

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### The Divinity Of Kings

LAST week I dealt with the derivation of the kingship from the deification of the chief or headman of the tribe. This fact of the King being an incarnation of a god has always been present in coronation services right up to our own day, but the magical nature of the Coronation has never been put before the public of this country quite so brazenly and so impudently as was done in the case of the Coronation of May 12. Encouraged by the effects of the fifty years of intensive advertising of the monarchy, and anxious to divert attention from the circumstances of the Abdication of Edward VIII., trusting also to the narcotising influence of a gigantic show, advantage was taken of the "feast of unreason" to emphasize the miraculous nature of the Coronation of George VI. I have already given many instances of this, and will now add two more. The first is from the New Year's message of Archbishop Lang:—

The Coronation is first of all an act of faith and worship, in which the Empire, with the King, dedicates itself to the service of God

The Coronation, as I have shown in more than that, it is the actual endowment of the King with "divine" power and qualities. The *Times* puts it more definitely and comes nearer the truth:—

The King is a man who draws his strength from a power outside human life yet draws it not for himself. Because he is in communion with forces greater than man, his life is the life of the people.

That is much nearer the truth. And the reason why is well-known to students of anthropology, and to many others who would not find it profitable to tell the whole truth.

### Man And Nature

Why is it that a King is regarded as embodying the life of the community to such an extent that health, the sufficiency of rain, the fructification of the

earth, in a word all that makes for the well-being of the tribe, depends upon him? Without understanding this aspect of the subject, and without appreciating the extent to which the persistence of primitive feelings and primitive frames of mind influences contemporary life, one can never understand the ease with which the persistent miseducation of the people has resulted in developing the existing phase of King-worship. The "practical-minded" man is in the habit of saying, "I have no time to bother about the past. I must attend to the practical things of the present." The poor, shortsighted fool! The present is the past, as surely as this year's crop of wheat is past conditions presenting themselves in a concrete form. The pity of it is when by our stupidity we make the past extend unbroken and unimproved into the future.

To comprehend, if not completely to understand, the position we must get back to Frazer's separation of magic from religion, and we may also graft on to this the theory of "Mana," which would serve as a starting point for both. It may, I think, be possible to construct a line of development that will fit the facts, and also an outline of the development that led to the chief, headman, or King being believed to be an incarnation of a god. And on behalf of this sketch it may be said that while there are a multitude of known facts in its favour, there is none that I am aware of that is decisively against it.

First we have to picture man as having just reached that stage of self-consciousness at which he tries to create a mental picture of what is happening around him. In common with the animal world he knows that things happen. He puts his first questioning of nature in the wrong way—Why? It is science that asks "How?" and is content with answering that question. Pre-science, and the vast mass of the primitively-minded that are found to-day in the highest and the lowest walks of life, in the university and the church, as well as among the "lower classes," ask *why* things happen. "Mana" appears to be the first form of the answer. Some mysterious quasi-personal power seems to be responsible for everything that happens. The "Mana" in the stabbing stick is responsible for the injury it does. The "Mana" in the ground grows the food, the "Mana" of an enemy is responsible for the death of a man. So it goes on. "Mana" is the universal answer that man gives to the questions he is asking. There is no doubt at all as to the universality of this belief.

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### The God-King

A greater definiteness of thought is achieved when this nebulous "Mana" is personified (in existing tribes of primitives, the two conceptions exist side by side). What may be called the infantile stage of the gods sets in, and it is here that Frazer believes we have the beginning of magic, as distinct from religion.



Man believes that nature can be coerced, and attempts a clumsy, but wrong, method of establishing control over the forces that determine his destiny. This power of coercion is not resident in all, but in only a few favoured individuals, who, by means of formulæ and incantations, such as we find among ourselves in the use of mascots, or lucky objects, in the belief that good luck may be enjoyed, or bad luck averted, give rise to the magician. It is the knowing, the wise ones of the tribe, who then take the lead, and they become chiefs or kings in virtue of their superior knowledge of the means whereby the forces of nature may be brought to act favourably towards man. Later, when man is forced to realize that the magic of the King is not reliable in coercing nature, its failure leads to religion. Then prayer takes the place of magic. Man does not order, he pleads. He does not stand erect and command, he crawls. It is the discovery of human weakness, the failure of coercive effort, the supplication of despair in the form of prayer that lie at the root of developed religion.

I am compressing into a few words the outline of a very long process, the evidence for which would fill, and has filled, volumes. But, still following Frazer, while the period of magic lasts it is likened to a primitive science (not a very good analogy) inasmuch as man is then trying to do what science does to-day—that is, make natural forces do his bidding. The control of nature, however, as we know, is ultimately dependent on knowledge, and that was not available. To cite Frazer:—

As time goes on, the fallacy of magic becomes more and more apparent to the acuter minds, and is slowly replaced by religion; in other words the magician gives way to the priest, who renouncing the attempt to control directly the processes of nature for the good of man, seeks directly to attain the same end indirectly by appealing to the gods to do for him what he no longer fancies he can do for himself. . . the King, starting as a magician, tends gradually to exchange the practice of magic for the priestly functions of prayer and sacrifice. And while the distinction between the human and the divine is still imperfectly drawn, it is often imagined that men may themselves attain to god-head, not merely after death, but in their lifetime, through the temporary or permanent possession of their whole nature by a great and powerful spirit. *No class of the community has benefited so much as kings by this belief in the possible incarnation of a god in human form (Italics mine).*

There is actually no better established fact in anthropology than the fact that the King commences as an incarnation of a god, and is such because of the control he exercises over those things that are considered necessary to the well-being of the tribe. I can again give but a few examples, but they are really a few out of thousands that might be drawn from all parts of the world, and from all stages of human culture, from the most primitive tribe right up to the Coronation of George VI.

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#### The King And The People

One of the chief functions of the King was to see that rain fell in adequate quantities, and that the earth produced its proper crops. Among the Wagogo of East Africa, the main power of the chiefs depends upon his rain-making. The chief of the Massai is expected to make rain and to destroy the tribe's enemies. Among the Negroes of the Upper Nile, it is the chief who brings rain, scatters enemies, and is responsible, as is our own King in the national anthem, for making his people "happy and glorious." In 1880 the followers of Lo Bengula had no doubt that when he arrived at his Kraal the needed rain would come, much as many in this country attributed

to divine providence the fine weather that accompanied the Jubilee of George V. The ancient Mexican Kings took an oath at their accession that they would make the sun shine, the rain to fall, and the earth to be fruitful. The ancient Egyptian Kings went farther than any in this direction. Not only the weather and the crops, and victory in battle depended upon the King, but also the very life of the gods. In celebrating divine worship the King said, "O gods you are safe if I am safe. Your doubles are safe if my double is safe at the head of all living doubles. All live, if I live." If one can imagine one of our Kings with enough philosophy and knowledge and wit to repeat this prayer, we could well take it as a very fine piece of satire. Kingship and religion are indissolubly connected. James the First said the same thing in his "No bishop, no king."

The ancient Burgundian Kings also possessed the power of securing good crops, and might be deprived of their position if they failed to do so. That, again, expresses a very common phenomenon. A King who fails to carry out his part of the contract, is often removed or ceremonially killed. So important is this function of controlling the rain and the weather and of giving victory, that in many instances a King may be sacrificed for no other reason than that he is getting old. That is because as he grows weaker so may the power of the sun, or the quality of the rain, or the certainty of victory be less. Among the Red Indian tribes the rain-making function of the chief is well-established. Among the Swedes good or bad crops were always attributed to the King. A canon of St. Patrick attributes to Kings, "fine weather, calm seas, crops abundant, and trees laden with fruit." The cure of disease by the divine touch of the King is also very common, and one need only remind readers that as late as Queen Anne's reign, the monarch, after being consecrated, had the power of curing certain diseases by a touch. And at the Jubilee of George V. it was solemnly suggested by some newspaper correspondents that this practice might be revived with profit to sufferers. It may be taken that if the ceremony had been revived, which after all is no more remarkable than the curing of disease by the "laying on of hands," there would have been thousands of cures recorded. A people who can treasure the memory of the touch of a King, or a glance from a Queen is not really so very far removed from the state of mind indicated by the practices above noted.

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#### An Ancient Ceremony

No reasonable person can doubt that the Coronation Service, in even its present emasculated form, is no more than another version of the ceremonial induction of the chiefs of uncivilized peoples all over the world. It must be noted that it is through the magic of the Archbishop that the King is endowed with the power to "give his people guidance," to gain victory, to secure plenty, and so forth. It is not said of, and it is not claimed for, the man who was King by Act of Parliament. It would have been glaringly absurd to have spoken of the people receiving the benefits named through the man-King, but when we are dealing with the god-King we are on a different level. As the *Times* says, he draws his power from outside human life. Ridiculous in itself, once the magic of the holy oil is applied, and the performance staged with the technique of Hollywood show and a verbose religious ceremony, the absurd becomes "impressive." It is the "sanctified" monarch that does the trick.

Next week I will deal with the social consequences of this perpetuation of uncivilized ideas in our own time. But I think I have said enough to justify my



repeated statement that the Coronation Service comes to us direct from the jungle, and that it embodies one of the earliest superstitions of mankind. Between the ceremony in Westminster Abbey and the induction of a chief among the Zulus, the Massai, the Igbos, the negroes of the Nile, the Fijians, the denizens of Malaya, the ancient Mexicans, the Egyptian Kings, there is not the slightest substantial difference. The medicine-man grins through the mask of the Archbishop, the tom-tom beats through the peal of the organ, the smell of the forest comes through the perfume of incense, the impressive solemnity of the peers of Britain masks the awe of the savage watching his chief receive the spirit of the tribal joss. It is all there, and the fact that so many of the onlookers and participants at Westminster no longer accept the performance in its real and legitimate sense makes the whole proceeding the more intellectually and socially demoralizing.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded)

## "The Divine Comedy"

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

By the general suffrage of the literary world Dante's place has been assigned among the three greatest masters of his art. Yet comparatively few people know intimately the writings of the greatest of all Italian poets. Thousands of books, in many languages, on Dante and *The Divine Comedy*, have increased to such an extent the difficulty of studying his works that, to the bewildered reader, tossed on the perilous waters of contradictory commentary and subjective criticism, little is left but to take shelter in the safe haven of conventional admiration.

What wonderful and far-reaching changes have taken place in Europe since Dante's time. Poets have rushed, comet-like, across the literary horizon, lightened the darkness for a brief moment, then as rapidly departed. Their songs, their messages, even their names, have been forgotten. Dramatists have provided comedy and tragedy for the public of their day. Most of their names are lost to memory, and even their plays have ceased to attract. Time is merciless, and strews the poppy of oblivion over all but the worthiest. Dante is one of the select few. He has had but one superior during the six centuries since his death, and that is William Shakespeare, the greatest name in the world's literature.

Tennyson hailed Dante as a "King who has reigned six hundred years." Yet of Dante's life but little is known. Even before his death he had come to be the subject of many flourishing legends. It is well-nigh impossible to make out exactly what he did. So deep is this obscurity, that his stature seems to gain from the uncertainty an unreal proportion like that of a tall man in a mist. All we know for certain is that he was born in Florence in the thirteenth century. He was of noble birth, and had a passion for knowledge. He learned all that the schools and universities of his time could teach him "better than most," fought as a soldier, did service as a citizen, and became chief magistrate at Florence. While young he met Beatrice Portinari. She made a great figure in his life, and a greater one in his immortal poem. He married another woman, "not happily." In some Guelph-Ghibelline strife he was expelled from Florence, and at

the bitter bread of banishment. Without a home, he turned to the world of the imagination, and wrote *The Divine Comedy*, one of the most remarkable of all books, and died, not old, at the age of fifty-six.

To Freethinkers, Dante's masterpiece has a special interest, for it forms an epitome of the Christianity of the Dark Ages, a very different thing from the invertebrate and sentimental substitute which is to-day known as the Christian Religion. The great poem consists of three parts, "Hell," "Purgatory," and "Paradise." Written in an age of faith, and by a firm believer, it is startling to a modern reader. Dante's uncompromising realism brings vividly before us some idea of the extent of the credulity and cruelty of those far-off days in which Paganism, Christianity, and Ignorance, were intermingled. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from so describing it. His similes appear the illustrations of a traveller, his poem has some of the directness of a guide-book. Dante even introduces the poet Virgil as his guide to the Infernal Regions. He compares the precipice which led from one circle to another in Hell to the rock which fell into Adige on the south of Trent. The place where heretics were confined in flaming tombs resembled the cemetery of Arles. He puts Francesca da Rimini, whom he had nursed on his knee as a child, among the damned, "imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown about the pendant world." Count Ugolini is introduced among other sinners suffering the torments of the damned. His own beloved Beatrice, the lode-star of his chequered life, continuously appears and reappears throughout the poem. Dante was as imaginative as old Homer, but he wrote as directly as Hakluyt.

The power of Dante's genius carries everything before it. Such transcendent originality and power of conception is rivalled alone by Homer and our own Shakespeare. For his having adopted the current Christian superstition in all its horrors and extravagances, we no more blame Dante than we criticize Homer because he so uses the Pagan deities of his time. But, apart altogether from its merits as a great poem, the "Divine Comedy" remains none the less a reliable mirror by which twentieth-century readers may view the kaleidoscopic Christianity of the Middle Ages in all its crudity and cruelty.

Modern authors write of the "good old days." It is absolute nonsense. Antiquity was very cruel, and the Middle Ages scarcely less so. Poets had their moments of exaltation, aristocrats led butterfly existences, but the majority of people lived hard and unlovely lives. And priests were then too haughty to gloss the barbarities of their savage superstition. In the *Divine Comedy* there is an air of grief and sound of lamentation, which penetrates even the precincts of Paradise. A monster sits in the seat of deity and rules the terror-stricken Christian world. Dante spares us nothing. He shows us horrors heaped on horror's head, and points to hell after hell, each more abominable than the last, around every species of petty offenders. He pictures in plain language the torments of the lascivious, the unbaptized, the gluttons, and the avaricious. The whole is as lurid as the nightmare of delirium. Some of the damned sinners are tossed in furious winds, some are lying in filth under a constant hailstorm, others are punished in burning tombs, whilst numbers are tormented in rivers of blood. Except in the pathological and theological writings of the unbalanced Fathers of the Christian Church, few human beings have ever had such ideas of filth and corruption. The tender, human emotions of Dante are nearly strangled by this hideous theology. The horror of the pictured In-



fernal Regions tinges even the flowers of Paradise and dims the glories of Heaven.

This Christian Superstition, which Dante reminds us has its roots in Paganism, and of which he sings with such power, is now, at long last, in full retreat. It is being attacked all along the line by Freethought, whose mission it is to free mankind from ancient error. Human nature does not need a supernatural religion, does not need an other-world superstition. It needs to be freed from the shackles of priestly control, and from the exploitation of a clerical caste. But Dante's reputation is quite secure. The daring imagination, the innate artistry of this great genius of European literature can never stale, for there are few lines of his great poem without those superb felicities of speech which tingle the blood. The essence of Dante's greatness lies as much in his splendid language as in his potent imagination and omnipotent phantasy. His reputation has outlasted empires, kingdoms, and commonwealths. Nations degenerate, religions decay, cities become desolate, great statesmen fade into mere names, but the written word remains. Transcendent genius has made the name of Dante Alighieri ever illustrious, for he was a very great master of the oldest of the arts.

MIMNERMUS.

## Personal Revelation

WHEN Christians are asked to prove the existence of God, it is only the old-fashioned who appeal to the argument from Creation, or from Design, or some similar line of reasoning whereby God's existence is *inferred* from a number of known facts. In modern times these so-called "proofs" have fallen into disuse because of the ease with which they can be refuted. But even if we ignore the refutations, the most that these arguments can do is to make God an inference. And an inference is a possibility, not a certainty. Since definite proof demands certainty, no intelligent Christian nowadays will be so foolish as to advance an inference as a definite proof. For he realizes that to infer the existence of anything, whether it be God or Gazook, is not equivalent to proving that existence.

Up-to-date Christians are more wily. They will tell you that the existence of God is not a matter for logical or material proof. As for inference, while it may be used in support of proof, it can never constitute the actual proof itself. The latter is only to be obtained by what they call "personal revelation." That is to say, God reveals himself to individuals personally and proves his existence to them in that way.

If we ask by what means a man is able to perceive this revelation, we are told that he does so through his "spiritual sense." God cannot be directly apprehended by the ordinary senses with which we are familiar, namely, those of sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. These senses are reserved for the perception of material things only. And although such phrases as "hearing the voice of God," "seeing a vision of God," and "feeling the hand of God" are liberally used in religious discussion, we are not expected to interpret any of them literally as though it were the material senses which are involved. These phrases are no more than metaphorical descriptions of experiences in the spiritual sphere, for which no other suitable words exist.

Since all such experiences are purely personal (like a headache or remorse), it follows that we cannot prove the reality of them to another person. This, of course, does not detract from the intensity of the experience to the person who claims to have had it, but it does impair its value as a means of convincing others.

So although we may individually have become convinced of God's existence through revelation, our experience is, of itself, no proof whatsoever of God's existence to anyone who has not had the necessary revelation himself. Besides, people have been known to say that they were suffering from a headache when in fact there was nothing the matter with them at all. And in any case, personal experiences of that kind, however real they may be at a given moment, are never permanent. They are *temporary* realities, while God is supposed to exist as a permanent reality.

If we enquire whether all men are born with a spiritual sense, the usual reply is that, as with any of the other senses, a man may be born with or without it. On the face of it, a babe who is born with the spiritual sense should always be aware of God's existence. But whether this is so or not, has never been definitely established. We can apply satisfactory tests to prove that the baby possesses all the normal senses, but there is no known test for the spiritual sense. Not until the baby has grown up and has been suitably instructed about God through the other senses, can we discover whether it possesses this one sense whereby God's existence can be apprehended. Even then we have to take the grown-up baby's word for it.

This is most unfortunate. For it is natural that those who doubt the reality of the spiritual sense should point to the instruction about God as the origin of the subsequent claim to possess that sense. If only we could prevent all children from being taught about God, we might then be able to discover what percentage was born with the spiritual sense, and what percentage without it.

In spite of the fact that a man may be born without the spiritual sense (as a man may be born blind), it is within the competence of God, who is all-powerful, to make good the deficiency. But whether this feat has ever been accomplished, is also something that has never been established. There is no known instance of a man who became a Christian by direct revelation without having had some previous information about God through the ordinary senses. It appears that, although personal revelation is common among Christians, God has not cared to make use of this simple method of proving his existence to those who knew nothing about him beforehand.

This, too, is unfortunate. For it is natural that those who doubt the genuineness of personal revelation should point to this prior information about God as the cause of the subsequent claim to have had that revelation. How satisfactory it would have been if only we could have found, dotted here and there amongst the savage tribes of the world, a number of individuals who, having had no previous contact with Christianity, had nevertheless acquired that faith by direct personal revelation.

But, alas, these are not God's ways of proving his existence. He prefers to convince those who are already convinced, or at least those who have been well primed with beliefs about him through the customary channels. Strange coincidence! But stranger still is the fact that, having adopted such inconclusive methods, he allows a proportion of these people to turn round afterwards and declare that the whole thing is false doctrine and illusion! What explanation has the Christian, who claims proof of God's existence through personal revelation, for the phenomenon of a Christian turned Atheist?

The most usual explanation is that the Atheist can never have been a true Christian. This is on a par with the Roman Catholic statement: "Once a Catholic, always a Catholic"—a statement which the Protestant Christian would be the first to repudiate as untrue. But it won't do. If a Christian were to say to



me: "I don't believe you *were* ever a true Christian," then I would be justified in replying: "And I don't believe that you *are* a true Christian." On the other hand, if the Christian objects to this, and insists upon being believed, then I would insist upon his believing that I *was* as true a Christian as he claims to be now. The Christian cannot have the argument both ways.

Granted, then, that the Atheist was a true Christian once upon a time, what other explanation has the Christian to offer? He may say that, just as a man may lose his sight, so the Atheist who was a Christian must have lost his spiritual sense. In this state he can no longer perceive the reality of God. But this won't do either. A man who becomes blind does not deny the existence of things he once saw and no longer sees. Much less does he deny the reality of the sense of vision. The Atheist, however, denies the reality of the spiritual sense, as well as of everything which is said to be perceptible by means of that sense, including the chief bone of contention, God himself. What has the Christian to say to that?

One answer is that, although the Atheist is really as certain of God's existence as the Christian, he deliberately chooses to lie about it. But, for the third time, this won't do. For if the Christian accuses the Atheist of deliberate lying about his present convictions, then the Atheist is equally entitled to say that the Christian is lying when he lays claim to personal revelation. If the Christian objects to this, then he must withdraw his accusation against the Atheist. Again, the Christian cannot have the argument both ways.

At this stage the Christian might say: "How can a man, who has at one time a conviction of the reality of something, turn round later on and truthfully assert that the thing is not, and never was, real?" To which I would reply: "You ignore man's power of imagination. A man may, in all sincerity, believe something to be true which is in fact not so. At one time I believed in fairies, elves, dragons, mermaids and a lot of other things which I have since discovered to be unreal. I was also brought up to believe in the reality of God. Most of us (though not all) are undecieved fairly early in life about Santa Claus, fairies and a number of other illusions. But the illusion about God is allowed to persist. It is even encouraged—for reasons which are obvious to me now, though formerly I was ignorant of them. That is why so many adults continue to suffer under this illusion—including yourself."

The Christian, being a wily person, might here reply: "Now it is you who want to have the argument both ways. If you accuse me of having an illusion about the reality of God, I can equally accuse you of having the contrary illusion." But, far from resenting this remark, I would welcome it. "By accusing me of being deluded," I would say, "you admit that illusory beliefs are possible. And if I admit that they are possible in my case, then you must equally admit that they are possible in yours. If you do not admit this latter possibility, then it is still you who want to have the argument in your favour both ways. I ask you, therefore, to state plainly that you admit your belief about the reality of God may be an illusion."

The crucial point in the discussion has arrived. Many Christians, when faced with this question, will refuse to admit the possibility. Having no real confidence in their claim to personal revelation, and knowing inwardly that it is pure imagination, they dare not allow themselves even to voice such an admission. It would upset the overweening conceit which lies behind their mental attitude. Such persons are but a step removed from those pathological cases who

identify themselves with Moses, or Julius Cæsar, or Jesus Christ, or even God. To such as these, the only possible retort is: "If you won't admit that you may be deluded in your beliefs, then I don't admit that I may be. And my certainty is as good as yours."

As for the remainder, it is only necessary to point out that *one* of the two beliefs in regard to God's existence must be illusory. God either does, or does not, exist. There can be no other alternative. As an Atheist, who was formerly a Christian, I am in a position to compare the two states of mind, and to determine for myself which of them is illusion and which is not. The Christian, however, who has always been a Christian, has never experienced the two states of mind, and so has no means of determining whether his own beliefs are illusory or not. If he has any real confidence in the validity of his beliefs, he will not fear to put them to the test of comparison. But, to be in a position to do this, he must first make a thorough study of the evidence which changed the erstwhile Christian into an Atheist. If he is prepared to do this, and to accept the truth at all costs, no matter how unpalatable it may seem to be at first, then there is great hope for his future sanity and mental integrity.

C. S. FRASER.

## England in Long Past Years

IMMENSE tracts of territory remained moor, marsh and forest in Britain in Norman and Plantagenet times, and the uncultivated regions were still larger in earlier centuries. In a Domesday sketch of Sussex drawn in 1086, one third at least of that county was primeval woodland that spread over Kent, Hampshire and Surrey, and the uncultivated character of the Weald was repeated in practically every part of our island.

Yet, a numerous agricultural population had persisted in Britain long prior to the Roman colonization of the country and a respectable civilization existed certainly in its south-eastern area, when Julius Cæsar came over the Channel. The village community probably dates back to Celtic or even earlier centuries. It was undoubtedly an outstanding feature of agrarian life in Saxon times, while it also formed the leading character of husbandry throughout a widespread European range from the year 500 until 1500 A.D., a period of 1,000 years. It was a system of co-operative farming which, despite all variations arising from climatal differences and racial peculiarities continued throughout its lengthy career, the same in essentials everywhere.

The term "manor" was introduced into England by the Norman invaders, but antedating and embracing the manorial system there are clear survivals of a more archaic organization lingering from earlier days. As Dr. H. C. Darby states in his instructive essay, *The Economic Geography of England*, a chapter in the *Historical Geography of England*, Cambridge, 1936: "Manorialism was but a shell and accretion around the village community."

This community in its simplest form was constituted of one or more groups of dwellings situated within its arable and pasture lands. The peasant cultivators in the language of Vinogradoff comprised "a community of shareholders," whose system of shareholding applied to the ploughed fields, the meads and pastures as well as to the utilization of the products of spinney, stream, marsh and pool.

The arable acres were the most noticeable and important property of the village commune. These were arranged in strips, and every separate holding consisted of several such strips spread about the farm in



various places, while each strip was divided from those of other tenements by borders of grass or by barren furrows. This arrangement seems to have been observed in open-field cultivation generally.

In default of our artificial fertilizers; clover, root crops and other plants which play a part so important in the modern system of rotation, constant cropping of the ploughland soon impoverished the soil. Hence, the necessity of allowing the land to rest in fallow at stated intervals. This enabled the soil to recuperate, and the arable land was therefore divided into fairly extensive tracts which were cropped in succession. But another plan was occasionally adopted. Under the two-field scheme, the ploughland was divided into two fields, one of which was sown in autumn with winter cereals, wheat or rye, and the other seeded in the spring season with oats or barley. This arrangement eased the labour, while with the three-field system, the arable was split into triple sections, one of which was planted with spring corn, one sown with winter crops, while the third was left in fallow.

Between the time of sowing and reaping, the soil under cultivation was protected by fences, but when the harvest was garnered these defences were removed, and the live stock then grazed on the weeds and stubble. This plan provided a wider area for cropping for the same output of ploughing, although the yield was apt to prove inferior.

But whatever form the open-field agriculture assumed, it was never by any means in universal operation. It seems to have been restricted "to a large irregular area lying chiefly in the Midlands, reaching northward as far as Durham, and southward to the Channel, and extending from Cambridgeshire on the east to the Welsh border in the west."

Husbandry in Kent possessed peculiar features. Dr. Gray informs us in his *English Field Systems*, that the Kentish custom "had its exact counterpart nowhere else in England." For while the Anglo-Saxons of the Midlands followed open-field farming, and were subject to virgate tenure the Jutes in Kent were domiciled in hamlets.

East Anglia was apparently influenced by the Scandinavian settlements, and agriculture in Surrey, Essex, Middlesex, Hertford and the Chilterns presented forms modified by ancestral tradition, the nature of the soil, the extent of the woodlands and other local peculiarities. Still, whatever the variations, with his plough teams of oxen and on his fields the peasant remained for life.

The ravages of cattle disease and the frequently bad seasons which ruined the harvests were ever to be dreaded. Still, improvements slowly accumulated, and one of our greatest historians, Professor F. W. Maitland, concluded that: "Agrarian history becomes more catastrophic as we trace it backwards."

The domesticated animals on the holdings played a considerable part in husbandry. Sheep and cattle were very numerous, even in pre-Norman times. In addition to their flesh as food, their milk was indispensable in making cheese and butter. The oxherd led the animals to their pasture grounds when the ploughman had unyoked his oxen and he guarded them by night when robbers were abroad. The shepherd also had his cares. An ancient chronicler records the shepherd as saying: "First thing in the morning I drive my sheep to pasture and stand over them in heat and cold with dogs lest wolves should devour them, and I lead them back to their sheds and milk them twice a day and move their folds besides, and I make cheese and butter, and am faithful to my lord."

Miserable indeed were the scraggy and ill-nourished animals of those distant days. Scarcity of provender decreed their slaughter in large numbers at Martinmas when they were pickled and preserved for winter

consumption. Added to the stubble of the harvest fields were the meadows when not set aside for hay, and the permanent pastures which served as grazing grounds. Fowls and geese abounded, while bees were valued for their honey, which served in place of sugar, as well as for beeswax used in making candles.

The woods and streams proved important in old-time rural economy, for the former furnished fuel and timber essential to the construction or repair of buildings, as well as the wood for fences. The forests also provided pannage for the innumerable droves of swine, but for this pig-feeding, rents were paid in money or in kind to the lord of the manor. "At Leominster, every villein paid one pig in ten to the lord," and one swine in seven is said to have been the obligation in Sussex.

The lord exacted his toll of the fisheries. A fishing stream almost invariably had its water mill, and few indeed are the villages mentioned in Domesday, where the mill is not recorded. The chief fisheries, however, were in the fens, where freshwater and marine eels were caught in enormous numbers, while many other edible fish were extraordinarily abundant. In Cambridge and the neighbouring counties not alone the fisheries but the reeds and rushes, aquatic birds, salt-pans and turbaries led to the formation of local customs distinctly different to those of ordinary agricultural life. Peat was dug from the turbaries and this supplemented wood as fuel. Coal was known to and utilized by the Romans, but as Salzman notes in his *English Industries in the Middle Ages*, with the Roman departure from Britain "coal went out of use, and no trace of its employment can be found prior to the Norman Conquest. It was not until quite the end of the twelfth century that coal was rediscovered."

The production of salt was eminently essential, for through half the year the mass of our ancestors depended upon salted provisions. Until 1670 rock salt was unknown in England, and previously the preservative so indispensable to healthy domestic life was obtained by means of evaporation from sea-water and brine springs. It appears that the leading districts for the production of salt were "the marshes of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Essex, Kent and Sussex—but coastal salt-pans were far from being restricted to these counties. The inland centres were in Cheshire and Worcestershire—at Droitwich, Northwich and at many other wiches as well."

The typical village community so outstanding in the English plain was replaced by the pastoral vill in northern and western regions. These were the seats of the isolated homesteads, where sheep-farming and cattle-raising were the predominant occupations. In wilder and rugged Wales the scattered hamlet became common, and this was apparently the case in Shropshire, Gloucester and other western counties. To the north, in the more rugged regions of Yorks, Lancashire, Northumberland and Durham, the breeding of sheep and oxen was much more general than arable farming. Giraldus, who wrote in the twelfth century, assures us that the pastoral Welsh lived more extensively on meat foods, milk, cheese and butter than on grain comestibles. He also avers that the people in those parts erected no substantial dwellings, but led "a solitary life in the woods and contented themselves with small huts made of boughs of trees twisted together, constructed with little labour and expense, and sufficient to endure throughout the year." In the northern districts of England, during the summer, and at least in a mild winter, live stock was pastured on land remote from farm settlements.

Even in Devonshire similar conditions appear to have prevailed, while in Cornwall two dissimilar types of agrarian settlement may be traced. Dr. Darby dis-



cerns "large vills with much ploughland, with English terminations like -ton, and located usually in the river valleys or along the coast. . . . Completely different from these were the small units, usually with Celtic names."

The long-advocated theory that the village community was almost uniform in structure is thus shown to be invalid. In past centuries, the primitive nature of means of locomotion, and the lack of capital threw man more upon the mercy of his environment, and the many modes of agrarian economy were in consequence shapen by local conditions. Agricultural services varied very considerably, and methods of cultivation and stock-keeping were strikingly diverse.

T. F. PALMER.

### Acid Drops

This is the way in which the B.B.C. announcer began his description of the Derby. "In the presence of Queen Mary, the King, and the Royal Family *Mid-day Sun* won the Derby of 1937." The secret is out. The trainer, or the jockey, whispered in the horse's ear "the King and Queen Mary and the Royal Family are here," and *Mid-day Sun* rose to the occasion. The other horses were just "Bolshies" and deserved to lose, or they were not told they were in the "presence." So we have a King's Derby, to follow a Coronation opera season, and Coronation Continental tours for the holiday season, and King's weather (if it is fine) and so on, world without end. But we have not a Coronation war in India, nor will a few mine explosions constitute Coronation disasters, nor a serious and wide-spread disease make a Coronation epidemic. Neither will an increase in taxation be hailed as Coronation taxes, nor bad trade be called a Coronation slump." The advertising must be kept on, but the right things must be advertised, or fools may begin to see things.

So, after all, the Duke of Windsor has had a religious marriage! A gallant parson of the Church of England defied his Bishop, by not telling him what he intended to do, flew over to France, and married the Duke, or believed he did, after he had been married by the civil law of France. Thus is one more absurdity added to the situation. (1) The only law of marriage in France is the civil law. (2) The only legal marriage in this country is also the civil law of marriage, the Church of England clergyman being a person licensed by the State to perform the ceremony. The marriage by the parson in a private house in France has no force in French law, and it has no force in English law either. (3) The English law is that a legal contract of marriage may only be performed by a person appointed by the State, and in a place appointed by the State for that purpose. The heroic parson was a person licensed to perform a marriage, but the place was not an appointed place in the meaning of the Act. (4) The English and French law agree that provided the marriage ceremony required by the State is gone through, the contracting parties may do as they please—get married again over a broomstick, marry according to the Church rites or Chapel rites, or stand on their heads and chew betel nuts while a parson says a prayer. The religious ceremony performed over the Duke and his lady, after the civil marriage may, therefore be taken as further evidence in favour of the thesis that in these days tomfoolery and a sanctified monarchy are almost inseparable.

We have not been in the habit of defending Mr. Duff-Cooper, late Minister for War, but we cannot understand the intense indignation expressed by some at his saying, in defence of buying ammunition in Germany, that "It made very little difference to those who were killed whether the bullets were made at home or abroad." All we ask is, does it? The evil thing is that men should settle their differences by bullets, not the place of origin

of the bullets. And it seems to us that if the bullets are good, it is our *sending* bullets abroad that may be used in killing *us*, that makes one reflect, just as the Germans might reflect that the bullets they are supplying might be used to kill them. In our judgment any case gains by clear thinking, and Reformers ought to set a good example. Swopping stupidities is not a first-class method of achieving progress.

*The Catholic Herald Citizen* (America) informs us:—

The Church has never defined what constitutes the sensible sufferings in hell, but she has declared that it would be rash to say that it is not real fire. That souls in hell suffer by fire is repeatedly stated in the Holy Scriptures, and our Lord frequently so described the pains of the damned.

This is the kind of non-committal answer that one has learnt to associate with infallibility.

It will be admitted that the question of the existence of a lake of fire and brimstone is one of some importance. A Victorian divine gained notoriety by saying that if the doctrine of Hell Fire were true, it should be printed on every blade of grass. But infallibility does not consider it advisable that such a point should be cleared up. You see it is so useful to put the fear of hell into Paddy and Eileen in their mud hovel, and also when dealing with more cultured enquirers to refuse to be saddled with such a disgusting dogma. Infallibility is economical in its pronouncements. It defines only when it must. It is highly convenient to have more than one string to one's bow.

"What do we Mean by the Holy Spirit?" asks Mr. Weatherhead in a Whitsun Sermon. Just imagine a minister (or anyone else) taking seriously (and calling "glorious") the silly story of "Pentecost." It is indeed difficult to credit Mr. Weatherhead's seriousness. He contrasts Christian attainments of to-day with the miracle-life of these primitive Christians. Superficially, at least, he ignores the only point worth mentioning, namely, the atmosphere of ignorance which makes miracles credible to the credulous. Instead of which, Mr. Weatherhead uses the myth as a reproach to the religion of a saner age:—

There is no reason on God's side why everything that happened in the book of Acts should not happen to-day in England. We have produced a poor replica, a tawdry sham, a spurious substitute.

No reason except that God appears to have gone out of business.

"The truth about Spain they would find in the Catholic papers." So says the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Mannix. *Catholic Truth*, an expression of the same order as Punic Faith!

A sample, for which we are indebted to the Australian *The Rationalist*:—

*Catholic Leader* (February 11). The Truth is that the poverty of the Spanish Church is proverbial among Catholic churchmen the world over. . . . The average unskilled labourer in Australia is far better off than the "wealthy Spanish clergy."

*Catholic Advocate* (February 18) reports the removal by the "Reds" of

thirty "sacred, precious ornaments and relics," from Toledo Cathedral. Included in the list are the following items: "The mantle of the Virgin del Sagrario with embroidery of over 80,000 pearls. . . . A relic of the True Cross engraved with the design of foliage and ornamented with precious stones and classical cameos. A crown of Our Lady in seventeenth century goldsmith's work, completely encrusted with precious stones. . . . 'The Monstrance of Arfe.' This was of solid gold with wings of pearls, emeralds, and rubies. . . . The chalices of Cardinal Fonsica and Mendoza of solid gold and enamel encrusted with pearls. The Bible of St. Louis, King of France. Each leaf was composed of gold panels



and scenes were depicted from the Old and New Testaments. The three volumes are valued at 80,000,000 pesetas (£2,000,000)."

Another Catholic Truth. The *Catholic Advocate* (January 14) :—

General Franco is a Spanish Catholic who loves his country and every blade of grass that grows in it. Dear to him are its people, its workmen, its peasants.

(February 18). General Franco could take the city in 24 hours. . . . He does not wish to destroy the city; a man does not willingly destroy his own home.

Report by British Members of Parliament (3 Conservative, 2 Labour, 1 Liberal) :—

By December 1, between one-third and one-quarter of the houses of Madrid were estimated to have been destroyed. The bombardment of the city, both from the air and by shell-fire, has been most intense in the working-class districts. The better residential districts have as yet been little affected.

It is well to remember what James Martineau wrote :—

The one grace which the Roman Church seems never to reach is veracity.

The Rev. Dr. Rumble has been broadcasting in Australia. He claims information on some important points :—

It is correct to say that there are no Protestants in heaven. But notice that I do not say that no person who has lived and died as a Protestant in this world goes to heaven. I have repeatedly said that people who are good, or who die with sincere sorrow for their sins, can be saved, even though they were Protestants. For that is due to no fault of their own in such people. But the moment they leave this world they see the full truth, and cease to be Protestants.

And so Rumble rumbles on. If the Full Truth is ever vouchsafed to Rumble, he may yet see himself as an arrogant and presumptuous bigot. What the Reverend Rumble really knows about such matters is precisely nothing :—

There are tipsters standing upon this course who know as much about a racehorse as do the lions in Trafalgar Square. Now, I . . .

Quack, Quack!

We commend to the attention of the Minister of Transport who, we believe, is thankful for any hints which may lead to a reduction of the enormous number of road accidents, the advice tendered by the Most Rev. Michael J. Gallagher, Bishop of Detroit. This gentleman gives his imprimatur to a travel prayer :—

Sanctus Joseph cum Maria,  
Sanctus Raphael cum Tobia,  
Sanctus Michael cum colesit heirarchia,  
Sint nobiscum in via.

The Detroit Catholic Evidence Guild are circulating this, along with an appeal for careful driving. Just in the same way do Brigg's Brown Blobs for Biliousness counsel the swallows to have a certain amount of exercise daily, keep windows open and be careful what they eat. Quack, Quack!

Nothing better expressed how ordinary men and women received the Coronation than the scenes reproduced in our cinemas. The audiences everywhere seized upon the "secular" incidents and giggled with delight. The King wiping his fingers after getting them inked with the pen, or the Archbishop twisting the comic crown round to see which was the front or the back, or the way in which various personages knelt in front of the throne—who looked very bored at the whole ceremony. If anything knocked the bottom out of the "sacredness" of the Coronation or its connexion with the Lord, it was undoubtedly the cinema. It is most unlikely the religious tomfoolery will ever be repeated.

One stage of the Coronation ceremony struck one as a perfect duplication of a tailor's fitting. When the King was divested of his crimson robe, the under-garment looked like an unfinished long-coat minus its collar. The "anointing" seemed to embrace certain sartorial adjustments upon a customer rather shy of his somewhat unclothed appearance. Then when the long white surplice was placed on the King, a pause seemed to indicate, "H'mm, not quite right yet; let's try something else": whereupon the supertunica was placed over the surplice (colobium sindonis). But indeed, sheer nonsense characterized every incident in the proceedings, the various emblems being handed to-and-fro with an air of "Now I have it, what shall I do with it?" One fact stood out—that none of the participants had the least idea of any reality about the performance. The King and Queen gave the impression of being bemused by it all.

"Agnostic who was converted," was the *Star's* heading, referring to the Rev. R. A. Jardine, the Darlington vicar, who conducted a religious service for the marriage of the Duke of Windsor and Mrs. Warfield. It doesn't matter a bit in a slipshod journalism that the report which follows reveals nothing whatever of Agnosticism in Mr. Jardine, but it states that *his father* was an Agnostic. That's good enough for a religious point.

There was a time when the mere mention of Casanova's name evoked a shudder of moral horror—particularly by Victorians who had never read a line of his immortal *Memoirs*. Even in these degenerate days, it is not easy to get a completely unabridged edition of his works, except in French, and even that is printed from an edited version. But we have never heard of him as a sculptor. In the *Universe* he is given the credit of having sculptured a beautiful monument of the Cardinal of York, who was given an annuity by George III. after the French Revolution. The sculptor was, of course, Antonio Canova.

## Fifty Years Ago

Why talk to us of kingdom-come? It will be time enough to study it when we get there. All the guide-books we have now are mere bundles of guesses. What we want is knowledge of this world. Knowledge is power, said Bacon. Ignorance means barbarism. Science means civilization.

Theology disappears before culture. Religion has been called the poetry of unpoetical natures, and theology is the science of the unscientific. Who that has studied the wonders of nature cares for the miracles of the creeds? Who that has steeped his mind in the highest poetry cares for the fairy tales of the pulpit? You and I, said Schiller to Goethe, have art and do not need religion. We doubt whether any earnest student of Shakespeare retained much respect for priestly teaching. What are the dreams of theologians compared with the magnificent dramas of the mightiest of the sons of men? Jejunum, fantastic puerilities, fit for the nursery or the asylum.

Among the thoughtful theology is falling into disrepute; among the educated and thoughtful its claims are derided. Thousands of people see that sky-pilots themselves display no real belief in the doctrines they preach. They go into skyology, as other men go into trade, law, or physis, simply for a living; and they teach the little orthodoxy of whichever sect finds them in bread. So little do they think for themselves, either from want of inclination or capacity, that scarcely one in a thousand ever finds reason to alter his opinions. Another point they have in common is this. They believe in getting as much as possible of the good things of this life, and in enjoying them as long as possible. Kingdom-come is attractive, but there is no need to hurry! Heaven is a capital place, but sky-pilots are loth to reach it before their time! Well, if they show so little faith in their doctrine, why should they be astonished if other people show none at all?

The Freethinker, June 12, 1887.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**J. JONES.**—Copies are being sent to the address given. No lectures are at present arranged for Wolverhampton, but if there are a sufficient number of sympathizers to attend to local arrangements some could be fixed.

**R. S. CRAMPTON.**—We are moving in different worlds. You appear to live in one in which it is regarded as an offence to attack—except in a tone of reverence which one cannot feel—religious beliefs with which one does not agree. We fancy we ought to say "religious beliefs with which you are not in agreement." Our world is one in which one may criticize religious beliefs in exactly the same tone and temper that one shows with regard to any belief. The abusive part of your letter leaves us unmoved.

**NOT A SAINT.**—We do not publish letters to which no name and address (not necessarily for publication) is appended. But please do not take the trouble to send on the missing information. Your notion of not wishing to bother us after sending a six-page letter is amusing, particularly as you regard it as no business of ours to criticize the beliefs of other people.

**TUNNELLER.**—We have received no report on the matter you mention. With regard to the clerical ownership of the businesses you name, we cannot put our hands on the paragraph written so long ago, but it may have referred to shares held in these concerns.

**A. LE LIEVRE.**—Thanks for your letter but, as you will see from last week's issue, we recognize the error of the writer in stating that in the Catholic Edition of the Bible the commandment concerning graven images is not to be found. We regret it escaped our notice on the first reading.

**G. F. LAWS.**—There are two conditions in which the phrase "accessory to the fact" may be used. One may be an accessory because one gave positive help to the commission of an admittedly wrong action. The other is that one refrains from doing what one might have done, and was perhaps expected to do, to prevent the commission of the act. It is in the last sense that the expression was used.

**B. HETHERINGTON AND G. BURNHAM.**—Thanks for address of likely new reader. Paper being sent.  
**FOR ADVERTISING AND CIRCULATING THE FREETHINKER.**—D. Fisher, 4s.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

The "Views and Opinions," dealing with the Coronation have attracted wide-attention, and they have attracted new readers. We have also received, verbally and by letter, a large number of requests for republication in permanent form. But as they stand they are a mere outline of a subject that has been much dealt with during

the past twenty years, and, therefore, would need to be very much enlarged to do anything like justice to the subject. For this reason, as well as the consideration that Mr. Cohen has a number of things in hand at present, he cannot see his way to republication. But the subject itself may form a part of *A Book About the Gods*, which he has in hand. Meanwhile those who would like to send a set of these articles (there will be six in number), to friends and likely subscribers, can get them by writing to the office. The six copies will be sent post free for 1s. 3d. An extra number of each issue was printed in view of some such contingency.

The following exceptionally plain language is allowed to appear in the *Daily Mirror*:—

For fourteen years a victim of our incredible and preposterous marriage laws I have lived a life of loneliness, frustration and often of bitter temptation.

Legally tied, actually husbandless and my child fatherless, I welcome for the sake of others the reforms that for me will come too late.

Incidentally, in the face of all this controversy about Holy Communion, I wonder how many divorced persons care twopenny whether they receive the ministrations of a cruel and bigoted Church or not?

For myself I left the Church a very long time ago. No comfort or help there; no understanding and no sympathy.

If other papers representing our free press would show an equal liberality to this, it would be quickly discovered by our sapient theologians that Jesus was very very much put-about because of our iniquitous Divorce Laws.

There was once a "Wicked" Bible, the distinguishing feature of which was the leaving of the words out of the Commandments. The adulteries and murders committed because of God's carelessness with the proofs have not been chronicled.

Edward Gibbon, in the famous Chapter XV. of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, said:—

But it was not in this world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.

Picking up a volume on a second-hand bookstall, and glancing at this passage, one was surprised to find that it read:—

But it was in this world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.

If a lie redounds to the glory of God, why should these pious editors or publishers or compositors or proof-readers, be accounted sinners?

Mr. J. T. Brighton puts in some excellent propagandist work in the North East Area, opening up new ground where possible, and bringing the message of Freethought to new audiences. A letter appreciative of his work in Blyth appears in a recent issue of the *Blyth News Ashington Post*. Mr. Clayton is also carrying on the same sort of work in the Lancashire area, and in both cases the results have justified the Executive of the N.S.S. applying the experiment to other speakers in other areas.

After a week in Edinburgh, Mr. G. Whitehead returns to Glasgow for another week commencing from to-day (June 13). The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate at all the meetings, and saints should take the opportunity for obtaining the latest Pioneer Press Publications, which will be on sale at all the lectures.

The Vicar of St. Edward's Church, Barnsley, the Rev. J. Winston, has discovered a new disease:—

It is peculiar to professing church-goers. The attack comes suddenly every Sunday. On Saturday the patient sleeps well, and on Sunday morning eats a hearty break-



fast. But about Church time the attack comes on and continues until morning service is over.

Then the patient feels easy and eats a hearty dinner. In the afternoon he feels much better and is able to talk about golf or politics. About church-time he gets another attack and stays at home.

No physician is ever called in, but the disease is fatal to the soul.

And fatal to those who minister to the soul.

On Sunday, June 20 the West Ham Branch will have an outing to Hainault Forest, and all Freethinkers and their friends within range are invited to join the party. Train from Forest Gate Station (L.N.E.R.) 10-15 a.m. Book to Grange Hill; day return fare, 9d. Each member of the party must bring lunch, and tea will be arranged for the party at Forest Drive Tea Rooms, Lam-bourne End, at 4 p.m.

The Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. will hold open-air meetings during the summer on Tuesday evenings. At the moment it is not certain if the meetings will be held at one spot weekly or fortnightly, but Mr. D. Robinson will speak at Well Lane Corner (Old Chester Road), on Tuesday evening 15th inst., by which time the Branch will be able to make a definite statement concerning future fixtures. The Birkenhead Branch is being well served by its officials, and if the local saints will give the deserved support, they can and will make the bigots pay dearly for their intolerance.

## Henry Hetherington—1792-1849

(Continued from page 342)

THE Trial of Hetherington for "publishing" Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy* took place on December 8, 1840. He conducted his own defence. The indictment makes very amusing reading. A portion of it runs, "That Henry Hetherington, being a *wicked, impious, and ill-disposed person*, and having no regard for the laws and religion of this realm, but *most wickedly, blasphemously, impiously, and profanely devising and intending to asperse and vilify that part of the Holy Bible which is called the Old Testament*, on February 3, in the third year of the reign of our sovereign lady Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, did publish, and cause to be published, a certain scandalous, impious, and blasphemous libel of and concerning that part of the Holy Bible which is called the Old Testament, containing therein, amongst other things, divers *scandalous, impious, and blasphemous matters* according to the tenor and effect following, that is to say, 'What wretched stuff this Bible is, to be sure! What a random idiot its author must have been! I would advise the human race to burn every bible they have got. Such a book is actually a disgrace to ourang outangs, much more to men. I would advise them to burn it, in order that posterity may never know we believed in such abominable trash. What must they think of our intellects! What must they think of our incredible foolery! And we not only believe it, but we actually look upon the book as the sacred word of God, as a production of infinite wisdom. Was insanity ever more complete? I, for one, however, renounce the book; I renounce it as a vile compound of filth, blasphemy, and nonsense, as a fraud and a cheat, and as an insult to God,' to the great displeasure of Almighty God, to the great scandal, infamy, and contempt of that part of the Holy Bible which is called the Old Testament, to the evil example of all others, and against the peace of our said lady the Queen, her crown and dignity." A profusion of ridiculous legal jargon

followed, which would be a waste of labour to quote.

The Attorney-General was exceptionally brief in opening the proceedings. He merely occupied himself in proving the sale of the book, and reading the indictable passages. Hetherington then began his defence. Space prevents it being given in full, but a few quotations may here be cited:—

"Mr. Haslam calls upon the clergy to enter into the controversy with him, and to let *reason* decide between them. Why do not the Government and the learned Attorney-General adopt Mr. Haslam's recommendation instead of instituting a prosecution against a bookseller *who never read a line of the book till his attention was called to it by this unjust prosecution?*" A little further on in his defence, he says, "I appeal to the learned Attorney-General, whether my being ruined and sent to a dungeon, will alter the present state of things? Will it alter the opinion of Mr. Haslam? Will it make me believe that I ought to be prosecuted for selling the book; or that a man has not a right to promulgate his opinions? I am placed in an awkward position in having to defend a man's right to publish, while I dissent from some of Mr. Haslam's opinions, and the manner in which he has thought proper to express them. I have been told that the Attorney-General is a good kind of a man, who has no wish to press severely upon persons in my situation; and some friends—not my true friends—have urged me to forward a memorial to him on the subject of this prosecution. Now what could I do? There was no way of inducing the Attorney-General to stay this prosecution, but by pleading guilty; and although I am well aware that your verdict, if adverse to me, will be my ruin, yet I would rather terminate my existence on the floor of this Court than plead guilty to this lying indictment, or admit that I am a *wicked, malicious, and evil-disposed person*, when I know that to the best of my judgment and ability, I am an upright, honest, well-intentioned man. If I believed myself to be the man described in the indictment—which I must do before I could consent to plead guilty—I would fly to the uttermost parts of the earth; for a man is totally destroyed when he has lost all feeling of self-respect, and the esteem and regard of his friends and associates." Later on, in replying to the charge of "objectionable" language used by Haslam, Hetherington proceeds, "If the sale of a controversial book is to be suppressed, because it contains a few passages in bad taste, and of objectionable phraseology, then the sale of the Bible itself must be prohibited, for that book contains many passages far more objectionable in the present day than any to be found in Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy*. I have here a list of passages from the Bible, of a highly objectionable character; but as I perceive a number of ladies in the court, I will not pollute their ears, nor shock the feelings of the Jury, by reading them. My only object in alluding to them is to show that if the principle of selecting two or three objectionable passages from a work is to lead to its condemnation, and the punishment of the bookseller, then I might with equal justice be condemned for selling the Bible itself. On this ground also I claim, and am entitled to your verdict. Gentlemen, the Attorney-General has not done justice to Mr. Haslam; he has dwelt upon the passages contained in the indictment, but has left the Jury in total ignorance of the general nature of the work. In many parts of the book are to be found passages of great beauty. So far from a charge of blasphemy fairly attaching to Mr. Haslam's *Letters*, he uniformly declares that he rejects the Jewish Scriptures because they are *irrational* and *dishonour* the God 'that governs the universe.' I will read a passage from his Second Letter, which shows the veneration he entertains for the Deity:—



But is it not monstrous, that that power which gives life and motion to millions of worlds; which guides them in their eternal revolutions in the boundless ocean of space, and which preserves them in everlasting order and harmony; is it not monstrous that that power should be represented in this ridiculous point of view? Vain, violent and boisterous, without the least indication of anything rational, good or merciful in any of his proceedings. Such a god may be the god of the Christians, but he is not the God who governs the universe. That God is no more to be compared to the Bible god, than the dazzling sun is to be compared to the glimmering light of a candle.

"Mr. Haslam's work has many other passages of the same description; and the Attorney-General will see that the passage in the Eighth Letter—almost the only objectionable passage in the work—was not deliberately designed to give offence, when I tell him that the author, in deference to the opinion of his friends, has cancelled the objectionable passage, and re-written it. Now what would the learned Attorney-General have more? The object of prosecution has been always held to be preventive, or corrective, not vindictive. The object sought, then, is already attained. Mr. Haslam has anticipated your wishes by correcting the objectionable passage.

"Gentlemen, I have urged sufficient, I hope, to induce you to give me your verdict; but before I conclude, I will read a passage from the works of Dean Swift, which is worthy of your profound attention. 'Whoever,' he says, 'could restore, in any degree, brotherly love among men, would be an instrument of more good to society than ever was or will be done by all the statesmen in the world.'

"Gentlemen, let us commence the glorious work to-day. I will tell you how you can do more towards spreading brotherly love among men, than all the statesmen in the world will be able to accomplish. Say to the Government, by your verdict, **THE PUBLICATION OF OPINIONS SHALL BE FREE.** This will spread brotherly love among men; for what is it that prevents brotherly love from dwelling among men? **THE OBVIOUS PRINCIPLE OF COERCION.**"

AMBROSE G. BARKER.

(To be continued)

## The Grovellers

The consummate impudence of clericalism is well illustrated by the following passage from a pietistic article in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* of April 24:—

The Church also has a certain authority over those who are not members—the authority of the Word of God and what the Church conceives to be the right interpretation of it. A man may deny that authority, or he may defy it, and many do, just as a man may deny or defy the multiplication table. And because, from its conception and experience of religious truth, the Church believes that the consequences may be as disastrous for him in the one case as in the other, the Church seeks to get men to obey its authority as being the authority of God Himself.

Aside from the question as to which Church has the right to exercise authority over those who repudiate all supernatural authority, it must be seen that if such a pretension be generally conceded, and no strong contradiction of it put forward, clericalism will extend its authority wherever it can in all possible directions, and over all relationships and interests in life. It plays upon ignorance and fear, and must resort to menaces to secure the adhesion of those whose only assets are their hands and brains. The great

ecclesiastical corporations do literally "extort money by menaces" from myriads of people.

Let us ponder carefully the significance of the passage above quoted. It is only an idiot who would try to establish an analogy between ecclesiastical authority and the multiplication table. We actually see the latter in operation—as we do Gravity, and the circulation of the blood. But we have no evidence of the so-called "Divine Miracles" upon which Christianity bases its claim to authority. There is no consistency to be found in the interpreters of the authority of God or the Church of God. One set of them will authorize certain practices which another set will condemn. There is no systematized or intelligible code of morality to be drawn from the Word of God. But mankind, irrespective of so-called supernaturalistic revelations, is gradually building up a secular Code of Law in the regulation of life, which is crowding out the obsolescent precepts and dictates of divinity. Change is the order of the day. By the exercise of his *mental* powers man is progressing to higher altitudes. God stays in the past—the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.

There are many workers who, to preserve their positions as breadwinners, give an outward lip assent to the authority of clericalism because they have pious employers, but who in their inmost thought repudiate that authority. There are thousands of unavowed Freethinkers among the mass of the people who, for prudential considerations, do not show their true colours. It is no doubt an unbecoming and hypocritical position to occupy; but it is not so degrading as the position occupied by the well paid clerical liars, forecasters and fortune-tellers who impudently presume to require unquestioning acquiescence in their unfounded claims.

Someone has said that supernaturalism is closely related to two other "Isms," viz: Imperialism and Capitalism. What the impoverished majority of human beings are to be allowed to *know* must be prescribed by the authority of the supernaturalists. And the one thing needful from the standpoint of the latter is belief in the fables of the Bible. So long as men are swayed by supernaturalism they remain the ready prey of Priests and Parsons, Imperialists and Capitalists. Mental serfs are easily subjected to disciplinary terrorism, and quickly obey the command of "Down Dog!" or "On the knee, Knave!" It is only knowledge of the Truth unqualified by any adjective which can make men free. Supernaturalism is the antithesis of Freedom.

Religion therefore cannot continue to exist without grovellers. When the cleric says to his congregation: "Let us Pray," what is he inviting it to do? Simply to assume an attitude of abjection and subjection. He might as well say "Let us Grovel"—on the knee, Dogs! For prostration before the Joss or Ju-Ju is of the very quintessence of every supernatural faith wherever found. According to the Primrose League, religion is the great bulwark of the British Constitution. "Cosmo Cantuar" ardently proclaims the same sentiment, and fervently cries for a "Recall to Religion." And Imperialists and Capitalists echo his cry.

Shall not the hand that feeds us have the right to flay us? So speaks the groveller, for—"Whom he loveth he chasteneth." "O love of God, all human love excelling!" sing the tame believers. But the enlightened Humanist repels this insult to the love of husband and wife, brother and sister, and sweetheart, for it is only from *human* experience that human beings have learned what love is. The Love of God blinds, but the Love of mother or sweetheart gives sight and keen apprehension and compassion.

IGNOTUS.



## Masterpieces of Freethought

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY

BY

C. J. HASLAM

I.

It is difficult for most intelligent people to realize nowadays the veneration paid to the Bible for the greater part of last century. So great, indeed, was the idolatry of the "holy" book that a man like Dean Burgon could claim that not merely the chapters in it were revelations from God, but that every word, every letter and point, were indubitably divine. The emancipation of Roman Catholics, with the almost complete freedom given to them to practice their religion, made the struggle between the Pope, as the final arbiter of man's destinies, and the Book, more and more bitter. If the Pope was God's Vice-Regent on earth, the Bible was actually God's Word; and being prior to the Pope, could be the only Rule of Faith. Paine's *Age of Reason* was the work of the Devil—as indeed, was any book which attacked the Bible. The heretic within the Church—like Bishop Colenso—was looked upon with horror; and fundamentalist divines had the time of their lives in replying to books like *Essays and Reviews* or *Lux Mundi*.

But if the change of view in which the Bible was held was slow, it was sure. Fundamentalism became the prerogative of the less intelligent section of the community. The Salvation Army, the Church Army, the Bible League, and similar organizations preached a view of the Bible which simply could not be held by the more learned Christians. Not that these people would hastily deny the myths and legends with which the Bible was crammed. Rather did they emphasize the "unique" figure of Jesus and his teaching as well as the more secular aspects of the work of the Church.

It is necessary sometimes to recall the reasons why the Bible dropped from the very high altar upon which it was placed by believers during the nineteenth century. The impossibility of answering Paine in a convincing way was one reason. But another was the persistence with which the fighting Freethinkers of the period attacked the credibility and authenticity of the "Word." That their work is often forgotten or ignored is one of the tragedies of Freethought. For a thousand who remember Thomas Paine, there may be only one who remembers Charles Junius Haslam. Yet it would be difficult, I think, to name a book of its day against the Bible more convincing than his once-famous *Letters to the Clergy*.

It is curious to note that, though we Freethinkers have attacked the Bible by speech and pen almost without cessation for over a century, we have actually but very few books dealing with the Bible as a whole. Bradlaugh wrote a number of pamphlets against it, and he intended his *Bible, What Is It?* to be a sort of text-book. But he expanded it to such an extent that all we eventually got was his *Genesis*, which deals in detail only with a few of that book's early chapters. Foote's finest work on the Bible is, in my opinion, contained in his *Bible Romances*, and that could indeed be called first-class criticism. Robert Cooper's *Bible and its Evidences* has always seemed to me one of the very best works against the Bible ever penned. And there is a very useful American book, *The Bible*, by John E. Remsburg. Ingersoll dealt with many aspects of the Bible in his famous lectures, and there are a number of other writers who have specialized on this or on that point. But if a modern Freethinker

wanted a concise handbook against the Bible dealing particularly with the damaging admissions of orthodox believers and divines against its authenticity and credibility, his choice would be a very narrow one. Cooper's work is almost unknown to the present generation; and how many readers have gone carefully through Bradlaugh's *Genesis*? Haslam's *Letters* are, let me admit frankly, almost as unknown as Cooper's *Bible and its Evidences*. I have never seen a second-hand copy for sale, or met anyone who has read the book. Yet it is quite a masterpiece in little.

Wheeler gives a short account of Charles Junius Haslam in his invaluable *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, and that is all I have been able to discover about him. He was born in 1811, and died as late as 1898. He followed his *Letters* (1838) with another series addressed to the Bishop of Exeter in 1841, and later wrote a pamphlet, *Who are the Infidels?* and one in 1885 entitled *The Suppression of War*.

John M. Robertson does scant justice to Haslam's *Letters*. They are mentioned only in connexion with Hetherington's imprisonment for blasphemy—and are actually described as "a freethinking criticism of Old Testament morality." Had Robertson remembered the titles of each letter—there are twenty-four—he would have seen that the last nine dealt in detail with the New Testament. The error is repeated in the later and expanded version of the *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*.

Haslam's *Letters* are a vigorous, splendidly sustained attack on the Bible. In conjunction with those he wrote to the Bishop of Exeter, they form a particularly good case against its authenticity and credibility.

Haslam, like Robert Taylor before him, and Robert Cooper later, takes as his authorities orthodox church historians, and manages to extract some very damaging admissions from them. He takes Bible statements and subjects them to a close and critical analysis. He attempts no philosophical disquisitions, no weary word-meaning wanderings other than the plain significations generally attributed to the words. If the Authorized Version is not a true translation, if the Hebrew or the Greek has a totally different meaning from that given by the English translation, what is that to him? This Authorized Version is the Bible by Act of Parliament, in the sense that any attack upon it could invoke the Blasphemy Laws against the critic. The English Version of the Bible then is the one which has to be examined in the light of reason and fair play. How does it come out of the test?

Haslam, on the question of God, seems to have been a Deist like Thomas Paine. He says:—

Now you will very likely imagine that I am going to prove that there is no God; and then, I suppose, Atheist will be proceeding from your lips. I beg, however, to inform you, that I am not. I believe in a God, and I believe also, that God is without body, parts, or passions, as this article [of the Church of England] declares.

Haslam also believed, like Thomas Paine, in Jesus as a man who actually existed, and who was good, kind and benevolent. It seems to have required a Diderot or a d'Holbach to have the strength of mind and will openly to deny "God," to affirm Atheism boldly and frankly. And it is to the credit of Charles Bradlaugh that he never hesitated to put his position down clearly and unequivocally. He was an Atheist, and he said so, over and over again. And he helped to make it possible for his followers to do the same.

H. CUTNER.



## That United Front

I ARRIVED at a Scientific Atheist Philosophy and joined the N.S.S. at the end of 1891. I arrived at the idea of a Political Common Front at the end of '93. Jack Lindsay, in the *Freethinker* for May 16, 1937, omits the qualifying term "political." That scarcely clears the issue—dialectically—when all the "pother" arises over the question of a United Political Front. Since 1891, '92, '93, I have done what I could—in an "amateurish" way—for Secularism in Philosophy and for a United People's Front in Politics. I have considered—to the best of my ability—every new theory and new political policy put forward since then. I have been "active" when possible. When abroad, I have followed developments; when at home, I have been able to look, and have a smile, at my own Political Party. I refer to this to justify this criticism of Mr. Lindsay's article in the *Freethinker* for May 16.

In the first par., J. L. writes, "One would like to know what Paine or Carlile would have to say about the strange notion that 'rationalism' can be separated from social questions." For my part, I should like to know what they would say about the much stranger notion that Secularism has ever been separated from Social questions.

Par. 2: There is a big difference between *Common Sense* and *Crisis* of Paine, as compared with the "Communist Manifesto" of Marx. Paine's Political Pamphlets dealt with a specific actual struggle then commenced. Marx—the bigger man, mentally, perhaps—elaborated the idea of a revolution yet to come, and for which the social-economic conditions were not ripe.

Par. 3: Here the error in dialectic is due to lack of definition in the meaning of "Truth," "Abstraction," "Materialism," and "Communism." After I had reached an understanding of "Scientific Socialism" c. 1893, it took me quite a time to realize that what I meant by the "Materialist Conception of History," was very different from what some Socialists—even in those days—meant. To-day, when some use merely the letters "M.C.H.," the difference is still greater. Many British Communists seem to use these letters as symbols of some Mystical Force, by which we shall be delivered from "parasitism," and into "unity and freedom"—in this world. In earlier days, many Christian Communists regarded the mystic letters "I.H.S." in the same way—for the next world. The habitual use of mystic letters or words is a very dangerous substitute, in dialectic, for clear, logical thinking. The best corrective I know for this trouble is the Scientific Atheist Philosophy so clearly expounded by C.C. Take that method, in *Determinism* or *Free-Will*, as applied to Individual Human Existence, and apply it to the collective Social Existence which we call "Capitalism"; then dogmas and theories, which are more metaphysical than scientific, will have less chance of misleading the unwary in Political Policy.

Par. 4: More "splitting-up" and more bitterness have been caused by the efforts of British Communists to force their theories and policies on other Parties than have taken place since the early British Socialists and Anarchist Communists were breaking away from the Radicals—mostly Atheist—and the Social-Reform-Liberals. That disintegrating process weakened Secularism for too many years. Now, under the Presidency—and Editorship—of Chapman Cohen, we have regained much of our position. Let us beware of losing it again.

Par. 5: Here one wonders for how long J. L. has read the *Freethinker*. Recent Materialist thought is often reviewed and criticized in its columns, as are the works of Hogben, Levy, Childe, and others. As for grotesquely scholastic articles, I have found nothing in the *Freethinker* to match the disputes between rival schools of Thought—each of which claims to be real genuine "Marxism." *Plebs*, the journal of the National Labour Colleges, claims to be "Marxist"; yet, not so very long ago, they complained that a British Communist paper would not accept an ad. for a *Plebs* book on Marx, nor print a criticism from the Secretary of the N.C.L.C. J.L. has had much fairer treatment than that, in the columns of the *Freethinker*.

In the final par. I read that "the central work of the *Freethinker* is the continual attack on ecclesiastical obscurantism." Well! well!! well!!! I have no use for a paper which merely attacks "ecclesiastical obscurantism"; yet I have read, enjoyed, and admired, the *Freethinker* since 1891!

ATHOSO ZENOO.

## Correspondence

### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER" THE MARRIAGE BILL.

SIR,—I am sorry to see from your issue of June 6, that you approve of Mr. Herbert's Bill to amend the Marriage Laws—a Bill which even Luther, Calvin, John Knox, and John Milton would have regarded as a horrible piece of reactionary superstition.

By far the most important clause in the Bill is the one forbidding divorce until the parties have been five years married—a reactionary proposal which has never been even suggested in any other country. Sexologists are agreed that most marriages break down from physical causes—which means that the failure of the marriage is as well known in twenty-four hours as it ever can be. It is monstrous that the parties should be held together for five years before they have any chance to correct an innocent mistake. If a marriage is an obvious failure, the proper thing is to end it at once without waiting for children to be born.

Against this incredibly reactionary absurdity, there are hardly any advantages to be set. The Bill has been butchered to such an extent that there is no relief even for the partner of a hopeless drunkard, or a person who is serving a life sentence in prison. The King's Proctor and the six months' delay between the decrees nisi and absolute, which have no parallel in any other country, will still remain part of the law of England.

The Bill has one merit; it will evoke such a howl of rage the moment the public find out what it really means, that much good will be done. One thing that makes people really angry is the taking away of a right which has been long established. When people wake up to the fact that they have to wait five years before they can assert a perfectly reasonable right which formerly demanded no delay, there will be more indignation than there has ever yet been over the English Divorce Law.

R. B. KERR.

[We are not aware that we expressed approval of everything in Mr. Herbert's Bill.—EDITOR.]

### FREE SPEECH

SIR,—I have never doubted that the N.S.S. had done a certain amount of work in protesting against the growth of oppressive legislation. And surely my last article made it clear that I wanted no political affiliations. What I suggested was a more conscious relation with the fellow-forces, such as the International Peace Campaign and the Council for the Defence of Civil Liberties, which are as absolutely non-sectarian as the N.S.S. itself.

Let me say in reply to the critic who seemed to think I was suggesting forcible activity, that I had no such thing in my head. I agree entirely with his remarks. But perhaps shortly the *Freethinker* will find space for an article I would like to write on the meaning of Revolutionary tactics, as this is a point so misunderstood.

As to Athoso Zenoo's letter on Left censorship, he should remember that the advertisement turned down by the *Daily Worker* was for a Trotskyist book, at a time when the Trotskyists are acting as Fascist agents in counter-revolutionary activities in Spain, as in the Barcelona putsch. (An analogy would be a provocative notice by Jesuits in the *Freethinker* at a time when, say, the Roman Catholics had started a rebellion in Scotland to impose their religion by force.) But this does not mean that the Communist organs will ignore the book in question. Anyone who has had experience of literature will know that the great weapon of censorship is Silence.



The Capitalist press, that is 99 per cent of the English organs of news and criticism, simply censor all unorthodox opinion by blandly ignoring it. Nothing could be more effective. For instance a Rationalist monthly lately published a letter completely falsifying the Marxist viewpoint, but "had no space" for my rejoinder.

The Trotskyist book in question will be treated in minute critical detail in the Communist organs. There is in this month's *Left Review* a careful eight-page review of it; and there will be other notices. If Athos Zenoo looks at the *Left Review* notice he will see that the criticism is at every point based on factual material; and anyone at all interested and wishing to follow up the subject could buy the criticized book. If this is censorship of opinion, I only wish that all the newspapers and magazines which have ignored my books since I became "Left," would follow this method of censorship with regard to my own work.

JACK LINDSAY.

[Mr. Lindsay is, of necessity, not well informed as to the N.S.S. and the Societies he names. The N.S.S. is ready to co-operate with any movement with which it is in agreement, or for specific purposes that fall within the range of its principles and objects. But it must be on terms of absolute equality. Otherwise it will go on pursuing its own campaign. But it cannot be merely used by any organization.—EDITOR.]

### National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JUNE 3, 1937

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, presided.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Rosetti (A.C.), Bryant, Preece, Elstob, Silvester, Tuson, Sandys, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read. Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Birkenhead, Tees-Side, Liverpool, Kingston, Bradford, Edinburgh, Bethnal Green, West London Branches and the Parent Society. Correspondence from Bradford, Birkenhead, Glasgow, Liverpool Branches, International Free-thought Council, B.B.C., and Board of Education was dealt with. Lecture reports and details from Preston Branch, and Messrs. Whitehead, Clayton, Brighton and Shortt were presented. A proposal to organize a party for an outing and visit to Thomas Paine's house at Lewes was adjourned for further enquiries. The receipt of one thousand pounds from the estate of the late G. F. H. McCluskey was announced. The President drew attention to the death of William Heaford, and his long and valuable services to the N.S.S. and the Free-thought movement. A motion of condolence with the members of the family was passed, with an expression of appreciation of the bequest of the books comprising his library to the N.S.S.

Motions passed at the Conference having a bearing on the Rules of the Society were discussed, Messrs. Wood, McLaren, Sandys, and Bedborough were co-opted, and Messrs. Clifton, A. C. Rosetti, and Mrs. Quinton were elected as the Benevolent Fund Committee.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, July 15, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Perhaps no writer has ever roused more hatred in Christendom than Voltaire. He was looked on as a sort of anti-Christ. That was natural; his attacks were so tremendously effective at the time. But he has been sometimes decried on the ground that he only demolished and made no effort to build up where he had pulled down. This is a narrow complaint. It might be replied that when a sewer is spreading a plague in a town, we cannot wait to remove it till we have a new system of drains, and it may fairly be said that religion as practised in contemporary France was a poisonous sewer.

Bury, "A History of Freedom of Thought."

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON

##### INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"1837-1937. England, Then and Now."

##### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. A. Leacy.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Sunday, Mr. H. Preece. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, Friday, 8.0, Mrs. E. Grout.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connell, Carlton and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Carlton and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others. The *Freethinker*, *Age of Reason* and Mr. Chapman Cohen's latest pamphlets on sale outside Marble Arch Tube Station every evening.

#### COUNTRY

##### OUTDOOR

BIKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane, corner Old Chester Road): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. D. Robinson (Liverpool), A Lecture.

BLACKBURN (Market): 8.0, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HUNCOAT: 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, Messrs. Jackson and Morris. High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. Thompson and Parry.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Cross): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. V. Shortt. Alexander Park Gates, 8.15, Saturday, Platt Fields, 3.0, Sunday, Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson.

NELSON (Chapel Street): 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH ORMESBY (Market): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Town Hall Square): 7.45, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Archbishop's Recall to Religion." Chorley Market, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt, A Lecture. Preston Town Hall Square, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt, A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. N. Charlton (Gateshead), A Lecture.

TEES-SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Cross, Stockton): 7.30, Monday, Mr. Robson, A Lecture.

TRAWDEN: 7.45, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

WHEATLEY LANE: 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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