

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVII.—No. 44

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

God Help Us!

"MAN'S help is God" is a common pulpit expression. Sometimes it is enlarged to "Man's *only* help is God," but that is when the situation appears to be desperate. The nature and the occasion of this kind of help are indicated in the cry "God help him!" when a man is in a very desperate situation. But in every instance there is the same fundamental implication. It is a cry of despair, a confession of frustration, an announcement of ignorance. The situation must be bad; man must have reached the limit of his resources; the outlook must be black for him to call upon God. No one trusts in God while he feels that his credit is good elsewhere; when that is gone then he appeals to God, as the spendthrift, or the man in desperate need of cash, flies to the money-lender. And nothing better endorses the cynicism than gratitude is a keen sense of favours to come than the sight of a man on his knees thanking God for what he has done for him. It is the whine of the beggar, with a religious covering.

The "Will of God," said Spinoza, "is the asylum of ignorance." No one has ever bettered that phrase and none ever will. It gives you the maximum of information with a minimum of words. "God help us!" is a synonym of helplessness; "God only knows!" is a synonym of ignorance. Spinoza's epigram gives us the philosophy of religion in a nutshell. A genuinely scientific study of religion is no more than an illustrative commentary on this generalization. The whole of modern anthropology constitutes a storehouse of facts and situations demonstrating it. Sir James Frazer's eleven bulky volumes of *The Golden Bough* is a sustained and unchallengeable proof that every essential feature of religion is based upon early man's ignorance of the nature of what is going on around him. And a conclusion based upon a delusion must be wrong. Modern defenders of religion admit the truth of what has just been said in the very act of declaring it to be false.

For in no case do they rest their case for God upon what is *known*. They insist that we must believe in God because science cannot tell us all we wish to know, or answer all the questions we care to ask. What is this but saying that religion begins where knowledge ends? If a scientific man were to say "You must believe what I say about the phenomenon before you because we have no knowledge of how it happens," he would be laughed at for a clown, or despised as a confidence-trick operator. The clergyman says it with an air of authority, and demands to be recognized as a mouthpiece of divine wisdom. From the dawn of human thought until today "God" has never been more than the phrase with which hopeless ignorance seeks to narcotize a consciousness of its own impotence.

* * *

The Pressure of Life

One often wonders whether there are really people who sincerely believe that God does help. Large numbers say they believe, and it is difficult to believe they are all hypocrites. The clergy say that *they* believe, but, as Heine said of God's forgiveness, it is their trade. They must say so. We readily grant that God—or the belief in God—helps *them*. The comfortable and high positions held by so many obvious mediocrities prove this. Can one imagine a man of the mental calibre of the Bishop of London receiving ten thousand a year from any other source than that of the Church? He once said that life would not be what it is without Jesus Christ. We accept that in full. It is self-evident. But the mass of the people who say that they believe God helps them have no obvious ground for saying so—except that of slavery to a phrase, to tradition, and perhaps a fear coming down to them from their primitive ancestors that it may be dangerous to offend gods who may be there after all. Man is inclined to be a great humbug, and is mostly a terrible coward.

But just as life in its primitive stages, when gods were as plentiful as caterpillars, and bulked on the landscape with mastodons, so modern and more civilized conditions rob of its power the belief that God helps. Ultimately man has to come to terms with reality. If a parson is sick he consults a doctor or goes to a health resort. If he cannot afford the health resort, his congregation may have a "whip round," and the parson gets a rest—so does the congregation. The layman is more affected by his surroundings, for he has no obvious personal interest in fighting against them. The need for soldiers pointing to the fact that the physical health of the people is not what it ought to be, the Government starts a health crusade. But the Minister of Health does not ask for a nation's prayers to bring about what is desired. He dwells on the benefit of having playing fields, but is silent about going to Church. He thinks of strengthening the backs of the people, but is silent

about bending their knees. He looks after the appointment of doctors, but there is no suggestion of increasing the number of parsons. Milk, and not masses, is recommended; and only in the editions of Roman Catholic papers, issued where that Church is strong, is there printed, much in the style of cures effected through quack medicines, accounts of illnesses cured by burning, to the Virgin or to a saint, holy candles—purchased in Church. The Government in its rearmament scheme pays not the slightest heed to the Church, the Clergy, or to God. In earlier periods there would have been religious processions, prayers in the Churches, and the sanctification of implements of war. All we have left is the blessing of a battleship and the breaking of a bottle of a not too expensive wine, followed by an adjournment to a luncheon at which the wine is put to a use that meets with much greater appreciation. Facts will tell, in the long run, and the lesson of experience has a method of working its way into the thickest of skulls.

* * *

Can Religion Help?

Why should we expect God to help us? All we know of the world has been gained, not merely by the slow growth of human knowledge, but in actual opposition to the message God is said to have given the world. The Christian God is the only deity who has attempted authorship, and the consequences have been deplorable. For either he did not know what he meant to say, or he did not know how to say what he meant, or he forgot what he had actually done, and got everything wrong in his first, and last, venture in literature. So man had to set to work with nothing but his native wit to discover the truth about himself and the world in which he was living. And the result to date is that even the parsonry, who might have remembered that it was their job to keep God on top, have handed the world of verifiable knowledge over to science and philosophy. Religion admits that for everything that can be known we must go to science. Prayers for rain are still offered (it must be admitted that in every case the rain does come *after* the prayers are offered) but much greater reliance appears to be placed on the non-religious forecasts of the B.B.C. There is general agreement that all that is known or may be known is the legitimate sphere of science, and for information and help we can look to no other source. So far as the present position is concerned religion has not merely surrendered to science; but has given everything to it as spoils of war. But religionists still have a spark of hope. After all, science may never be able to tell us all we want to know. Beyond the known lies the unknown, but knowable, and as Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge have warned their fellow-believers, it is dangerous to build upon the present ignorance of science. Religion dare not challenge the known in the name of *God's Word*. And it is dangerous to claim the unknown, for tomorrow the unknown may become the known, and wherever and whenever that has happened the consequences to religion have been disastrous. But beyond the known and the unknown there may be the "unknowable"—that land of vague phrases and unthinkable, inconceivable existences. That offers a refuge for religion, for it a land of nowhere filled with nothing; and when science bids farewell to the gods and signs, as it has virtually signed, the order for their banishment, they may dwell in the "unknowable" in security. That world of the "Unknowable" is Spinoza's "asylum of ignorance," sanctified. The savage began to build it when he personified and worshipped the forces around him; and the present-day theological philosopher represents the final stage in

which "God" is reduced to sheer vacuity. Over every altar there should to-day be written, "Here is worshipped that of which we know nothing, and we worship in the security of knowing that our worship may never be tainted by the iconoclastic influence of developing knowledge."

* * *

Decide

God has never saved man. That is a fact of history. But man has saved God; that is a disaster of history. Man does not anywhere surrender his ill-informed guesses at the riddle of the universe quickly or easily. Ignorance begets fear, and fear hesitates at adventure. More, ignorance gives its decisions quickly and easily. Knowledge, which knows only the method of trial and error, reaches conclusions slowly, and states them with circumspection. So it happens that man clings to his fears—fashions gods after he has acquired the knowledge that deprives them of justification. He endows them with judgments born of his own knowledge, with designs that owe their being to his own socialized nature. He takes upon his own shoulders the blame for events that, if there was a God, properly belongs to Him. He shapes language and attributes it to a God, he cultivates the earth and thanks his god for the products of his own industry. He civilizes his gods, not always to bring them up to his own level, but to at least the extent of making them sufficiently decent not to affront human society. Christians tell us that man is always seeking after God. It is not true. It is nearer the truth to say that God is always seeking after man. It is a fact of history that men can and do exist without God; but history cannot show us a god that has survived man's neglect. Man is the great god-maker. He atones for it sooner or later by destroying his own creation. Decide marks the road of progress.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Sage of China

"Without fears, without desires, without ceremonies, he has used sheer reason, and played the philosopher."

Voltaire on Confucius.

It used to be alleged against John Bull that he had little or no tact in dealing with other races. He trampled heavily on the things he could not understand. Even in neighbouring Ireland he dubbed the Roman Catholic religion "a heathenish superstition," and behaved accordingly. In the East, he epitomized the Greek Church as "a fancy religion." In the Far East, all non-Ayrians were regarded impartially as "niggers." Of late years John has altered his attitude a little, and tried to make amends.

China, for example, is in the news again; and much ink has been spilled in connexion with recent hostilities. It is only from the purely John Bullish point of view that the Chinese can be called barbarians. They have a civilization which was very old when our forefathers were painted savages. They have native religions of their own, and, rightly or wrongly, they have an antipathy to foreign ideas. It is we ourselves who in their eyes, are the barbarians, and truth to tell, what with our superstitions and our quarrels, the spectacle offered by our boosted European civilization cannot be a very edifying one.

From its size, population, and range of climate, China should be regarded as a continent. The chief reason why it is not is that Confucius, twenty-four

centuries ago, compiled a series of classics, the acceptance of which stamped on the people a common character, with identical customs and ideals, which have made China one country. Is there anywhere else in the world a similar position accorded to a man, who never claimed any association with the supernatural? In the legends, Christ declared himself to be the son of a god. Mohammed believed himself inspired. The followers of Gautama Buddha added a superstitious veneer to his teaching. But Confucius was only a man, a humble scholar. It is no exaggeration to add that he is, in a sense, the father of the whole people. He bent all his energies towards the promotion of a stable and peaceful society. His teaching, more than anything else, has been the secret of that marvellous unity which has, again and again, enabled China to triumph over foreign conquest and domestic faction, and reassert her great and impressive unity.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the moral code of Confucius is the distinct enunciation of the "Golden Rule" centuries before there was any Christianity. Being asked if there were one word which would serve as a rule of conduct for life, he replied: "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

To Confucius, society was the great reality. Civilization, with its material splendour, social order and settled government, was a blessing. For its preservation he trusted to the combined influences of education, example, and ceremonial. Confucianism has been a great success. It has been the rule of life for millions of people for twenty-four centuries. Moreover, it is secular; it confines itself to this world. It knows nothing of prayer, and is not troubled with priest-made problems of sin and guilt. It is opposed to idolatry. Priests are unknown to it. It suits the Chinese character, for they are, as a people, practical and unspeculative. It has made China the most uniform, the most closely compacted, and the most conservative nation in the world. Other races may die out, but the Chinese are one of the permanent factors of humanity.

Confucius did more for his country than any other among the countless myriads of her sons had done. In his splendid audacity the old-world scholar "aimed at a million." What matter if he missed an unit!

"That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit."

Like Socrates, he was a teacher—not a school-master—but an instructor of inquiring young men, many being among the ablest men in China of that time. They began the pæan which has since resounded through all the intervening ages, nor is it less loud and less confident now than it was four-and-twenty centuries ago. He is one of the greatest figures of all human history. Quiet as the Sphinx, looking over the far-flung desert of contradictory theologies:—

"Others abide our question: thou art free,
We ask and ask: thou smilest and art still."

Confucius planted himself on the actual laws of human nature, and the relations and duties of life, as these had been formulated by wise men before him. He rejected all idea of the supernatural. "We cannot as yet," he said, "perform our duties to men; how can we perform our duties to spirits?" Again, "We know not as yet about life; how can we know about death?" Recall also his memorable words: "My aim is to learn from things below, and rise to things above." Standing outside all superstitions

and religions, he built up his own philosophical system by secular knowledge alone.

For twenty-four centuries his authority has been more unquestioned than any other system. We can but admire the singular devotion, completeness, and dignity of his life. Seeking no honour, or applause he made an imperishable name. At a time of history when gross ignorance and superstition were rampant, the pursuit of culture for its own sake, and not for any base or ulterior object, was an exception so rare as to be scarcely credible. In an age of superstition, Confucius remained ever faithful to ethical ideals; in an age of barbarism he cared only for truth. He has been rewarded by the devotion of countless millions, who have accepted his secular system as having the stamp of truth and finality. And, paradoxical though it may sound, the quintessential secularism underlying Confucianism embodies what cultured people of the present day are hoping to become prevalent in Europe. Confucianism is more than one of the World's religious systems. It is a sure signpost of that religion of humanity which will one day supplant all the creeds and superstitions of the world.

MIMNERMUS.

A Study of a Dying Race

THE aborigines of Australia are probably the most primitive of living men. When the white invader entered their territory they numbered perhaps, some 150,000, and had led a secluded existence in their isolated habitat for untold ages. Their neighbouring Tasmanian relatives have already disappeared, and the extinction of the surviving savage stocks of the Island Continent is merely a matter of time.

Important anthropological data were amassed by pioneer investigators such as Grey and Howitt, and these were enormously extended by the strictly scientific studies of Spencer and Gillen, whose first-hand inquiries proved a veritable revelation. More recently still, Stanley D. Porteus, Professor of Clinical Psychology in the University of Hawaii, has conducted a comprehensive study of the Australian aborigines in their native surroundings, and his findings are available in his *Psychology of a Primitive People* (Edward Arnold). This volume is divided into two parts: native environment and an inquiry into blackfellow intelligence. Rich in results as Porteus' observations and examinations are, he pleads for further studies of native mentality before it becomes too late. "The native Australians," he assures us, "are a fast vanishing race. In many districts where there are still aborigines to be found the population is limited almost entirely to adults. There are extremely few children being born, and some of these are half-castes. Only in the case of such tribes as the Luritcha, who have never before been in contact with civilization, is there to be observed a full quota of children. Inadequate as this study may be, it is safe to assert that in twenty years or less it could never be repeated. By that time our opportunity to learn more of the psychology of this most interesting people will be for ever lost."

Where the natives have come under the influence of Christian missionaries, many are nominal converts. The food rations furnished by the authorities to the normally ill-nourished natives have very materially contributed to this. The converts usually display every outward manifestation of piety when they attend religious services, but when Prof. Porteus found them gathered together to celebrate their tribal corroborees they seem to have reverted to their or-

iginal customs and beliefs. On these occasions the blackfellows attached to the Beagle Bay Mission to all appearance returned wholeheartedly to their ingenuous native faith. "Standing on the sandridge a little distance from the camp," observes Prof. Porteus, "one gets the full effect of weirdness in the scene. One might almost believe that the fierce note of these songs is struck in challenge to all that the mission stands for. One can hardly believe that these natives, shaking with the vehemence of their singing, can be the same men who knelt so quietly at vespers. No matter how sincere the religious response may have seemed, one cannot help feeling that the primitive reasserts itself with the first beat of the kylies, and that the blackfellow with every note that he sings is voicing a belief and a passionate attachment to his own folkways."

Porteus obtained much important information from the old men who are the storehouses of tribal tradition and wisdom, as well as the virtual rulers of the community. This keen observer expresses a very favourable opinion of the natural intelligence of the aborigines. Porteus never views the native from any arrogantly superior standpoint, but always bears in mind the environmental disabilities which the savage people suffer. Although the Australian native has no shelter worthy of the name; scanty weaving, and is a stranger to pottery yet, when we consider the fact that these tribes were restricted to a Continent divorced since remote times from all contact with progressive peoples, and are still in the stone, hunting and food-collecting stage of development and are confined to a habitat containing no quadrupeds capable of domestication; with immense territories ever subject to periods of prolonged drought with its attendant famine then the skilfully close adaptation of the native races to highly unfavourable circumstances merits praise rather than superior pity.

Having secured the complete confidence of the leading natives by tactful and considerate treatment, Porteus was invited to witness many of their secret ceremonies. Like most whites, the blacks cherish a desire for forbidden fruits, and enjoy sailing near the wind. Thus, a dramatic representation was presented which one of the tribal veterans assured Porteus was "not for ladies." It seems safe to say that no such performance would be submitted to, much less permitted by our licenser of plays. Nevertheless, the spectacle was acclaimed with genuine enthusiasm by the native audience, and even the sophisticated white onlookers appear to have appreciated the performance to a greater degree than they might perhaps have been willing to admit. The Professor, however, noted "that the ones most forward in the performance were some of the older natives who had impressed me as the most devout of the worshippers at evening chapel."

So completely was Porteus trusted by the natives, that they brought forth their most sacred symbols for his inspection and approval, and even presented him with some of their most zealously safeguarded churinga, which they treasure with solemn secrecy and care, as sacred memorials of the spiritual experiences of their lowly race. Magical powers are also assigned to these wooden or stone memorials, and anyone carrying a churinga at a moment of combat issues unharmed from the fray. Also, his strength will be increased and made more effectual, for the prowess and virtues of its former possessor dwell in the divine token, and are transferred to its later owner. Moreover, borrowed churinga will act as mascots, while their scrapings when mixed with water restore the ailing to good health.

Apart from the spirits of their ancestors who lived in long past *alcheringa* times, no deities are known

to the aborigines when uninfluenced by European contact. But sorcery is a potent factor in native life, and their dread of evil magicians serves to sadden their lives. Not all the spirits are baneful, but those that are, constantly contrive to accomplish mischievous deeds. Every conspicuous object—river, rock, cess-pool or tree—is feared as the haunt of special enemies. The most devilish sorcerers are the Kurdaitcha who, when aided by malicious medicine-men, steal unseen into camp and spear their unsuspecting victims, who soon become sick and die. These dreadful Kurdaitcha also absorb human blood, induce oblivion in their prey by means of magic, so that death swiftly supervenes. It is also supposed that the death of a distant enemy is secured by pointing and jerking a charmed stick or bone in the direction of his dwelling-place.

To the European, who usually possesses many superstitions of his own, fancies such as these appear preposterous, but when we reflect on the circumstance that Australia is, for hundreds of miles in succession still a deserted continent, the spiritual delusions of the black become perfectly natural. As Porteus puts it: "If we can realize the intense loneliness of the blackfellow's world, the fact that he is governed by unreasoning fears is entirely explicable."

Dependent as he is on memory the native's mnemonic powers are naturally striking. Also, he is a remarkable mimic and any naughty European expression is noted and reproduced with startling fidelity. "Bloody" has long been sanctioned in Holy Writ, and *Macbeth*. More recently, William De Morgan utilized it with consummate skill in *Joseph Vance*, while the Shavian use of it at which some of the critics pretended to be scandalized and shocked is later still. Even so, it is a common feature of modern speech, much used by Englishmen abroad. So, when Mr. Millard was learning to drive a Ford truck, it became his custom to take with him on his expeditions "spare cylinders" in the form of native women (gins) to push the car, if required. Porteus relates that: "One evening these gins were regaling the camp with a little play on the day's experiences. First one would make a buzzing sound just like the starter, another would 'clug-clug' like the engine until a third would suddenly contribute a convulsive splutter which signified the stalling of the car. Then in the succeeding silence a fourth, seated upon a log to represent the driver would remark in a querulous tone, 'Well, what's wrong with the bloody bastard now?' The performance would be hailed with gales of laughter from young and old."

Another instance of native mimetic ability was recorded by the anthropologist Stirling, who noted that the blacks soon became proficient in bad language. "One of his black boys who was having trouble with an obdurate camel, lost his temper, shook his fist in its face and exclaimed, 'You bloody liar!'" Thus, one touch of Nature makes the whole world kin.

T. F. PALMER.

Healthy humanity, finding itself hard pressed to escape from sin and degradation, will leave the brooding over speculative pollution to the cynics and the "righteous overmuch," who, disagreeing in everything else, unite in blind insensibility to the nobleness of the visible world, and in ability to appreciate the grandeur of the place Man occupies therein.

Nay more, thoughtful men, once escaped from the blinding influences of traditional prejudice, will find in the lowly stock whence Man has sprung, the best evidence of the splendour of his capacities; and will discern in his long progress through the Past, a reasonable ground of faith in his attainment of a nobler future.

T. H. Huxley.

Tendencious

"It's as easy as lying," said Hamlet. Well, most people find lying absurdly simple, but *efficient* lying is far from easy. Feeble lying fails to deceive; good lying succeeds in deceiving. A liar on the grand scale can be excused for hitching his wagon to a star. He may become a diplomat and achieve a brilliancy of reputation which will allow him occasionally to tell the truth, in the knowledge that it is unlikely to be believed. He may become a major statesman, for few in that position abhor the taradiddle. And in the journalistic sphere it is the good liar who is marked out for promotion. To him goes the job of writing the tendencious paragraph or the tendencious article. This is no job for the pinchbeck reporter; it is reserved for the journalist.

The business of the tendencious paragraph is to suggest some falsehood. It draws the line at direct mis-statement; there are risks attached to that. And, apart from the danger of libel and the risk of offending important persons, there is still in existence in some quarters an old-fashioned prejudice against the marketing of falsehood. The dealer in the tendencious escapes that reproach. He has developed a most elaborate technique. On page three of the journal, in an article by Benjamin Blunt, the required false impression is engendered. On page five, in an article on *Women's View*, the same impression is given, from an entirely different angle. Just as the reader is on the point of flinging the paper to one side he reads on the last page but one a further paragraph. This one contains less subtlety; it states rather than suggests. Care is however taken to leave open one or two exits in case the situation should develop uncomfortably. Other papers, issued by spiritually-allied publishing houses, lend a hand in the same direction; and, should the response be encouraging, incessant gramphoning then proceeds. The tendencious writer has succeeded, and he senses that the time has now arrived when a rise in emoluments may successfully be engineered.

Journalist Psmith and Journalist Ptomkins, Specialists in the Tendencious, are recognized as sophisticated persons; highly-skilled literary men; brilliant members of the Fourth Estate. One can admit that high-skill is necessary so to steer your course that your hands are shaken cordially by the very best people, statesmen, ecclesiastics, even big business-men, when any clumsiness may have resulted, instead, in your being shrunk from as one shrinks from the obnoxious and malodorous sewer-rat. Yes, it takes skill; unless it be indeed true that the day is gone when honest and courageous speech is admired by the people of this island; and what is respected more is the ability to put over successfully good thumping lies, something that will enhance our national pride, something that will remove even further clothing from the *Sans-culottes*, something that will put money in our purse. "Begad, Sir," says Manfred Blimp, the manufacturer of Shaving Brushes, "That fellow Ptomkins is a Knockout. He was the man who devised that story about anthrax and Foreign Shaving Brushes all out of his head. We must see what we can do for him. We'll mention his name to old Waxen-Wurdz at the Club to-night. If that kind of thing doesn't deserve recognition, what does? The nation should be proud of Ptomkins." And Cuthbert Blimp, the Egg Merchant, likewise effervesces about Psmith, and the national service he rendered by circulating telling ingenuities about Chinese eggs.

Not that the tendencious gentlemen are confined to

journalism. Observe that man in the corner-seat who, on a long railway journey, ingeniously gets the conversation round to the folly and lack of proper patriotism in people who buy carelessly instead of buying British. The suggestion is made by a fellow passenger that if everyone acted upon that principle then there would be, even in Britain, manufacturers who would charge more heavily and give less value if the article from abroad were excluded. "Of course, you're right, Sir," you are rather surprised to hear. "There are firms who would get lazy and avaricious, and give you a raw deal. But that does not apply to the many old-established firms who have served the nation well for years. What do you lose by supporting them? Take Sniffkin's Sausages, for instance; or Tootles' Tooth Powder. Everyone knows they are good. Why, Tootles has been known to be the goods for over half a century! Is it fair, I ask you, that this strictly reputable and honourable concern should suffer from competition in Andorra or Patagonia?" A noble creature, this! I often met him when I travelled daily up and down the country. Many is the fountain-pen, motor-car, and types of boots, books and bacon, I acquired a prejudice against by such skilful tendenciousness—perhaps in some cases to my loss. Such smartness in salesmanship is surely a trivial offence, if an offence at all, compared to the peccancy of those who trade in the things of the mind and offer false currency in that sphere.

"Truth is a thing to be shouted from the house-tops." Who said that? Was it an Archbishop, a Bishop, a Missionary? It was William Kingdon Clifford, a great nineteenth-century writer, a scientist, a Freethinker, a great man. Our great Modern Press writers—who have religion in their bones, who raise the banner for Religion, and God, and Jesus, and lie like troopers—regard men like Clifford as purveyors of folly. The word has gone forth: The Truth is Dangerous, and any who show leanings thereto must be butchered to make a scribbler's holiday. *The Truth is Dangerous* is their belief; a belief, all the same, never expressed, for the expression of it is regarded as dangerous. This popular education business was all a mistake; it is slowly but surely creating havoc. But, thank God! we have found the way out. The Mob can read, well then, let them read! Let them read what *we* give them. What we will shout from the house-tops will be what the vested interests in Christendom dictate. We will gramophone the message of ecclesiasticism, the message of every big and bad business, the message of every ignoble institution that will bring us the boodle; all these causes that cannot put up a rational case, and which, when they see their precious perquisites in danger, shout (and employ supers to swell the shout) "Tradition, Intuition, Symbolism, What is Truth?" They pay, pay well, though often in other ways than hard cash, for the Tendencious paragraph; whilst the poor burglar or pickpocket (who takes real risks in carrying on his profession) rarely reaches a luxurious mode of living, and is hardly ever asked out to a banquet. There is high "value" attached to-day to the successful manipulator of public opinion. He who inspires the little paragraphs about the Magnificent, the Wonderful, the Wise, the Ethical book called the *Holy Bible* is regarded as a person of enormous "value." He who wishes to resuscitate the fortunes of the King who gave his opinion that "the extermination once and for all of the Left parties will put an end to the war in Spain," turns out tendencious articles to show that that person has some very excellent personal habits (the way he plays with his children is a treat to see.) Such a writer is, in the view of some section of opinion, undoubtedly a person of "Value," and,

plainly, Right Honourable. For our part, we would rather be a dog and bay the moon than be Right Honourable on those terms.

T. H. ELSTON.

How Things are Done in France

THIS is the report by M. A. Lorulot of the work done in the last twelve months by the National Federation of Freethinkers of France and its Colonies.

The political arena has been so occupied with economic and financial problems that it has been scarcely possible to obtain a hearing for reforms of an anti-clerical or rationalist character. When some sort of a hearing has been obtained the Government, in spite of its Socialist quality, has been only too ready to sacrifice Freedom of Thought in order to catch Catholic votes for its financial policy. Whether the Popular Front has gained by its concessions to the Catholics is a matter of considerable doubt. There are some fifty members of the Chambre who are declared Freethinkers, and have formed a parliamentary group under the chairmanship of M. Quinson, the deputy for the Ain.

The late minister of the P.T.T., M. Gardillier, promised the Federation to allow them a regular broadcast. His successor has not yet fulfilled this promise.

M. Zay, the Minister of National Education, has made laudable efforts to preserve the secular nature of the French State schools. Constant watchfulness is required to prevent public money being allotted to clerical establishments which have no right to it. The laws enforcing secular education should be applied to Alsace and to North Africa.

The Parliamentary Group has undertaken to advance these three demands.

The Federation has increased in membership considerably. New branches have been founded in the Aisne, the Var, the Vaucluse and Upper Savoy; they all show a welcome liveliness. Several other local associations have joined the National Federation. The Havre Society has founded an Orphanage, the Orphelinat Francisco Ferrer, which has given shelter to thirty Spanish children. This is a particularly admirable effort.

Two new pamphlets have been published and distributed, each in editions of over 100,000; and other pamphlets have been sold and distributed in similar numbers.

This winter a special effort is to be made. Each region is to organize an intensive propaganda with a view to joining together all active Freethinkers in the district.

The Annual Congress was held this year at Bordeaux, from August 12 to 18. Next year it will be held at Boulogne.

The printing number of the weekly *La Libre Pensée* has been increased to 32,000, which is a matter for satisfaction.

AND IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

At the last census in this country everyone had to declare their religious belief and, out of a population of thirteen millions, over one million stated that they had no religious creed. But of these million Freethinkers, only 50,000 belong to propagandist organizations, and of these 10,000 are members of the Moravian Socialist Freethought Association which is so strongly political in its outlook, that it will not affiliate to the World Union which requires of its members, that they shall be of no one particular party, just as the National Secular Society admits to its

membership men of all political leanings, provided that they can subscribe to the aims and articles of association.

Our Czech friends have been untiring in platform propaganda and in publishing during the past year. In addition they have worked along two lines which, to me at any rate, seem particularly interesting. The Czech State looks upon all religions with an impartial eye. Whatever Church can show sufficient demand to warrant it, will receive State support. There is then in the process of formation a Freethought Church, which, it is proposed, should apply for State support on equal terms with the Catholics and Protestants. With similar reasoning there are formed in the State schools classes for instruction in all such religions as can show an adequate number of pupils of that denomination. Basing their claim on this regulation, the *Volna Myslenka* has been able to establish classes in Moral Instruction for the children of parents without religious beliefs. In Praha (Prague) there are already 38 of these classes, in Brno 40 (1,000 pupils) and in Pardubice 10; it is hoped to establish over 50 more during the coming twelve-month.

A source of trouble has developed in the refugees. Most of these come from Germany and Austria, and there are many Freethinkers among them who have been received with open arms by our friends of the *Volna Myslenka*. Some of them have ill-repaid this hospitality, and over a score of spies have been discovered among them. Yet they have been considered with sympathy. Unable to gain a tolerable living, often reduced to sore straits, they had been unable to withstand the temptations of Nazi and Fascist emissaries who have made use of them and the entry given them into Czech homes for espionage. As there are also Spanish Fascist refugees and Russian refugees, the different species of exile are segregated by the Government now, and it is proposed that all refugees of no matter what sort should be found adequate means of gaining their living so that espionage should no longer tempt them.

In June last the 500th anniversary of the execution of Dupa, the last Hussite leader, was celebrated, and at the great demonstration organized at Kutna Hora, the Freethought representative Spurny spoke on the same platform as the Agrarian (Conservative) Minister of War.

The German-speaking Bund held their Annual Conference at Teplice, at which 8,000 Freethinkers were present.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

The Book of Mormon

Most people know that the Book of Mormon was written on gold plates, which no one but Joe Smith and a few chosen friends ever saw, and that an angel took them away to heaven after Smith had translated it into what he called English by the aid of a pair of magic spectacles which accompanied the plates. But probably few outside the Latter Day Saints have read the book. My copy has 568 pages of about 600 words each. It might be approximately described as the books of Joshua and Samuel transferred to American soil, with a new set of priests, judges, prophets and kings very like those of Palestine. The Nephites, who were the American branch of the Chosen Race, escaped from Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's time, and crossed the Atlantic. The Lord gave them lessons in ship-building, and superintended the voyage. In the Promised Land, which appears to be New England (though the geography is very vague and difficult to fit with any map), a great part of them forsook the true faith, and became the Lamanites, whose skins the Lord darkened to show his

disapproval. Wars between the Lamanites and the orthodox Nephites, and heresies among the Nephites, fill up the centuries till the time of Christ. The care of Jehovah for his chosen race is shown by the fact that the earthquakes at the death of Christ, which did so little damage in Palestine, destroyed all the cities of the Nephites, and killed all the unrighteous Nephites, leaving only the righteous to welcome Christ, when he came to see them for a few weeks after he left Palestine. He preached the Sermon on the Mount over again, and appointed twelve apostles, three of whom were never to die. So they are alive now, but the man in charge of the gold plates at the time, apparently a younger Nephi, was forbidden to give their names. After Christ's visit the Nephites lived in paradisiacal communism for about 170 years, then they became wicked again. The prophet Mormon and his son Moroni in the fourth century, were the last guardians of the gold plates. Mormon tells us "When young I was large in stature, so the people of Nephi appointed me leader of their armies," and he did some successful fighting against Lamanites and Gadianton robbers, but in his old age civilization began to break up, and the story culminates with the great battle on Cumorah Hill in A.D. 385, when the Lamanites, with enormous loss to themselves, all but exterminated the Nephites. 140,000 Nephites were slain, and a little later Moroni found himself the only survivor, and in danger of his life. Also there was no more room on the plates, though they were written in reformed Egyptian, which takes up less room than Hebrew. So Moroni buried the plates on Cumorah Hill, not to be seen again till an angel revealed them to Joe Smith.

An interesting passage is in the Book of Jacob ii. 27 (Jacob was younger brother of Nephi, and lived about B.C. 500). "There shall not any man among you have more than one wife, and concubines he shall have none." From which it is easy to see that Mormons are as good at explaining away awkward passages of Scripture as Christians are. It was Joseph Smith who introduced polygamy, he had a special revelation to authorize it. Another interesting text is Mosiah xviii. 24, which orders priests to labour with their own hands for their support. This is repeated in several other passages.

Alma 30, 48, Korihor said, "I do not deny the existence of a God, but I do not believe there is a God, and I say also that ye do not know there is a God, and except ye show me a sign I will not believe." This was about B.C. 60. Now "there was no law against a man's belief," but one could hardly expect a prophet to extend tolerance to such blatant agnosticism, so Alma struck Korihor dumb, and after begging his bread miserably for a time, he went among the Zoramites and was run over and died. Alas, the power to strike heretics dumb, though not quite lost is much diminished in these days.

One of the Mormon's last letters to his son Moroni is devoted to condemnation of the "solemn mockery" of baptizing infants who have nothing to repent of, and all go straight to heaven. So that, despite the constant bloodshed in the Lord's name, it seems that Jehovah lost a little of his barbarity in crossing the Atlantic.

X.Y.

Acid Drops

Bishop Barnes is alarmed at the drop in the birth-rate, not because it means smaller population, but because he thinks we are breeding the poorer stocks, and this means, he says, that "the best stocks are dying out." Which is just nonsense. It is true that the people in the poorest circumstances breed more freely than those in better circumstances. But setting aside that there is a larger death-rate among the former than exists among the latter, there exists no scientific evidence that there is in the increase of the so-called "lower classes," anything more than a problem in sociology. If 10,000 children of the "lower classes" were transported at birth to the circumstances in which the "upper classes" live, and *vice versa*, there is no evidence that the products would be very much different from what they are in existing circumstances. Bishop Barnes appears to be beset with

the snobbish idea that there really is something superior in "the upper classes." Take away the environmental advantages—which include nutrition, education, etc., and it becomes clear that the difference is explained by economic and purely cultural factors. Bishop Barnes's doctrine of the brotherhood of man appears to insist on the doctrine of the "elder brother" as a dominating factor.

The *Church Times*, commenting on the war between Japan and China, and expressing its condemnation of the awful slaughter of non-combatants, adds, "Let the Christian make no mistake. War now means massacre. And the massacre method is succeeding." We like that word *now*—as if war ever meant anything else but massacre. It has not always meant, of course, the actual massacre of civilians at a given moment; but there have been few wars where the ordinary population as apart from the soldiers, have not suffered, and this applies particularly to those well-known wars fought in the name of religion. The fight for supremacy between Catholics and Protestants lasted for centuries with terrible results in the sacking of towns and the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children—often in the name of the Pope or "Our Lord." What did the Christian wars of the Crusades, or the Spaniards in the Netherlands, mean except "massacre"? Whether the massacre method will succeed is another question. It did not succeed in the past, and it may not succeed in the present if the peoples of the world are determined that it shall fail.

Roman Catholics in Liverpool have got to vote anti-Conservative in the Municipal Elections. Their own representative of God, Archbishop Downey, is telling them so. The Conservative Party and the Church are now in open opposition, and the bid by the Catholic-dominated Labour Party to get the Church over half-a-million pounds for its schools, has turned the elections into a topsy-turvy religious squabble, in which there will be much sectarianism talked and little politics.

As noted in a recent article in these columns, the Labour Party has officially adopted a policy of full grants to voluntary (Catholic) schools; the ruling Conservative Party have swung into action on a cry of "no grants"—described by Sir Thomas White, political "boss" of the city, as the "supreme issue" of the elections; and now the Catholic Archbishop has advised all his flock to vote against any supporter of the Conservative Party (and presumably to vote for any supporter of the official Labour Party). His letter to the clergy, to be read from all pulpits on the Sunday preceding the elections concludes: "In view of the seriousness of the case and the exceptional circumstances surrounding it, I appeal to the Catholics of this city, on this occasion, because of the peculiar peril with which we are faced, to put the interests of their schools (for which they have made so many sacrifices in the past) above all interests, and at the November Elections to register their votes without fail against any candidate who supports the official policy of the Conservative Party of this city."

While Catholic Tories and Socialists are busy supporting and voting Labour, and anti-grant Tories and Socialists are busy voting Conservative, what the position is of Labour candidates who do not accept the policy of Catholic grants is not quite clear. And whether the Labour Party has put the cat among the pigeons, or the pigeon among the cats, also remains to be seen. There are many lessons to be drawn from these "municipal elections," not the least of which is that the Conservatives are arguing their no-grants policy on a basis of finance, and the Socialists their full-grants policy in the interests of "educational efficiency"! So perhaps it really isn't a question of religion after all?

The Principal of the Yorkshire United Independent College, speaking at Bristol, accused some of the Congregationalist Churches of "fiddling while Rome burns." His remedy is "more Congregationalism," which, put into homely phrase, simply signifies that

there is "nothing like leather." He also said that some of their churches were not fit to choose a minister, the implication of which is that the Congregationalist Church contains ministers that are not fit to be chosen. Well, he should know!

A Catholic publication, *Daily Mass*, has good news for the Catholic business man. All he has to do is to attend Daily Mass. This habit will

make your business or profession or occupation a thousand times more successful than your own unaided efforts, even if you slave from morning to night, could possibly make it. Cannot He ward off a thousand sources of failure?

Come to Mass! Bread for Energy! Eat more Fish! Do your daily dozen. And—it pays to advertise.

The Church in Italy has just received a staggering affront. It seems that Mussolini has appointed Gabriele D'Annunzio as President of the Royal Academy of Italy, in spite of the fact that the whole of the works of the poet are on the Index, "because," says the outraged *Universe*, "of their grossly immoral and anti-religious character. The poet has for years been identified with anti-Catholic doctrines and propaganda." D'Annunzio has been appointed in the place of Marconi, who seems to have been a devout Catholic, and the appointment "must make future relations between the Italian Academy and the Vatican extremely embarrassing." Here one can see how Catholic influence would work if it had the chance. Not the fitness or the reputation as a poet of a man should be his qualification for a job, but his religious beliefs. And the point to remember is the insolence of the Church of Rome in this as in other respects. We hold no brief for Mussolini, but we are glad to note that he did not consult the Vatican before making the appointment.

It is certainly interesting (to the outsider) to watch the Hitlerite progress in religious unity. We read in the *News-Chronicle*, that Hitler has accepted the "Nuremberg Manifesto" on Christianity. The *News-Chronicle* quotes the following clauses in the Manifesto:—

Germany's division into various faiths and beliefs is an insult to God whose creative will meant all Germans to be a united people.

Christ is the basis of our faith not as the offspring and perfecter of Jewry, but as the deadly enemy of the Jews.

Every alien spirit, therefore, should be driven out of the Church, and a German Christianity should be erected as a faith for all Germans, and to include all faiths.

It is all very well for the editor of the London journal referred to, to claim that this is tantamount to "the complete rejection of the teachings of the New Testament." The latter is so contradictory that it is equally possible to prove from the New Testament, (1) that Jesus intended His "salvation" to extend only to Jews, or (2) that Jesus offended the Jews mainly because He opposed them or still worse ignored them. But there can be no contradiction to the outstanding fact of history that for many centuries the whole Christian Church persecuted and hated Jews. Hitler has an immense Christian tradition in favour of his worst crimes.

We are constantly learning "What Jesus Meant," but we felt a bit surprised to read in the editorial columns of the *British Weekly* that Jesus recommended mankind to "read the newspapers." Which newspapers? The editor does not say. But we have no doubt he thinks his own journal at least a runner-up in the guessing competition. The only newspaper Jesus actually mentioned was the *Times* (see Matt. xvi. 3). A pious detestation of all newspapers once inspired a preacher to take for his text Mark ii. 4. ("They could not come nigh unto Jesus because of the press.")

Mr. Ernest Poole, the famous American author, explains (in the October *Harper's*) the extraordinary development of the Boy Soldier movement in Italy. Mussolini has created soldiers out of six-year

old boys. He has decreed that Italy must have a population of sixty millions by 1950 (17 million more babies must be "produced" in 13 years). We note with interest the Daily Prayer (or "grace before meat") which, Mr. Poole says, asks God to "grant the Duce a long life." We also note that "religious training, formerly confined to the elementary schools is expended now to the higher schools . . . and in the Opera Basilla (the National Boy Soldier Brigade), there is a chaplain for every legion." In a way, this is an answer to the often asked question, What is the use of Religion?

£40,527 has now been subscribed to the Bishop of Coventry's appeal for £65,000 to provide churches, church halls, etc., for his diocese. Even Lord Nuffield sent £10,000 towards the fund. The Bishop of Chelmsford wants seven more churches and three mission churches in Stratford, and he urgently appeals for an annual sum of £11,000. The Bishop of Truro wants £10,000 for Cornish church schools—and so the merry game goes on. The point to note is that the money in each case will be forthcoming, and it goes to support a worn-out faith, and an effete religion, instead of helping in the relief of genuine suffering. If there is anything much more tragic than this waste of money in a rotten cause we should like to know what it is.

One of our Catholic journals dealing with the "British Israel" nonsense says that "it is one of the oddities of human psychology that recurrent aberrations of this kind can from time to time enlist the interest and open the purse-strings of otherwise normal and intelligent people. Superstition takes many forms, and this is one of the oddest." Well, well, a typical example of the kettle calling the pot black! for every word quoted can just as easily refer to the writer's own pure and undefiled Roman Catholicism. If we were asked to give a supreme example of the most childish superstition and credulity, we could think of no better illustration.

Confetti manufacturers look like being very hard hit in the near future. It seems that some of the churches hate having to clear up the stuff after a wedding, and are making the unlucky bridegroom deposit ros. before the ceremony, the money to be returned if the church and grounds are left quite clean afterwards; if not, the money goes to the cleaners. So there goes with a bang one of the most cherished privileges of the spectators at weddings, and one of those old customs probably based on a symbolism which would shock most people if they knew it. One ought to add that some of the churches in America charge 25s., but that is to be expected from the land of big ideas.

Fifty Years Ago

THE *Rock* enters its "indignant protest" against a paper of Canon Isaac Taylor in praise of Mohammedanism. It laments that his views could not have been met on the spot with "the instant reply and stern rebuke which they deserve." The *Rock* displays its ideal of Christian charity by stigmatizing Mohammedanism as "a foul and debasing religion." Christianity professes to do as it would be done by. But if anyone calls Christianity a foul and debasing religion, how will the *Rock* take such a remark? Carried away by its desire to condemn Canon Taylor's too truthful utterances, the *Rock* exclaims: "What shall we say to the man who, in a Christian assembly, with a Bishop in the chair, apologizes for polygamy and excuses slavery!" This question is evidently thought to be a crushing one. Yet what else can a Christian do, what else does he do, when challenged upon the polygamy and slavery that God allowed under the Old Testament dispensation? What shall we say, in turn, of the bishop or editor who "apologizes for polygamy and excuses slavery" as having been permitted by God's law? If Mohammedan polygamy is dreadfully bad for the uncivilized tribes of Africa, why was Jewish polygamy so good and elevating for the patriarchs and chosen people?

The Freethinker, October 30, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H.B.C.—Thanks for cutting. The advertisement and the tract are fair samples of the type of intelligence to which Christianity is forced to appeal nowadays.

W. J. MEALOR.—Pleased to have your appreciation of our lecture at the Picton Hall. We always aim at giving of our best, and the best can do no more.

D. SLAVIN.—All Freethinkers are "out for social reform," but it does not follow that, therefore, the N.S.S. must fight as an organization for a particular plan or policy. That is to make activities of the Society subservient to a particular political or economic theory. The distinction should be clear to all who have not exchanged one bigotry for another. And the social activities of Freethinkers are not, we hope, exhausted by the National Secular Society. The domination of a one-eyed view on social matters is likely, in the long run, to prove as dangerous as a one-eyed view on religion.

"ANTI-DUHRING."—Strictly, belief in anything must imply some conception of the thing in which one believes. So far as the belief in a god is concerned, it is not hard to see the position. The belief begins in gods as copies of men. So far as the belief continues as a real belief "god" is still thought of in terms of "man." But there is a growing field in which "god" is used as a mere word that stands, not for belief, but for a mere profession of belief. May we commend our pamphlet *Gods and their Makers* for an outline of the subject.

J. KING.—It would take too much space to answer your question, "Wherein one can benefit by exchanging religion for Atheism?" in a paragraph. We suggest a reading of Freethought literature such as is advertised. A reading of *Letters to a Country Vicar* and *Four Lectures on Religion and Life*, would be quite enough to show the absurdity of assuming that our position is a "mere negative."

D. MAPP.—Thanks for good wishes from yourself and family. We may be writing later on the subject of your enclosures. Your cuttings will then prove useful.

Mrs. C. M. REID.—We are obliged for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

Sugar Plums

We again call the special attention of London Freethinkers to the Social that is to take place at the Bishopsgate Institute, Bishopsgate, E.C., on Saturday, November 13. The Bishopsgate Institute is central for the whole of London, buses and trains running from all directions. The function commences at 7 o'clock, but friends will be welcomed at 6.30. There will be a good musical programme, dancing, and refreshments. Tickets

are 2s. 6d. each, and we invite early application. The Social is organized by the Executive, and London members should see to it that the gathering is a success. We hope that many members will bring friends with them. Tickets may be obtained from the *Freethinker* and N.S.S. Offices.

There was a "crowded house" at Mr. Cohen's lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, on Sunday last. Mr. Cohen has a weakness for Scotch audiences, and the close attention with which his arguments were followed justified the appreciation he has for them. The questions, too were also very much to the point. Attendances, sales of literature, etc., all, we learn, set up a record. The one regrettable thing was that the demand for the current issue of the *Freethinker* was greater than the supply. There was a very brisk sale of the *Pamphlets for the People*. Mr. Smith, Vice-President of the Branch, took the chair and carried out his duties in an admirable manner. The Glasgow Branch is working very hard just now, and deserves all the local support it can get. Mr. Cohen is now taking two or three week's holiday from lecturing. He has had a strenuous time the last three weeks, and there are many things awaiting his attention.

Mr. Cohen asks the indulgence of his correspondents and readers for some delay in dealing with matters that ought to have received attention. But he has been heavily pressed with work for the past three weeks, and has had to be a deal away from home. This week his visit to Scotland, usually taking from Saturday morning to Monday evening—itsself a serious inroad into a busy week—has been extended until Wednesday evening owing to Society business in Edinburgh. He may have more to say about this last item, next week. So we hope that readers and correspondents will bear this in mind and join us in regretting that it is very difficult to squeeze more than twenty-four hours into each day.

Mr. Cohen spent a very pleasant couple of hours on Wednesday last in a "talk" with a number of members of the South West London Post Office staff. He was asked to talk to them on "Freethought," and the questions showed a very keen appreciation of the points raised. The address covered the bearing of Freethought on religious, social and political problems. If we are any judge of audiences, we opine that the discussion will not cease with the departure of the speaker.

We are not surprised to find that the clergy of Preston are not all satisfied with the omission of the mayoral church service by the corporation, the occasion being the election of a Roman Catholic Mayor. A protest against the policy adopted has been sent to the *Lancashire Daily Post*, signed by The Church Association, The Loyal Orange Association, and the Woman's Protestant Union. It is quite usual to find Christians angry when any form of religious monopoly or injustice is removed. We are not, of course, blind to the fact that the motive of the corporation in suspending the ridiculous Church Parade was due to the Mayor being a Roman Catholic, and not to any sense of justice to citizens as a whole. Still, it may serve as a precedent to be used when Preston Christians develop a sufficiently strong sense of justice to recognize that a Mayor is elected to discharge a purely civic function, and not to advertise this or that Church.

We are indebted to one of our readers for a reference to the case of Bowman v. Secular Society, Limited, by Lord Macmillan, whose authority on law no one will question, in his *Law and Other Things*. Lord Macmillan describes the case as "probably the most illuminating case on the change which has come over opinion in modern times." That case, we may remind readers, arose over a contested legacy to the Secular Society, Limited. It was fought right through to the House of Lords, and won. It established, for the first time, the unquestionable right of a Freethought Society to money.

bequeathed to it. It was, as the founder of the Secular Society, Limited, described it, the financial charter of liberty for Freethought. It made a legacy secure for a Freethought Society and for Freethought purposes, and is the leading case wherever English law has any authority.

The interesting thing to note is that it was the judgment delivered by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge on the second trial of G. W. Foote (Founder of the *Freethinker*) for blasphemy, which provided the foundation on which the Secular Society was built. Hitherto, the Christians had robbed Freethinkers at will. From that trial the financial side of the Freethought movement was made secure. Freethinkers could leave what they wished to a Freethought organization, or to a free journal such as the *Freethinker*, in the absolute certainty that their wishes would be carried out by their executors.

The Birkenhead Branch of the N.S.S., at its meeting on October 10, passed a resolution protesting against all forms of dictatorship as a threat to intellectual freedom, and condemning acts of violence at public meetings, and expressed the opinion that the continuance of such methods can lead only to the introduction of further restrictions in such liberties as we now possess. We hope that this resolution has been sent to the press, and that it will receive the publicity it deserves.

The Leicester Secular Society issued a questionnaire to all candidates for the municipal elections, enquiring whether they were prepared to support the Sunday opening of Cinemas, Sunday games in parks and recreation grounds, and whether they would favour information being given to all parents that it was within their rights to withdraw children from religious instructions, and without any questioning as to the reasons for so doing. If these do nothing else, they will indicate that others beside the more bigoted type of Christians are alive and watchful.

Determined efforts are being made to bring back the Christian Religion and the Christian Bible into the Primary schools of New Zealand. A section of the press is busily engaged in recalling to religion the 80 or 90 per cent of the population who are non-church-goers. It is realized that this can only be done by one method: Get hold of the child and pump into him daily the Lie of Lies that the Bible is not the work of man, but the work of God. It is recognized as clearly impossible to produce such a belief in the mind of anyone over twenty years of age without this preliminary treatment.

The *Dominion* has pulled out of its cases the type of a leading article on the subject of the Bible:—

Apart from all questions of creed or dogma, the fact remains that in the pages of the Bible are to be found the noblest philosophy, the finest language and the most exalting precepts that could possibly be given to the children. Why keep it out of the schools?

Trumpet this nonsense again and again, and continue the process in the schools. It is *the only way* the future population of New Zealand can be prevailed upon to bow the knee.

The President of "Our Lady's Missionary Society" writes us,

Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be injured by anything written about him in the *Freethinker*, or any other organ. But I am sorry for you.

If our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be injured by the *Freethinker*, then he has no cause for complaint. And if we cannot detach anyone from the worship of Jesus Christ, then no believer has any complaint to make. Which makes us wonder why Mrs. Evelyn L. Thomas takes the trouble to write us. Perhaps it is only to assure us that she agrees with Jesus Christ in having nothing about which to complain. Thus all ends happily—or ought to.

The Understanding

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."—*Prov. iii. 13.*

HAPPY, indeed, must he be, if, when in finding and getting two such desirable things, he can make good use of them. For, from the mere possession of things, little, if any, happiness may be expected. Happiness, of a sort, can be got from the mere lust of possession, but not for some people. The happiness to be got from wisdom and understanding can only be proportionate to the use made of them.

If no other use is made of understanding than in counting the number of the beast, the little happiness to be got, when the number is told one beforehand, cannot amount to much.

The value of understanding was brought before me in a humorous way over sixty years ago. The incident led me to Locke *On the Human Understanding*, a wonderful book.

This story, which I tell presently, showed me how, in his own way, a man may answer a question correctly, and yet be absolutely wrong. If a question be capable of two or three different interpretations, it must have two or three different, and yet correct, answers.

Locke was aware of this and much more. He says:—

I know there are not words enough in any language to answer all the variety of ideas that enter into men's discourses and reasonings.

So he tells us for "the diversion of some of his idle and heavy hours," he wrote this book "to be of some service to the human understanding." And he began "to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with."

And in what an interesting way he proceeds to do what seems to be his great task:—

To break in upon the sanctuary of vanity and ignorance.

Locke's valuable book was published in 1689. It is still worth reading. His method of writing and reasoning still deserves studying. Locke never laid any claim to infallibility, and had he been living to-day, no man would have enjoyed correcting his book, where it needed it, more than he.

But, whether his book be read or not, his "Dedication" of it to the Earl of Pembroke, "The Epistle to the Reader," and the "Introduction" to it are certainly worthy of attention.

In his "Dedication," he tells us that "The imputation of novelty is a terrible charge amongst those who judge of men's heads, as they do of their pet-ukes, by the fashion; and can allow none to be right but the received doctrines. Truth scarce yet carried it by the vote anywhere at its first appearance; new opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common. But truth, like gold, is not the less so for being newly brought out of the mine."

From this mere taste of the "Dedication" the reader may judge of its quality.

And here follows an interesting sample of "The Epistle to the Reader":—

Every step the mind takes in its progress towards knowledge makes some discovery, which is not only new, but the best, too, for the time at least.

For the understanding, like the eye, judging of objects only by its own sight, cannot but be pleased with what it discovers, having less regret for what has escaped it, because it is unknown. Thus he

who has raised himself above the alms-basket, and not content to live lazily on scraps of begged opinions, sets his own thoughts on work, to find and follow truth, will (whatever he lights on) not miss the hunter's satisfaction; every moment of his pursuit will reward his pains with some delight, and he will have reason to think his turn not ill spent, even when he cannot boast of any great acquisition.

And now, reader, if you do not step out in search of new knowledge you cannot very well blame Locke.

But Locke wished to avoid any abuse of language, so that misinterpretation should be well nigh impossible.

"Vague and insignificant forms of speech, and abuse of language," he says, "have so long passed for mysteries of science; and hard or misapplied words, with little or no meaning, have by prescription, such a right to be taken for deep learning and height of speculation; that it will not be easy to persuade either those who speak or those who hear them, that they are but the covers of ignorance, and hindrance to true knowledge."

Then in his "Introduction," he strives to show us that it is "useful to know the extent of our comprehension." He says: "I can discover the powers thereof, how far they reach, to what things they are in any degree proportionate, and where they fail us, I suppose it may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension, to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether, and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities. We should not then, perhaps, be so forward, out of an affectation of any universal knowledge, to raise questions, and perplex ourselves and others with disputes, about things to which our understandings are not suited, and of which we cannot frame in our minds any clear or distinct perceptions, or whereof (as it has, perhaps, too often happened) we have not any notions at all. If we can find out how far the understanding can extend its view, how far it has faculties to attain certainty, and in what cases it can only judge and guess, we can learn to content ourselves with what is attainable by us in this state."

Then, later, when speaking of "Our Capacity, etc.," he says: "Men may find matter sufficient to busy their heads and employ their heads with variety, delight, and satisfaction, if they will not boldly quarrel with their own constitution, and throw away the blessings their hands are filled with, because they are not big enough to grasp everything. We shall not have much reason to complain of the narrowness of our minds, if we will but employ them about what may be of use to us; for of that they are very capable: and it will be unpardonable as well as childish peevishness, if we undervalue the advantages of our knowledge, and neglect to improve it to the ends for which it was given us, because there are some things that are set out of the reach of it."

And again he says: "When we know our own strength we shall the better know what to undertake with the hopes of success."

To get to know the constitution of the mind, to take a survey of our own understandings, examine our own powers, and see what things they were adapted for: this is what Locke tried to do. The above will show the general reader that "The Dedication," "Preface," and "Introduction" to this book are too valuable to miss.

Come now, and let us laugh together saith the humourist. For too much "soberness consisteth not with good health, for the blood ceaseth to flow

and becometh stagnant; but laughter and life goeth hand in hand, it looseth the frame, the blood courseth merrily through the body, and filleth us full of health and hope. Methinks, more is to be hoped from the "noisy laughter of the fool," than from the saturnine sobriety of the Puritan."

At the beginning of this essay I said that, over sixty years ago, a humorous story introduced me to Locke "On the Human Understanding." Here in conclusion is the story:—

A gentleman, in making application for a house, added a P.S. to his letter—"Please say if there is a W.C.?"

The agent in reply said: "Re your P.S. The nearest W.C. is almost two miles off. It is a comfortable place and has seating of 400."

Now had the gentleman been enquiring about a Wesleyan Chapel, he would have had no reason to complain of the agent's correct, yet misleading, answer.

GEORGE WALLACE.

The Virgin Birth

SCEPTIC: "What sustains you in your belief that the Virgin Birth of Jesus is an historical fact?"

Average Christian: "Nothing in particular, except that I have been reared in a religious atmosphere."

S.: "Have you examined the question closely with the aid of critical literature?"

A.C.: "No. I have never considered this step necessary, for it seems to me that such a wonderful event could not have been evolved from the human imagination."

S.: "Are you aware that it is on record that many Pagan and other Gods are alleged to have been born of virgin mothers long before the Christian era?"

A.C.: "I am not. I have listened to scores of sermons from the pulpit, and have no recollection of having heard any reference to these events."

S.: "You do not surprise me. Broadly speaking, the clergy are careful to avoid any allusion to the subject of Comparative Mythology, knowing that if their followers acquired a knowledge of it their faith in historic Christianity would evaporate."

A.C.: "What are your grounds for doubting the truth of the Virgin Birth story?"

S.: "Rather should I ask, 'What are your grounds for believing it?' The Epistles were written before the existence of the Gospels, and no reference is made therein to the event. The writers evidently had never heard of it. Neither Mark nor John refers to the incident; and the accounts appearing in Matthew and Luke, our only authorities for the story, are contradictory. In the former Joseph dreams that an angel informs him of the expected birth, and in the latter it is Mary herself who learns the news from an angel. Christian biblical experts say that no trace of the story can be found until after Matthew and Luke were written, and that the details in these two gospels are obvious interpolations. Assuming, however, they are not interpolations, what evidence is there for the story? Neither Joseph nor Mary has left any record of his or her experiences, and Jesus himself made no claim to a supernatural origin. Details of a dream, and a visit by an angel, recorded by unidentified writers many years after the alleged events, are all we have in support of the tale. This 'evidence' would be rejected emphatically by any sane legal tribunal, with an expression of astonishment at the mentality of the claimants."

A.C.: "That may, or may not, be so, nevertheless

I cannot ignore the important fact that our clergy who, as you will admit, are pious and educated men, have complete faith in the story. If they entertained the slightest doubt on the subject they would not subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles."

S.: "Has it never occurred to you that many of them do so with tongue in cheek? It seems to me that they are forced to this subterfuge by the knowledge that their refusal would mean the loss to them of secure and congenial employment. They are human, and their personal moral standard is no higher than that of ordinary mortals like ourselves. It is a mistake to assume they are a body of saints."

A.C.: "Can you mention an instance of a clergyman openly repudiating the doctrine?"

S.: "It is common knowledge that a small but increasing number of the clergy, who, of course, have previously expressed their faith in the Thirty-Nine Articles, disapprove of it. Not long ago an Archdeacon in the West of England complained of the attitude of certain clergymen who, from the pulpit, criticized the doctrine; and expressed his opinion that they should resign their livings. The doctrine appears to be struggling to maintain its existence. You will probably be surprised to hear that a bishop has already suggested that it should no longer be required as an essential part of the creed."

PRO REASON.

Wanted—A Creator

Two men stood arguing outside the Church. On the night air came the words: ". . . turn to Jesus, he will not allow nations to burn wheat when children starve."

They were grown men. Obviously just out of the bible class or men's meeting. They were solving their brothers' fate on the doctrines they had but recently swallowed.

The platitude is as "rich" as the old chestnut: "God is in his heaven, Britons are awake, all is right with the world." What a state we should be in, to be sure, if God was not in his heaven, and Britons were all asleep!

Well, children—to say nothing of the grown-ups—still starve and wheat is still burned. The solution of the pious gentlemen outside the Church is not very helpful. The whole history of that Church, and of all others too, bristles with examples of bolstering-up the *status quo*. While the existing state of things economical and political are beneficial to the clergy—and who can deny that they are and have been?—they are opposed to any change or reform.

To the present disorder in the world the religions, individually or collectively, can bring no solution, indeed no alleviation. They can and do placate the unfortunates, and they can talk. But deeds not talk are wanted now more than ever before.

A creator is wanted. A wonderful new world, full of happiness, devoid of want, poverty and drudgery is possible; it is about us, waiting to be given form. A creator? There are thousands. The inventors, the scientists and the engineers have brought the dream of centuries almost—but not quite—within our grasp.

A midwife is required to bring about these marvels without a great upheaval, without smashing life and civilization completely in the birth.

The powers of darkness, blind politicians, insane economists, eighteenth century minds and archaic spiritual beliefs hold us back. Over them reigns the God of Money, a God far more potent and far more jealous than those of the churches.

Machines which can do the day's work of thirty accountants in an hour, produce paint from wood, drugs and dyes from common chemicals, wool from milk and make motor-car parts from soya beans are going to play havoc with our worn-out economic system when they become prevalent in a very short time. Two years ago, half a million acres of land went out of cultivation in India when a genius discovered synthetic indigo.

Will the "turning to Jesus" advocated by the bible-class solutionists give work to the displaced? Or provide a better life (materially) to the community? Or both? Or neither?

It is computed that, with drastic re-organization of Society, no man need work more than from four to five hours a day and still lead a fuller and better life than he does at present.

Religious and other bodies which tend our souls and ignore our bodies—except when war threatens—are now concerned with what we are going to do with all this leisure to be. Shall we become vicious, slothful, lazy? Satan will surely find work for idle hands, they say.

Drudgery, respect-destroying poverty, slums and hopelessness in a professed Christian country, in the richest country in the world; remedies within hand reach . . . and the clergy talk about the dangers of leisure, the deluded argue about Jesus not allowing the burning of food!

It is small wonder that there is discontent and an ever-increasing turning from the propaganda of the maidservant of the State, and of the *status quo*. When folk think more of their material betterment, and what stands in the way of its attainment, then we are on the road (but only just started) to breaking down the house that harbours these evils. The main buttress of that house is religion in its many guises.

Fill the bellies of the masses, clothe and house them properly and that "change in the hearts and minds of man," so often reiterated in the pulpit will be an accomplished fact and the long promised, wonderful "Things to come," will be "Things as they are."

A. F. WILLIAMS.

Correspondence

PACIFISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Imagine my surprise when in this week's issue of the *Freethinker*, I read, under the jottings of "Acid Drops," the following sentences: "We are not pleading for a foolish pacifism. . . . We may take war in given circumstances as inevitable."

It seems to me utterly incompatible with the admirable views of the *Freethinker*, which is one of the most rational newspapers (or journals) in England, that such an irrational statement as this should appear. The editor and contributors to this journal (I have the *Freethinker* sent to me even when I am in France or Spain) are able to present a perfectly logical explanation for the phenomena which encompass us, and under no circumstances do I think that they would advocate mass religious conversions, inasmuch as they are able to see that religion in toto is sheer nonsense. And yet, we are all able to see the reasons for war, although personal theories (the Malthusian, the Marxist, and the Anarchist) may be at variance. Still, you state that "War in given circumstances may be inevitable." Of course, the man who shouts that he doesn't want diphtheria, and yet refuses to have inoculations is very much like the man who doesn't want war, and yet refuses to take the necessary steps to prevent such a catastrophe. After all, we know that given the hypothesis of certain economic conditions, we will have war; why in that case

should you think that economics will perform a dramatic volte-face, and thus making the outbreak of war "inevitable." As much as I like the *Freethinker*, I consider that this paragraph in "Acid Drops" is the most irrational which has ever appeared. There can be no foolish Pacifism intent on preserving Peace, for after all we have in front of us two horrible instances on the failure of "foolish Pacifism," vide the civil war in Spain, and the Japanese aggression in China. If the people of the world were Pacifists, and their pacifism was built upon the concrete foundations of mental resistance (see De Ligt's *Pour Vaincre sans Violence*) Peace would be a far stronger implement for effecting "resistance" than war. After all, do we feel greater affinities for the Mosleyites in England (beside whom we would have to fight in a future war unless we are conscientious objectors) or don't we recognize that our country is only bounded by our minds and greater affinities exist for us toward the Freethinkers and Scientists of Germany, France, Russia, Italy, Hungary, Austria, China, and any other nation. Yet, that is all war is; it is the insularizing (?) of our intelligence, so that we destroy men against whom we have no ill-feelings, except those irritated by a Government intent upon preserving its financial interests.

Let me assure you that I am exceedingly fond of the *Freethinker*, and I only write this letter because I think that the article I criticized deviates from the usual high standards of its policy.

R. S. BLUM.

[We have been obliged to delete some portions of this letter, purely from considerations of space, but we have not, we think, deleted anything vital to the writer's point of view.—Ed.]

FREETHOUGHT AND FICTION

SIR,—It is not essential to logical controversy to answer every point that is raised, irrespective of its relevance. In the matter of "carefully avoiding" relevant points, I leave it to your readers to decide who is the most adept—Mr. Rowland or myself!

Since I cannot trespass on your space to the extent of recapitulating the arguments put forward in my article, "The Poison of Fiction," I have no option but to summarize the position again in the form of this question: If a Rationalist were compelled to vote for the destruction either of all works of fiction or of all works of fact, which alternative would he choose? An unequivocal answer would indicate whether he were on my side or on Mr. Rowland's.

The latter declares that I have "no right" to denounce, as purveyors of mental dope, many writers of fiction who have "provided entertainment" for thousands of people. Begging his leave, I claim the right of every man to denounce anything which he deems to be harmful to humanity. And one of these things, in my opinion, is the present-day widespread habit of wallowing in fiction. Also, having already exposed the fallacy of arguing in favour of a practice on the grounds of its "providing entertainment" (even be it to Freethinkers), I cannot further trespass on your space by repeating the pertinent passages from my article.

In conclusion, I will say that anyone who answers my question by voting in favour of retaining fiction, and justifies his choice on the grounds that it "provides entertainment," has no right to denounce religion or the clergy. The latter justify their "mental dope," on the grounds of the "happiness" it gives. The argument that religion does not provide "real" happiness is easily countered by the argument that fiction does not provide "real" entertainment.

C. S. FRASER.

[Our apologies to Mr. Fraser are due for this late insertion of his letter.—Ed.]

TOLERATION

SIR,—May I put in a word on the side of Mr. Bayard Simmons? For, I think you will agree, the question which he raises is one of basic importance to all Freethinkers, and likely to become more and more pressing

in our broken world. While one considers opinions purely as opinions, it is easy to take an abstract viewpoint of absolute tolerance; but when one faces up to the way in which at a certain point opinions merge into acts, one needs a more complex analysis.

This problem is not one that matters during socially settled periods. Then the slogan of absolute tolerance is the right one. But when social cleavages begin to grow chasmic, then the way in which opinions relate to activity becomes of more and more pressing importance. Every advance whatever that mankind has made has been as the result of struggle. Individual work, such as inventions, scientific discoveries, art, etc., may seem at first glance unrelated to the mass struggle; but a closer scrutiny shows how they are involved in it. The basis of all social advance for humanity has been mass-struggle.

To deny the reality of struggle is to stand outside humanity altogether—to claim the heritage, but to refuse the work of defending it. It ill becomes Freethinkers to adopt an attitude which is a derivation of Christian Pacifism.

The Liberals and Labour-leaders of Germany insisted (in accents indistinguishable from those of the passage which Mr. Simmons quotes from the *Times*), that the way to preserve liberty was to ignore Fascism, to laugh at it, to do anything rather than fight it with a mass-struggle. The lonely efforts of the Communist Party to organize mass-opposition could not, under such circumstances, mobilize the forces of liberty in sufficient strength to beat Fascism by the time it was ripe to snatch at power.

Liberals and Labour-leaders have learnt their lesson in France and Spain. That is why Fascism has been held back. They have not learnt it in England. But the masses are wiser. The London masses have already twice, on the most important occasions, defied the Pacifist advice of their Labour-leaders (uttered almost word for word with the disastrous advice which the social-democratic leaders gave to the German masses). In this we may well see the most hopeful sign for the English future. It is not to be expected that the *Times* would welcome evidence that the English masses are once more waking to the issues of the day, and at long last picking up again the great tradition of mass-struggle of their forefathers for Liberty. If this struggle succeeds in creating a United Front in time, we may yet escape the world-war for which our present Government, Germany, Italy, and Japan are heading.

JACK LANDSAY.

MASONS AS CATHEDRAL BUILDERS

SIR,—The consciousness of allocating Masonic Charity Funds for Cathedral Building on the false allegation that all Freemasons are Cathedral Builders must ever torment the perpetrators of such conduct.

Freemasons are ever reminded that their chief concern should be, not what they can take out, but what they can put in for the relief of aged Freemasons, their widows and orphans.

They are further reminded that they must not remove the ancient land marks of the Order.

Freemasons are the most sheep-like flock in the community, and will follow their blind leader until they all fall into the ditch together.

MASTER MASON.

QUOTATION FROM PAINE

SIR,—Professor R. A. Wilson of Saskatchewan, in his new book, *The Birth of Language*, quotes the following passage from Paine's *Age of Reason*. I cannot find it in my copy of your fourpenny edition. Did you abridge?

"Statues of brass or marble will perish, and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than a copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and with material of any kind, carve it in wood or engrave it on stone, the

thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essentially distinct, and of a nature different from everything else that we know of or can conceive."

CALDWELL, HARPUR.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD OCTOBER 21, 1937

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

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. The Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Greenock, Liverpool, Chester-le-Street, Kingston, Manchester, West London Branches, and the Parent Society.

The Chairman drew attention to the adjourned summons for selling literature at meetings of the N.S.S. in Edinburgh, down for hearing on the 26th inst.

Correspondence was dealt with from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greenock Branches, and the North East Federation of N.S.S. Branches.

The Chairman informed the meeting that a Trustee would have to be elected to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. C. G. Quinton. He suggested Mrs. Quinton, Junr., a member of the Executive for many years, and also of the West Ham Branch N.S.S., would be a suitable successor. His personal knowledge of Mrs. Quinton, Junr. went back many years, and he would have no hesitation in nominating her as a trustee of the Society. The nomination was accepted, seconded, and carried.

Lecture arrangements were sanctioned for Gateshead, Stratford, Edinburgh, Greenock. Progress in arrangements for International Freethought Congress in London, in 1938, was reported. Booking the Bishopsgate Institute for a Social on Saturday, November 13 was announced; a number of minor matters were dealt with.

The date of the next Executive Meeting was fixed for Thursday, November 18, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

THE CLERGY AT WAR

The troops while ready to believe in the Kaiser as a comic personal devil, were aware that the German soldier was, on the whole more devout than himself in the worship of God. . . . For the regimental chaplains as a body we had no respect. If the regimental chaplains had shown one-tenth the courage, endurance, and other human qualities that the regimental doctors showed, we agreed, the British Expeditionary Force might well have shown a religious revival. But they had not. The fact is that they were under orders not get mixed up with the fighting, to stay behind with the transport not to risk their lives. No soldier could have any respect for a chaplain who obeyed these orders, and yet there was not in our experience one chaplain in fifty who was not glad to obey them. Occasionally on a quiet day in a quiet sector the chaplain would make a daring afternoon visit to the support line and distribute a few cigarettes, and that was all. Sometimes the Colonel would summon him to come up with the rations and bury the day's dead, and he would arrive, speak his lines, and hastily retire. The position was made difficult by the respect that most of commanding officers had for the cloth, but it was a respect that they soon outwore.

From "Good-bye to All That,"
by Robert Graves, p. 242.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson and Miss E. Millard, M.A.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner—"Freethought To-day in Europe."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor John Hilton, M.A.—"My Belief in the Common Man."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W): 7.30, Allan Flanders—"The Menace of Catholic Action."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, O. B. Sweeney (Birkenhead)—"Morality and Trade Barriers."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. W. J. Russell—"Bringing Jesus Up-to-date."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. T. W. Green—A Lecture.

BURNLEY (Barden Club): 11.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"Mind and Mystery."

GREAT HARWOOD (S.D.F., Grimshaw Street): 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Muriel Whitehead, G.S.S.—"Science the Saviour."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. F. A. Ridley—"The Papacy and Fascism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Rev. S. Spencer, B. A. (Liverpool)—"A Freethinker's Indictment of the Church."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Cafe," Oxford Road): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton (Co. Durham)—"Civilized Savagery."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Carlton Hall): 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S.: 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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