

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### God and Evolution

The issue of Sir E. B. Poulton's address on *The History of Evolution*, before the British Association (Watts & Co., 1s.), is to be welcomed. It may serve to remove misconceptions concerning the present standing of evolution in the scientific world, and to illustrate the currents of opinion concerning evolution, and few are better able to speak than Professor Poulton. He has lived in a scientific atmosphere that is saturated with the conception of evolution, and he has had a lengthy experience of the quality of the opposition offered to it in the period following the publication of the *Origin of Species*. This opposition from the Churches was to be expected, that from scientists was less defensible, and was not to be expected. The Church had managed, even though much damaged, to recover somewhat from the impact of the Copernican astronomy, and the influence of the physics of Galileo and Newton. Both of these, logically destructive though they were of that cosmic basis upon which Christianity rests, were yet somewhat removed from the general mind. But to reduce the world of living things to an almost mechanical process was more than the Churches could tolerate. And behind the evolutionary explanation of the sub-human world of life, there loomed the certainty of its application to man. If evolution were true, then the varieties of animal life, the numerous and curious expedients by which animals maintained themselves, the complexities of animal structure and the wonders of animal instinct, could no longer be pointed to as evidence of the skilled cunning of God. The "carpenter theory of creation" would have to be given up. And Man? If evolution were true he could no longer be thought of as built in the likeness of God. He was the greatest of animals with the capacity to look before and after; but still an animal in origin, deriving the highest of his qualities from animal society as he had derived his physical structure from the animal world. The Church was fighting with its back to the wall. The religionist had for long said, "Eject God from

the universe and it becomes a chaos." Evolution carried the message, "Place God in an evolutionary universe and there is nothing for God to do. He merely sits aloft watching things go."

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### The Blight of Belief

The opposition from scientific men is not more difficult to explain, but it is harder to justify. Granted that the evidence for evolution fell short of offering a demonstration of its truth, there was no evidence against it. No other explanation of animal forms existed then, no other explanation exists now. And there was much evidence, indisputable evidence, for it. There was no doubt that there was a fundamental identity in all animal structures, and the development of the microscope has shown that this identity is greater than the earlier biologists had thought. There was the evidence from fossil remains, from embryology, and also from intermediate forms. If God existed, and if he manufactured the animal world, then it gave support to the belief that God was indeed, what Heine called him, the Aristophanes of the universe, and life was just one huge joke. Some theologians had suggested this. They said, in explanation of some of the fossil remains discovered, that God had made them and placed them where they were found in order to mock the prying inquisitiveness of scientists.

Whether coming from the Churches or from scientists, in all cases the opposition was motivated by religion. Even in the case of Lyell, Alexander Bain said that while he remained quiet in public his belief in evolution was drawn from him at the dinner table. The Christian Church had for so long ruled the roost, it had exercised a terrorism for so long, that many were afraid, as some are afraid still, to brave religious prejudice. But for the religious motive, evolution would have been discussed as other scientific theories are discussed. It might have been rejected as false; it might have been laughed at as ridiculous. The venom of the controversy, the passion shown, the timidity exhibited, were all religious in origin.

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### The Meaning of Evolution

What is evolution? We may preface the answer by saying what evolution is not. There is a type of professed believer in evolution who offers a very striking proof that a man does not always clear his mind of religion by discarding its customary forms. It was part of the theistic case that the world was managed wisely and well. Not to be behind in this essentially religious view there have never been wanting evolutionists who protested that evolution gave a "higher" view of God or man than that given by the Churches. They have argued that evolution tends to produce a higher type of animal, and is therefore justifiable on ethical grounds. This is absurd. Such categories as "high" and "low" have no existence



in nature; they are standards of value created by man, and have no reality apart from human society. Nature is not human, it is *a*-human; it is not moral, it is *a*-moral.

The fundamental fact in nature is change. But change means difference, for without difference change would be imperceptible. The business of science is to seek the law, or laws, of this eternal process of change; and Darwin's contribution to this unceasing quest of science was to offer an explanation of the development of animal forms. He did not venture a general theory of evolution; that was attempted by Herbert Spencer. I am pleased to see that Sir Edward Poulton pays a well deserved tribute to Spencer's influence as being the greatest in making evolution familiar to the English-speaking world. What Darwin attempted was to work out a theory of the origin of animal species by "Natural Selection." This was not the best of phrases; a better one was that used by Spencer, "The Survival of the Fittest," since this was a statement of observation.

While upon this point I may digress by calling attention to a fact that is of interest to Freethinkers, and which had it been known to the ordinary scientist would probably have been ignored. In that fighting Freethought magazine, *The Oracle of Reason*, for the publishing of which several people went to prison, there was published as early as 1842, seventeen years before the issue of the *Origin of Species*, a series of articles written, I think, by Chilton, under the title of "Natural History of Gradation." The articles dealt with the evolution of animal life, including man, and definitely foreshadowed a theory of the survival of the fittest as an operative factor. I am not accusing Darwin of borrowing his theory from this source, had he been indebted to it he was too honest a man not to have said so. I cite it merely by way of comment on the popular theory that Freethought propaganda has always been confined to "unlearned" men. As a matter of fact, the Freethought side of the religious controversy, matching class with class, has always been greatly superior to the intellectual quality of the religious side.

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#### Evolution and God

Change in nature is everywhere. The connexion between living and extinct animals is also an inescapable fact. The fact of evolution is to-day so plain that no one worth bothering about disputes it. It is dishonesty or stupidity that converts a dispute as to the factors of evolution into a doubt as to evolution itself. Neither is there any doubt as to the reality of natural selection. The point at issue is to what extent is natural selection responsible for the development of species. Evolution does not depend upon the truth of Natural Selection, and Darwin allowed for the possibility of other factors. But that has not prevented religious ignorance and religious knavery treating the question of what are the factors of evolution as an equivalent to a doubt of evolution itself.

But evolution once dismissed, what explanation of the origin of species is there? None at all. Special creation is not a theory, it is a verbal splash. It has been well said that if evolution had not been in the field scientists would have had to invent it. There is no other process in sight. No other process is conceivable. And evolution applies to every branch of science. The astronomer adopts it in his account of development of suns and systems. The geologist uses it in his account of the changes in the earth's history; the sociologist uses it when discussing the growth and transformations of social groups. The philologist uses it in his description of the growth of language. Evolution is implicit in every branch of human thought. To-day it is almost a necessity of

science. There is no other hypothesis that is worthy of consideration.

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#### Folly and Faith

But there is one other factor to be considered. Change, as I have said, is the one universal feature of nature. But the change, to come within the scope of science, must come through the action of forces within nature. But Christian theism, or any other theism, rests upon the assumption that there operates a super-natural force that is distinct from nature. When we speak of a red rose we do not mean a rose that has been painted, we mean a rose of which the colour is part of its natural growth. It was this conception that loomed as a constant danger to the Christian Church. It was realized that God and evolution could not logically exist together. Evolution, here and abroad, was loudly denounced as Atheism. Gladstone said it was turning God out of his own universe. Leaders of religion foamed at the mouth. Some evolutionists, with the dregs of their religion still in their system, propounded fanciful reconciliations. That kind of person is with us still. But it was surprising to find a fearless, honest-minded man like Alfred Russell Wallace—co-enunciator of Natural Selection—arguing that while evolution covered the body of man, there was evidence of a God in the existence of "mind." The idea of a world which could get along from star-mist to man without God, but into which God had to be introduced to inoculate man with "mind," is too laughable for serious discussion. Another evolutionary theory—from the religious side—was that God created nature, and having endowed it with powers to produce everything sat on one side just watching things go. Finally, a later, and now fashionable theory arose, that "God" permeates the universe, or is the "reality" that underlies all phenomena. That is, when analysed, an unintelligent kind of Atheism. Historically, God has stood as something apart from the universe. He was the creator of the universe, and its governor. But to identify the universe with God is to say that God does not exist, but that we will give his name to the universe, and admit that we know nothing of God except in and through nature. If that is not substantially Atheism, then I have yet to learn its meaning. The Atheist need not object to anyone calling nature God, or calling the village pump God, so long as we know what he means. Anyone may call nature God without disturbing the Atheist in the least, except so far as the use of the word may encourage others to give the word a wrong connotation. With this exception, the man who talks of God and means nature strikes the Atheist as just a muddle-headed kind of person, with a weakness for out-of-date terms.

It is almost laughable that we have in this country an Anti-Evolution Society. A few years ago we were laughing at Daytonville, with its legal banishment of evolution from its schools. Just about seventy years ago Darwin "shocked" the religious world with his *Origin of Species*. But that was the last great battle that was fought in this country by the Church against science. Yet we should be mistaken if we regarded that as anything other than a battle in a war that has been waged by the Christian Church ever since it possessed power. Anti-scientific from the commencement it did but advertise to the world the curse civilization has suffered by the existence of a "sacred" book—the *Oracles of God*, as the Archbishop of Canterbury called it in the Royal Coronation circus at Westminster Abbey. There are many evils under which a civilization may suffer. But the deadliest of all is a "Thus saith the Lord."

CHAPMAN COHEN.



## A Portentous Prophet

"The happiness of credulity is a cheap and dangerous quality, and by no means a necessity of life."

Bernard Shaw.

THOMAS MOORE, the Irish poet, was nearly choked with indignation by being asked by an artless young woman, how he got his forecasts for his almanac. Yet the undeniable fact remains that "Old Moore," the portentous prophet, counts far more readers to-day than the author of *Lalla Rookh*, a sugary poem much admired on publication, and for which the poet received ten thousand pounds.

It used to be said that prophecy either found a man mad, or left him so, but an exception must be made in the case of "Old Moore," that most genial of all prophets, whose almanac is known to everybody. Some time ago, there rose up, in an idle week, the old newspaper dispute over the names of the twenty greatest men now alive and famous. Reputations tossed and rose and fell. There were odd folk who were not quite certain of Mr. Lloyd George. Over the merits of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini there were unkind comparisons. Some persons from remote country places mentioned royalties; but none of the numerous correspondents ever questioned the right of "Old Moore" to be considered a popular prophet and a respectable citizen.

His is a fame that flourishes wherever the English language is spoken, and his truly enormous reputation is in itself an ironic and remarkable comment on our boasted civilization. He has shown to hundreds of thousands the vision of the future, and he has observed carefully the secret of anonymity. As for his multitudinous readers, the prophet serves them well. His manly utterances set them right at the moment when a new bacillus causes many to "get the wind up." His words, too, have a soothing effect when rival prophets foresee a "Second Coming" of Somebody to make our flesh creep over dire predictions of "Armageddon" on a wholesale scale, with full scenic effects.

Old Moore's Almanac for 1938 suggests that the "voices of the stars" are somewhat noisy and clamorous. In the main, however, the prophet believes in "safety first." Unlike the old Biblical soothsayers, he does not stress "earthquake and eclipse," but relies on highly probable predictions. For example, the month of January promises "good trade," and, it is said, "entertainments of all kinds will do well." In February the State Church "will come under reproach"; presumably some "brother in the Lord" will tread the primrose path, and get headlines in the press. In March an accident at sea is predicted, and the prophet announces a religious row in June. Lest this pessimism should depress his readers, "Old Moore" smilingly announces that many weddings will be celebrated in July. But the prophet's master-stroke for the coming year is that in August "a busy time for railways and road travel is indicated." That gem is worth all the twaddle over the number of the "Beast" in the "Book of Revelation," and is certainly grateful and comforting. It is so much more soothing than predictions of the end of the world, or, what is far worse, Oswald Mosley winning the General Election. "Old Moore" is a garrulous old soul, and, fortunately for his readers, he has none of the fierce fanaticism of his Semitic predecessors. As a proof, the modern prophet concludes his yearly survey with the jovial words: "To all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." So it will be seen that the last and least audacious of the prophets has his good points.

That is how a popular twentieth-century prophet

looks out on the unknown year that stretches before us. It cannot be said to be an inspiring message in the exciting days in which we live, when the choice before men is "chaos and old night," and Freedom, and the preaching of the gentle art of sitting on the fence is the latest gospel of the Christian Churches. "Old Moore's" pathetic commonplaces are no worse and no better than the imbecilities of the spiritual leaders of the Christian world, which have varied from the braggadocio of the two Archbishops, the baby-talk of the Bishop of London, and the determination of so many Fathers-in-God to avoid hurting anyone's feelings, and to hold fast to their salaries. This saponaceous attitude can have but one result, and that is to reduce to the very lowest ebb the prestige and influence of the Christian Churches, which only continue to flourish in those half-educated and uncultured strata of the community which are ever ready to welcome any prophet provided he keeps a straight face.

"Old Moore" is my favourite among the present-day representatives of a troublous race. He should know something about "the stars" and "planetary influence," for it is said that he has been in active communion with them for nearly two and a half centuries. At least, one of the many editions of his almanac claims to be in its 242nd year, and another is said to have a circulation running into millions of copies. It is true that the name of "Francis Moore, Physician" is not in the current medical register, but, probably on account of extreme age, he is on the retired list. He must have seen many ups and downs during his lengthy and interesting career, having started in business as a prophet prior to the reign of Queen Anne.

There are so many people out walking in the streets who are celebrities, or notoriety, that it is a very pleasant novelty to find a prophet whose features are veiled. In this Bagdad of ours no Haroun al Raschid can venture abroad undistinguished, and escape the venturesome press-photographers. "Old Moore's" fame, however, is still safe without his portrait being exhibited in shop windows alongside photographs of royal babies, cinema stars, and bishops in full war-paint. Let all other prophets take a lesson from "Old Moore." Let them give us as cautious and comfortable anticipations, and there should be an end of the slump in prophecy, and most of us will be able to sleep at night.

MIMNERMUS.

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### THE BIBLE IN MODERN SPEECH

(Psalm cix. 1-15)

O God, let's hear from you. There are naughty people telling lies about me. They hate me, and fight me for no reason. Because I liked 'em they became my enemies, so I prayed hard. They did me wrong when I was good to 'em and hated me for loving 'em. Now, Lord, I want you to give my enemy hell. Judge him but damn him, and if he squeals take no notice. Don't let him live long; and give someone else his job. Leave his kids without a daddy, and his missus without her old man. Make the kids rough it in begging their bread; and let the money-lenders ruin their dad and stop him from working. Don't let anyone pity him, and don't let his kids have any sympathy either. Kill the brats and all of the breed as quickly as you like. Make the dad suffer for all his father and mother ever did wrong. Don't ever forget to give him hell, Lord.

D.

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A stupidity that never happens on a bit of common-sense is as great a marvel as a genius that never touches the level of mediocrity.



## The Poison of Poetry

IN our endeavours to justify the existence or continuance of a given practice, we are often led to introduce what may be called *bogus* criteria of merit. I drew attention to these in the prefatory remarks to a previous article entitled "The Poison of Fiction." And since it is possible that my critics may again be tempted to use such criteria in their arguments against my present contentions, I feel it necessary to repeat in brief what I said there.

It is fallacious to argue in favour of any practice on any one, or on any combination, of the following grounds: (1) That the practice is old or of long standing; (2) That it is widely prevalent or popular; (3) That it gives entertainment or happiness.

For proof of the fact that these are bogus criteria in judging of the merit of any practice, I must refer readers to my previous article. As was there shown, the only criterion which can be regarded as rational and of general application is this: that the justification of any practice must depend upon whether its beneficial effects upon the majority outweigh its harmful effects. And to those who disagree with this criterion, I would say that I would welcome the enunciation of any other criterion which could be proved to be more satisfactory.

On the basis of that criterion I adduced evidence in support of my view that the present widespread indulgence in fiction-reading constitutes a menace to the life and minds of the people second only to religion. In the category of fiction I included poetry.

Although, taken by itself, the reading of poetry does not affect a great number of people, I feel that, like fiction, its value to humanity has been, and still is, grossly overrated. Like both religion and fiction, I regard poetry as one of the many relics of primitive mentality which act as a drag upon the progress of mankind towards an ever-improving set of conditions in this life. All three are forms of verbal opiates. And it is in support of these opinions that the following arguments are set forth.

The words *prose* and *poetry* are used as names for two different ways of uttering language. There are several minor subdivisions of these two great categories; but, apart from these subdivisions, they include all the known ways in which language may be uttered. (For brevity's sake, I exclude *song*, because it is the combination of language with an element which can be, and often is, wholly dissociated from language, i.e., *music*.)

The differences between prose and poetry are of two kinds; external and internal. The external are those whereby we may recognize that a given set of words is meant to be either poetry or prose. The internal differences are those arising from a consideration of the various functions of language itself. The main function of language is now admitted to be that of enabling one person to understand the meaning, or ideas, of another. Subsidiary functions are to arouse emotions, either in ourselves or others; and to practice deception, either upon ourselves or others. Speaking generally, all the functions of language may be included under the one head of trying to mould our environment to suit our purposes. But since this includes activities which are not specifically linguistic, it is too wide to apply in the present discussion. Nevertheless the utterance of language may have as its aim anything from world-revolution to mere self-gratification.

The chief external difference between poetry and prose is that the former is mainly rhythmic, and the latter mainly unrhymic. While rhythm may be present in prose, its presence is fortuitous and not due to deliberate intent. As soon as words begin to be

arranged in rhythmic sequence of set purpose, then we are trying to be poetic. The normal and natural utterance of language is never poetic in the literal sense of the word. If it were so, then the greater part of our normal and natural speech would be in poems. But we know that this is not the case. It follows, therefore, that whatever merits poetry may have, it has not the merit of being either normal or natural. In other words, *poetry is an abnormal and unnatural way of uttering language.*

(In parenthesis, I may say that I am quite aware that some prose utterances are described as "poetic." But this is a metaphorical use of the word. It implies no more than that these utterances have certain resemblances to poetry. It does not mean that they are poetry in the literal sense.)

Poetry, then, is the deliberate arrangement of language in rhythmic forms—that is to say, in forms which, by reason of certain specially obtained sound effects, are intended to please the ear. Since the æsthetic pleasure derived from the rhythmic sounds is quite distinct from the emotions roused by the meanings of words, it follows that it is theoretically possible to derive pleasure from hearing a series of meaningless words arranged rhythmically. Yet I imagine that most authorities and poets would deny that language can properly be called poetry if it is utterly devoid of meaning. Nor, by definition, can language be properly called poetry if it is utterly devoid of rhythm. But, since meaning is an essential ingredient of *all* forms of language, it follows that rhythm must be one of the chief ingredients of poetry as such. It also follows that this ingredient is valueless by itself. Apart, then, from its possible use as some sort of adjunct to meaning, *rhythm has no linguistic value.* Let us now examine what sort of use it might have as an adjunct to meaning.

In order to convey meaning—not any meaning, but the *correct* meaning we wish to impart—we are not at liberty to use any words that may come into our heads. We have to choose the most appropriate words, and we have to adopt the most suitable order in which to place them. Experience shows that the chances of such an arrangement being rhythmic is very remote. It would be even more remote if the rhythm turned out to be both consistent and regular, as is the case in most poetry. And if our meaning needed several hundred words for its expression, then the odds against the whole taking the form of poetry would probably be millions to one. It follows that, except possibly in very short poems, the most appropriate choice of words to express meaning must be subservient to the demands of rhythm. In other words, in order to allow of the introduction of an element which is valueless by itself, poetry compels us to sacrifice the most important essential of all language. *Rhythm, therefore, even as an adjunct, is proved to be a handicap to meaning.*

It has been claimed that certain ideas expressed in poetry could not have been better, or more felicitously, expressed in prose. Although this may be true of *some* ideas, where the element of chance has entered into the arrangement of the most suitable words to produce a rhythmic sequence, it can hardly be substantiated with regard to the vast majority of ideas which a person might wish to convey. For if ideas as a whole, and in the normal course of utterance, could be better or more felicitously expressed in poetry than in prose, then a great proportion of our most lucid, intelligible, and informative authors would normally adopt poetry as their means of expression. The fact that they do not, proves my point that, *as a form of expressing ideas, poetry is inferior to prose.*

C. S. FRASER.

(To be concluded)



## Honesty

HONESTY is a good word, and yet far from easy to define. We know, for instance, that Nobby Clark, who works uncomplainingly for Forty Shillings a week, maintains, in a fashion, a wife and six children, buys his Armistice Day Flag (and pays twopence for it like a gent.), attends all loyal processions, sneers at "Bolshies," talks "smut," but never, he boasts, utters a syllable against God or Religion—Nobby is the ideal in many quarters of an *honest working man*. An honest man in a counting-house is a man who keeps his hands out of the till. An honest woman is a woman who appears to have preserved her virginity up to the day of her marriage. Like many another word, honesty is defined so loosely and so variously that it is in danger of meaning nothing at all.

Some meaning of the word it is desirable to standardize. It would be better to use the expression *an honest man* to indicate that the individual referred to has something like a firm hold on all the homelier, more essential, virtues. He is trustworthy in dealings, truthful in speech, admits his shortcomings; does not murder, thief or prevaricate. He is one of the type that, if universal, would tend to make life pleasanter for all of us; in short he is a *social unit*, playing the game according to his lights which he takes every pains to keep bright. We are all conscious that such a man adds to the general comfort and sweetness of existence.

The difficulty in getting down to brass tacks as to the meaning of honesty is due to the fact that none is willing to define it so as to make oneself vulnerable to criticism. The honest man, one holds, is the person somewhat like oneself. If he is in business and his methods are questionable, he consoles himself with the thought that he is as good as his brother business man. Honesty in business, he says, is a very good thing within limits, but it is absurd to push it too far. Honesty, of course, in his clients is admirable; equal honesty in dealing with his clients is unnecessary. Why, it would land him in the workhouse, and any ethical teaching that would land him in the workhouse is on the face of it ridiculous. That the person who sells for 1s. 1d. a concoction which costs a halfpenny, and which purports to cure cramp, eczema, tuberculosis, kidney trouble, angina pectoris and warts, should end his days in the workhouse—is plainly an inequitable reward for merit. Why! Millionaire Mnewton does it, The Right Honourable Phlatcatcher does it, Sir William Sharepusher does it, and even ex-King Gonzago turns an honest penny by recommending shoddy articles of wearing apparel. Who am I that I should be righteous overmuch? What is good enough for the élite, is good enough for me!

There is a substantial and numerous class in this country who believe that by the Grace of God they are privileged to practise a lower ethic than the humble creatures whom they employ. Amongst their employées a general degree of high morality in some directions is seen to be desirable because in its absence they would not for a minute "know where they were." They regard this *morality* to be one of the human peculiarities which the Good God has created, so that they can trade upon it and turn to their double gain by neglecting it themselves. It is said that one cannot have a thing both ways, but this ignores that the attempt to have it both ways is in the very essence of good business. This effort is deliberately made, and, owing to the quality of the relationship between employer and employed, it frequently succeeds. The point of a sound ethic is, of course, its universality; if honesty were universal,

everyone would gain. The purely commercially-minded see, however, that there is a time-lag in the process. Before honesty gets into more general recognition, they argue, they will be dead. Meanwhile, they are going to be on the safe side and keep up the practices by which their grandfathers became rich, by trading on the virtues of those whom it has pleased God to place in a lower station. This is why they conceive Religion to be so All-Important. This is why Barney Brass values a Church which teaches the underlings to be honest, and content with the position in which it has pleased God to call them. This is why he recognizes the Archbishop of Canterbury to be indeed his friend. Otherworldliness is represented by the Archbishop, who, naturally, lives in humble surroundings, and finds great difficulty (as men like the Bishop of London assure us) to make ends meet. What the Archbishop preaches, means death to the Agitators. The Agitator! that pathetic creature who is out for *materialistic* ends, who is showing grossly unspiritual cravings for more wages. Hats off, says our over-dog, to the Archbishop, who preaches the *Useful Gospel*, who diverts men's minds from Bread and Circuses, who teaches our employées to be honest but isn't too particular about *us*. England is all right as long as it feels reverential towards Christ's Sainly Shepherds and complacent towards the condition of Christ's Tender Lambs.

Fifty years ago in England, in the Good Old Days, business was run on approved Christian lines. A customer was run up and down with the eye, and his financial position in society assessed before the price of an article was mentioned. *Those were the days*. Tricks to diddle the customer were as common as blackberries. Then there came along a set of "foreigners," who went on different lines, who put a plain price on every article and stuck to it. They made a point about *giving satisfaction* to the customer, thinking that, by giving satisfaction, they would *keep* their customers. If they ever went elsewhere they would find they fared worse. Slowly and very reluctantly, and mainly because they found that those new Apostles of a Fair Deal were obtaining the huddle, the business houses of Old England have had to learn a degree of straightforwardness. But honesty is still not in their bones, and diddling the unsuspecting is still the conception of business that gains the intellectual and practical assent of large numbers of our commercial and professional traders.

Honesty of Speech is still a bugbear, and is derided at many a comfortable fireside. Fool the public and get fat thereby is the watchword. The old institutions live by lies, and employ publicity agents (journalists) to serve their purposes for a monetary consideration. These writers sometimes excuse themselves by saying: It is the public who are to blame. The public want tripe and we serve it. We will give them what they want for their pennies. Always providing, yes, *always providing*, that what they want happens to coincide with what *we* want. Up with the Clerics, Kings, Big Business, Quacks, Axe-Grinders; Ceremonials, Symbols, and the right kind of Circuses. Down with Freethinking, Freedom of Speech and the Desire for Truth. Keep these lines about "Anti-God" movements in England in print. Don't distribute them; they are wanted most weeks. It is what Archbishop Downing wants, it is what all the clerics, with a few exceptions, want. What does Dean Inge say? What does the Dean of Canterbury say? It is not good for the masses to know what such eccentrics say. What is good for the masses? That which is good for *us*. Is this honesty? What matter—but if you press: Yes, it is honesty, as we understand it. We have had a good Christian bringing-up, and this is our belief. Let us



lie for the glory of God, says the pulpit. Well, what is good for the pulpit is good enough for us. As for your kind of honesty, which brings you little but discomfort, a fig for it! It may be better for the world if all were such as you, but, meanwhile, what about the loaves and fishes? Ladies and gentlemen, Let us Lie! Lie like a Trooper; lie like Holy Mother Church; lie like a tinker's lady!

T. H. ELSTON.

### Nature Notes of a Freethinker

Then came October full of merry glee;\*  
For yet his moule was totty of the must,  
Which he was treading in the wine-fats see,  
And of the joyous oyle, whose gentle gust  
Made him so frolick and so full of lust:  
Upon a dreadful Scorpion he did ride,  
The same which by Dianes doom unjust  
Slew great Orion; and eeke by his side  
He had his ploughing-share and coulter ready tyde.

PERFUME is the hammer which strikes on the bell of memory. A handful of hay, with all the gathered scents of the fields in its keeping will send me off to early days when I used to sleep in a hay-loft. The fragrance of that lovely rose, "Marechal Niel" recalls the figure of my grandmother with whom I used to argue about work. It was her favourite rose, and, with a big family to keep, together with a romantic husband, my grandfather, in spite of cares, she always retained part of her life for things of beauty, but she could never see my point of view, that work could be made a pleasure on the granting of one of my wonderful "ifs." The dog rose, delicate and fleeting, with its faint fragrance, sets memory off to a village green, big enough to hide a colony of gypsies, and often too big for the small farmer to catch his horse with a nose-bag of corn after a few days free grazing. On the edge of the green the dog rose grew in abundance, and it was a wonderful adventure to get and smell the ancient flower of England. There has not, to my knowledge, been any thesis taken up on the subject of perfume and memory; the various forms of life from youth onwards pull us away from a knowledge of ourselves. We are led from one experience to another, but the mere evoking of memory by perfume brings us back to ourselves. There is a Greek proverb which I recall as "Smell sage and forget mortality"; bruise the leaf and the aroma is a thing of delight. Tansy, crowned in summer with yellow flowers, has a leaf that yields up its essence when bruised; it is not easily forgotten, and the leaf's pleasing pattern makes a very useful book-mark. The lemon scent of Balm also is memorable. *The Book of Herbs*, by Lady Rosalind Northcote, contains a story from Aubrey's *Miscellanies*, which runs as follows:—

A most curious legend is told by Aubrey of the Wandering Jew, the scene being on the Staffordshire Moors. One Whitsun evening, overcome with thirst, he knocked at the door of a Staffordshire cottager, and craved of him a cup of small beer. The cottager, who was wasted with a lingering consumption asked him in, and gave him the desired refreshment. After finishing the beer, Alasuerus asked his host the nature of the disease he was suffering from, and being told that the doctors had given up, said, "Friend, I will tell thee what thou shalt do." He then told him to go into the garden the next morning on rising, and gather three Balm leaves, and to put them into a cup of small beer. He was to drink as often as he needed, and refill the cup when it was empty, and put in fresh Balm leaves every fourth day, and, "before twelve days shall be past, thy disease shall be cured and thy body altered." So saying, and declining to eat, he departed and was never seen again. But the cottager gathered his Balm-leaves, followed the prescription of the Wandering Jew, and before twelve days were passed was a new man.

Those readers who saw the play and the film of "The Wandering Jew" may like to speculate on the memory of such a character. For my own part I think that the

\* October has been drinking new wine and it had gone to his head.

regions of the memory have never been adequately dealt with; in an age of internal combustion engines, and speed of five miles a minute, there seems to be little chance of it being of any interest except to a few. For him who knows that such distractions have nothing to do with him when he has discovered his Self, I would recommend a reading of the eighth\* Upanishad. It will place memory in a new light for the student.

There have been storms, torrential rains, and magnificent sunsets this October. The traveller would find in the early morning that the rain had washed the face of the earth; there was a brilliant freshness along the country road, where the fierce winds had swept the fallen leaves in golden ridges to the foot of the hedgebanks. The scarlet berries of the dog-rose glistened on their barbed boughs; the trailing bryony, bitter-sweet, hawthorn, and all hedge-dwelling flowers and shrubs took out a new lease of life in late autumn. From the real picture of an autumnal requiem, I started to remember some of the word pictures of great writers who found fascination in praising and loving the earth.

There is the first chapter in *Under the Greenwood Tree*; Hardy knew, by personal contact with the earth, how to set down in clear language, an external picture for his readers. In a short story, entitled, *Kalium*, by Gorki, the two opening paragraphs might prove that the artist's pen is as mighty as the artist's brush. In the hope that my preference for pictures is shared by readers, I give the two paragraphs herewith:—

Whistling from off the sea, the wind was charged with moist, salt spray, and dashing foaming billows ashore with their white manes full of snakelike, gleaming black ribands of seaweed, and causing the rocks to rumble angrily in response, and the trees to rustle with a dry, agitated sound as their tops swayed to and fro, and their trunks bent earthwards as though they would fain reave up their roots, and betake them whither the mountains stood veiled in a toga of heavy, dark mist.

Over the sea the clouds were hurrying towards the land as ever and anon they rent themselves into strips, and revealed fathomless abysses of blue, wherein the sun burned uneasily, sent cloud-shadows gliding over the puckered waste of waters, until, the shore reached, the wind further harried the masses of vapour towards the sharp flanks of the mountains, and, after drawing them up and down the slopes, relegated them to clefts, and left them steaming there.

Neither of these two writers lived on the bread alone of pretty or powerful nature pictures; they had much in common. Hardy disturbed the complacency of his generation by novels that contained challenging ideas; he was one of woman's best friends, but his feet were always on the earth—the clouds of theology were useless to him. Gorki, who, in his own words, "did not come into the world to comply with it," knew the earth well from Tiflis to Leningrad, from Kazan to Odessa. He had tramped it, and slept on it; in 1931 he wrote, "I can never forget that this was the town (Tiflis) where I took the first uncertain step along the path which I have now been following for about forty years. It might be said that the magnificence of the scenery and the romantic gentleness of the people were two forces which furnished the impulse that transformed me from a tramp into a writer." In one of Thoreau's books, *The Maine Woods*, there was an arresting passage that impressed me. He writes, at one stage of his journey made under primitive conditions, and on coming to a lonely part in Ktaadn, the Indian word meaning "highest land":—

Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful. I looked with awe at the ground I trod on, to see what the Powers had made there, the form and fashion and material of their work. This was that Earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Night. Here was no man's garden, but the unhand-selled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor wasteland. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made for ever and ever—to be the dwelling of man, we say—so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it.

\* *The Ten Principal Upanishads*. Faber & Faber, Ltd.



These three illustrious authors were not "other worldsmen"; their work is not marred by generalities instead of particularities. They all had first-hand information of the earth they wrote about, and in place of pious speculation, their contribution to the world of history was based on their sense of fact.

At Sotheby's, in May, 1935, letters, manuscripts and books by or relating to Walt Whitman belonging to the late Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke realized the sum of £1,655. In Whitman's *Complete Prose*, a record of many years of his life, after covering the ground of his experiences in the Civil War, there is a footnote which will make him a noble companion of the three writers mentioned above. It reads as follows:—

Without apology for the abrupt change of field and atmosphere—after what I have put in the preceding fifty or sixty pages—temporary episodes, thank heaven! I restore my book to the bracing and buoyant equilibrium of concrete outdoor Nature, the only permanent reliance for sanity of book or human life.

Who knows (I have it in my fancy, my ambition), but the pages now ensuing may carry ray of sun, or smell of grass or corn, or call of bird, or gleam of stars by night, or snow-flakes falling fresh and mystic, to denizen of heated city house, or tired workman or workwoman?—heated city house, or tired workman or workwoman?—or may-be in sick-room or prison—to serve as cooling breeze, or Nature's aroma, to some fevered mouth or latent pulse.

And again he says:—

After you have exhausted what there is in business, politics, conviviality, love, and so on—have found that none of these finally satisfy, or permanently wear—what remains? Nature remains; to bring out from their torpid recesses, the affinities of a man or woman with the open air, the trees, fields, the changes of seasons—the sun by day and the stars of heaven by night. We will begin from these convictions. Literature flies so high and is so hotly spiced, that our notes may seem hardly more than breaths of common air, or draughts of water to drink. But that is part of our lesson.

One of his autograph notes in the sale reads:—

I subject all the teachings of the schools, and all dicta and authority, to the tests of myself. And I encourage you to subject the same to the tests of yourself—and to subject me and my words to the strongest tests.

If one did not know Whitman as a man of the open-air, those two sentences alone would pronounce him as a being of self-reliance gained by contact with things that are elemental.

NICHOLAS MERE.

## Acid Drops

Of the whole population of the British Isles it was left for a demented, or half-demented man, himself a sufferer from the war, to utter the *mot juste* at the Cenotaph on November 11. A man lately confined in an asylum, while the ceremony was taking place, rushed forward and cried:—

All this hypocrisy! You are preparing for war.

Was ever anything that was said which came nearer to the truth? The war was fought to end war, and we are all preparing for war on a scale such as never before existed; a war which our rulers assure us will make the last one look like a fifth of November celebration, and which threatens completely to wreck civilization. The 1918 war was to make the world safe for democracy, and democracies are fighting for their existence with their backs to the wall. It was to make Britain a country fit for heroes to live in, and we have the distressed areas, and the permanent unemployment of between one and two millions of people. And when the war was won, the sole opportunity Europe has had to pursue a policy that might end nationalistic wars was thrown away to pursue a policy of aggrandisement and revenge. Was ever a war fought that was such a demonstrated failure to achieve its declared aims as that of 1914-18?

For some years it has been obvious that this annual ceremony of *compulsory* manifestation of mourning lacks reality. At its beginning it was a touching manifestation of genuine sorrow. So the genuine sorrow of those who lost a son, a parent or a lover in the war remains. But genuine sorrow cannot be ordered, and of the people who stand still in the streets when the hour of eleven strikes, what proportion feels any genuine grief, or reflects on what the war was fought for and what it has achieved? Genuine grief for the dead does not seek the repetition of a public display. It seeks quietness, it requires quietness; publicity becomes a profanation. A people cannot be ordered to sorrow; they can only be made to play the hypocrite.

Of what were the multitudes marching past the Cenotaph thinking? Eliminating those who had lost some one belonging to them, what proportion of the remainder were genuinely thinking of the dead, what they died for and what they achieved? We know there was at least one, but to him the crowd cried "kill him." What were the bulk of the people thinking of who took part in the gigantic sing-song that was held in the Albert Hall, and which only needed free smokes and drinks to make it a most enjoyable smoking concert? The remarks made by those who were present to whom we spoke, were full of the reflection that they had had a good time. A good time! Well that is at least something. The war with its millions of dead has provided a "good time" for a few thousands. Let us with all thankfulness place that to the credit side of the account. Perhaps it may counterbalance Hitler, and Mussolini, and the new war the world is getting ready for. That also may in time have its annual day of remembrance and its annual "good time."

But, as we have said, there was one man who saw something significant about this order—for sorrow—business who did see something in it, and who said it was an act of hypocrisy, while the very people who stood officially mourning were preparing, even using the occasion as part of that preparation, for another war on a greater scale. And he too had his recognition, his moment of public attention. For two or three policemen literally sat on him and closed his mouth with their hands until the moments of ordered and official sorrow had been completed, and those who had tickets for the Albert Hall meeting were able to think uninterruptedly about the "good time" that was awaiting them. And never more will he be able to see another such day, for he is committed to an asylum, where he is likely to remain. And the utilization of the "Day of Remembrance" will be confined to helping on the next war, which will, unless, the general mind changes greatly, give rise to another "Day of Remembrance," and the preparations for another war in the ghastly series.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop Henry St. George Tucker, newly elected Primate of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, has been warning the faithful in Chicago that they must develop "an enthusiasm for their work comparable to that of Soviet Russia or warring Japan, or the Christian cause may fail and pass out of existence." He states that "the enthusiasm of the world to-day lies largely outside the sphere of organized religion," and he considers that the church "must contribute largely in the solution of social and industrial ills."

Nearer home, the Dean of Canterbury, who has returned from a visit to Russia, "after years of studying their problems," expresses himself to *Reynolds News*. After stating that "any student of Russia finds wide grounds for criticisms" with which one can agree, he speaks eulogistically of the Soviet New Constitution:—

It embodies the noblest declaration of the Rights of Man which any country has ever set forth. It does far more than broaden the basis of suffrage; and the complete enfranchisement of the peasants is the best proof of their contentment.

It ensures to every citizen protection from arbitrary arrest, and the right not only to work, and payment for



it, but to specified hours of rest and weeks of holiday with pay.

It provides generously and wisely for motherhood, and makes education of every grade free to all. It renders life economically secure, in spite of all vicissitudes. The haunting fear of poverty and insecurity has gone, and with it the unhealthy development of the acquisitive instinct.

We wonder how many avowedly Christian countries there are of which this might, with truth, be said.

Like Bishop Tucker, the Dean considers this "a great challenge to the Christian world." "Raising the standard of human life is the way Russia chooses to win the world's recognition to the value of her experiment." One thing is clear. According to the best minds in the Church to-day, the words of the Master: "My Kingdom is not of this world," have to be rased from the tablets of the Christian brain, or the Church will "pass out of existence."

So the S.O.S. has gone forth. The cry is "Right about turn." The growing enthusiasm of the world for social reform is to be diverted so as to afford some slight nutriment to a sick religion. This is to be brought about by a plentiful application of religious labels to the many forms of healthy social activity which are proceeding steadily, thoughtfully, and scientifically towards social betterment. Progress, it is admitted by implication, can come about without God and without the Christian Religion. But what will the Church do if This-worldism can deliver the goods? Nothing is left but to print labels, find paste and get on with the posting so that Other-worldism may not be dismissed too contemptuously. One can admit that men like Bishop Tucker and the Dean of Canterbury are concerned with human welfare. One can understand their reluctance to throw over their theological cargo. But the job of adaptation they are tackling is beyond their skill. Truth is on the march and the Churches are being unceremoniously thrust to one side, and there is even no disposition (there being no reason for it), to return them a vote of thanks for past services.

It is not unusual to find Mayors and "sich" using their public office to boost their private religious opinions. And the smaller the man the greater his emphasis on some narrow form of religious activity. The new Mayor of Blackburn is Councillor W. Hammond, who informs the world, so far as it is confined to Blackburn, Sunday school teachers should exercise their "privilege" in selecting the "right books." That is a bad piece of advice at its best, and if it were good, Sunday school teachers would be the worst class to put it into practice. For what they consider "good" books are usually very bad ones. There is only one way to train people in reading, and that is to set them on the way to train themselves. Encourage the habit of reading everything, from blood and thunder stories to the most abstruse philosophic works. If there is anything in a boy or a girl, and they have access to good books (a very important point), they will discover what is best for them. We wonder in what kind of reading, by the way, the Mayor himself indulges! Not much that is of consequence, we imagine, or his remark that the Bible contains "all the teaching of human life," would not have been made. That, so to speak, stamps the man.

There is a small epidemic of typhoid in Croydon, and on Sunday last the Churches in the Borough called God Almighty's attention to the matter. We are not quite clear as to exactly what the parsons of the district had in mind. Did they mean to remind God that he had not taken proper care in preventing the outbreak, or did they expect him to stop the disease without doing anything to remove the quite material causes of its appearance? If the former, it amounts to a vote of censure on God, and while he may answer the prayer by reducing the number of typhoid cases, he may let us have it in another way, perhaps in the shape of another war. Or, if God will only help to remove the typhoid when mere man

looks to the drains, the food supply and other causes of typhoid, it is difficult to see where the common sense of praying to God appears. But we are ready to admit one thing. The move is decidedly Christian, generally religious and decidedly and incurably idiotic.

Perhaps, however, we may see processions of people parading the streets to ask this God of typhoid to hold his hand. And the Roman Catholics may come out with some figures of stuffed saints, or other "sacred" emblems, all of which may help to get rid of the epidemic. That is what they would have done a century or so ago, and that is what the Churches still do where people are sufficiently benighted to do it. Or perhaps the whole may be taken as the first real step of success in the "Recall to Religion" campaign. We must get back to savagery if religion is to be re-established.

A defender of the theory of "verbal inspiration," Mr. A. B. Buxton, writes to the *Spectator* admitting that "outside the Church" the public "have the general impression that the Bible is a discredited book." Mr. Buxton reassures his friends. He names all the best known Revivalists—including Torrey and Moody—and doubts "if anyone can claim a single great Evangelist who did not believe whole-heartedly in the full inspiration of the Scriptures." He is right. Nor have we any reason to question his statistics that the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the entire Scriptures is still held by

1,500 missionaries of the China Inland Mission, also at least 1,500 missionaries of other interdenominational societies, and the Salvation Army. Amongst Church of England societies probably 50 per cent of the C.M.S. and the 200 missionaries of the B.C.M.S., besides many many more, still hold it.

The Lord must put up with what he can nowadays.

## Fifty Years Ago

### ROMANCE AND REALITY

ROMANCE: Gone for ever, parting weeping,  
Hunger, sorrow, death, and pain;  
Lo her watch Thy Church is keeping,  
Come, Lord Jesus, come to reign.

REALITY: The Salvation Army with its kettledrums, or the Church of Rome with its black Madonnas, may be able to descend to the level of the negro, but the Church of England with its Thirty-nine Articles can never be the Church of Equatorial Africa; *it is too spiritual, too lofty.*—See Canon Taylor's speech at the Church Congress.

ROMANCE: Far and wide, though all unknowing,  
Pants for thee each mortal breast,  
Human tears for thee are flowing,  
Human hearts in thee would rest;

REALITY: In the whole of Western Africa 290 missionaries and native agents, supported by the Church Missionary Society, at a cost of £13,703 6s. 7d., baptized only 306 adult converts in one year.—See Canon Taylor's second letter to the "*Times*," October 31.

ROMANCE: Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run,  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

REALITY: It is unquestionably true . . . that in Africa, in India, and over very large areas of the Eastern World, Mahommedanism is making converts by thousands where Christianity hardly makes one. . . . The native converted to Christianity often sinks into a deeper degradation than the missionary found him in. "*St. James's Gazette*, October 29.

ROMANCE: See how these Christians love one another.

REALITY: One clergyman writes to me to say, that unless I apologize to *him* for what I have already said, he will "gibbet" me, as he politely expresses it, in the "*Times*."—See Canon Taylor's second letter to the "*Times*."

*The Freethinker*, November 20, 1887.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. SHARPLES.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops." It is impossible to deal at length with a matter that is purely of local interest, or concerned with a public individual who is quite unknown, and unimportant outside his own narrow local circle.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—A. W., £2; A. Friend, 7s. 9d.

G. SMITH (Blair-Atholl).—*The Parson's Creed* has been out of print for some time, and we are unable to put our hands on a copy.

S. SIGILMAN (U.S.A.).—Thanks for cutting.

W. A. WILLIAMS.—We are obliged for cuttings.

F. C. HOLDEN.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

R. WORTLEY.—Next issue.

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.

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

On Sunday next (November 28), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Gateshead, on "Must We have a Religion?" The lecture will commence at 7.0; doors open at 6.30. Admission will be free, but there will be a number of reserved seats at sixpence. It is rather a long while since Mr. Cohen lectured on Tyneside, and a good muster of friends from the surrounding district is anticipated.

The agitation of a great many religious bigots and other dunderheads over the International Conference of Freethinkers, which is to be held in London next September, continues. We hope it will continue. The Conference cannot be prevented, and the anxiety of the moribund element of the religious world should impel English Freethinkers to make the Conference a success. Rear-Admiral A. R. Emdin, of Heathfield, Sussex, is one of the most recent to make a fool of himself. He has written to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, asking "decisively to veto this outrageous proposal." To which Sir Samuel replied that the letter, so says the *Evening Standard*, is still under the consideration of the Home Secretary. So we shall see what we shall see. But the Rear-Admiral says that the Home Office has explained to him that it does not ban meetings, but it can prevent "undesirable aliens" entering the country. If the Government does venture on interference that is the kind of cowardly underhand method we should expect it to adopt. But, again, we shall see.

Rear-Admiral Emdin says that the Conference is "A World Conference of the Godless," which is lie number one. It is the International Conference of Freethinkers, which has been held all over Europe for the past half-

century. He says the idea of the Conference originated in Russia, which is lie number two. It has been suggested many times during the past twenty years, that the Conference should be held in London. He says "The Central Council of the Godless recently passed a resolution that the Conference should be held in London, next April, and voted 150,000 roubles for the expenses." If that refers to the Conference which is being arranged, then it is lie number three. The expenses of this is being met by the Rationalist Press Association and the National Secular Society, with some contributions from other British organizations. What kind of an individual is this Rear-Admiral Emdin, anyway? We have never heard of him before, and the world will be probably the better if it never hears of him again.

Father Woodlock, the Roman Catholic Priest, evidently regards it as in line with the traditions of his Church, and the Vatican-honoured policy of the order of Jesuits to which he belongs, to lie and lie again when the interests of his Church can be promoted. So he helps the other liars by saying of the Conference:—

We know quite well they won't use their real title for their conference here. They will be the League of The International Freethinkers, or something quite innocuous, and their speeches will be watered down for our benefit.

Well, Father Woodlock cannot say that we are watering-down our speech for his benefit. He is just lying and he knows that he is lying. But to lying he adds cowardice, because he knows that the press generally will protect him, and that in his own pulpit and to his own dupes he may lie with absolute impunity. No one is, in fact, greatly surprised when a Roman Catholic priest lies in the interests of his Church. People are only surprised when he tells the truth. The Roman Catholic Church has not received the title of "The Great Lying Church" for nothing. And Father Woodlock belongs to an order steeped in deceit, the members of which have carried the pretence of being what they are not farther than any other institution in the world. It is something indeed to find a Jesuit priest complaining—this time without cause—that other people are not exactly what they seem.

We are better pleased to note a letter from the Rev. Alexander McGovern, of Goole, who pertinently remarks in dissenting from the suggestion that the International Conference should be prohibited:—

Religion has been established and organized in England for at least 1,500 years, so that surely "all that is most sacred and most precious to the individual as well as to the nation," ought not to suffer through such a congress as the above.

Quite so. "Ought not to suffer," but the truth is that given a fair field to-day, and Christianity in this country—real Christianity—would be reduced to infinitesimal proportions. We appreciate Mr. McGovern's liberality, but if Christianity is to survive anything like the power and influence it possesses now, it must appeal to the ignorance and bigotry of such men as Rear-Admiral Emdin and Father Woodlock.

We greatly appreciate the kindness of readers in sending newspaper cuttings. Together they form a news agency far better than any established one could be, because they are supplied by those who are interested in the Freethought movement, and therefore best qualified to pick out items of news that are likely to be of interest. And even when such cuttings are not used at once, they are kept on one side when they may be of later use, or they serve to *inform* what does appear in these columns. At the same time we must ask those who send to remember that it is simply impossible to comment on all that are sent. In this matter numerous considerations have to be borne in mind in the allocation of space—whether the particular topic has been dealt with sufficiently; whether the matter is of sufficient general interest to demand immediate comment and so forth. The



*Freethinker* goes all over the world, and the job of the editor is to decide these and other points in determining the "make-up" of the paper. And our space is strictly limited. So our general and large body of helpers must remember that although the particular information is not immediately used, or may not be openly noted, it serves its purpose in making the *Freethinker* what it is.

The Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society is fixed for Saturday, January 22. It will well maintain its character, and we hope to see as numerous a body of friends present on the date named as were present last year. Further particulars later.

From an article in the current *Nineteenth Century*, we learn that the dawn of a new educational day for Abyssinia has taken place:—

As yet only elementary schools for boys and girls have been opened with Amharic and Arabic sections. Naturally the teaching and outdoor exercises are on Fascist lines, and loyalty to the King Emperor and the Duce takes a prominent part in the school life. . . . There is no intention of Europeanizing or over-educating these people.

We also learn from another source that:—

Italian financiers are making plans for a brewery industry in Ethiopia. A brewery, it says, is to be erected in Addis Ababa, the first of its kind, and a high production is anticipated.

Beer, at any rate, is considered, good for them.

## The Revolt of the Lord

(Concluded from page 733)

SEVERAL days passed and God began to take a profound interest in these three men. He actually began to like them. They relieved the boredom of having to listen to gossiping old women or shivering men speaking upon the happiness of their mundane lives. As a matter of fact, God had long before come to the conclusion that men lead happier lives on Earth than in heaven, although he had no definite proof as he had not visited the terrestrial sphere since his investigation into the Babel question. But now, he was going to listen to men who had studied, or who actually questioned, his own existence. He asked the Atheist, the Agnostic, and the Sceptic many questions, and they all answered him on the advance which science had made, on the beauties of literature and poetry and on the magnificence of Earthly Nature. God was intensely interested and looked into the distance as if trying to picture all the wonders of which Shelley wrote, and the triumphs of science, and even the triumphs of literature . . . the last was a great testimony to the three men's powers, for God and the angels had a definite aversion to literature. The three men went on to relate how many very intelligent men such as Darwin, Buchner, Haeckel, and hundreds of others had (was it true?) been sent to hell, although their intellects were such as to be rarely found on Earth.

The guardian angel hesitated for a moment; I could see that she was once again assailed by misgivings, but once again she overcame them, and continued: Finally, after hearing these men for many months God became very impatient. All this time new people were entering heaven. And all this time the people had nothing better to do than to talk gossip, or how much money they had made on Earth, or how they had served themselves well by circumventing someone else. God was truly, and perhaps rightly, impatient. He knew best. He could stand this condition of tension no longer, so one day, about a year

after these men entered Heaven he called them to his side, and whispered to them that he wanted to visit Hell. The Atheist, the Agnostic, and the Sceptic all nodded their approval, and pleaded . . . actually pleaded . . . to be permitted to accompany the Almighty. God in a fit of generosity—he was many moons older than the God who ordered Moses to slay the Midianites—assented to their request. So, late on the evening of Thermidor the sixteenth, they stealthily crept to the golden gate and told St. Peter of their mission. Only, of course, they did not say they were going to hell, but rather that they were going to visit purgatory to enquire how many souls were ready for transport. God had transformed or transmogrified himself into a fourth man, and since all of them had divine tickets of leave, Peter permitted them to go by, although he looked suspiciously on this fourth man, for he could not remember having allowed him to pass originally through the gates.

The guardian angel stopped suddenly now, and I could see that she was questioning the advisability of continuing. Yet, she went on: Well, the four people went swiftly to Earth, and then below Earth, until they finally came to the Devil's house. They stopped there and knocked at a gate. The gate was cold, and God was in consternation for the immense heat which the fire should have created could not be felt. Yet, in his magnanimity, he said nothing. The gate opened and there behind it stood a man of erudite bearing and appearance. God looked at him, but could not recollect his face, so he said, "Is the Devil in?" The man answered in soft tones, "I am the Devil." God was taken aback but managed to ask, "But the last time I saw you, weren't you all red, and was there not an eternal fire burning here?" The Devil blushed, and answered, "Oh, so you're the Lord, are you? Well, almighty being, that is the truth, I was just like that. Yet, since you last came about two thousand years ago, many things have happened. Thousands of intelligent men have entered here. Amongst others, a man by the name of Rousseau came and spoke very convincingly on the evils of Eternal fire; then another man, a great Pacifist, as they called him on Earth, spoke on the futility of incessant burning. Then, still another spoke on the terrible cruelty. Other men said that the brain of the human being could not evolve while it was in fire, while others stated that it was waste of fuel, and they gave economic reasons to support their theory. Briefly, almighty power, I have been converted to what the human beings call 'Humanitarianism.'" God was astounded. For a moment he did not speak, but when he did it was in severe tones, "Then it is no joy sending men to Hell to see them burn, because they do not burn." The Devil nodded his head, and then invited God to enter to see the wonders which had been accomplished under the new dispensation.

Tears came to the guardian angel's eyes. Well, she continued, God entered the Devil's sanctuary and he spoke with Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, Verlaine, Pasteur, Voltaire, and many others, and he was so impressed with these men that he took the Devil aside and said, "Listen, Satan, I plead with you; go to Heaven and let me take your place. I shall give you the four corners of the globe!" But the Devil was adamant and answered, "No, almighty power, I cannot obey this request." God stayed several days in Hell using all his eloquence, and tried to make the Devil understand the conditions in the celestial region, but the Devil said that he knew them only too well and it was precisely for those reasons that he could not go to Heaven.

"Well," my guardian angel went on, "there is little more to say. God returned to Heaven, a very disap-



pointed divinity. He is now more dissatisfied than ever, and he actually speaks of performing a miracle called devolution (whatever that may mean) by which the Earth and the whole solar system will return to its primitive form and a new contract will be made with Satan. Of course, this is only rumour. But there is a great deal of dissatisfaction . . . a great deal. Anything might happen." The guardian angel relapsed into silence, her form disappeared, and the sound in my room became limited to the pumping of my heart and the steady rhythm of my breathing.

ROBERT S. BLUM.

## People Who Call Themselves Freethinkers

SOME time ago, in a letter to the editor of the *Freethinker*, I drew attention to the half-hearted avowal of Freethought principles, which too often characterized certain speakers and writers in our movement, who could refer to our uncompromising hostility to Fascism in the most explicit (often vitriolic) terms, while demurring to express any condemnation of intolerance from the Left—or, if any criticism were offered, it more often than not resembled the gentle chiding of a friend.

But I owe an apology to Mr. Cutner. In a recent article appeared the following passage, which deserves quoting, because of its refreshing straightforwardness, and its refusal to pander to political bias by apologizing for intolerant conduct. After criticizing the "touchiness" of Fascists when their own prejudices were assailed, Mr. Cutner proceeded:—

Or try any meeting where Communists are present to venture to differ from Marx, or Stalin, and see what a holy row will follow. As for criticizing Russia . . .!

Now, why—particularly on a Freethought platform—should not Russia be criticized, or Stalin, or Franco, or Hitler, or the opinions they stand for? Why should people who call themselves Freethinkers feel hurt if their political opinions are touched? Why should any subject be, to use religious parlance, sacrosanct? Why should we claim the right to attack religion without let or hindrance, and discriminate when it comes to politics?

Well, of course, we shouldn't discriminate when it comes to politics. The fact that many do is explained by their having thrown overboard the religious *dogma* without being able to rid themselves completely of the religious *spirit*. To become a secularist or an Atheist is not necessarily to become a Freethinker; conversion to Freethought being an infinitely more difficult process than conversion to Atheism. (That Mr. Cutner understands this is indicated by his reference to "people who call themselves Freethinkers.") As I understand the term, a Freethinker is something more than a sceptic in matters appertaining to religion. According to J. M. Robertson the word first came into use in the English language towards the end of the seventeenth century when "freethinker" and "freethinking" denoted religious unbelief. But words, like everything else in nature, are subject to the laws of evolution, and nowadays Freethought implies, at least in my opinion, something more than religious scepticism. By Freethinker, I mean a person who makes a conscious effort to formulate his opinions on the basis of evidence, and not from the standpoint of some assumed authority; and by Freethought, the mental outlook which seeks to apply the scientific temper to every department of life. Such

an attitude of mind connotes tolerance, because the Freethinker believes that no one individual, group, or institution has a monopoly of truth. Hence, it is natural that foremost among the aims and principles of the National Secular Society is the advocacy of the fullest possible freedom of thought, speech, publication, and action.

In many cases conversion to Atheism is the first step towards conversion to Freethought. I, personally, was an Atheist before I was a Freethinker. It is easier to assimilate the arguments against the belief in God than it is to grasp the significance of the Freethought attitude of mind and all it implies: and Freethought implies among other things, the ability to examine evidence objectively (i.e., scientifically, and not from the standpoint of prejudice); the assumption that your opponent *might* be right, and you wrong (the basis of tolerance); the habit of listening calmly to a vigorous—even "provocative"—attack on your own cherished beliefs; the courage to rise in defence of your opponent when he is being unfairly treated (even though you might hate the ideas which he upholds); and so on. But too many "prospective" Freethinkers never get beyond the first step. They get rid of the religious belief—accept the Atheistic position; but then the process is arrested, the suppressed spirit of bigotry being deflected into political channels.

This bigotry assumes fanatical proportions in its opposition to Mosley and his supporters. Take the following as a typical example. After a lecture delivered at a public meeting on Sunday evening, October 10, the chairman, who had bought a special newspaper edition, announced as a matter of interest, that during the afternoon Sir Oswald Mosley had been hit by a brick thrown by a member of the crowd, knocked unconscious, and removed to hospital. On hearing this a section of the audience, largely composed of "people who call themselves Freethinkers," broke into applause! Comment seems needless, though I am glad to say this time the speaker rose to the occasion and gave the bigots a thorough "dressing down."

To-day we are witnessing the decay of the older forms of religious belief, only to find that new pseudo-religions are arising to take their places as the enemies of intellectual freedom. I have avoided calling these post-war political 'isms (Communism and Fascism) religions, because they lack the supernatural content; but they are religions in so far as they demand the same obedience and subservience to authority which characterized the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. In the political religions the State is the God, and the dictatorial promulgations the divine revelation; while the devotee displays the same vigorous, fanatical zeal which was associated with religious sectarianism some thirty years ago.

It is the clear duty of all who value intellectual liberty to protest against all forms of intolerance, religious or political, and whether emanating from the Left or Right. Freethinkers must guard against the danger of allowing their political biases to obscure their principles. As Bertrand Russell says, "No liking for Communism should make us unwilling to recognize what is amiss in Russia, or to realize that a regime which allows no criticism of its dogma must, in the end, become an obstacle to the discovery of new knowledge. Nor, conversely, should a dislike of Communism or Socialism lead us to condone the barbarities which have been perpetrated in suppressing them in Germany. (*Religion and Science*, pp. 251-2).

This article is an appeal to Freethinkers to condemn impartially *all* forms of dictatorship. Not to do so is to do a great disservice to the cause of Freethought.



We might increase our numbers by pandering to political susceptibilities, but it would be at the expense of sacrificing our Freethought principles. In a movement such as ours, surely it is quality, and not quantity, that is desired.

W. FLETCHER.

## Freethought in Luxemburg

ATHOSO ZENOO has discovered the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. English Freethinkers may find more to ponder on in Grand-Ducal happenings than our friend's article suggests. The Catholic Fascist, or would-be Fascist, Government of the Grand Duchy introduced, as Athoso Zenoo tells us, a Bill, usually referred to as the Law of Revolutionary Exceptions, by which extreme measures could be taken against persons holding revolutionary views. This Bill was asserted to be directed against the Communists, but it was so worded as to be a weapon against anyone the Government particularly disliked. In this little country, the larger part is mostly agricultural and the smaller intensely industrial. There are not many Communists. In proportion to the 300,000 population, however, the Freethought fraction is large and very active, more than twice as numerous relatively as English Freethinkers. As for their activity, their exertions to prevent this bill from becoming law may be taken as a sample. Our friends in Luxemburg, who have always been essentially non-political and opened their ranks to all, whatever their political opinions, who rejected authority in religion and accepted reason as the touchstone, had no doubt that Freethinkers were among those aimed at in this proposed law. They have held for some time past that organized Freethought should take part in politics when the freedom of thought on which their existence depends is menaced. The Luxemburg Federation has therefore shown particular energy earlier this year.

In particular, the society of Esch on Alzette, a town of iron foundries, took special steps. They publish a weekly paper something like the *Freethinker*, the *Freie Gedanke*, and a monthly *Die Neue Zeit*. When the proposed law was referred to a plebiscite, the Esch Freethinkers published issues of 60,000 copies of these, a copy going into every home throughout the Grand Duchy. As I write I have in front of me a copy of *Die Neue Zeit* for June 1, 1937, calling on all Luxemburgers to vote against the government proposal. It has displayed the portraits of twenty leading democratic inhabitants, such as a professor, the president of the Luxemburg Teachers' Union, a doctor, an engineer, an architect, a dentist, a station-master, some barristers and solicitors (both men and women) as well as Members of Parliament, each giving his reasons for asking all voters to cast their votes against the proposal. Not only was the agitation against the proposal successful, but, by their active and thrusting policy, the Luxemburg Freethinkers have got into touch with all sections of democratic thought in their country, have revived and animated the anti-clerical feeling, and have gained many members for their organization.

We hope to welcome some of these vigorous Secularists at the International Congress next September in London, and I am sure all members of the N.S.S. will give Messrs. Useldinger, Hill, Ulvelin and their friends an appreciative reception.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

## Prayer—A.D. 1937

MR. HUGH REDWOOD, Religious Editor of the *News-Chronicle*, has just issued a work called: *Practical Prayer*, described on the cover as "A Guide to the Practice of Prayer." This treatise is remarkable from the fact that it is dated A.D. 1937. Except for a rather modern carelessness about the texts he quotes from the Bible, he might be writing a few centuries ago. Mr. Redwood betrays no acquaintance with the literature of his subject or with science generally, or with the scientific explanations of the origins and psychology of prayers.

Mr. Redwood speaks of "a scientific gospel," and suggests that we should "make trial of it by experiment" (p. 68). But, he says, "I must know Christ before I can show Him" (p. 69), "it is one of my chief convictions that the first requisite in praying is to show forth the presence of Christ" (p. 69), "doubt is our greatest handicap in praying" (p. 23), and in case this is an insufficient deterrent to approaching the subject in a scientific way, he adds that doubt is also "definitely a sin" (p. 23).

There is a chapter on "The Mechanics of Prayer," in which the author compares Prayer to a Radio, "except that we are dealing with Divine Power instead of electricity." He omits to note that the Broadcasting Station closes up rather too often, and that only people rich enough to buy the most expensive sets can get the best results. He does not speak of the inaccuracies of some announcements, nor of the rumours that occasionally announcers get dismissed for drunkenness, mild obscenities, and divorce. Then again, some frequent users of the Prayer Radio seem to be short of one of those "buttons" Mr. Redwood mentions in his Radio-parable.

Mr. Redwood says nothing about Prayer Wheels and similar "Mechanics of Prayer." But he has a machine of his own, out of which he gets "a joy which it is not easy to describe" (p. 127). He was inspired by hearing a "loud speaker" (was it himself?) suggesting a "Card Index of People to Pray For"! His description of this pathetic machine-like form of sympathy with people in distress, for whom he can do nothing but pray, would occasion little "joy" to anyone but Mr. Redwood. To others it would be an Index of Tragedies inviting tears or—determined action of a most "material" character.

Some Bible passages look queer in Mr. Redwood's "paraphrase"; "the Authorized Version freely paraphrased," is the author's description. He claims "the right to attribute to Jesus Christ words which He may never have uttered," but "attempting with all reverence to read His Mind, between the lines" (p. 15). The amusing burlesque of Christ's interview with Nicodemus—having nothing whatever to do with Prayer—is laughable enough, especially Christ's advice to Nicodemus—"Listen to the wind, Nicodemus"—which might serve as a text for many preachers, or as the title of Mr. Redwood's book.

The "Lord's Prayer" is described as "Christ's Model Prayer," in which "He compressed a whole philosophy." It is curious that although several Prayers of Jesus are recorded in the New Testament, there is no evidence that either He or His disciples ever used this prayer themselves. The Churches throughout the ages have invented a tremendous array of all kinds of prayers, but they never regarded the "Lord's Prayer" as anything but a tiny little unimportant ornamental boat in an ocean crowded with big ships.

Amongst the Bible references (p. 22) appears the story of Elisha's Prayer (2 Kings vi.). The chapter (of which Mr. Redwood quotes but one verse) is an appalling record of Jahveh's punishing people with blindness and famine—and cannibalism, and concludes thus: "Behold this evil is of the Lord." It is the least likely justification of Prayer that one could cite.

According to the Bible chronology, man never dreamt of praying till Cain had murdered his brother centuries after the "Fall." The Bible's first mention of prayer is Genesis iv. The second reference is about two thousand years later, at the time that God inspired Abram to murder his son Isaac. Prayer seems to have been as commonly offered to Baal and the other "false gods" as to the one and only Jahveh. But as theists apparently



think belief in "a God of any kind" better than Atheism, it may be that Prayer to Anybody is better than none.

When Jesus was asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (or as Mr. Redwood says it means: "What are the rules of the game?"), Jesus seems to have offered the "rich young man" a complete encyclopedia of details—but He did not include Prayer (Luke x. 25-28).

Mr. Redwood is apt to exaggerate the importance of his subject. He thinks "prayer is as much a necessity as washing or dressing or eating one's breakfast." Maybe, one could dispense with breakfast sometimes as easily as Saints have done without washing or decently dressing. But what shall it profit a man if time stolen from useful soap and porridge is wasted on ineffectual Prayer? Mr. Redwood's answer is "efficiency." "Time spent on prayer is time saved" (p. 42). He who prays "gets life in a new dimension."

"Christians," says Mr. Redwood, "are very imperfectly acquainted with the realities connected with prayer" (p. 11). Mr. Redwood wastes so much time on irrelevancies (war, love, sin, "re-birth," etc.) (p. 44), that he has to summarize hastily what those "realities" may be. The most he can say is that the "drastic" results of prayer comprise "a complete overhaul" of the praying man's life, including "new heating, new power and new sanitation" (p. 46).

There are, however, limits to what we must pray for. On pages 83-84 the author gives a list of things for which "prayer must not be drawn on." And first and most important we must not pray for "MERELY PERSONAL ENDS." This prohibition rules out Christ's own "Give us this day our daily bread"—about as "merely personal" a request as one could ask. Did not Christ pray: "Let this cup pass from ME"? Did he not commend the Publican who prayed: "Be merciful to ME," and answer the expiring burglar favourably when he asked: "Remember me"? If men cease to pray for their personal needs, Prayer will be a farcical taking in of each other's washing. But we have a shrewd guess about this *carveal*—it is calculated to explain away the constant failures of all prayers.

"Church Finance," says Mr. Redwood, "should be governed by Prayer" (p. 98), and he tells how once he recommended prayer to a church worried about its debts. "The church was called to prayer, and within a short time its minister was notified" that a rich stranger conveniently died and left the church a fortune—enough to pay all its debts ("and then some," as the Americans say). As the victim of these prayers was not even a church member, the story may perhaps frighten capitalists into saving their lives by subscribing to church funds BEFORE their funeral.

Whether Mr. Redwood is a reliable witness to the many miracles he records must be left to the reader's judgment. He was apparently challenged to produce evidence of a tall yarn he told in an earlier book. He now identifies the "personnel" connected with the "Prayer" miracle referred to. It is as we suspected. Mr. Redwood gives us all the names and addresses in the simple formula: "I may as well admit that the man was myself" (p. 86). As evidence, confirmation, and proof, this is as good as we are likely to obtain in relation to any kind of miracle.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The preservation of the Bible as a book sacred beyond criticism has kept alive a tradition of barbaric cunning and barbaric racialism, generation after generation, to the infinite injury of economic and political life. . . . Hitler never made a speech that could not be re-phrased in Biblical language.—H. G. Wells.

The chief strength of the Greeks lay in their freedom from hampering intellectual tradition. They had no venerated classics, no holy books, no dead languages to master, no authorities to check their free speculation. As Lord Bacon reminds us, they had no antiquity of knowledge and no knowledge of antiquity.

"The Human Comedy," Jas Harvey Robinson.

## Shelley and Lynmouth

A FEW weeks ago in the "Nature Notes of a Freethinker," which I enjoy so much, there was a reference to the cottage at Lynmouth, said to be have been inhabited by Shelley. The cottage, which Shelley and his wife occupied from June to August, 1812, was pulled down and another was built on its site.

The niece of Shelley's landlady, Mrs. Hooper, remembered the poet well and indicated to the late Miss Mathilde Blind the exact situation of the cottage.

It is probably long since the cottage disappeared, for I think I can recall the appearance of the present one, of which I have a photograph, as it was some fifty years ago.

Mr. Mere also refers to Keats, and this reminds me of some lines entitled "Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition," which disingenuous editors often omit from the poet's works:—

The church bells toll a melancholy round,  
Calling the people to some other prayers,  
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,  
More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.  
Surely the mind of man is closely bound  
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears  
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs  
And converse high of those with glory crown'd.

Still, still they toil, and I should feel a damp,—  
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know  
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;  
That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go  
Into oblivion;—that fresh flowers will grow,  
And many glories of immortal stamp.

The poetry of Keats is essentially Pagan; it was at the classic altars he worshipped. I do not find any reference to the orthodox deity.

EDGAR SYERS.

## Correspondence

### LONDON IN ROMAN DAYS

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. T. F. Palmer, in his summary of religions practised in Roman London, makes no mention of the cult of the Phrygian god, Attis. This ferocious faith required its priests to be castrated, and the bloody ritual with which the process was done is fully described in Frazer's *Golden Bough*. In the first Romano-British Room of the British Museum is a most elaborate instrument, shaped something like a gigantic pair of sugar-tongs, and highly ornamented with figures of gods and goddesses and emblems of fertility, which was undoubtedly used for the purpose of controlling hæmorrhage during castration. It was found in the Thames in 1840, but its use was recognized in recent years by a surgeon (Mr. Alfred G. Francis). Only one other instrument of its kind has been found within the whole confines of the Roman Empire, and the British Museum specimen is much the finer of the two. The practice of this cult in Roman London is a fact of great historical interest, but it is characteristic of the sex repression in England that the British Museum authorities will not inform the great British public more as to the purpose of this instrument than that it was a "surgical clamp."

WILLIAM A. BEND.

### IN A COUNTRY FIELD

The tolling bell calls good folk in to pray,  
The stoat has danced the rabbit's sense away,  
A sudden leap, and in the sunburnt grass,  
The coney's form is now a lifeless mass  
Of downy fur, and sleek ears soft and long,  
And dainty paws that scratched the good red earth,  
What fun! Join in, who can, in such celestial mirth,  
And praise dark wisdom with a senseless song.

Nicholas Mere



## Society News

An enjoyable evening was spent by those present at the Social in the Bishopsgate Institute, last Saturday evening. Miss Thelma Tuson was in good form, and delighted the company with her singing. Mr. Cecil Johnson's parody of the B.B.C. was amusing, and it was unfortunate that the acoustic properties of the hall prevented a comfortable hearing to some of the audience. A short speech from the President received the usual warm and hearty reception. Mrs. Potter's violin solos were well played and pleased everybody.

Dancing to the music provided by the Somerville Band, with Messrs. Clifton, Rosetti, A. C. and R. V., acting as M.C.'s, occupied the rest of the evening, with the exception of an interval for refreshments. In that department a party of volunteer workers undertook the arrangements. They worked hard and well, and received many congratulations for the excellent catering, service, and table decorations. The Executive of the N.S.S. takes this opportunity of thanking all those ladies and gentlemen who formed the refreshment committee, and materially added to the success of the evening.

Birmingham saints will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. L. Ebury, who pays his first visit, and will speak in the Bristol Street Schools this evening (November 21), at 7 p.m. The subject of his address will be "Christian Cant." The local N.S.S. Branch will, of course, see that Mr. Ebury receives a warm welcome from a good audience, and Mr. Ebury can be relied upon to do his part well.

Freethinkers wishing to send seasonable greetings to friends abroad should make use of the folded greeting card, with pansy design, and a quotation from Col. Ingersoll, obtainable from the Pioneer Press or N.S.S. offices at two pence each or 7 for one shilling, also an artistically designed post card with a quotation from Thomas Hardy as follows:—

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R. H. ROSETTI,  
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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Saturday night and Sunday night, Mr. J. W. Barker will speak at each meeting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, N.10, Sunday, L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, L. Ebury.

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, Mrs. Janet Chance (President, Abortion Law Reform Association)—"The Church, The Labour Party and Abortion Law Reform."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Moritz T. Bonn, D.Sc.—"The Conflict of Ideologies."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, A. Burall—"Facts and Values."

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 7.30, Sunday, November 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

#### INDOOR.

BEDLINGTON (Reay Hall): 7.0, Thursday, November 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Exodus xx. 8-9."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, W. L. Owen (Liverpool)—"Education—A Valuation."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury—"Christian Cant."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Assembly Rooms, Market Hall, Blackburn): 7.30, Thursday, November 18, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Does Man Survive Death?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. G. Essardi.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Some Supposed Revolutions of Modern Science."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Fregardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 6.45, Debate—"Does Evolution Explain the Origin of Man?" *Affir.*: Mr. A. G. Senior. *Neg.*: Mr. T. Graham.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, B.A., B.Litt.—"Religion as a Bar to Progress."

GREENOCK SECULAR SOCIETY (Shepherds' Hall, Regent Street): 7.0, Muriel Whitefield—"Science the Saviour."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Charles Lestor—"Communism and Religion in Primitive Society."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, D. Robinson (Liverpool)—"Evolution."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road): 7.0, Mr. Spencer (Manchester)—"God and Mammon."

SEGHILL (Miners' Hall): 10.30, Sunday, November 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Parsons, People and Politics."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. N. Charlton—"The Bible Discredited."

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Whitefields' Buildings, Southfield Road, Middlesbrough): 8.0, Friday, November 19, Mr. Dalkin—"Scientific Materialism." Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton, 7.0, Tuesday, November 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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President - - - CHAPMAN COHEN.

General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

**PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.**

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The Trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name .....

Address .....

Occupation .....

Dated this.....day of.....19..

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.



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