

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

From the Camp of the Enemy

ALL our prisons are equipped with chaplains, their business being that of satisfying the religious yearnings of His Majesty's guests. Following this example, some of our daily and weekly newspapers engage a parson, or semi-parson, to attend to the religious welfare of their readers. Whether this is done to prepare a section of the readers for the ministrations of the chaplain, or whether these scribbling preachers write under the impression that they will make the prison chaplain's services unnecessary, I do not know. I am a humble chronicler of facts. Now the gentleman who looks after the spiritual welfare of the *News-Chronicle* readers is Mr. Hugh Redwood. Whether he is a parson or a semi-parson, I cannot say. But he writes like a parson, he thinks like a parson, and so one may at least say that he ought to be a parson. I believe, wherever possible, in relating the punishment to the crime. For some quite unknown reason, one of our readers wrote Mr. Redwood protesting against the use made of the B.B.C. machinery for religious propaganda, and protesting also against those who were trying to stir up Sir (Barkis) Samuel Hoare to do something to prevent a "Godless Conference" being held in London. To the first complaint Mr. Redwood replies, by letter (which is one way of avoiding publicity and preventing others joining in the protest) that those who do not wish to listen to the B.B.C. religious services "have only to switch off, or listen to something else."

That is *really* thinking like a parson, so lopsidedly that it leaves one completely open to attack, and with no possible defence. Consider. The fee that the *Freethinker* pays the B.B.C. is exactly the same that is paid by the godite, and equal fees should receive equal service and equal privileges. And even a semi-parson ought to be able to see that, in strict justice, if one man is allowed to express opinions in

favour of religion, and in so doing criticize another man's non-religious or anti-religious opinions, the other man should be permitted to have *his* say on the same topic. Mr. Redwood may reply that this is not the case on the paper for which he writes, but a newspaper may do as it pleases—subject to the dictates of the advertiser—whilst the B.B.C. is a semi-Government monopoly. It is not, therefore, to the point to say that if the *Freethinker* does not care for the religious service he can switch off. The complaint is against the abuse of a public service. When I complain that my local rates and my taxes are increased because the Churches and Chapels are allowed to escape rate and tax free, it is surely no reply to tell me that I am not forced to go to Church. Neither is it a reply to say that if I do not like the religious service I need not listen. And when Mr. Redwood says that while the religious service is on I may listen to something else, he must know, if he will stop thinking parsonically for a moment, that on Sundays, while the religious services are on, I may *not* listen to something else. It is religion or nothing. The parsons have seen to that.

* * *

Godly Temper

But if Mr. Redwood has not a sense of logic or justice, he has a rather nasty temper. Continuing his reply, he says:—

You appear to nourish resentment against religion on the ground that it needs "force and favour." I myself have no use, and have often said so, of efforts to bludgeon people into belief. But neither have I any use for attempts to bludgeon them out of belief, and I know of no class of people quite so bigoted or intolerant as those who mistakenly style themselves "Free"-thinkers.

Mr. Redwood evidently does not believe in turning one cheek when the other is smitten, and in his temper he forgets to be truthful, logical or just. Otherwise he might have reflected that the *Freethinker* of to-day is unfortunate in the fact that he is born of a religious ancestry. In the majority of cases he has been brought up in a religious home, and he belongs to a community in which religious influences are very strong indeed. In mercy and justice, therefore, Mr. Redwood might have said, "I often meet with so-called 'Free'-thinkers who are just as bigoted as are Christians, but when I reflect upon their religious heredity, their religious environment, and the religious influences that are brought to bear upon them, I am not surprised."

But I do not think that, in existing circumstances the *Freethinker* has very many opportunities of "bludgeoning Christians into unbelief." My complaint against non-Christians is that they are generally far too accommodating to believers. They are too apologetic, too ready to compromise, in too great fear of the bludgeoning that the Christian is only

too ready to inflict. Of course I may have misunderstood Mr. Redwood, who may only be trying to say in a picturesque way that a Freethinker arguing with a Christian reminds him of one using a bludgeon to correct an infant. I have noticed that myself, and have also observed that in a great number of cases one might as well use a bludgeon to force a battleship to surrender as try to drive logic or a sense of justice into some Christian skulls. Or it may be that Mr. Redwood has never asked that Freethinkers should have a fair show in the religious questions discussed in the *News-Chronicle* because of his perception that the blows of the equipped Freethinker are verily like unto those that cometh from a bludgeon in the hands of a strong man. Or perhaps it is that Mr. Redwood has used the wrong simile. He may have had in his mind the old saying about the inadvisability of using a steam-hammer to crack a nut.

Perhaps, also, it was by way of apology that a few days after Mr. Redwood had written his reply to the Freethinking correspondent, he wrote an article in the *News-Chronicle* on the inadvisability of showing temper in controversy. If this is the case Mr. Redwood is forgiven his temper.

* * *

More about the International

The question of the International Union of Freethinkers holding a Congress in London is still disturbing a certain type of Christian. Fussy and foolish Members of Parliament are asking questions in the House of Commons, and this is, we expect, giving them some importance to the "old women," of both sexes, in their constituencies. The ignorance displayed in connexion with the International Conference is surprising, particularly when five minutes' enquiry would have told these stupid M.P.'s the facts. The *Catholic Herald*, who wrote us the other day as to the character of the International Union of Freethinkers was duly informed of the truth. So it may have been that the following, which appeared in the *Herald* for December 3, was written before the enquiry was made:—

The *Catholic Herald* learns that the *Freethinkers International*—hitherto non-political and non-violent—joined forces with the International Militant Proletarian Freethinkers, which was set up by directly Muscovite influence in 1925. . . . Thus Moscow secured control of organizations numbering some six million of members, who hitherto have been fighting religion in scattered groups.

In all charity we will assume that the *Herald* has been misinformed; but even then we are surprised that the *Herald*, which must know how utterly unreliable is news about Freethinkers when it comes through religious channels, did not take care to see that the news was based on fact. The International Union is to-day what it has been ever since its foundation over fifty years ago. It is under the control of no outside body, and its programme is completely non-political. It has not allied itself with the International Proletarian Union, and it has no more concern with the political opinions of other organizations than a union of Christian Churches has with the political views of those who belong to it. "Moscow" has no more control over it than has Canterbury. That we hope is categorical enough, and we hope also that the *Herald* will have the grace to correct its misstatement in a subsequent issue. I admit that there are very few examples of Christians either correcting a lie about Freethinkers, or apologizing for telling one, but the *Herald* might achieve fame and set up a precedent in the matter by apologizing for what it has printed. We shall see, although we suspect that, if it does acknowledge its error, it will get into hot water with many of its followers.

Sheer Clumsiness

With a lack of tact and truth that was characteristic of it when I was a youth, the Christian Evidence Society announces to its possible subscribers, that there is "now no necessity to plead ignorance of a propaganda of . . . which has as its object the overthrowing of the Christian religion." I like the reading of this. It is such an ingenuous way of saying, "We have told a lie concerning the situation so long as it paid to do so, but now that the truth will pay better than a lie, we had better reverse our policy." It is so Christian, to apologize in this way for telling a little of the truth about non-Christian persons and policies.

Meanwhile, men such as Sir Phillip Dundas, M.P. and Commander Marsden, M.P., join with others in trying to make the flesh of Christians creep by telling them of the powerful and subtle and implacable conspiracy afoot to corrupt the morals of young men and women in universities and elsewhere in order that they may become "anti-god." Mr. Lewis Spence, writing in the *Glasgow Sunday Mail*, follows the lead given by Sir Phillip Dundas, and calmly suggests that Atheists should be ostracized wherever and whenever they are found. I think the punishment is too mild. Why not revive boiling oil, or the stake, or at least life-long imprisonment? If I were Mr. Spence I would not let such characters as Sir Phillip Dundas, outdo me in either foolishness, or lying, or malignity. Christianity must indeed have weakened if all it can now suggest in defending God is ostracism. *To be shut out of Christian company!* Why, to a great many that was the one thing that made hell attractive. The men I have named make an admirable trio. If I believed in a God I should say that God designed them for his followers. Their kind will be among the last of God's worshippers. But even their perpetuation may serve a useful purpose. They may serve the same purpose, psychologically, that children born with an external tail serve physically. In that far-off future when we have wiped the primitive and savage out of life, they will remind us of our lowly beginnings, and so serve to chasten our intellectual pride.

All the same if I believed in a God I fancy I should be inclined to place a little more confidence in him than the people I have been dealing with display. I would not take it for granted that God must be guarded by a policeman, or that his followers, in and out of the university were such hopeless fools that they succumbed to the first Atheist that challenged their faith. I say nothing about the slimy slander of Messrs. Spence, Marsden and Dundas, that it is only by corrupting the morals of young men and women that they can be afterwards influenced by Atheistic reasoning. This gutter kind of Christian pleading is very old, and the majority of decent Christians are now somewhat ashamed of it. But the three named have evidently in mind only the more ignorant sections of the believing world, and they probably feel that among their possible followers the clean-minded are in the minority.

But I really do not think that all those who are in our Universities are so weak-minded that they need policemen to protect them against the arguments of the Atheist. I do not even think that the average Christian is so hopeless a fool as the three I have named appear to believe. I think the truth really lies in the fact that the majority of believers in Christianity grow up without ever understanding what their religion actually is, and all that its teachings imply. Their parents, their teachers, the Church to which they go, never permit them to understand their religion. The Church has always been wise enough to teach that salvation came by belief,

not by understanding. And when the truth about religion is placed before the receptive minds of educated young men and women a great many of them with ability and courage realize how they have been misled and deceived. It is for this reason that the concerted propaganda against "anti-godism" is afoot. In effect this says, "Let us stop the youth of this country knowing what is the truth about religion; by no other means can it survive. Let us have a tariff wall against importing Freethinking ideas, and a measure of punishment against their advocacy inside the country, even if it be only a form of social ostracism. Even though we may only frighten the foolish into retaining their religion, it will be something. After all the relatively foolish are always in the majority." What these people overlook is that even the foolish may learn something, and that although the proportion of the wise to the foolish may never change very much, yet wisdom steadily reaches higher stages and folly follows the rise. And as it requires but little wisdom to see through religious beliefs, folly need not advance very much higher to accompany wisdom in its rejection of superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Saladin" the Sceptic

"I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part."

Shakespeare.

AN announcement that a biography of William Stewart Ross, better known as "Saladin," is to be published shortly, will recall the memory of a picturesque personality associated with Freethought. Although he was never in any sense a leader, he had a small and devoted following, who used to make up the annual deficits on *The Agnostic Journal*, and who purchased his books with unabated enthusiasm. He had many claims on their attention, for he was at once poet, publisher, editor, lecturer, journalist, and bookseller.

His business, that of an educational publisher, was at Holborn Viaduct Steps, not far from Edward True-love's old bookshop on Holborn Viaduct. Unlike other publishers, he "wore his rue with a difference." A part of his window display was devoted to Freethought literature, and the current issue of his own paper was always on view. Quixotic to a degree, he was ever ready to throw business aside and engage in argument, of which there was plenty in his shop. Among his callers was G. K. Chesterton, and, when those two engaged in wordy warfare, business was entirely suspended. Both were big men, big talkers, and the shop was small, and customers had to wait or call again. It was magnificent, but it was not business. These feuds had one good result; they taught Chesterton much that he could never have learned in the commercial newspaper offices. Indeed, he was grateful, for he put Ross into one of his novels, *The Ball and the Cross*, and the attempt was not unsympathetic.

Ross himself had a flamboyant way of writing which an unfriendly critic called "Macaulay flowers." It was, however, natural to the man, for he spoke in the same way as he wrote. A poet at heart, he thought in hyperbole. His poetry was characteristic, and in slender volumes of verse he endeavoured to clothe unfathomable thoughts and shadowy images in melody. In his humble way he was a pioneer of Symbolism, and he proved himself a genuine artist in exploiting a primitive faculty. In prose he was not so excellent a craftsman, but on special occasions he could write

with moving eloquence. His account of his last meeting with James Thomson, the poet of the *City of Dreadful Night*, his obituary oration on Charles Bradlaugh, and a monody on his dead son, were remarkable pieces of writing.

His best-known Freethought publication was *God and His Book*, a slashing attack on Orthodoxy. Another book on the Romish Confessional had a large circulation, and was actually used extensively as Protestant propaganda. Other favourites from his pen were *Woman, Her Glory, Her Shame, and Her God*, and *Roses and Rue*, a collection of essays of unusual merit.

Ross really enjoyed being an editor, for he fondly imagined that by so doing he was a man of affairs. His paper was his baby, and he was proud of it. Finely printed and well produced, it attracted attention at a time when that could not be said of all advanced publications. Freethinkers were very well catered for in those days, for beside *The Agnostic Journal*, there were Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*, Foote's *Freethinker*, C. A. Watts' *Literary Guide*, and the *Bradford Truthseeker*. In addition, *New York Truth Seeker* and *Boston Investigator* came from America to reinforce the others. And the ordinary magazines, such as the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Nineteenth Century*, were rarely without militant Freethought articles. In England, Huxley, Morley and Tyndall were upholding Freethought, whilst in America Ingersoll was blazing Secularism across a continent.

Ross was a fluent speaker, but by no means an orator. In this respect he was snowed-under by such magnificent exponents of that art as Annie Besant, Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, and Charles Watts, who together formed a galaxy of talent such as no other movement could boast of. I think in such company that he felt sometimes that he was himself the fox without a tail.

Yet he did succeed in making a name for himself. Undoubtedly, he had talents of his own, and he had hosts of friends. Whenever he chose to appear in a lecture hall he was sure of an audience. On the platform he was not at his best. Once, presiding at a South London debate, he made the chairman's speech so lengthy, that one of the disputants lost his temper and asked if he were debating with "Saladin" or the other man. But the audience enjoyed his flowery periods and barbed satire, and let him finish. In debate he was too emotional, for he would start like the falls of Niagara, and would imperil his peroration. His followers forgave him everything. Woe betided the disputants in a debate when he was chairman, for he got most of the applause, and an ovation which his admirers were always waiting to give him. He was fond of working a flowery reference to the "caves of Elephanta" into his lectures, and I have heard admirers call to him as he entered a hall: "Give them 'the caves' to-night."

The Agnostic Journal had a fine band of contributors. Apart from "Saladin" himself, who wrote a weekly causerie, entitled "At Random," the list was a striking one. Frederick Gould, whose graceful pen has been at work for Freethought for over half a century, was even then well known. Amos Waters wrote literary articles, and Frederick Millar spicy paragraphs. Croft Hiller contributed philosophical essays. It had a good circulation, and deserved it. Journalists in search of copy used to buy it for ideas, which they used without acknowledgment. Woffendale, Engstrom, and other Christian Evidence advocates, took it regularly, and, probably, enjoyed its perusal. Chesterton used to risk his life weekly on its behalf, for he would shuffle along Farringdon Street, reading as he went, until some good Samaritan

bundled him into a cab. As the *Freethinker* and *Reformer* offices were situated only a stone's throw away from "Saladin's" shop, on publishing days that neighbourhood was full of "the saints," who used to foregather and compare notes. I used to see Foote, Wheeler, Arthur Moss, and others, almost regularly.

Ross seems always to have failed to reach the goal for which he strove; yet one thing can be truly said of him. He was a bonny fighter in the Army of Human Liberation, and his reckless courage was beyond praise. This was, in sober truth, the real secret of his unfailing romantic popularity, and it is the reason which has called forth my poor remarks so many years after he has passed to where "beyond these voices there is peace." It is neither an easy nor a profitable thing for a man to be a prominent Freethinker. Onerous as such a position is to-day, forty years ago it was even harder. Ross never hesitated when he joined the ranks of the Army of Liberty:—

"For whom no drums beat, yet they fought
Alone, in courage of a thought
Which an unbounded future wrought."

MIMNERMUS.

Revival in Slimtown

"YES, things are looking up with the Slimtown Wesleyans," said the cobbler, "They've got what is called enterprise. They're realists. They look facts in the face. Their motto is 'A live donkey is better than a dead lion.' With the result that they are the only thriving religious body in Slimtown."

"How has that come about, Ebenezer?" enquired a customer. "Why, if I remember rightly, Methodism was down on its uppers a few years ago."

"You're right, Fred. To understand the situation aright you've got to go back a good way, even before my time. A hundred years ago the Methodists in Slimtown were thriving. There were the Wesleyans, the Primitive Methodists, the United Free Church, the New Connexion, and a few other sects, each with its own Chapel—and even then there were separate Missions and Tin Tabernacles. Methodism in those days seemed to fit Slimtown. Their system of Local or Lay Preachers was popular. They had their regular Ministers, but the local preacher was allowed a good innings. The layman with a liking for public life read his Bible, and then chose the particular branch of Methodism he liked best. In this choice, he was, of course, guided by the Spirit. The Spirit, with a rare catholicity, guides in all directions."

"Keep your words smaller, Ebenezer. We ain't got your gift for words."

"I'll try, Fred. You see, I was once a Lay Preacher, myself. And in that direction—long words and lengthy peror—bursts of eloquence—the Spirit guided me. But the Spirit was wrong, and you are right, Fred. We must make things fit."

"Well, the hey-day of Methodism had been reached. The response from the rank and file grew less. The Salvation Army appealed to some of the more vivid and less controllable of them; at the other extreme, the Hell Fire of John Wesley was too much for some of their stomachs. But the worst trouble that the Methodists had to face was that which all the Churches had to face. Their doctrines were getting suspect; their other-worldliness was making the members of their flock who were interested in human conditions, impatient. So they suffered as all the

Churches suffered. Collections fell off, congregations fell off, Sunday-school attendances diminished and smaller, and the spectacle of more-than-half empty churches was making their nakedness plain. Human institutions, you see, could ebb and flow, but godly institutions, causes which enjoyed the help of God, could not go backwards, or even stand still, without calling attention to the fact that God was absolutely careless about the success of Methodism. Human Institutions may not fit human character and human needs and so must be remodelled; Divine Institutions enjoying God's Help should fit human requirements for all time. For God is Unchangeable.

"With buildings all over the country practically unoccupied on Sundays and needing repair, the heads of the Nonconformist churches got together and came to the conclusion that it would be *spiritual* (also human and common-sense), if the Methodist Chapels dropped their different designations, and joined up forces. The advantages were obvious. First and foremost, of course, was the huge spiritual gain; that is, the warring and rivalling Nonconformist sects would have to meet each other, shake hands and appear friendly-like. Second, many of the churches could then be scrapped, the buildings could be sold for cinemas and the like (the ground values could at any rate be realized), the united congregations could foregather in the same House of God, and could check the remarks of the scornful by putting up in one building at least a respectable show. And the Balance Sheet would show better figures.

"Slimtown, of course, shared in this spiritual transformation. All the Methodists met on Sundays in the one tabernacle. Ninety per cent of them by implication agreed that the schisms that had rent the Methodists in the earlier days of their history were about unnecessary minor points, not justifying the extreme step of division. *Guidance* had worked questionably in those early days. Hand-shaking proceeded and, naturally, some of them found out that members of the rival sects were on the whole much the same as the members of their own congregation. There were fanatics on both sides, and there were also those who had very little religion at all; often quite sociable and likeable people. But, naturally, there were Die Hards—these were generally people of *convictions* although of rather an obsol—old-fashioned sort—and there were some who regarded the giving-up of their old building as worse than death. On the whole, from this point of view, it might be said there was 'spiritual gain,' if you want to use such a word.

"But, alas, congregations did *not* increase, collections drooped, and, *pari passu* (Sorry, Fred!), political importance did not increase. For the trouble really was that the whole object of their getting together as a spiritual flock was ceasing to be an object that people troubled about. The Catholics, of course, are wiser; they *breed* their congregations; they never dream of leaving anything to God. They drill their babies into their faith by making them familiar with their religion, and can depend upon them, in the majority of cases, keeping on repeating when they reach maturity, the stuff they acquired in childhood. Also the use of contraceptives is a mortal sin. From the same motive they discourage very actively the *mixed marriage*. Consequently the Catholics hold their own—or about hold their own. They leave nothing to God. But the Nonconformists, steeped in the tradition of Wesley, had not so fully appreciated the value of giving God a little assistance in these ways. Not as a body. Their spiritual heads did to some extent see the value of at least opposing secular education and keeping *some form* of religion in the schools, particularly as they could get money for

teaching it from outsiders. But the Nonconformists did include amongst them certain simple-minded laymen who thought that God had given them an appealing message, and that it was their business to spread it, and that to the extent that they did so, and the value of their faith, the stock of the House of God would rise.

"But it didn't," continued the cobbler. "Religion didn't fit, and that was the long and the short of it. Much of their most hopeful material was getting weaned away to social objects such as Housing Reform, and Peace Movements; there were even one or two with unhappy matrimonial experience, who were working for the Reform of the Divorce Laws. What was wrong with them, you see, was that their religion was out of harmony with the spirit of the times, and what was standing in the way of adaptation was their old-fashioned idea that their religion was God-given. It was incapable of being altered to fit facts; for God, who had made it, knew his religion and knew man, and had given a revelation to man which contained all things necessary to salvation. God, you see, was concerned with the things of the Spirit. He was concerned with how man was going to spend Eternity, and what He said about the best way of preparing for Eternity had been stereotyped quite a long time ago, and it couldn't be altered to fit any fresh circumstance, however pressing. To *adapt* was to play with the eternal verities—to make concessions to man's materialism. Probably (who knows?), it was the sin against the Holy Ghost.

"To the credit of our place, Slimtown was the first town to see that to stick to the Oracles of God was the way of Death and Destruction. So it came to pass that Salvation came to Slimtown in the person of the Rev. Angus Tura. The Things of the Spirit soared under his guidance. A Bright Young Man was Angus; he saw things clearly and saw them whole. Slimtown, for the first time, was put on the spiritual chart.

T. H. ELSTON.

(To be continued)

Whom God Hath Joined?

It happened in the village of Killeter, County Tyrone. Mr. Albert Muldoon, 21-years-old chauffeur, was acting as best man at the wedding of Miss Ruby Cunningham, aged 30, a farmer's daughter, and Mr. Christopher Craig, 30-years-old son of a Druminnay farmer. In the church Mr. Muldoon "somehow got into the bridegroom's place," said, "I will," and put the ring on the bride's finger. It was not until the Rev. William Duncan, who did not know the parties by sight, began to take the names in the vestry, that it was found that the "bridegroom" was only the best man. However all ended happily when the bride was remarried to the bridegroom.

I was taught at school that of two things or persons, one spoke of the better not the best; at a wedding, however, it is doubly different, for the bridegroom is not the better man, while his lieutenant is called the "best man." If this causes perplexity to an educated person, it is perhaps some explanation of the extraordinary mix-up with shy, nervous country folk in the presence of a strange man of God.

Was the clergyman dismayed? Not a bit of it. He simply went through a bit of the ceremony again, got the correct signatures, and pronounced everything O.K. Exactly the common sense thing to do, and to have a good laugh at the blunder.

I am not so perverse as to plead that a mistake should be persisted in, but the village clergyman in

this case did and said, far more than he knew. Unwittingly he showed that God is not interested in the proceedings, and in plain unequivocal terms he stated that the religious part of the ceremony was of no account—he didn't even repeat it for the real marriage—the signing of the register being the one vital point making the contract binding.

Secularists have, of course, always maintained this. But although marriages at the Register Office are no longer rare, it is still held by religious people—and by many who are not religious—that there is something unfinished about the formal legal ceremony; a church or a chapel affair is spoken of as a "right" wedding, the religious observances adding dignity and solemnity to the occasion. Only Atheists and scoffers argued otherwise, but now the whole fabric of the religious ceremony has been ruthlessly characterized as meaningless by a clergyman.

As a sportsman, I must say God has not had a square deal from his servant. I submit that, while in the eyes of the Law only the second marriage is valid, every bit of religious technique had been complied with, and surely God's Law ought to be treated with as much respect as that of Man. God moves in a mysterious way, the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite, and, of course, to tamper with the Almighty's joinery is fearful blasphemy. He who knows all things had some Purpose in guiding the steps and prompting the voices of "best man" and bride. To argue otherwise is sheer Atheism. At least I feel that the Rev. Mr. Duncan had no call (as they say in Ireland) to flout God so summarily. For, after all, a clergyman is not a civil servant, and this speedy divorce appears just a trifle disloyal. Still, from the stand-point of rationalism, it is gratifying to know that the Protestant Church has affirmed in unmistakable manner that the civil ceremony is the "real" marriage, and the religious observances merely trimmings.

But the Catholic Church would not be so accommodating. Only one way God can join couples that will be recognized, and that is by the One True Church.

In probably no country in the world (say Swift and other Irish writers) are there so many ill-assorted and unnatural unions as in Ireland; buying, selling, and bartering brides is one of the stock themes of the Irish Theatre. The results are what might be expected. If the Catholic Church has joined them, however disproportionate in age, breeding or intelligence, no divorce can put them asunder. While there are such things as "mixed marriages" they are performed with great reluctance by the priests, and the non-Catholic must swear an oath that all children of the marriage will be brought up in the Faith. But let there be no mistake about this, there is no give and take with the Church; the Protestant simply gets no chance. It is pretty well unthinkable for a Catholic in the Free State to marry outside the Church, but where that has happened ostracism and persecution follow. Let me illustrate a case:—

A young man whom I will call Michael was brought up in a Catholic atmosphere in a Southern Irish town. Business took him to London, and his reading made him liberal-minded. He married at a registry a girl from an easy-going Protestant family. A year later, the sudden death of his father compelled Michael to go home to take control of the business that kept the family. The birth of a baby to the young couple started trouble. Michael's mother insisted on a christening, and the young wife agreed. But then the priests made it plain that another marriage would have to be gone through. This got Michael's back up. He was willing to sacrifice a good deal for peace, but he did not like being told that he was living in sin, and that his child would be stigmatized accord-

ingly. He stood up to the clergy, but they hold all the cards in the Free State. Pressure and boycott decided the issue. He went back to London—practically ran away—from the land of his birth.

A loving couple, in the best sense of the term joined by God, were embittered; a mother parted from her son, a successful business abandoned, bad feeling created between two families. . . . But these things matter not to the Church, for there is nothing they will not put asunder to maintain power.

There is a story of an Irish girl who said to the sailor who attempted to kiss her after a flirtation: "Is it marriage ye mane?" Let the young Protestant be careful. It is well that he should know what he will be in for.

J. EFFEL.

Shelley's Religion

(Concluded from page 782)

SHELLEY tells Miss Hitchener in the next letter that he has "no objection on the score of feeling" to the belief in Deity. "I would as gladly," he says, "perhaps with greater pleasure, admit than doubt his existence. I now do neither: I have not the shadow of a doubt." It is impossible to go further, but his next sentence confirms the step already taken:—

My wish to convince you of his non-existence is two-fold: first on the score of truth; secondly, because I conceive it to be the most summary way of eradicating Christianity.

Miss Hitchener is advised not to be frightened by verbal bugbears. "Atheism," Shelley tells her, "appears a terrific monster at a distance. Dare to examine it, look at its companions—it loses half its terrors." He presses her again on the question of Deity:—

What, then, is a "God"? It is a name which expresses the unknown cause, the suppositious origin of all existence. When we speak of the soul of man, we mean that unknown cause which produces the observable effect evinced by his intelligence and bodily animation, which are in their nature conjoined, and (as we suppose, as we observe) inseparable. The word God, then, in the sense which you take it, analogizes with the universe as the soul of man to his body; as the vegetative power to vegetables; the stony power to stones. Yet, were each of these adjuncts taken away, what would be the remainder? What is man without his soul? He is not man. What are vegetables without their vegetative power? stones without their stony? Each of these as much constitutes the essence of men, stones, etc., as much make it what it is, as your "God" does the universe. In *this* sense I acknowledge a God; but merely as a synonym for *the existing power of existence*.

Nothing could be clearer or more decisive.

With respect to Christianity, there has been a general misuse of the term since the advent of modern criticism. Shelley tells Miss Hitchener that the faith which she held is not Christianity at all. "A Christian," he reminds her, "is a follower of the religion which has constantly gone by the name of Christianity." This is perfectly true, and should never be forgotten. The new Christianity, commonly called the New Theology, is Christianity in the last stages of dissolution. It cannot be stated in terms that clearly differentiate it from (say) Mohammedanism. Shelley sagaciously remarks that both a Christian and a Mohammedan "ceases to belong to the sect which either word means, when they set up

a doctrine of their own, irreconcilable with that of either religion except in a few instances in which common and self-evident morality coincides with its tenets. It is then morality, virtue, which they set up as the criterion of their actions, and not the *exclusive* doctrine preached by the founder of any religion." "Your religion," he tells Miss Hitchener, "agrees as much with Bramah, Zoroaster, or Mahomet, as with Christ." She had loved God, but "not the God of Christianity—a God of pardon and revenge, whose will could change the order of the universe." Shelley, for his own part, did not *doubt* Christianity; he was perfectly satisfied as to its falsity. "I cannot conceive in my mind," he says, "even the possibility of its genuineness." This was Shelley's opinion to the very end. Only a few weeks before his death, he wrote of Christianity that "no man of sense could think it true," and that he differed from Moore in thinking it useful.

Shelley leans, however, in this correspondence to a doctrine which is far older than Christianity. He imagines that the soul does not perish, but in a future existence "will lose all consciousness of having lived elsewhere" and "begin life anew, possibly under a shape of which we have no idea." But the only argument he advocates is *feeling*. "Reason tells me," he says, "that death is the boundary of the life of man: yet I feel, I believe, the direct contrary." "I cannot submit," he exclaims, "to perish like the flower of the field." Such was his attitude at that enthusiastic age. When his mind ripened he admitted that the desire for immortality was the only, and not very powerful, argument in its favour. From the first he had not believed in the continuance of personal consciousness after death. Finally, as he told Trelawny, he was satisfied to know no more on the subject than Plato and Bacon. And if the language of *Adonais* be urged against this view, we should reply that, allowing for the exigencies of metaphor, there is no more expressed than the conception, which Shelley started with, of the individual soul returning to the soul of the universe from which it sprang.

"Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same."

Shelley's real religion, if the word *must* be used—which we are far from conceding—was something very different from what usually passes under the name. Standing in the cathedral of Pisa with Leigh Hunt, listening to the music of the organ, he remarked on what a religion there might be if humanity, instead of superstition, were its object. In the same spirit he writes in one of these letters to Miss Hitchener, that his Address to the Irish People would soon be out, and that:—

It will be instantly followed by another, with downright proposals for instituting associations for bettering the condition of human-kind. I—even I, weak, young, poor as I am—will attempt to organize them, the society of peace and love. Oh that I may be a successful apostle of this true religion, the religion of Philanthropy!

Shelley was not built to organize human society. He was built to illuminate and inspire it. We might apply to him nearly every line of the magnificent forty-second and forty-third stanzas of his immortal threnody on the death of Keats. His beautiful spirit, speaking through his glorious poetry to generation after generation of the dedicated soldiers of freedom and humanity, bears a strong resemblance to "that Power":—

"Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above."

The modern thirst for biography is becoming excessive. No privacy is respected. It is forgotten that public men have private residences, and that men of genius have a life of their own with which the world has no legitimate concern. One is sometimes glad that it is impossible to spy into Shakespeare's house through doors and windows. It may be questioned whether Shelley's letter to Miss Hitchener should ever have been published. But they were drawn upon by Dr. Dowden in his authoritative *Life of Shelley*, and after such a partial use of them it was well that they should be completely accessible. Mr. Dobell, in his *Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Elizabeth Hitchener*, has, therefore, rendered a real service to all Shelleysans. As one of long standing, we thank him for his labour of love; and we hope he may some day be able to edit (no one could do it better) that complete collection of Shelley's letters which we have said is so desirable.

(Reprinted) G. W. FOOTE.

The Poison of Poetry

MR. FRASER has a case, but he overstates it. Poetry can be poison in his sense of the word. So can printing; so can singing; so can oratory. Yet humanity will preserve these activities, for *on balance* they are not poisonous, but nourishing. I would be prepared (but not here) to argue at length that the poets have done more to promote truth, and the love of it, than any other group of men—not excepting Scotch philosophers saturated with a Calvinistic *anti-life* outlook. But I will let all that go and confine myself to remarking that what Mr. Fraser really wants, unconsciously, no doubt, is the abolition of human speech.

There is nothing new in that demand. Scientific men, especially physicists, continually dwell on the inadequacy of human speech to describe the phenomena they deal with. Scientific statements are more and more made in mathematical formulæ, in algebraical symbols. No less a master of language and lover of truth than Anatole France has observed that men seek to discuss philosophy, to write their laws, in language which is a development of the cries of animals. An inadequate instrument perhaps, but one which is being improved, and in any case answers the requirements of the great mass of people. Before we consent to become Trappists (another Christian *anti-life* gang) Mr. Fraser must convince us that writing mathematically, $2 \times 2 = 4$ is so much superior, except for brevity, to saying, in our human way, twice two makes four.

Man is not likely to discard lightly his speech: that which more than all else differentiates him from animals. And he cannot, if he would, get rid of *rhythm*. Life is shot through with rhythm; indeed, cannot exist without it. Our pulse, our breathing, our walking is rhythmic. Our speech, our singing, is rhythmic because breathing is. The length of our sentences is determined by the depth of our breathing. *Rhythm*, says Mr. Fraser *italically*, has no linguistic value. I say, in plain roman type, that without rhythm there can be no language. Can it be that Mr. Fraser belongs to those ignoramuses who think that prose has no rhythm?

If so let him begin his education here by studying the rhythmic sweep of the magnificent prose of Mr. Chapman Cohen. Let him further study his own by no means inelegant style. Here are two sentences from his first article: (1) The normal and natural utterance of language is never poetic in the literal sense of the word; and (2) The fact that they do not, proves my point that, as a form of expressing ideas, poetry is inferior to prose.

We note in the first sentence three words ending in *al*—normal, natural, and literal—i.e., three rhymes. In the same sentence are the embellishments of alliteration—normal, natural and never, language and literal. In the

second sentence the alliteration is on the *fs* and *ps*, fact, form, inferior, and proves, point, poetry, and prose. Is this beauty of English prose and poetry, "apt alliteration's artful aid," detracting from the *truth* of Mr. Fraser's arguments? Mr. Fraser puts over his arguments all the better for employing, not "cleverly," as he would say of the poets, but unconsciously the genius of the English tongue.

Of course the beauty of English prose and poetry can be employed for base ends, as Mr. Fraser hints. Being a poet myself I could beat him to a frazzle in showing up the tricks of the poets, but I will present him with one example only of misleading prose. Somewhere, in Bible or Book of Common Prayer, is the beautiful sentence: In Him we live and move and have our being. These three internal rhymes on *v*, at rhythmic intervals of iambic feet, by their compelling beauty (repeat it over slowly) help to put over a nonsensical idea of pantheism. As I said before, Mr. Fraser has a case.

A case, but that is all. I thank him for putting it. These humorless, remorseless Scotch critics have their uses. They killed the poet Keats, as we all know. But I do not think Mr. Fraser will diminish the lustre of Mr. Chapman Cohen's prose, with its sweeping rhythms and cadences, and I can assure him that I shall continue to employ rhyme and rhythm in my verses to plead the cause of reason and Freethought.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Acid Drops

It seems we owe the Archbishop of Canterbury an apology. Our readers will remember that when writing on the Coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey, we were sarcastic as to a civilized people approving a ceremony in which by praying and greasing the Archbishop managed to incarnate the tribal god in an ordinary man. But if we are to be guided by the *Sunday Dispatch* of December 12, a miracle was worked. For example, here is the *Sunday Dispatch's* opinion of the speech of George VI. before he was King:—

When he spoke his words came slowly and hesitatingly, despite the fact that he was reading his speech. I remember the long pauses, the diffident manner, the slightly toneless voice.

At the recent State opening of Parliament the King,

made an eighteen-minute speech in a clear, unflinching voice that rang through the House of Lords.

So we were wrong. A miracle was worked at Westminster through the medium of holy oil and prayer. The miracle is the more impressive because it is limited in its effects to kingly functions such as the opening of Parliament, for those who have listened—in the cinema—to the King speaking at ordinary functions will notice that there is still slow and hesitating speech, the long pauses, etc., even though there are only a score or so of words to be said. Of course it need make no difference to the man whether he is a ready or an unready speaker. Many a very great man has been a very poor speaker, and while he could turn out an eloquent volume, could not be trusted to make a speech lasting ten minutes. We refer to the matter only because we owe the Archbishop an apology. He did work a miracle, although only the *Sunday Dispatch* has noted it.

The Bishop of Kensington must either have been listening to some of the Christian Evidence Society's speakers or he has been listening himself to some of its "evidences." At the Annual Meeting of the C.E.S., the Bishop said that while Christianity could be accepted by the simplest and the most uneducated, "the man who undertook to stand up in such places as Hyde Park must be the intellectual superior of his critics, hecklers and honest doubters." But if the Christian Evidence lecturer knows as much about Christianity, and understands as much, as the "critic and honest doubter," it is just about twenty to one that he will be on their side. One cannot both understand and believe Christianity at

the same time. Perhaps the Bishop was only poking fun at the C.E.S. Probably his private advice to that Society was "Stick to the simplest and the most uneducated."

After all, "religious truth" is the only kind of truth known to man, that needs to be specially explained to each generation, and which has fewer people accepting it as the level of intelligence rises.

Appeals are being sent out for £200,000 for the building of Church Senior Schools. This may strike the unwary as being evidence of the interest of the Church in education. But one's admiration is checked by the reflection that the Government—that is the general public—will contribute seventy-five per cent of the cost of these schools, which will then become the property of the Church. It is to be noted that the Church is not really interested in education itself, and raises no protest against insanitary schools, or schools that do their work badly. Church schools are wanted only because they will supply a brand of religion that is not given in provided schools. We raise no complaint against any firm advertising its wares, but there is no other firm in the country which asks the general public openly to pay for the advertising of its wares.

That indefatigable super-Fundamentalist, Sir Charles Marston, has produced another book in favour of the absolute truth of the Bible. It is entitled *The Bible Comes Alive* and its all-believing author imagines that his description of the latest excavations in Palestine and elsewhere still further confirms him and his like in asserting that the Bible comes out unscathed from modern criticism. This is too much even for the religious reviewer of such an orthodox paper as the *Church Times*. He says that nothing that Sir Charles Marston records "does in fact upset or even disconcert the literary criticism of the Old Testament. . . . To claim that they overwhelm the principles of historical criticism, or seriously modify any of its important conclusions, is, with all respect, delusion." Of course it is as useless to argue with people like Marston as it is with a Salvation Army "lassie." The truth about the Bible marches on, and belief in it nowadays, in intellectual quarters, is very much different from what it was even thirty years ago. In fact, it is not *belief* but *unbelief* which is growing—a fact which Sir Charles Marston seems to know as well as we do.

An amusing incident occurred at a meeting of the Gravesend Town Council. A motion was brought forward by Councillor Mrs. Ricketts that the meetings should open with prayer. The motion led to a devil of a row, and one member suggested that another member should have "a punch on the nose," and another member was forced to withdraw. A member said "The rotten spirit which existed among the majority of the Council will never be blessed by God." On very good (religious) authority we can say that God has blessed all sorts of "rotten" things, and affairs will have to be very bad indeed if those who pray think that their prayers are of no avail. Anyway, Gravesend Town Council will have its prayers—until its members develop enough common sense to drop the performance.

At least one person in Liverpool was disappointed by the recent aeroplane tragedy in which an R.A.F. machine, astray in the fog, scraped a church roof, hit and demolished the roof of a house, and crashed into neighbouring backyards, where it exploded, the young pilot being burned to death. People who suffered damage to their houses included several members of the Protestant Reformers' Church, according to *The Protestant Times*, of Liverpool, which adds: "One dear old lady who narrowly escaped death said: "I thought it was the judgment-day—for the sky lit up with flames."

The plane did very little damage to the church roof, apparently, but the house it struck was partially destroyed, together with most of the furniture bought by a

man in preparation for his wedding on New Year's Day, for which he had also newly-decorated the house. His mother had a narrow escape, as did several other people in the neighbourhood. But the *Daily Herald's* one heading on the story next morning was "Blazing 'Plane Hits Church."

Many floods are reported from different parts of England. These we must expect; but Lourdes—the place where miracles appear regularly, where the blind are made to see and cripples to jump for joy—to the agency of the Virgin—at Lourdes, floods have also been happening, and over £11,000 damage has said to have been done to the famous grotto, and in the town about £8,000 damage. Now here is a chance for a really good miracle. If broken limbs can be repaired, why not a broken grotto? Why ask for hard cash when prayers are so effective? Even an Atheistical building could be made good by spending mere money. But a sacred grotto—certainly, prayer's the thing!

Criticism of the Haig statue reminds a Sunday writer of artists' "glaring errors," one painter depicting "a duck-hunter armed with a gun and clad in full shooting-kit in the Garden of Eden." Durer's "Peter denying Christ," shows a Roman soldier smoking a pipe; and his "Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden" has the Angel robed in a dress trimmed with flources. Tintoretto introduced into his picture of the Israelites gathering manna, figures armed with guns and blunderbusses. . . . But who *on earth* is to prove the artists *were* wrong? Surely there might be flources—besides "pennies"—in heaven! And if manna came from heaven, we cannot ignore the possibility that pipes and guns may also come from thence. Clerical shareholders in Armament stock should be able to testify to the Lord's interest in guns.

The church "is dying very fast in nearly all country districts" known to Sir Francis Acland, Liberal M.P. for North Cornwall. This gentleman has written to the Archbishop of Canterbury withdrawing from membership of the "establishment." The baronet has revolted against the church's attitude on divorce. This is one kind of response, and a very gratifying one, to the *Recall to Religion*. Sir Francis Acland's defection, we expect, will be attributed to "intellectual pride."

Fifty Years Ago

If the Gospel according to John was written by that apostle, it is curious that he never mentions his brother James, the companion "son of thunder." He quite forgets how he and his brother desired to call down fire from heaven to consume a certain village, and omits to explain whether it was James and himself, as Mark reports, or their mother on their behalf, as the first Gospel puts it, who petitioned to sit on the right and left hand of the Lord in the kingdom. He seems to have quite forgotten that he once had a brother in the fishing business. John is said to have lived to a very old age, but he hardly lived long enough to write the fourth gospel, which certainly was not in existence before the third quarter of the second century. A writer of that time is reported by Eusebius as describing John as a priest at Ephesus wearing the *petalon* or sacerdotal plate. Possibly it was a Jewish Priest of the Essene sect who wrote the Revelation, and warned the churches in Asia Minor against false apostles, and consigned to the synagogue of Satan those "who say they are Jews but are not, and do lie." It was expected John would live till the second coming of Christ, and according to Tertullian, he survived being thrown into a cauldron of burning oil. When he did retire to his long home, the earth above his grave kept heaving up and down to show that he was not dead but sleeping. Upon such legends as these rests all that Christianity knows of John and the other apostles.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. SYERS and C. S. FRASER.—Received and shall appear for Distributing and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—S. James, 5s.

W. SIMMONDS.—The only point in the present booming of the Bible is that it may help to keep alive a general impression of its value as a *religious* book. The clergy obviously do not care a brass button about its literary value, or its ethical value, or its historical value, or any other value save its religious value to them. It is a huge "ramp" that is being worked—one that is quite common in the lower regions of the commercial and newspaper worlds.

DR. R. K. NOYES and F. C. HOLDEN (U.S.A.).—Again thanks for cuttings.

C. W. JEFFERY (Bexhill).—We have written you regarding the erratum in *Age of Reason*. Thank you! Readers will please note that on page 112 of the Bi-centenary edition, the footnote should read, Matt. xiii. not xxii.

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.

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

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

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

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

The "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

To-day (December 19) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on "Are We Civilized?" Admission is free. Chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. We hope to be able to report the usual good attendance.

We have received a number of letters in reply to Mr. Fraser's recent article on "The Poison of Poetry," a few in support and many against. But the writers have written lengthy essays instead of letters of sufficient brevity for these columns. The subject is an interesting one, but we cannot fill the paper with it, and we do not like cutting down letters to suitable proportions. We do wish letter-writers would pay attention to our request that letters should be brief. They should not exceed 500 words. If they do so, they run the risk of being refused.

Religious critics can neither forget nor forgive that the late A. E. Housman was a confessed Atheist, not confessed as a disaster, but as a mere logical incident in his intellectual development. So one of these critics complains that A.E.'s work was "desperately adolescent," and there was "no intellectual spiritual development noticeable," in his later work. "There is the same intense feeling, the same narrow outlook, the same tragic-

ally childish anger at God." Which, being interpreted, means that after, at eighteen, arriving at a considered Atheism, Housman did not spend the rest of his life apologizing for having done so. That is, of course, the respectable way of arriving at Atheism. Say how sorry you are that you cannot share the "spiritual vision" of pathological "mystics," or refer constantly how much one misses the child-like ecstasy of those who enter into contact with a "spiritual world," and one may be forgiven. After all, Housman's development was steady and natural, and what more could one require? One cannot develop, so far as the idea of God is concerned. Having reached the conclusion that "God" is a myth, there is no further advance. There can only be a retrogression to childishness. It is amusing to read that Housman cannot be compared with Catullus or Heine. Neither can he be compared with Dante or Shakespeare. But everyone does not become a King in the world of literature. It is enough if a man's work is good and adds something to the intellectual wealth of the world. The one thing certain is that Housman's work will be read and admired when the very names of his catchpenny critics are forgotten.

The Annual Dinner, in the Holborn Restaurant, on Saturday, January 22, is open to any Freethinker or friends wishing to attend. The only condition is that each diner must obtain a ticket which can now be applied for—8s. each—from the Offices of the N.S.S., or the Pioneer Press. Evening dress is optional; and the increased attendance each year in itself indicates the growing recognition of an enjoyable evening. Besides the dinner, the reception, speeches, musical programme, and general good fellowship make the Annual Dinner easily our social event of the year. A vegetarian menu is provided for such as desire it, but notice must be given.

Those who have not already sent seasonable greetings to friends are reminded of the post card, with quotation from Thomas Hardy's "Winter Words" at one penny each, ninepence per dozen, post free in both cases. Here is a form of greeting card with quotations suitable for Freethinkers.

Curious things happen in the world, especially in that part of it known as Ireland. Here is a statement of the aims and objects of a Secular Society in Dublin, as given in the *Irish News* for December 2:—

Our friends in Dublin keep a watchful eye on Communitistic activities there.

The following is a copy of a circular which is being circulated in Dublin by a committee hostile to the Catholic Church:—

"Convinced that clerical domination in the community is harmful to advance, the Secular Society of Ireland seeks to establish in this country complete freedom of thought, speech and publication: liberty for the mind in the widest toleration compatible with orderly progress and rational conduct. With that end in view, the Society takes for its aim the following programme:

"To oppose unremittingly, with a view to terminating—

(1) "The system of clerical management, and consequent sectarian teaching, in schools.

(2) "The immunity from payment of rates and taxes enjoyed by the various Churches.

(3) "The Censorship Publications Act; and

(5) "All other impediments by way of religious tests or regulations dictated in the interests of those who make a profession of religion. Whilst working for the removal of these injustices and obstacles to human advance, it becomes our aim, on the constructive side, to further a State wherein the best of modern knowledge, in science, art, and philosophy, will be made available to everyone where men and women will be free to develop that stature, conditioned only by what is reasonable in ethics, independently of the sanctions of sectarian Churchmen."

"Progress is possible only when man is free to enquire. Freedom cannot exist alongside intolerance. The Secular Society of Ireland holds that the freedom of men and women in this country, as in all other countries, is to be realized only when the sectarian clergy of the various denominations have been curbed in their power

of interference, and the people stand free of that worst sort of despotism—hierarchy. Where the clergy are powerful liberty always suffers, clerical privileges grow precisely as dwarf the simple rights of the rest in the community. Ecclesiastical ascendancy must have as its concomitant shrinking liberty—and always intolerance.

"The Secular Society of Ireland stands free of association with any political party whatever. It will be political in the sense only of seeking to establish for all citizens equality of citizenship, as regards obligations to the State and the opportunity to develop freely therein.

"Founded by Irishmen, with the desire of seeing their country free in the fullest sense of the term, it welcomes to its ranks all men and women, irrespective of class, race or creed, who have a regard for liberty, and would free the cultural body from the paralysis upon it."

The above is evidently a new development of Communism. It will seem plausible to many and has a subtle appeal.

I daresay readers have been wondering why we said curious things happen in Ireland. Well, it lies in the following comment by the *Irish News* :—

The above is evidently a new development of Communism. It will seem plausible to many, and has a subtle appeal.

So we are left wondering, Why Communism? And wherein lies the "subtle" appeal. But it comes from Ireland.

Samuel Butler's Note Books

I.

BUTLER liked to think of himself as *l'enfant terrible* of literature; and certain it is that he seemed to be very often "agen" something, just to be against it, and for no other ostensible reason. A deeper insight into his philosophy, and indeed into the nature of the man himself, would have shown that if he did oppose something, he had, in his own opinion, some weighty reason. He was not what is known as a specialist; he did not have a one-track mind. He fancied himself as an art critic and as a musician. He felt he had science behind him when dealing with Evolution; and in literature he put forward with confidence such an original suggestion that the author of the *Odyssey* was a woman.

We are lucky in the case of Samuel Butler to know of what he was thinking, day by day. Like a great number of writers who also have kept diaries, or common-place books, or note-books of some kind, from an early age he would write down many of his thoughts and ideas on all sorts of subjects in special note-books. These, in the course of years accumulated, and he set to work to systematize their contents. "At his death, in 1902, he left five bound volumes," says H. Festing Jones, the editor of the published selection of their contents in 1913. Each contained about 225 pages, closely written, dated, and indexed; and there were also "enough unbound and unindexed sheets to make a sixth volume of equal size."

To put down his ideas as they came was a habitual practice of Butler's. "One's thoughts," he said, "fly so fast that one must shoot them; it is no use trying to put salt on their tails." Many of the entries he used in writing his books—they provided a text or an idea upon which to build his thesis. But most of the entries can stand alone; and they certainly prove how astonishingly diverse were his interests, and how wonderfully acute are many of his remarks.

Festing Jones, who was Butler's friend and biographer, wished at first to publish the Note-Books in their entirety. Later, however, he published a selection only, rather roughly classified under various headings. In 1933 appeared another volume of selections (*Further Extracts from the Note-Books of*

Samuel Butler, edited by A. T. Bartholomew), which are not classified, but headed from volume one, two, etc. From both the earlier and the later Selections one can get a good idea of the thoughts and criticisms which made Butler, as he rightly thought, such an *enfant terrible*. He cared nothing for established opinions; rapier or sledge-hammer were alike to him. He felt that he had something to say, and he said it bluntly.

He has many a shrewd hit at Christ. "No one supposes," he remarks, "that Christ himself, were he now living, would be a Christian; but he would find his mother and sisters and his brethren, all of them devout believers." And on the question of Christ's historicity, Butler says, "It does not matter what you call them [Christ or Anti-christ]. It is as wicked to deny the one as the other if you really believe in either, and if you believe in neither you are an Atheist. The only true Atheist is he who seriously disbelieves that there is either a Christ or an Anti-christ, and no such person exists. But whether you call Christ, Christ or Anti-christ, does not matter, he will be Christ as long as heartily believed in."

Butler was always sore about the way in which he thought Darwin treated him; and indeed about the way in which—unless one was very orthodox—one was allowed to refer to Mr. Darwin while that great scientist was alive. There are quite a number of hits against him in the Note-Books, this one giving the key to Butler's opinion as clearly as any of them: "A man may say what he likes about Christ, but he must be very careful how he attacks Mr. Darwin, or indeed any of the scientific or literary bigwigs."

The critics of the *Fair Haven* (who saw through it) considered that Butler was talking a lot of nonsense in claiming that Jesus never died upon the Cross. "They say," he comments, "my view that Christ never died on the Cross is fanciful, melodramatic, etc., but surely it is less of these things than the view that he died, descended into hell, and then ascended into heaven?" And Butler was never afraid of taking another side and justifying himself. "If I had been," he says, "born in the time of Jesus Christ, I trust I should not have been among his disciples; I hope I might even have been among those who crucified him, but one must beware of spiritual pride. Who knows but what he himself might have been an apostle if temptation had fallen in his way?" And he even added bitterly, but in my opinion, quite justifiably—"Christ was only crucified once for a few hours. Think of the hundreds whom Christ has been crucifying in a quiet way ever since." Perhaps here he was thinking of the Jews "who," he said, "are generally hated for having crucified Christ. A juster cause would be for having given him birth." One wonders how many Jews know this biting epigram.

Butler had probably as much contempt for the sayings of Jesus as for his doings. He quotes his friend Pauli's opinion: "Christ's sayings were like quack pills intended to be swallowed whole, without chewing or knowing what they were made of, and they poisoned one." Even Evan Powell Meredith, in his *Prophet of Nazareth*, never went further than that. But though "I dislike Christ very much," said Butler, "still I can stand him. What I cannot stand is the wretched band of people whose profession it is to hoodwink us about him." But he had written previously: "Jesus! with all thy faults I love thee still." This shows how inconsistent a man can be from year to year. There are abundant references to Jesus in the Note-Books to show that with all his faults Butler positively disliked Jesus. But he also thought sufficiently of Jesus later on to say that "Whatever else he was, he was not a Jesuit."

Butler knew, of course, that he was always tread-

ing on people's corns. "Why do you persist in doing this?" he was asked. "It is not right nor Christian." "No one ever trod on people's corns more persistently than Christ did," replied Butler. "Yes," was the answer, "but you are not Christ." "No," said Butler, "thank God. But when Christians say things that shock us (as they often do) we do not think them wicked. Why then should they think us wicked if we sometimes speak our minds plainly about their opinions?"

Butler believed in plain speaking—in Freethought; and his life was a protest against those who would forbid him to write or say what he pleased. The published selections from his Note-Books are packed with his satirical attacks on life in general. They make very piquant reading for his fight was not always against religion. I hope to deal with some of these in a future article.

H. CUTNER.

The Shadow Show

"For in, and out, above, about, below
 'Tis nothing but a magic shadow show.
 Played in a box whose candle is the sun
 Round which we phantom figures come—and go."
 Omar Khayyam.

MOIDERING IT.

The *Sunday Express* is reprinting judicious excerpts from the Holy Bible as Literature. As the Author of about fifty "thrillers," I was interested in their extract of Genesis headed. THE FIRST MURDER.

An excellent story as far as it goes, I think, but in these days of high powered American gangster films a little lacking in pep.

Consider:

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. . . . And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against his brother, and slew him."

Quite! But if we want a real snappy, up-to-date version of the Bible why not translate it into American?

For instance.

"So the Big Shot respected young Abe's mazuma more than somewhat, but Cain's potatoes interested him less than no little. And Cain got his dander up and his dial registered rage. So he had a few snappy wisecracks with Abe and rubbed him out.

"So the Big Shot says to Cain. 'Where's Abe?'

"Search me," raps Cain, "Do I keep him huh?"

"O.K. big boy," says the Big Shot. "This is where you get yours. You muscled in on my territory, so I put the finger on you.

"You ain't booked for the hot squat yet buddy. I'm gonna give you the works. I've put the finger on you, and your monniker from now on is Mud."

So Cain went out from the presence of the Big Shot and dwelt in the land of Nod.

You get the idea?

FOR EAST IS EAST.

The following paragraph is culled from *The Gold Coast Spectator*, to which Mr. J. M. Stuart Young is a frequent contributor:—

When his two sons were critically ill, a father at Mandsa, India, took a vow that he would crawl 300 miles on his hands and knees to the holy city of Hardwar if they recovered. They did recover, and

they insisted on joining the pilgrimage. After seven days of crawling, one of the sons died.

But the father and remaining sons are determined to carry out the vow. They crawl at the rate of five miles a day. Having stopped for two days to attend the dead man's funeral, they are now continuing their painful way on hands and knees to the holy city.

And, having read that, it was almost with relief that I happened on the following delightful advice to an Atheist in the *War Cry*—which incidentally I bought in a public house. The seller indignantly refused a free copy of my *Freethinker*:—

You can never imagine yourself a goody-goody little boy with a clean collar and a clean heart.

You're right there, unfortunately! We can fall so far from our young hopes that we lose all power of recognizing ourselves. But there is another part of you that does, and it fights about it. Deep down below the conscious mind there's another *you*, and it sees, and is ashamed, and it kicks at you in its shame, and you in turn kick out at the boy whose presence sets up the irritation.

Would you really like to see him turned into a replica of yourself? Honestly, would you rather he lounged around the public-house than went off to his Bible class? Would you rather he took in a stock of filthy yarns and had evil thoughts about every girl he set eyes on, including your own daughter? That's "coming it a bit thick," is it? It's a straight question, and if you answer "Yes," you're different from most other men. What kind of a fine fellow would you be without your smokes, beer, and dirty stories and betting coupons? What would you talk about, for instance, apart from "shop"?

BEST SELLER.

"To spread the gospel, salesmen of the British and Foreign Bible Society dodge bullets in Spain and China, slash their way through Africa's tropical jungles, plod across the Arctic's frozen wastes," according to the *News Review*.

It is computed that despite prevalent world unrest more than 11,343,948 Bibles were sold during the year.

Now isn't that nice and comforting? Not so good is the scribes' additional comment that colporteurs seldom distribute Bibles free. In backward places, where money is scarce, these devoted men barter their Bibles for sweetmeats, eggs, sugar cane, turtles, skins and cooking utensils.

After all I've known a time when I'd swap the whole of Leviticus for a lucifer to light a fag. Incidentally the India paper came in useful when cigarette papers ran short.

NEW RUBRIC.

Apropos of Lord Halifax's views on Hunting Exhibitions "From Hitler (Heil!) and Halifax. Good Lord obliver us!"

FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON.

I'm reminded by Thomas Hardy's ironic lines on poison gas on the N.S.S. greeting card of the dour guid meenister of a Scots Kirk, who in a Christmas sermon concluded with the following magnificent peroration.

"Ah, ma friends. Hell is not to be watered doon as some o' these so-called Modernists would have it. The Guid Book says its a great big burrrning sea of sulphur and brimstone where—if ye dinna lead a guid life—ye will writhe in agony, not for yin year, not for twa years, but for ever and ever through eternity.

"And in your never-ending torment and pain mebbe you'll cry out to the Laird: 'Laird, we didna ken.'

"And the Laird, in his Infinite Maircy and Loving Kindness will look doon on ye and say:

" 'Well, Ye ken noo! ' "

GWYN EVANS.

The Young Magician *

1. *Jesus in his cradle informs his mother of his mission.*
3. *He miraculously cures a young man who had been turned into a mule.*
7. *Causes a well to spring in a sycamore tree.*
8. *Caleb is miraculously preserved in a hot oven; and in a well.*
11. *Jesus causes clay figures to walk and fly.*
12. *Works a miracle with the dyer's cloths.*
13. *Miraculously finishes off Joseph's defective carpentry.*
15. *Transforms boys into kids, and restores them.*
17. *Makes a serpent suck back his poison from a boy.*
18. *Causes two boys who offended him to die.*
20. *And his schoolmaster's hand to wither.*
22. *Is owned by his Father at Jordan.*

JOSEPH the high-priest, called by some Caiphas, relates that Jesus spake even when he was in the cradle, and said to his mother:

2. Mary, I am Jesus the Son of God, that word which thou didst bring forth according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel to thee, and my Father hath sent me for the salvation of the world.

¶3. Coming in their journey to another city, they saw three women going from a certain grave with great weeping, and by them a mule, covered over with silk, and an ebony collar hanging down from his neck, whom they kissed, and were feeding.

4. And they said, O our Lady St. Mary, pity your handmaids, for we have no head of our family, no father, no brother. But this mule, which you see, was our brother, which some woman by witchcraft have brought into this condition which you see; we therefore entreat you to compassionate us.

5. Hereupon St. Mary was grieved at their case, and taking the Lord Jesus, put him upon the back of the mule. And said to her son, O Jesus Christ, restore according to thy extraordinary power this mule, and grant him to have again the shape of a man and a rational creature, as he had formerly.

6. This was scarce said by the Lady St. Mary, but the mule immediately passed into a human form, and became a young man without any deformity.

¶7. Presently they came to that sycamore tree which is now called Matarea. And in Matarea the Lord Jesus caused a well to spring forth, in which St. Mary washed his coat. And a balsam is produced, or grows, in that country, from the sweat which ran down there from the Lord Jesus.

¶8. There were in the same city two wives of one man, who had each a son sick. One of them was called Mary, and when she put upon Caleb her son a coat made from a swaddling cloth of Jesus (received from St. Mary in exchange for a "handsome carpet") his disease was cured; but the son of the other wife

* Being a compilation of passages from "The First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ," "received" by the Gnostic sect in the second century, and translated and published in English in 1697 by Prof. Henry Sike, Professor of Oriental Languages at Cambridge. Though only those outstanding passages have been taken which give a connected story of the "young magician" at work and at play, these are used as far as possible in the words of the Gospel as translated by Sike and included in Hone's 1820 edition of the *Apocryphal New Testament*. With suitable literary and typographical treatment, they and the other New Testament apocrypha might provide the publishing world with a companion volume to the Bible in modern dress—or they might be considered as a more suitable companion to Grimm's or Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales*.

died. Hereupon there arose between them a difference. And when Mary the mother of Caleb was heating the oven to bake bread, and went away to fetch the meal, she left her son Caleb by the oven; whom her rival, the husband's other wife, took and cast into the oven, which was very hot, and then went away. Mary on her return saw her son Caleb lying in the middle of the oven laughing, and the oven quite as cold as though it had not been before heated.

9. After this her rival, the other wife, as she was drawing water at the well, and saw Caleb playing nearby, took him and threw him into the well. And when some men came to fetch water from the well, they saw Caleb sitting on the superficies of the water, and drew him out with ropes, and were exceedingly surprised at the child, and praised God.

10. And when Mary the mother of Caleb told the Lady St. Mary what her rival had done, St. Mary replied to her, God will vindicate your injured cause. Accordingly a few days after, when the other wife came to the well to draw water, her foot was entangled in the rope, so that she fell headlong into the well, and they who ran to her assistance found her skull broken and bones bruised. So she came to a bad end.

¶11. When the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he and other boys made clay into several shapes, namely, asses, oxen, birds, and other figures, each boasting of his work and endeavouring to exceed the rest. Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, I will command these figures to walk. And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return they returned. He had also made the figures of birds, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink.

¶12. On a certain day, when passing by a dyer's shop, the Lord Jesus, going into the shop, took all the cloths and threw them into the furnace. And when Salem the dyer on his return began to make a great noise and chide him, the Lord Jesus replied, I will change the colour of every cloth to what colour thou desirest. And then presently he began to take the cloths out of the furnace, and they were all dyed of those same colours which the dyer desired.

¶13. And Joseph, wheresoever he went in the city, took the Lord Jesus with him, where he was sent for to work to make gates, or milk-pails, or sieves, or boxes; the Lord Jesus was with him. And as often as Joseph had anything in his work to make longer or shorter, or wider, or narrower, the Lord Jesus would stretch his hand towards it, and presently it became as Joseph would have it. So that he had no need to finish anything with his own hand, for he was not very skilful at his carpenter's trade.

14. On a certain time Joseph laboured two years on a throne for the palace of the King of Jerusalem, which, when he came to fix it, he found it wanted two spans of the appointed measure. But Jesus said to him, Fear not; lay hold on one side of the throne, and I will the other, and we will bring it to its just dimensions. And they did so, and the throne obeyed and was brought to its proper dimensions.

¶15. On another day Jesus went in search of some boys who had hidden in play, and when he asked some women at the gate of a certain house, they said there was no one there. Then the Lord Jesus said, Who are those whom ye see in the furnace? and they answered, They were kids of three years old. Then Jesus cried out, Come out hither, O ye kids, to your shepherd. And the boys came forth like kids, and leaped about him.

16. And when the women beseeched mercy, and entreated him that he would restore the boys, Jesus said, Come hither, O boys, that we may go and play;

and immediately, in the presence of these women, the kids were changed, and returned into the shape of boys.

¶17. In the month Adar a boy of the city was stung by a poisonous serpent. The Lord Jesus calling the serpent, it presently came forth and submitted to him; to whom he said, Go and suck out the poison which thou hast infused into that boy. So the serpent crept to the boy, and took away all its poison again. Then the Lord Jesus cursed the serpent so that it immediately burst asunder and died.

¶18. One Sabbath day the son of Hanani a Jew broke down some fishpools which the boys had made by a river, but when he came to the fish-pool of Jesus to destroy it, the water vanished away, and the Lord Jesus said to him, In like manner as this water has vanished, so shall thy life vanish; and presently the boy died.

¶19. Another time, when the Lord Jesus was coming home in the evening with Joseph, he met a boy who ran so hard against him that he threw him down, to whom the Lord Jesus said, As thou hast thrown me down, so shalt thou fall, nor ever rise. And that moment the boy fell down and died.

¶20. And when they brought him to a school-master, to learn his letters, and the master lifted up his hand to whip the Lord Jesus, his hand presently withered, and he died.

21. Then said Joseph to St. Mary, Henceforth we will not allow him to go out of the house; for every-one who displeases him is killed.

¶22. And when he was twelve years old, they brought him to Jerusalem to the feast; and the Lord Jesus continued behind in the temple, among the doctors and elders and learned men. And he grew in stature and wisdom, and favour with God and man.

23. Till he arrived to the end of his thirtieth year, at which time the Father publicly owned him at Jordan, sending down this voice from heaven. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Who, for our sakes, took a human body, and hath redeemed us, that so he might embrace us with everlasting mercy, and show his free, large, bountiful grace and goodness to us. To him be glory and praise, and power, and dominion, from henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

RONALD STANDFAST.

I have an uneasy feeling that I have come out in this book a far better man than I have been in life, and that I ought to warn the reader to try not to believe all the nice things I have been telling about myself with un-English volubility.

I am not conscious of having told any deliberate lies to my readers—where I may have deceived them I have been deceived myself, deceived by the better man I might have been. But in one respect at least I can say with a clear conscience that I have not deceived my readers—in my love for animals. I have loved them and suffered with them all my life. I have loved them far more than my fellow-men. All that is best in me I have given to them, and I mean to stand by them to the last, and share their fate whatever it may be.

If it is true there is to be no haven of rest for them when their sufferings here are at an end, I, for one, am not going to bargain for any heaven for myself.

I shall go without fear where they go, and by the side of the brothers and sisters from forests and fields, from skies and seas, lie down to merciful extinction in their mysterious underworld, safe from any further torments inflicted by God or man, safe from any haunting dreams of eternity.

The night will be dark, for there will be no stars overhead and no hope of a dawn, but I have been in darkness before. It will be lonely to be dead, but it cannot be much more lonely than to be alive.

From the Preface to a last edition of
"San Micheli," by Axel Munthe.

Correspondence

THE PEACE PLEDGE UNION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—With reference to the remarks on the Peace Pledge Union in your issue of December 5, some readers may be interested to hear that the non-military Armistice Service was actually held in Regents Park on November 11, and a large audience listened to a choir, conducted by Mr. Brian Easdale and to a simple service "acceptable to people of all points of view."

The White Poppy is not the badge of the Peace Pledge Union. It was produced for Armistice Day by the Co-operative Guild, and in *Peace News* the Union suggested to members that, if worn, it should be accompanied by a Red Poppy, in order that Ex-Servicemen might benefit in the usual way.

Although Dick Sheppard was the originator of the Peace Pledge Union, he was from the first one among the Sponsors, who include to-day, George Lansbury, Aldous Huxley, Bertrand Russell and many others. The Union is on a democratic basis, and the 130,000 members, organized in some 740 groups throughout the country, are not under central control, but are free to develop along their own lines.

ROY WALTER.

POISON OF POETRY

SIR,—Mr. (or is it Miss?) Blean Woods says I know little, if anything, of child psychology. To return the compliment, Mr. Woods appears to have had little, if any, experience of children at all.

"The beginner's language is naturally rhythmic," he writes. "Rhythm is by parents' and teachers' example and precept strangled at birth." Let us set aside, for the moment, the curious phenomenon of a baby speaking rhythmically at birth. If the foregoing sentences have any sense in them whatever, how can Mr. Woods prove that the *natural* tendency of young children is to speak in rhythm? That the tendency seems to be otherwise is suggested by his very next sentence: "Before the age of five the child can and should be trained to speak in language wholly in rhythm." Why the special training, if the beginner's language is naturally rhythmic? Mr. Woods answers this by implying the existence of some vast and sinister conspiracy on the part of parents and teachers (the brutes!) to suppress rhythmic speech. I find it strange that, as a parent, I (of all people) should not have been invited to help in the dirty work!

Mr. Woods complains that, for having attempted to restrain prose utterance and to inculcate rhythm, his head has been "torn off" professionally. Well, to judge from his own letter, *something* seems to be missing!

C. S. FRASER.

Obituary

MR. W. B. COLUMBINE

FREETHOUGHT has lost an old and worthy supporter in the death of W. B. Columbine, of Ilkeston, Derby. Mr. Columbine's connexion with the Freethought movement dates back to the days of Charles Bradlaugh, and his interest in the movement was constant and sincere. He was not a man who sought publicity, and a great deal of the help he gave was given without ostentation. This applies not only to Freethought, but to other movements with which he sympathized. On more than one occasion he expressed his high appreciation of the *Freethinker* and the work it was doing, and under the initials of A.N.E., he was a frequent contributor to the local press, often for the purpose of correcting false views of, or to give information concerning the work and meaning of Freethought.

Mr. Columbine was 78 years of age, and head of Messrs. Carrier and Sons, Ltd., hosiery manufacturers. He died on December 5, and was cremated at Wilford Hill Cemetery on December 8. He leaves a widow and three children. Our sympathy is with them in their bereavement.

MRS. MARY ENTWISTLE

We have to report with regret the death on December 5, of Mrs. Mary Entwistle, wife of John Entwistle, of Bolton, Lancs. Mrs. Entwistle had been in ill-health for some time, and the end came on December 5. Both Mr. and Mrs. Entwistle were very ardent Freethinkers, and took an active part in propagandist work. Like so many other workers in advanced movements, she belonged to that select number that are ready to do what they can to help a cause in which they believe, finding in the influence of their work their only reward. The interment took place at E. Weaste Cemetery, Salford, on December 8. Mr. J. Shortt conducted a secular service.

BISHOP MONTGOMERY BROWN

We learn with regret from America of the death of Bishop Montgomery Brown, whose name will be well-known to *Freethinker* readers. He was a Bishop of the American Episcopal Church who was ejected from his Church on various charges of heresy. Substantially an Atheist, he published a number of books and pamphlets, we fancy at considerable cost to himself, in which a form of what we think he would have called Christian Communism. As he expressed strong doubts as to whether Jesus Christ ever existed, it will be understood that his Christianity was of a very doubtful character. But he was evidently a man of intellectual strength, a very wide reader, and a man who fought long and stubbornly for his own intellectual independence and for the enlightenment of others. He died at his home in Galion, Ohio, aged 82. A picturesque figure, and a great admirer of the *Freethinker* and its editor, his death removes a striking personality from the world of American liberal thinking.

Mental Fetters!

[Reflections inspired by the sight of a class of children in charge of a Priest.]

RIVETING the mental fetters!
Distorting the young child's mind!
The Jesus Joss—a Christ on a cross,
And a God, deaf, dumb, and blind!

A hell of terror and torment,
Or heaven where the angels reign!
A crown to win, or through mortal sin
To suffer eternal pain!

Tales of a crucified "Saviour,"
Of a God vindictive and vain!
Of murder and vice and plagues of lice—
Fiend-food on a young child's brain!

Trading these infamous fables!
Priest-spun from looms in the East;
And their woven spell has served them well—
Foul infamous lies of the Priest!

Arise then Spirit of Freedom,
And with dauntless faith ensure
That the credal fears of countless years
Shall fetter mens' minds no more!

A. HANSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond-Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

INDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarence Hall, next to Fighting Cocks, London Road, Kingston): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"Proofs that Christianity is Sun Worship."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Capt. J. R. White—"The Immorality of Rome."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Belief and Conduct."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W): 7.30, C. Burns—"The Church and the People."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 8.0, J. V. Shortt (President N.W.F., N.S.S.)—"Did Jesus Christ Exist?"

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Birmingham Town Hall): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"Are We Civilized?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.45, Mr. A. Ingle—"Christianity and the Revolution."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Art and Religion."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 6.45, Mr. Dan Easson, B.L.—"Cremation." Lantern Lecture.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Debate—"That Secularism can Effectively Displace Religion." *Affir.*: Muriel Whitehead, G.S.S. *Neg.*: Thos. Robertson, B.Sc., M.B., Ch.B.

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Shepherd's Hall, Regent Street): 7.0, Mr. John Grant (Glasgow)—"Is Belief in God Reasonable?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. William Paul—"Fascism and Reactionary Race Theories."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, H. Little (Liverpool)—"Selling the Pass."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"Will Science Outlive Religion?"

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (General and Municipal Workers' Rooms, Ferry Street): 7.30, Thursday, December 16. A Lecture.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (Co-operative Hall, Jubilee Hall): 7.0, Tuesday, December 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

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THIS Society was formed in 1893 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes. The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of enquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

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