew, just as Negroes may regard a White God as inconceivable. But they all think of God as the One and Only God. There has been more war and murder and persecution in attempting to inflict the "monotheistic" dogma on mankind that through any other cause. And those who believed in the same God have ruthlessly persecuted their fellow believers. Calvin and Servetus, Henry VIII., and More, Torquemada and his victims believed in the same God. Monotheism has been tried and found useless.

The Rev. Arthur Gardner's article in *The Expository Times*, on "Practical Christianity and the Law-Breaker," breathes an admirably humanitarian air, but it is extremely difficult to understand how any (except a Christian) writer can attribute modern Penal Reform ideas to "practical" or other Christianity. Mr. Gardner indeed seems to agree that "theoretical" Christianity was and is opposed to such ideas. Evidently "practical" Christianity simply means the practice of Christians who refuse to obey Christian teachings. Mr. Gardner is properly severe on the fact that "Christian Pharisaism is the public opinion" of a Christian country. We ask Mr. Gardner to believe that he is not flattering or helping the cause of Penal Reform by misdescribing it as "this field of Christian enterprise." He himself does not claim that the abolition of the death penalty is a Christian proposal; he admits that the Christian public "clings to the 37th article of the Church of England's faith holding that Christians may be punished with death for grievous offences." And he adds "Practical Christianity means different things in different ages."

Dr. (ex-Dean) Inge writes with more freedom since he entered a sphere of less responsibility. He says, "I cannot send my critical faculty to sleep quite so easily." He was discussing the question of the "historical Jesus," and although he says he is "satisfied on the main point," at the same time he "cannot deny that there is much uncertainty about the details." Dr. Inge seems to overlook the fact that if the "details" are all wrong, there is not much left to "deny" or assert. The man who described a lobster as "a red fish with four legs, which walks backwards," was only inaccurate in all the "details."

The Rev. Dr. Ryder Smith, in the *Methodist Recorder*, admits that "Paul knew nothing of the triumphs of modern science, but he believed thoroughly in Providence." Dr. Smith uses the wrong conjunction. Instead of "but," we should write "and therefore." Nothing could be more fatuous than Dr. Smith's comparison of Paul's alleged "optimism . . . when he looks at the world to be," and the ideals of the "modern man" who says "Science will yet show us how to master every evil." Paul's utterance was the expression of complete indifference to human welfare on earth. It was just a glorification of death—for the "believer," a post mortem bliss in heaven. The "modern man's" hope is (as Wordsworth put it) for human happiness here and now:—

Not in Utopia, subterranean fields
Or some secreted island heaven knows where,
But in this very world which is the world
Of all of us—the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all.

Really! many of the extraordinary performances of Government Departments these days make *Alice in Wonderland* appear like authentic history. To prove the Home Office claim that "the respirator to be issued to the public is one hundred per cent efficient in the cases of all known gases," an ambulance-man demonstrated at a Norbury meeting "dressed in a pair of thick oil-skin

trousers, a pair of heavy pure rubber boots—rubber composition, it was said, would not do—an oil-cloth jacket, big oil-skin gauntlets, a hood of oil-skin over his head and most of the mask, and, on top of all, a tin hat. . . ." Questioners were left unenlightened except on the fact that the respirator would be a public issue, but *not the protective outfit!*

One incident at the meeting had positively the "Wonderland" touch. After thanking the demonstrators, the clergyman who lent the hall "turned to the audience and blurted out—(we are using the *Star* diarist's words—and his printed emphasis which follows)—"There is only one way to stop war. It's Christ's way, and you all know it." This is where the parson must have "lifted his voice," as the account states, and italics were insufficient to "relay" it. The pressman thought that the speaker "seemed bewildered by the spontaneous roar of approval which greeted his remark." And perhaps the parson "thought" the "roar" of quite another kind? Bewilderment seems to be a natural result of "cross-purpose."

A letter signed "M. K. Zimcroft" appears in the *Star*:—

I read that the Russian Government has established peace among the turbulent tribes of the Caucasus Mountains by providing the necessary health services, schools and public care for women and children. Such methods might be tried on the North-West Frontier, and I suggest . . . that, being Christ-like, they are more likely to succeed than those at present used.

Freethinkers are well acquainted with this old Christian trick of appropriating to the credit balance of religion every good work of secularism. And, unfortunately, thousands of church people who have lost, or are fast losing, faith in the shams they see daily exposed, remain "orthodox" on that ground alone—that all good must emanate from a "Christ-like spirit." This is the most insidious of all Christian deceits. It represents the religionist's last trench and an ill-ventilated, ill-equipped, unstable trench it is. Secular forces, responsible for all progress, will take that trench by the constant bombardment of cold facts and common-sense

Fifty Years Ago

SLAVE-HOLDING is not only not put in any catalogue of sins or "offences" given us in the Bible, although those catalogues are full and minute; it is, on the contrary, distinctly sanctioned by that book. Jesus preached non-resistance and subordination to the powers that be. Slaveholders were received by the Apostles into the Christian Church, and a fugitive slave was sent back to his master by St. Paul, who assigned as his reason the master's right to his services.

Following the Apostles, the Fathers of the Church have all authorized and approved of slavery. The Church accordingly did not scruple to keep slaves itself. Priests, abbots, and bishops held slaves. Fleury, the Catholic historian, says "They were given entire villages where the inhabitants were slaves." Pepin, Charlemagne, and other kings and nobles made frequent gifts of lands and slaves to the Church. In the wills of grave bishops and abbots yet extant we read how they bequeathed their slaves like other possessions. The Abbey of St. Germain de Prés owned 80,000 slaves, the Abbey of St. Martin de Tours 20,000.

St. Bernard, the last of the Christian Fathers, writing to the Abbot of Molêmes (Ep. lxxx.), exhorts him to correct the slaves of the church confided to his care. St. Thomas Aquinas, the divine doctor and great light of the Church, contends that nature has destined certain men to be slaves. He invokes in favour of his detestable cause both human and divine laws, and even adds the testimony of Aristotle (*De regimine principum*, lib. iii. cap. x. tom. xiii.; Rome, 1570). The great Catholic bishop, Bossuet, declared that to condemn slavery was to condemn the Holy Spirit, which proclaimed its legitimacy.

The Freethinker, March 27, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MANY replies are unavoidably held over.

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

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Sugar Plums

The Manchester Branch brought its winter season to an end with a lecture from Mr. Cohen on Sunday last. The Picture House was well-filled, and there were a number of questions following the address. Mr. Monks took the chair, and pressed upon those interested in the work to lend a hand to the local society. With this we cordially agree, and hope that it will be acted on. There was a good sale of literature, and not enough copies of the *Age of Reason* to meet the demand.

After the "Views and Opinions" of this week was written, and just before going to press with this issue of the *Freethinker*, we received a cutting from the *Northern Daily Telegraph*, for March 19, that 300 Blackpool teachers have declared a boycott on conveying the children from school to Church and back again. We congratulate the teachers on their stand, and hope they will abide by their decision. The same paper states that sixty-five per cent of the children attended the first service. We are glad to find that the teachers have acted as we suggested they should act, and now we hope that the parents will follow suit. A little effort of friends of the welfare of children—whether they are avowed Freethinkers or not—would put a stop to this endeavour of the Churches to breed customers, and to use the teachers as tools.

March 31 marks the end of our special offer to supply five-shillings worth of Pioneer Press literature with every new annual subscription to the *Freethinker* that is received. But we hope that the *Freethinker* Circulation Drive will continue. We can do but little in the shape of advertising, but the help that has been given to introduce this paper into new quarters has been of great help, and we hope that this form of assistance will be, not merely continued, but extended. We still live in hope of making the paper pay its way.

A committee is to be set up by the Government to consider the birching of children. If the Government was a genuinely civilized one, ruling a genuinely civilized people, the birching of children would have been wiped out long since. But with a religion that is based upon a doctrine of Hell, and which thinks of man as being fundamentally a criminal, and with a people who think of peace in terms of readiness to go to war, one cannot expect very much. That fine old Freethinker, Montaigne, said some four hundred years ago:—

I condemn all violence in the education of a gentle soul that is designed for honour and liberty. There is, I know not what of servile honour and restraint; and I

am of opinion that what is not to be done by reason, prudence and address, is never to be effected by force. . . . I have never observed other effects of whipping unless to render children more cowardly or more wilful and obstinate.

And with regard to the thrashing of children in school:—

Away with this violence, away with this compulsion, than which I certainly believe nothing more dulls and degenerates a well-born nature. If you would have him fear shame and chastisement do not harden him to them. . . . The government of most of our colleges has always displeased me, and peradventure they might have erred less perniciously on the indulgent side. . . . How much better would it be to see their classes strewn with leaves and flowers, than with bloody stumps of birch. . . . It is not a soul or a body that we are shaping, it is a man.

There is plenty more of the same kind of teaching with Montaigne. How he would have opened his eyes to find four centuries after his death a House of Parliament discussing whether children should be birched or not, and so many of our teachers believing that freedom in school is the one thing that must be measured out in a thrifty manner.

Someone has been pulling the leg of the editor of the *Sheffield Star*. In a recent issue the following letter appeared:—

FOODSTUFFS IN SHEFFIELD

Sir,—I would try to induce Sheffielders strictly to adhere to God's method in the preparation and cooking of all meats, confectionery, etc., which will be found in plain bold type in the Book of Ezekiel, chapter 4, verse 10 to 15.

Do let us have cleanliness and especially for those people with a delicate palate. If we will only strive and persevere in all His doctrines, ways, and methods, we shall have no cause to pull each other to smithereens.—

Yours, etc.,
MEXBOROUGH COMMON.

OWD JACK.

Our readers may look up this text at their leisure. It is one of the many choice texts to be found in the Book which is read in this land.

Amid all the talk—the largely inconclusive talk—that is going on between the *pro* and *anti* birth-controllers, no one seems to have faced squarely the fact whether or not the decline in the birth-rate may not be due to causes that are little dwelt upon. The theory that families are smaller than usual, too small, it is said, to retain population at its present level, because young married people wish to have a "good time," if true, may be a good thing, for it means that the desire for parentage is not very strong, and a nation loses little by such remaining childless. The real regret is that a severe limitation of family life in all probability arises from the action of those who take the function of parentage very seriously on non-Malthusian grounds. If a careful enquiry were made as to what part is played by the feeling that small families are dictated by, (a) the insecurity of a comfortable home in which to rear children, and (b) the undesirability of rearing children for cannon fodder, the results might be very educative. The number of foolish women who write to the papers, "I have borne six children, four of whom were killed fighting, and wish I had a dozen to give to the army," must be very few—at least one hopes so. To feel proud that, having been born, one's children do their duty when the time comes is one thing. Deliberately to breed them for the purpose of war, is quite another thing.

The South London Branch N.S.S. brought its indoor session to a close last Sunday with Mr. G. Bedborough as the speaker. The lecture was interesting and humorous, and at the same time serious, with a number of questions asked and answered. Supporters of the Branch are asked to watch for announcements of the open-air campaign which is always a feature of its activity.

Under the title "Topics of the Week," the *Bebington News* reprints two of our "Acid Drops" dealing with the influence of the Catholic Church on the slave trade of South America. This is done with full acknowledgment.

Ingersoll and Paine

THE new edition of Ingersoll's famous *Oration on Thomas Paine* (Pioneer Press, 2d.), should call attention again to the way in which the greatest of American Freethinkers championed the man who "for more than one hundred years," he said, "was attacked on every hand."

Ingersoll discovered Paine very early in his public career. I have not the reference by me at the moment, but I think I am right in saying that one of his earliest lectures was on Paine; and the love and admiration he had for the author of the *Age of Reason* never wavered one iota to the end of his days. This is not surprising, of course. It was impossible for him to read the works of Paine without recognizing a great master mind, both in the field of politics and in religion. Paine, indeed, exercised a profound influence on Ingersoll's thought, and the passionate love of liberty shown in his masterly essays and discourses echo the same sentiment championed so courageously by Thomas Paine.

Ingersoll came prominently into the public eye when he offered 1,000 dollars if the editor of the *New York Observer*, the Rev. Ireneus Prime, could produce evidence that Paine recanted on his deathbed. This was in 1877; and the published account of the controversy entitled the *Vindication of Thomas Paine*, proves with what pertinacity Christians lied for the glory of the Lord. Ingersoll went to considerable trouble to find, if possible, people who knew the supposed witnesses of the recantation. He reprinted the testimony of men who had known Paine for years, and who were disgusted at the lies which were being circulated about him. Some of this testimony came from people who by no means shared Paine's Deism, and who certainly had nothing to gain by contradicting the foul slanders so assiduously repeated by believers in true Christianity—and, it may be added, a good many of these lies were certainly going the rounds until very recently.

Ingersoll convicted the liars in no gentle language. He forced the infamous Rev. Mr. Prime to admit he was lying when he said Paine recanted on his deathbed. Never was Ingersoll more bitter and scathing:—

Is it possible that the persecutors, the instigators of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the inventors and users of thumb screws and iron boots and racks, the burners and tearers of human flesh, the stealers, whippers, and enslavers of men, the buyers and beaters of babes and mothers, the founders of inquisitions, the makers of chains, the builders of dungeons, the slanderers of the living and the calumniators of the dead, all died in the odour of sanctity; with white, forgiven hands folded upon the breasts of peace; while the destroyers of prejudice, the apostles of humanity, the soldiers of liberty, the breakers of fetters, the creators of light, died surrounded with the fierce fiends of fear?

And to the Rev. Mr. Prime, Ingersoll declared: "Hereafter you will stand in the pillory of history as a defamer—a calumniator of the dead. You will be known as the man who said that Thomas Paine, the 'Author Hero,' lived a drunken, cowardly and beastly life, died a drunken and beastly death. These infamous words will be branded upon the forehead of your reputation."

Ingersoll did not have to pay his thousand dollars, for he made his Christian opponent admit that Paine never recanted. But this plain fact was too plain and true for the Christian mind. A few months afterwards, Ingersoll received an English religious paper, in which was said that, following his offer, Mr. Prime

brought forward such overwhelming testimony that Ingersoll had to admit that Paine recanted, and he handed over the thousand dollars forthwith.

"This is another instance," said Ingersoll later, "of what might be called the truth of history."

However, he promptly wrote to the editor of the English religious paper and offered him *advertising rates* to publish his denial; and a further 25 dollars for a copy of the issue containing the denial. Needless to say, he received no reply; and Ingersoll said "the lie is, in all probability, still on its travels, going from Sunday school to Sunday school, from pulpit to pulpit, from hypocrite to savage—that is to say, from missionary to Hottentot—without the slightest evidence of fatigue—fresh and strong, and in its cheeks the roses and lilies of perfect health."

But even Paine was not more lied about and calumniated than the great American Freethinker.

One thing Ingersoll always noticed about the controversy on Paine. "In no instance," he remarked, "that I now call to mind has any Christian writer spoken respectfully of Mr. Paine. All have taken particular pains to call him 'Tom' Paine. I have often wondered what these gentlemen would say if I should speak of the men eminent in the annals of Christianity in the same way . . . if I should write about 'Ad' Clark, 'Tom' Scott, 'Dick' Whately, 'Bill' Paley, and 'Jack' Calvin?" He recognized that the epithet "Tom" was almost always used by Christians as a sign of contempt. Tom Paine does not look quite as respectable and scholarly as Thomas Paine, nor does "Bob." Ingersoll have quite the air of dignity surrounding Col. R. G. Ingersoll. "Bob" was, of course, the way in which his Christian opponents almost always referred to him. It is, however, interesting to note that both in the case of Paine and Ingersoll their names live on. Who can name, off-hand, their religious opponents?

One of Chicago's newspapers published a well-known story of Ingersoll worth repeating here. It need hardly be said he was fond of good books and never visited Chicago without roaming round the big bookshops. A friend of his picked up a volume and said: "Ah, Colonel, this is the book you like."

"What is it?" asked Ingersoll.

"Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*."

"Yes it's a good book but mighty expensive."

"Why, I don't think so."

"I have a copy, and what do you think it cost me?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"The Governorship of Illinois."

One could go further. It is quite possible that Ingersoll would have been President of the United States of America if it had not been for his "infidel" opinions. He was the greatest, or at least one of the greatest, orators America ever produced, and he took a bigger part in politics than we Freethinkers are apt to give him credit for. But the Fundamentalists were too strong and too many for him. It was impossible, with their lies and enmity arrayed against him, ever to have polled the requisite number of votes necessary to occupy the Presidential post.

Ingersoll wrote quite a lot about Paine besides the remarkable *Oration* which, I hope, most readers of this journal will have bought at some time or other. With what magic in word and thought has he crowned his admiration for Thomas Paine! I should love to quote him again and again:—

Poverty was his mother—necessity his master. He had more brains than books; more sense than education; more courage than politeness; more strength than polish. He had no veneration for old mistakes.

—no admiration for ancient lies. He loved the truth for the truth's sake, and for man's sake.

And this:—

He saw oppression on every hand; injustice everywhere; hypocrisy at the altar, venality on the bench, tyranny on the throne; and with a splendid courage he espoused the cause of the weak against the strong of the enslaved many against the titled few. . . .

At the close of the Revolution, no one stood higher in America than Thomas Paine. The best, the wisest, the most patriotic were his friends and admirers; and had he been thinking only of his own good, he might have rested from his toils. . . . he could have been what the world called "respectable."

But Paine preferred, said Ingersoll, rather to benefit mankind.

If Ingersoll had any hero, it was undoubtedly Thomas Paine. None of the other great lovers of liberty, Voltaire, Whitman and the rest, ever moved him in the same way as the noble-hearted author of the *Age of Reason* and the *Rights of Man*. And some of us are inclined to think Ingersoll was right.

H. CUTNER.

Luxury

"Shut up the world at large, let Bedlam out,
And you will be perhaps surprised to find
All things pursue exactly the same route."

Byron.

GOVERNMENTS never govern. Once upon a time, an old philosopher mistakenly thought he could see a little wisdom being used in the government of the world. To-day, were he alive, he would be unable to see either wisdom or government.

Parents, of which the State is constituted, are supposed to look after their families—to rule in their households. And the State is supposed to govern all these families for its own, and their, benefit. What wisdom, then, is there in paying men and women to remain idle? Is it advantageous to the State to do so? Does the State enjoy Hunger Marchers, of both sexes, calling at its seat of misgovernment?

What would be said of a father who allowed some members of his family to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day; others to be poorly fed, badly clothed, and overworked; others to be poorly clothed, badly fed, workless, and existing on a mere pittance? That any member of the human family, man, woman, or child should lack any of "these things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul," in these days, when our poets and economists assure us that:—

"There's place and means for every man alive," is indeed, like some of the things to be found in the Epistles of our beloved brother Paul—"hard to be understood."

But we have become indifferent and conscienceless. We read, quite unconcernedly, of many families having but one respectable dress in their homes, members of such families having to go, in turns, to Church and Pictures. On the other hand, we hear of "The Lady of the House" complaining that her motor-car was getting too shabby-looking to go to Church in, and of £2,000 being spent on a sufficiently respectable one to enable her to enter into the full odour of sanctity. Unfortunately—"Men have outgrown the shame of being fools."

Every thoughtful, sympathetic person, to-day, feels annoyed at the sight of a ladly dressed, poorly fed sister or brother.

We act as though the old commands, and the penalties for their non-observance, were all inoperative—all obsolete. But, are they? We can now, scientifically, keep our hoarded-up Manna from stinking. The cold storage enables us to defy the penalty attaching to greediness. True! But the penalty remains operative in a worse form than it did before. For though our manna no longer stinks, our souls do.

But what is luxury? Briefly, it may be defined as being: Anything indulged in for pleasure or gratification, not from necessity. It was formerly deemed a punishable offence. The statute making it so was repealed by: 19 and 20 Vict. c. 64 (1826).

In the Victorian Era many stumbling-blocks were removed from the path of the commercially-minded. "Statesmen," then, as Tennyson sings, "Knew the seasons when to take occasion by the hand and make the bounds of freedom wider," for themselves!

And why should luxury not have remained a punishable offence? Had it not been removed, it might have been applied in a very effective way to-day. Just as long as there is any want in the land, all unnecessary expenditure of both rich and poor should be strictly prohibited.

William Blake tells us: "Truth can never be told so as to be understood and not be believed."

By simplifying truth it gets more easily understood, whether it is believed or not. For instance: what man, having a sister or brother dying of starvation, would go and spend money on wine, beer, football, for his own selfish pleasure instead of on food for his starving kinsfolk? But such things are done daily, tragically, glaringly, by all classes of society.

And instances of large sums of unearned money present themselves for our contemplation. The only new feature about them is that the very poor—to their own undoing—participate in them. Before the football pool made them so democratic the upper and middle-classes only shared in such windfalls. And but for safeguarding their own interests then, it might have been possible for us to take some necessary action now.

But no one ever dreamed of fortunes falling upon the poor, as was their wont in upper circles. One case will be enough to illustrate what I mean. Just before the Great War a friend who had a large holding in a Company, Limited, saw his shares falling in value so much that he determined to sell out. A gentleman who could afford to take an optimistic view of the future bought these 25,000 fully paid up £1 shares, offered at a market value of 1s. a share, for £1,250. This was in the summer of 1913. A year or two later, these shares stood at par, and were paying a good dividend. Shortly after, doubling the capital was resorted to, the 25,000 shares becoming 50,000 without the aid of money. Then when the Boom came these shares were sold at five times their value, enabling our optimistic friend to realize £250,000, free of tax. But to receive £250,000 for £1,250 in a few years, though it looks a fairly good business transaction is only 200 to 1, and is scarcely worth considering when viewed in the light of the Football Pools—£15,419 for 1d., also free of tax. Now why tax the legitimate entertainments of the people and leave such gambling windfalls alone?

As I write, the result of another Football Pool comes to hand, even larger than the previous one: £18,900 for 1d.

Such results for such small stakes are surely something new, something extraordinary. £15,419 put in the usual sporting way is—3,700,560 to 1, whilst £18,900 would read 4,536,000 to 1. Now, of the 4,536,000 pennies net, involved in the last pool, the working expenses being abstracted.

Many people would stake shillings, but many, pennies only, and all would be feverishly waiting their chances on the Saturday following investment, anxious to win each others' pennies; during the week before, work being arrested during discussions about "Sure things!" and the week after by mutual condolences of "Hard Lines!"

And what about the winners of such sums? Few people have sense enough to make good use of money. How do our poor friends adjust themselves to their new conditions? Of the few lucky ones who have come under my observation, most of them have used their money to enslave their fellows a little more. So, really, poor people are plunging deeper into the mire in the hope of getting out of it. And can they be blamed? The future for most of them is so hopeless. And the worker asks for so little. Poor "B.V." sums it up thus:—

"And yet I asked no splendid dower, no spoil
Of sway or fame or rank or even wealth;
But homely love with common food and health,
And nightly sleep to balance daily toil."

An assurance of so little, from the cradle to the grave, would rid society of most of its pests. At present many hard-working people, known to me, look upon Football Pools as their only hope of attaining individual liberty, and, I suppose, many whom I don't know.

And the pious who have, hitherto, been conscientious objectors to all forms of gambling (at least to open disreputable gambling) are now not only indulging, and winning *Godly* sums, but finding their actions, from a scriptural point of view, perfectly permissible. One of the successful, a student of Theology, in justification of his "little flutter," referred me to Prov. xvi. 33:—

The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.

Such justification leads one to think that our Theologically-minded friend would also spend his winnings as commanded in the Bible:—

And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth. (Deut. xiv. 26.)

A more accommodating book, for sinners, cannot be found in the literature of the world, than the Bible.

But I am concerned more with the thought, that if this insane tendency is not checked, somehow, other pools will be sought to solve many troubles.

And, what about our National Sport—Horse Racing? Are we going to stand idly by and see the Poor Thing drowned in a Football Pool? But, the Government may provide a subsidy and so save it, and us, from National humiliation.

GEORGE WALLACE.

Liberty, which is often very unfavourable to theological systems, is almost always in the end favourable to morals.—*Lecky*.

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on Camps and Courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need for Arsenals and Forts.
The Warrior's name would be a name abhorred!
And every nation that should lift again
Its hand against a brother, on its forehead
Would wear for evermore the curse of Cain!

Longfellow.

A Trade Union For Parsons?

To anyone accustomed to labour agitations and the strenuous preliminary efforts incident to forming a new union, the recently issued Manifesto of underpaid clergymen will come with sympathy and understanding. To do the clerics justice, the "agitators" are, like some of the best pioneers of trade unionism, paid highly themselves but "solid" with the underpaid in their own trade or profession.

The mere demand for a general redistribution of the funds of the Church on a more equitable basis for its employees is in itself a novel departure from the ridiculous pretence that religion commits its paid advocates to a life of self-sacrifice. The fact that the first publication of the Demand is signed by over sixty clergymen and a number of distinguished lay members of Convocation, makes it a notable document. One wonders what the (clerical) world is coming to when one reads the Manifesto headed by a dozen or more Bishops, whose signatures, E. W. Birmingham, Alfred Bradford, C. S. Bristol, Geoffrey Ripon, etc., etc., seem at last to bring the Church of England out of mystical medievalism into modern mundane materialism (not to say Marxism).

The publication referred to is called, "Men, Money and the Ministry," just published by Longmans, and sold at a shilling.

While we think Churches and Clergymen an unnecessary evil, we do not believe in labour—any labour—being exploited, and in many cases underpaid by a corporation bloated with wealth, whose "higher-ups"—in the same business—are often disgustingly overpaid. "The fatal opulence of bishops" is proverbial although we think it will never be "fatal" enough, until mankind is sane enough to abolish churches, or at least deprive them of the chance to batten on these inflated emoluments.

This defiant Declaration opens with a denunciation of the hypocrisy of those who proclaim that "man doth not live by bread alone," while "believing in the necessity for bread, but only for themselves or for their own class." The authors regard as "a very evil thing," the "sophistry which allows Christians to assume that a standard of life which would be abhorrent to themselves is entirely becoming for other families."

These episcopal, clerical and lay agitators evidently live up to the character of trade-unionism for which we do not blame them. We doubt, however, if they are on firm ground when they express their fear that "a bourgeois church . . . would lose its moral authority in the world." Whatever "moral authority" the Church ever imagined it had is non-existent for a number of good reasons, one of which may well be that the Church has always been bourgeois, while "the gospel is preached to the poor," telling them to "be content with your wages" (Luke iii. 14). But the "Great Lying Church" (or churches) cannot be very interested in "moral authority" unless persecution, lies, and hypocrisy are moral components.

Speaking of the "Church's opportunity," the Manifesto points out that "the opportunity does not find the Church of England conspicuously short of paid agents." It pertinently demands, "At least one full-time agent in every parish! What would the Prudential or the Communists make of such a chance?"

With real or assumed naïveté the authors refer to all sorts of reasons for the Church's "failure," only to reach the obvious conclusion, thus haltingly put:—

From some points of view, occupied by an increasing number of spectators, it wears the ungracious character of a vested interest. . . . The industrial worker . . . turns away from the institution, because, rightly or wrongly, he thinks it belongs to the other camp, and that in spite of what some of its members may say it does, in fact, support the economic and social *status quo*.

It is even hinted that unless the Church puts on a show of better behaviour, it may be faced with the antagonism exhibited in Russia and Spain.

The sources—some sources anyhow—of the Church's vast wealth are examined. Tithes and Mining Royalities are condemned quite frankly. There is no reference to endowments. Nothing is said of slum rents or of churches built upon wealth derived from the basest kind of labour (and even slave) exploitation. Not a word of the funds left by long dead dupes of superstitions which are no longer preached—like the literal fires of hell which frightened money out of dying believers to endow churches where Hell is treated nowadays with silent contempt. Not that we should like to see such funds handed over to the more numerous Fundamentalist Christians who still hand out hell every Sunday as usual.

The authors plead for a "redistribution of income" which would command "moral assent." Not unnaturally they complain of the sliding-scale of clerical salaries which seem to dole out wages in the ratio of the more work the smaller wages. They say "the average stipend of incumbents" (the working vicars of parishes) "is £426, of Cathedral dignitaries £850, and of bishops over £4,000." They sarcastically add (apropos the Bishop of London's comic complaint) "Bishops must be tired of explaining to the public that most of the income goes in expenses and not in joyous living."

Another ground of complaint is the palaces of bishops, the deaneries of deans, and the large parsonage houses of clerics which "tend to identify those who live in them with the privileged classes." The freeholds of beneficed clergymen and of the numerous lawyers—the legal officers of the church, "have few parallels nowadays in professions or services."

The statistical tables with which the book concludes should prove a valuable store of ammunition for Freethought propagandists. To us indeed the analysis given of the incomes and other emoluments in three typical Districts of Church government set out here emphasize again the tremendous financial interests involved. We stand aghast as we read that these "reformers" regard as "inadequate" an "income of seven and a quarter millions to spend annually in England on the advancement of God's rule." And this is in these days when religion cannot attract more than a small percentage of the population. And the Church of England represents only one single branch of one religion.

Until a wiser electorate decides on complete disestablishment, drastic disendowment, and positive secularization of education and the disappearance of clericalism in all civic or state work, we can only look on with amused wonder at the faith of those who imagine that opulent bishops and owners of rich benefices will disgorge in favour of the poorer clergy.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

All these nations, armed to the teeth, and watching stealthily for some occasion to use their vast armaments for their own aggrandisement and for the injury of their neighbours, are Christian nations.

A. R. Wallace (writing of the 19th century).

God Must Go

It is not necessary to be a Freethinker with a scientific atheistic philosophy, to see the trouble that prevails in well-nigh every region of this world. That is obvious—without much thinking of *any* kind. And all this trouble, conflict, and confusion, develops into FEAR, more widespread to-day—perhaps—than ever before. This fear is that fear of the unknown, one of the first emotions of primitive humankind, which is still one of the most powerful and most dangerous factors in human social action. Fascism is the "Naztiest," the filthiest, thing that I have known for more than a hundred years. To call it "beastly" would be an insult to the lowest form of animal life; and the Fascist re-actionary uses this fear to maintain his privilege and power. Against this, those who strive towards a social existence of equal freedom have to overcome that fear; and the only antidote against fear is knowledge. When we understand, we *may* fail in the struggle; but we do not become victims to that primitive and most terrible emotion—fear of the unknown. To paraphrase a paragraph of Professor Laski's, humans are part makers of their own destiny: mind no less shapes the world than it is shaped by it.

Here in this region, the troubles, antagonisms, difficulties, and dangers, have made many almost desperate. In the field of politics, the Nazi British Reactionaries have been developing a fear that is a deadly danger to the idea and ideal of equal freedom. In spite of the most unscrupulous use of any and every artifice, they fear they may not be able to maintain a sufficient united front in defence of their privileges. Hence, the increasing tendency to use fear against the British people. At the same time, many among the more ardent lovers of freedom tend to become desperate, also, because they cannot convince a majority of their fellows to unite with them. They fear they may not be able to form *their* united front in time. So, the force of the one fear against the other fear forces the pace towards a clash of physical force. Out of all this arises the confusion in the "Public Mind," about politics and policies.

The same confusion exists—only more so—in the realms of religion. Many of the apologists for religion are making most desperate attempts to form a United Front in defence of religion. Till now, that has been impossible; so there's not much chance of success to-day. When the various sections of the Christian sect cannot unite, there is little prospect of union between—say—Hindus and Christians. I couple these two because, among what are called the "Great Religions," Hinduism seems to me to be the nearest to Christianity. There is something nasty about them both. Certainly Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism, are simpler, straighter, and cleaner than either Hinduism or Christianity. We can say that without ignoring the fact that ALL religion is false; is evil in effect; and is a survival from the ignorance and fear of primitive times. The apologists for religion fear defeat through increasing secularizing of human life—individual and social. Many of them—and not the most ignorant—openly admit that the greatest present danger against religion is the secularizing of our life. AND WELL MAY THEY FEAR IT!

The great difficulty for the Freethinker is to make the Christian apologist face up to the first great charge in our indictment against Christianity. That first and leading charge is that Christianity is NOT TRUE. It is proven false. It is a lie; and the lives of those who live upon the cross are living lies—be they ever so great in social status. Being untrue, it should not be allowed to have the privileges it has. It should not

escape the payment of rates and taxes. It should not receive public money for private religious schools. It should not be taught in State schools—the only "Public" schools in any real sense. It should not have any protection or position in law more than a Political Party, Trade Union, Chamber of Commerce, or any other organization. It should not have any privileged position in public life. In other words, Christianity—or any other Religion—should be a private and personal matter for the individual. Let the individual believe in as many Gods as he or she may care to fancy; but, let that belief be confined to the believers. Let there be the fullest equal freedom in expression of thought, of opinion, of belief or disbelief, of criticism, for all. The Freethinker with a scientific atheistic philosophy, stands for that—no more and no less. The Christian fears that freedom more than anything else. No section of Christianity stands for *that* kind of freedom.

Instead of trying to meet the main charge against religion, the Christian apologists will chatter and "argubargue" about any other point whatever. They evade the real issue by "mixing the pudding"—dialectically. That is their dialectic—to dodge. Can a Christian be a Socialist? Should tithes be paid? Should we re-arm? Did Christ preach Peace? Can a Christian take part in War? Would Christ allow divorce? etc., etc. By endless controversy on such subjects they try to divert the "public mind" from the PROVEN FACT that the Christian religion is a lie. King George's Jubilee, King Edward's Refusal, and the coming Coronation, are the latest and most monstrously hypocritical attempts to muddle the minds of the British people about religion.

Happily, they may over-reach themselves. The King Edward affair shook the Monarchy and British Toryism more than most imagine. The evil nonsense, religious and political, about the Monarchy raises smiles of indifference where, one time, there was awe. In factory and mine, in workshop and street, one finds ordinary men and women regarding Royalty without any illusions. The language in the mill on the subject of the Throne is sardonic in its own style. The re-actionaries—religious or political—have now got a constitutional King: by that they mean a puppet King, who will do what he is told.

In this way they hope to be able to maintain a united front for re-action. In that, as ever, religion is hand-in-hand with political reaction; but they may not succeed. The strongest ally for reaction is religion. The strongest enemy of human progress and freedom is religion.

Let Freethinkers continue their great work to secularize *all* human activities.

Once, religion ruled in astronomy. After a long and bitter struggle, Freethought and science secularized astronomy; and we have the great achievements of to-day.

Once, religion was the master in meteorology: the man-of-God prayed for rain. Science expelled God again; and, to-day, not even Sir John Reith with his parsons, priests, ministers, rabbis, admirals, and colonels, mention God on the wireless in relation to the weather. When religion was the master, the wind blew where it listed. The wind had free will. Now, scientists trace the sequences that make the weather what it is.

So with physics. So with chemistry. So with geology. Above all, so in biology: religion and God were expelled from biology along with "special creation"; and biology was secularized.

Medicine and psychology are almost fully secularized.

The great bitter struggle of the present is in ethics, sociology, economics, and politics. Pierce and bitter

was the struggle before science defeated God in biological evolution.

Piercer far and more bitter yet will be the fight ere Freethought, science, atheism, gain the victory over God in those human social sciences. Still, as I look back over the struggles and victories of the past; as I think of the heroes of Freethought and science who worked and suffered and won; I have no doubt as to the ultimate result.

One can be proud for even a little part with the *Freethinker* and the N.S.S., in that long-drawn-out struggle. It gives one memories and satisfactions that make all the representatives of God—popes, bishops, rabbis, and what-not, seem poor indeed.

ATHOS ZENOO.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 18, 1937

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

Also present: Messrs. Rosetti (A. C.), Clifton, Saphin, Tuson, Silvester, 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 Bradford, Edinburgh, Chester, Sunderland, Blackburn, Birkenhead, North London, South London, West London Branches, and the Parent Society. Correspondence was dealt with from Plymouth, Edinburgh, Birkenhead, Blackburn, West London and Liverpool Branches. The Conference reception, business sessions, and lunch will be held in the Stork Hotel, Queen's Square, Liverpool, and the public demonstration in the evening in the Picton Hall, on Whit Sunday, May 10. Motions for the Conference Agenda were accepted and passed on to the Agenda Committee to which Messrs. Clifton and Elstob were elected. The question of Vice-Presidents was further discussed, and it was agreed to report back to the Conference. The date of the Annual Dinner was confirmed as January 22, 1938. The meeting expressed its thanks to Mr. C. G. Quinton for the presentation of an exhibition case for office use. A number of minor matters were dealt with and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

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

INDOOR.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, R. C. Saphin—"Can We get rid of God?"

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, entrance via passage facing Burtons): 7.15, Annual Branch Meeting.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Miss Agnes Smith, M.A.—"Psychology and Crime."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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