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

Views and Opinions

**The World and the Church**

JUST as we are closing the year of the “Recall to Religion,” the Church of England *Year Book* for 1936 makes its appearance. The figures therein show that during 1936 the number of confirmations have decreased by nearly 15,000, the number of Sunday School scholars by nearly 83,000, and even the Sunday School teachers have decreased by nearly six thousand. During the last four years the number of Sunday School scholars have decreased by over 236,000. These figures, of course, take no account of the increase in population, which would make the relative loss much greater than it appears. This must be quite inspiring reading for those who are working to recall the people to religion. Fortunately for them the stage-managers of this sacred pantomime will not have to produce actual statistics. All they need do is to speak and write of a great “spiritual uplift” that has occurred, and the larger church attendances experienced, without any reliable figures being produced. Even the fee-fo-fi-fum of the Coronation will be powerless to affect the steady disintegration of Christianity. At any rate our offer made when the Archbishop announced his “Recall” holds good. For every verifiable case of conversion from Freethought to Christianity, we undertake to produce at least two from Christianity to Freethought.

This decline in the number of Sunday School scholars may be due to several factors. First there is the growth of a healthier sense of parental responsibility which leads to a disinclination to send children to Sunday School against their will. Many parents to-day recognize that there is a better ideal than that of bringing children up as a mere copy of themselves. The development among children of a healthier sense of individuality must also be reckoned with, while many children of about twelve years of age, simply refuse to go to Sunday School. And each one has the

example of other children to back him. And with but little of hell and the devil with which to frighten children, the compelling force of Christianity on the rising generation has lost very much of its power. Part also of this decline is due to that impalpable, but real thing, “the spirit of the age.” Both children and adults find themselves living in an environment in which the number of avowed disbelievers is steadily increasing, a society in which the profession of religion is no longer so generally looked upon as one which all people ought at least to make, whether it is genuine or not. We are rapidly reaching a stage—if it has not already been reached—at which religion is recognized as at most a species of intellectual dissipation in which one may indulge, as one may indulge, in moderation, in alcohol or tobacco, but which leaves man none the worse if he ignores it altogether.

These factors of the decline of juvenile attendance at Sunday School—with which must be bracketed the Sunday School attendance of early adolescents—and the “spirit of the Age” account for the very energetic drive that is being made by the Church of England to secure the building of a larger number of schools of their own, with three fifths of the cost contributed by the Government. This shameful expenditure of public money for sectarian ends is one of the most scandalous of Governmental acts in recent years. There is no purely educational end aimed at by this building of Church Schools—unless we expand “educational” to cover every kind of training. There can be no question that the education given in the provided schools is much superior to that given in the non-provided ones, and if education was all that was aimed at there would be no need at all for these Church schools. The aim of the Church schools is frankly sectarian. The clergy, as clergy, have no interest whatever in education. Their ultimate interest is to secure clients for their own ecclesiastical organization. It is a case of capturing the child or disaster to the Church. The fact that some of the clergy are genuinely interested in education does not in the least affect what has been said. It proves merely that the social forces are often strong enough to overcome purely religious influences. If that had not been the case the state of the world would to-day be much worse than it is. Sectarian schools are built for sectarian ends. They are one of the means by which the churches contest the “spirit of the age.” Ultimately it is not mere organized opposition that the churches are fighting, neither is it any specific teaching; it is the general spirit of modern civilization with which the whole of religion is at war.

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**A Shortage of Parsons**

Here is another significant item of news. The Church of England has for some time found it rather difficult to find enough qualified men to act as ministers. On the point of quality the level has been

sinking for generations. This is not entirely a matter of salary; that would affect only such as were on the look out for a good job, and who would be prepared to preach almost anything so long as it brought them a good social position and a comfortable income. That type the Church has always had, but it is stupid to imagine that an institution such as the Church can be kept alive by that kind of character alone. In most periods the clergy will roughly represent the average of human nature in the bulk, with the same proportion of good and bad, intelligent and stupid, that one finds in other walks of life. And until recent times it had as many intelligent men and fools as one finds in other directions. But for several generations there has been a very obvious falling off in the intellectual calibre and general culture of the clergy. The change that has come over life in every direction, the new avenues of employment for intellectual ability that have opened, have initiated so great and so fundamental a change that men of ability find it more and more irksome to wear the uniform of any Church. Once upon a time the Church could choose its servants, now it has to take what comes and be thankful for what it can get. It must be content if the quantity is forthcoming; it can no longer insist upon quality. And a glance at the clergy of to-day shows that they may easily be divided into two main groups—the stupid, who genuinely believe in something like a real Christianity, and the more intelligent, who spend their time in discovering by what trick of thought or ambiguity of speech they can make Christianity mean what it has never meant, and what it never can honestly mean.

But the question of quantity appears to be pressing. The demand—not from the public, but from the leaders of the Church—is greater than the supply. Religion is the only commodity which as the public ask for less the manufacturers insist on supplying more. But if more clergy are to be provided, more money must be spent on salaries, and it has struck a number of people that this situation may be met by the institution of a celibate order of preachers, the celibacy to be either permanent or for a given number of years. This is the substance of a memorial to the Archbishops of Wales, Canterbury and York, presented by—among other signatories—Viscount Sanky, Viscount Halifax and Lord Hugh Cecil. The arguments for it are wholly economic. A celibate parson can live more cheaply than a married one. Moreover, the clergy are now recruited in a larger degree from “a different social class from that which once supplied them, they are given to marry at an earlier age, and so have more children, and a celibate clergy would help missionary work, since there would be one salary instead of two, one passage to pay instead of two, no allowances for children and for children’s education.” So it is suggested that when a parson is ordained, there should be a promise not to marry for an agreed number of years, or there should be a regular celibate order established by the Church. In plain language the occupation of a parson is to be brought down to the level of any other kind of employment, actually upon a lower level. Considerations of a social or ethical nature are to be left on one side.

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#### The Church and Civilization

This is an interesting suggestion to one who is acquainted with the social and ethical aspect of Christianity, for it illustrates the fundamental antagonism inherent in “true Christianity” to a healthy social life. The absence of any adequate recognition of the family, with a total ignoring of its humane and civilizing character, is a very striking feature of the New Testament. And later, with this

as a basis, the division of existence into “the world, the flesh and the devil” on one side, and the angelic and heavenly or “spiritual” state on the other, with the superiority of the state of a “virgin” over that of a married person led to the superiority of the celibate state becoming firmly established in Christian teaching. Marriage was, as with St. Paul, a mere concession to the weakness or sinfulness of human nature. This was in fact, as I have so often pointed out, one of the two ways in which the Christian Church made for the demoralization of human nature. On the one side by its intolerance and persecution it struck a severe blow at intellectual development, and on the other side it demoralized the stock, so far as it could, by eliminating those who were best qualified for family life. For preaching, no matter what the subject is, has the peculiar character of attracting those who least need its influence; and when the Church insisted on the superiority of the celibate life, and described the relations of the sexes as a mere concession to human weakness and sin, it withdrew from the ranks of parentage those who were best fitted for it. Of those who were attracted to the celibate or “spiritual” life there must have been a large proportion of the better type, while the hard, the thoughtless, the careless, were left to perpetuate the race. Dean Milman, and other writers on ecclesiastical history, have all noted the scant attention paid to the social benefits of family life in purely religious literature. Generation after generation of those who were regarded as the “holiest” of men and women, monks and nuns and priests, passed away and left no direct descendant to represent them. The coarsening of character, the hardening of nature, the brutalizing of life from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries may largely be accounted for by the operation of this dual action of the Christian Church. One may draw up a very spectacular indictment of persecution by the Church, of its intolerance and so forth, but the greater evil of the Christian Church did not consist in those it killed, but in the type it permitted to survive. Its evil influence on the position of woman and the family was not in its direct teaching so much as in the type of character it excluded, so far as it could, from the function of parenthood. As Francis Galton said, the Church acted as a breeder who deliberately selected from the worst of his stock, and bred from them while killing or dooming to sterility the better specimens. In acting as it does now, the present German Government, so far as it is successful, is doing what it can to breed a nation of mental degenerates and slaves, and is only putting before our eyes an example of what the Christian Church did for many centuries. So far as it succeeds, the present suggestion for a celibate clergy, resting as it does upon the lowest motives, is but repeating, or continuing the policy of the Church. And so far as it succeeds, it must have the same consequences. The best will pay heed; the worst will take no notice. The men who are most fitted to become parents will be withdrawn from the function of parentage. Those who are least fitted will be left to become the progenitors of the next generation. The Christian Church does not alter its methods. It merely adapts them to existing circumstances.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Perhaps it is not vouchsafed to everybody, whether in Holy Orders or out of them, to appreciate the full sublimity and beauty of the doctrine that if one of two married persons is guilty of misconduct there may properly be divorce, while if both are guilty they must continue to abide in the holy estate of matrimony. The conception of the law and practice of divorce as a kind of moral “obstacle race” may be magnificent. But it is not peace.—Lord Hewart.

## A Festival of Falsehood

"Who loveth not his brother at his side,  
How can he love a dim dream deified?"

James Thomson.

ARE there any hypocrites to compare with people who profess and call themselves Christian? From tens of thousands of pulpits this week will be proclaimed, "Peace and goodwill amongst men," by the clergy who bless regimental colours, christen battleships, and, on occasion, act as well-paid chaplains to the armed forces. The nations which profess to worship the legendary "Prince of Peace" are just as hypocritical as their pastors and masters. From one end of Europe to the other the roads resound to the tread of armed men, and a whole continent is humming with the sound of munition factories. The countrymen of Goethe are getting ready to cut the throats of the countrymen of Molière, and the compatriots of Kossuth are preparing to disembowel the brothers of Mazzini. In Spain the women, "like Niobe, all tears," are mourning their dead fathers, husbands, sons, and little children. The death-moans of thousands are drowned in the Te Deums of the victors, and the survivors are blessed in the name of that "Prince of Peace," who is said to have taught his followers to forgive their enemies until seventy times seven.

To such a pass, after near two thousand years of this alleged "Religion of Love" has the Western world come. In such an association, Milton's hymn on the "Nativity of Christ" reads like the bitterest mockery and the very quintessence of irony:—

"Nor war, nor battle's sound  
Was heard the world around,  
The idle spear and shield were high uphung,  
The hooked chariot stood  
Unstained with human blood:  
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng  
The Kings sat still with awful eye,  
And if they knew their sovran Lord was by."

The lines of poetry suggest a versified fairy tale, as indeed it is. "Peace and goodwill" to-day must wait the convenience of the Dictators and the directors of the Armaments firms. But such enormous divergence between precept and practice would be unbelievable, were it not true. Moslems do really attempt to carry out the teaching of their prophet. Hindoos and other Orientals are fanatical in their observances: but Christians give only lying lip-service to their creed. On Sundays, lolling in their church-pews, they acknowledge themselves "miserable sinners." All the week, if you told them so, they would start a libel action, or want to punch you on the nose. They are no more genuine than painted sparrows.

This humbug and hypocrisy crop out in so many other directions. The convivial nature of Christmas Day, alleged to be the birthday of their "Man of Sorrows," has frequently been noted to the discomfort of the clergy and their dupes, who resent fiercely any rational inquiry respecting their extraordinary faith. Indeed, "God's Birthday" is an annual orgy of gluttony and godliness, and the reason for this is quite an excellent piece of Christian evidence, for it plucks the heart out of the orthodox superstition.

Christmas Day was not kept regularly as a holiday until many generations after the alleged birth of Jesus. When first observed, it was kept on varying dates. The precise time of Jesus' birth in the legends was "wropt in mystery," like that of James de la Pluche, but it most certainly was not in December, for shepherds do not behave as represented in

that unpropitious month of the year. Why, then, do Christian people observe Christmas Day on December 25, and why is the alleged birthday of the ascetic carpenter of Nazareth a veritable carnival, and an annual orgy of eating and drinking?

Like all other human institutions, the Christian Churches and their feast days have had to contend in open warfare for survival. The festivals of old Pagan Rome were very numerous, and it was in competition with the feast of the Saturnalia, one of the principal Roman festivals, that Christmas Day came to be instituted by the Christians, and the date fixed as December 25. The anniversary of the god, Saturn, was an old-established institution, and the propensity of converts from the old Paganism to cling to established custom proved invincible, and the Christian priests adapted themselves to the situation with their usual oleaginous duplicity. If the apostates, they argued, were to be retained in the folds of the new religion, it was imperative for the Christians to incorporate the old under the mask of the new. Hence it followed that the alleged birthday of the Christian god was foisted upon the festival of the old Pagan deity, and, for a few days yearly, Jesus became Father Christmas.

This struggle for survival has also incorporated other Pagan features. In far-off centuries, white-robed Druid priests cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, and chanted their Pagan hymns to the frosty air. These features have been absorbed in the Christian Festival of Falsehood, and the mistletoe and the carol and hymn-singing still play their minor, if amusing, part in the celebration of a legendary Oriental deity, which had nothing in common with the Pagan Druidism which, for a time, was the religion of Britain.

Indeed, the Christian priests have always been smart commercial travellers, and have had keen interest in adding to the number of their customers. In the past the Christian priests sought for adherents by increasing the number of their festal days, and they crushed all opposition by bribing the weak and murdering the strong. In the twentieth century they are still at the old game. They are cajoling apostates all over the non-Christian world by means of medical missionaries, and at home by instituting Pleasant Sunday Afternoons instead of Painful Sabbaths, and by hypocritically pretending to identify themselves with social measures which appeal to the working-class. Observe, however, that for one Dick Shepard there are thousands of parsons who have no more sympathy with workers than the Sultan of Zanzibar with his slaves.

Indeed, the Christmas festival itself, with all its hypocritical professions and its purely legendary associations, is far too largely pretence and make-believe. It is the most ironical of paradoxes that preparations for wholesale murder are going on in almost every corner of that Christian world which professes to worship a deity who commanded his followers not to kill and to obey his behests of forgiveness and non-resistance. The Christmas Festival, so far as the Christian Churches are concerned, is an organized hypocrisy, a fitting celebration of legendary events that never happened. It will, however, continue in its present form precisely so long as priests make money out of the annual masquerade. There are many theatrical pantomime producers, but the cleverest and most successful of all are the clergy.

MIMNERMUS.

Those who are horrified at Mr. Darwin's theory, may comfort themselves with the assurance that, if we are descended from the ape, we have not descended so far as to preclude all hope of return.—*Ambrose Bierce.*

## Revival in Slimtown

### II.

THE cobbler removed a brad from his mouth, and continued:—

"It was almost miraculous, in a way of speaking, how the Rev. Angus Tura got to Slimtown at all. He was the third of the three ministers who were sent to preach a couple of trial sermons at the chapel so that the congregation might have a taste of their quality before they made their choice. The pulpits for the two previous Sundays had been occupied by ministers of quite excellent character as far as their sermons could demonstrate. They proved to have a good and solid basis for the Faith that was in them; they built up their argument on biblical grounds, they were logical, and at the same time eloquent. They were of the old school, of course; they started off with the Fall of Man, and drew the conclusions from it on approved Pauline lines. Angus, however, took their breath away. When the time came for his sermon, instead of saying, 'the subject of my discourse will be *Jeremiah* xii., etc.', he simply enunciated the following lines (without any reference at all to the fact that he was doing something unusual in neglecting the Bible):

GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES.

"Then followed an appeal for the Christian Church (the Methodists, of course), to be up and doing. The old way was palpably the wrong way, for by sticking to that path they were *dying*. They might, of course, be an unconscionable long time in dying, but the end was certain. This fact (he challenged them to deny it), proved the old ways and the old methods to be wrong. If these led to a Dead Church, they led to a dead God, and to take up a position that involved such a belief was pure Atheism. If they really believed in God, it behoved them to prove it by keeping the Church alive, not piously assisting in its demise by insisting on a religion which made not the slightest appeal to the great majority of mankind.

"Well, the stars in their courses fought for Angus. If the other two ministers sent as samples had not been so excellent, Angus would not have had a dog's chance. But the minister who had just been replaced had gained his position in Slimtown by just such an orthodox sermon and, *after* that sermon, hardly another respectable discourse had he given. It was the deliberate opinion of the leading lights of Methodism that that sermon had been dug up from the archives of Methodist sermonology. No one had been able to prove anything, but one lay brother had brought up other cases of such literary piracy, with names and dates, and also showed that sermons were purchasable at moderate cost from commercial agencies. The Committee (1) thought that the unimpeachable orthodoxy of the sermons (a) and (b), together with their eloquence and general ability, were obviously the marks of a preceding generation, and (2) they knew that the sermons (c), that Angus had given them, were not at all likely ever to have been preached before or to have been turned out by a theological academy at so much the ream.

"There was as well a few of the younger Methodists who were keenly impressed by the lines that this minister took. They were getting tired of expending time and energy, week in and week out, without tangible results, and Angus opened a hopeful door. Objections, of course, crowded to their brains, but, when all was said and done, the argument that God couldn't be behind a dying church was more than plausible to them. They threw their votes in favour of Angus, and that answers the riddle of how that gentleman ever got to Slimtown.

"Angus had enough good sense to move slowly. First of all he strengthened his position on the governing body by replacing a few of the old school by fine enterprising specimens of British Youth. Then, when he felt his position less precarious, he began to spread himself.

"In less than a year he had succeeded in having a cinema show as a regular feature of the evening service. The morning service had been abolished, the Church being left open then merely for those who wished to come and enjoy private prayer and meditation. It was difficult to procure suitable films, but by suitable excisions many of them were made comparatively "appropriate," without being, at the same time, deadly dull. The film was followed by a fifteen minute discourse by Angus, based on the screen story. It was Angus's first principle that Religion should be jolly; and Angus's comments were certainly that. He had a gift in that direction, and as he was fond of putting into the pillory Slimtown celebrities using the Bunyan device of giving them names such as Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. All Things to All Men, Mr. Mote and Beam, it came about in a very short space of time that the discourses became exceedingly popular. Angus took care always to preface his remarks with the phrases that what he was going to say would have to be taken in an allegorical sense, as the characters introduced did not refer to any specific individual, alive or dead. For the first time in thirty-four years collections began to have an upward tendency.

"The *Weekly Notes*, which he inaugurated also, went well. The same symptom predominated here. True there was a couple of columns of *Things of the Spirit*: illuminated by Angus Tura; but everything therein had a clever secondary meaning. It was possible to read them and gain spiritual solace of exactly the same nature as is obtained from *Punch*. There was also a crossword competition, on similar lines to others, only the *Bible* was more freely drawn upon. The entrance fee was 6d., and, it was announced, *the prizes would be in proportion to the total amount received*. These were advertised on quite a generous scale in both the local *Sentinel* and *Shriek*, which thus secured from both papers regular eulogies of the minister's spiritual warmth and enterprise. Prizes were offered to children for essays and drawings on quite a liberal scale. All entries had to be accompanied by a parental declaration that the effort was the unaided work of a child under the age of fifteen. Parental industry from nine p.m. to 12 p.m. daily, after the youngsters had gone to bed, reached almost feverish proportions in Slimtown.

"Angus brought out a special edition of the Bible for his Church. He called it *The Bible: Its Spiritual Magnificence*. It was a distinctly amiable production. You could look through it again and again, but you would never find a sentence to bring a blush to the face of anyone save those who had the disease of honesty to the point of incurability. What was left of the Pentateuch when Angus had done with it could have been printed as a two-page leaflet. Samuel may have hewed Agag (who came unto him delicately) in pieces before the Lord that day, but that day was not this day, and Angus with his unerring Spiritual insight sensed that Holy Samuel had better be inferentially reprimanded. Jesus, of course, was served up *à la Weatherhead*—a jovial Jesus, full of good jokes. *Additions*, of course, had to be made to the text to support such a thesis, but the Reverend A. T. was not lacking in courage. He did not approach the Cambridge or Oxford Presses for permission to publish his version. "They will not trouble me," he said. His instinct was a sound one.

"Just put your fingers here a moment, Bob," said the cobbler. "Press."

"Angus had long had his eye lovingly on the Football Pools as a source of spiritual revenue. "To combat the growing materialism of the age," he repeated again and again in his publication, "We must adapt ourselves to the existing situation." At the beginning of his second year, after many private consultations with the more wealthy members of his flock (and many adherents in other towns), he made his one big indisputable Hit. He launched THE POOL OF SILOAM. From that moment, Methodism in Slimtown went forward by leaps and bounds."

T. H. ELSTON.

## "Angels Ever Bright and Fair"

THERE are some doctrines—Hell-Fire for instance—which present-day Christians would like expunged from their Creeds. The "Herald Angels" still figure on Christmas Cards, but Angels in general are a mere subject for mirth. Even the Christmas variety have suffered because their "Message" of "Peace on Earth"—having been followed by incessant wars ever since—has now been "revised." No longer are we taught to believe that they proclaimed "Good-will" and "Peace"; their message was really "Peace to men of good-will," just the sort of "peace" Mussolini offered to the Abyssinians, or Japan to China.

Belisha Crossings are human attempts to substitute scientific safe-guards for superstition's "Guardian Angels." Probably the ordinary "bobby" has saved more children from harm in one day than all the hosts of Heaven in all ages.

Fairies are a sort of domesticated angel—but neither fairies nor angels have the popularity (or usefulness) of that other famous Myth, Santa Claus. A myth? We wonder how many children who put out their stockings expectantly on Christmas Eve regard Santa Claus as anything but a conventional alias for parent or uncle.

Angels are renowned in Islam, Christianity and Mormonism. In Zoroastrianism they are known but not honoured.

Angels in the Bible are variously described as "gods," "sons of God," "mighty ones," "witches," "hosts of heaven," "spirits," "principalities and powers." There are others, including the miscellaneous monsters of the Apocalypse, to say nothing of the queer creatures called "Cherubim and Seraphim." Perhaps the last-named include the beautiful but bodiless heads with wings beloved by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Judges xiii. 22, describes God Himself as appearing in the form of an angel (in an incident which says truly that "the angel did wondrously").

Bunsen's book, *Angel Messiah*, says the Essenes imagined the Messiah coming as an angel. Anyway, before, during, and after Christ's birth, angels are reported as being constantly in his company. Christ also said that when He came to earth again He would send His angels to "the uttermost parts of the earth," to collect the Elect.

Angels never marry, which, perhaps, is why they are said to be fond of children.

There are National Angels. From the Book of Daniel we learn that each nation has its own "guardian angel." To this authority we probably owe St. George for England, St. Denis for France and the rest. These saints may have killed Dragons as fabu-

lous as themselves. They may have inspired the countless "national" wars. But there is no evidence that they ever had the remotest beneficent influence on infant disease or infant mortality.

The charming and shapely Mae West assures us that she is "No Angel," while her rival Miss Dietrich figures as "Angel" in her latest film. "Crowds of beautiful TALL angels," is Mr. Russell Lowell's description. It may be supposed that huge armies of well-nourished, robust and most substantial angels stand in serried ranks on the Heavenly Plains, waiting to answer the signal to come and fight earthly battles. Jesus revealed their existence when He declared (Matt. xxvi. 53), that if He prayed to His Father, the latter "shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels" (an army of about 120,000 strong, armed presumably with up-to-date weapons). In Roman times such a number constituted an extraordinarily large force. We suppose to-day the "legions" would be numerous enough to outnumber any forces men could raise against them. From that army no doubt came the Mons contingent, invented as fiction by Mr. Machen, but vouched for as real by numerous Christians in the late war.

"The Sons of God," whose amours with the "daughters of men," are recorded in Genesis vi. 2, were presumably angels. In fact Bishop Gore's Commentary tells us rather quaintly that "this verse explains St. Paul's injunction (1 Cor. xi. 10), that women must worship with heads covered because of the Angels."

Some angels are less substantial. We are justified in describing them, in Shakespearean language, as of "such stuff as dreams are made on." In this category we might include those angels who at various dates "appeared" to different Bible worthies "in a dream." Joseph—the husband of the "Virgin" Mary—would never have known the "facts" about his wife's condition had he not had a dream in which "an angel" appeared (the word seems singularly apt) to give him an explanation which only a perfectly gentlemanly husband could believe (or invent).

Balaam's Angel, like Balaam's Ass, is in a category all its own. When the angel first manifested its (his, or her) presence, it is significant that it was invisible to everybody except the ass—a "perfect ass" apparently, and a "she-ass" at that. A special miracle occurred to enable Balaam to see the angel (the ass could see it without any miracle). And it turned out to be a murderous angel—a "gangster-angel"—after all. This angel told the frightened prophet that, but for the ass, "I had slain thee, and saved the ass alive." Possibly, this "angel" was a wicked angel, of the sort referred to by Jesus when he threatened to cast some of us into a dreadful fire "prepared for the Devil and his angels."

A recent article in the *British Weekly* forbids us to regard these extravagant yarns as universally disbelieved to-day. The Rev. Edward Langton, B.D., F.R.Hist.S., boldly asserts the contrary. He says rightly that the Scriptures unmistakably declare that Angels exist, and that Jesus believed in them. He warns his fellow-Christians against the Modernist who would claim that "all references to Angels should be interpreted as symbolical." "There is a danger," he says, "lest this theory of symbolism should be applied . . . to the realities of the spiritual world, and thus rob us of vital elements of our faith." The correct attitude would seem to be—swallow everything or you may find yourselves unable to swallow anything.

Mothers whose children are slaughtered in war, or whose children untimely die of disease or accident on the road, sadly write over their dead bodies "Thy,

Will be Done." But they can never again believe that "God sent His Holy Angels" to guard the child from all harm, "lest at any time he should dash his foot against a stone." (Luke iv. 6).

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### Things That I Can Explain

IN spite of the concerted efforts of press and radio, the notorious "Recall to Religion" launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury has met with failure. Atheists are often accused by the religious of misunderstanding "human nature" and not realizing the essential needs of Man, the foremost, so they reckon, being the belief in some superior being. But, on the other hand, Atheists may well ask the devotee where the rationale comes in when an Archbishop makes a "Recall to Religion" without qualifying it by presenting some valid arguments why people should return to church. It would have been a sad instance of the incapability of men to think were they to have flocked back to the sacellum, chapel, and cathedral simply because one man had "requested" them to do so. It would have been a harbinger of successful dictatorship in England.

Now that the "recall" has failed, we may coolly examine the efforts of the different organs of society which have attempted to inspire the people with a renewed surge of Faith. One of the principal offenders in this campaign (and probably, the principal) has been the press, but then to be surprised by this fact would denote an amazing lack of sophistication in worldly affairs. The newspaper world has always been guilty of "malversation" of the public confidence. From the *Daily Mail* on the Fascist right, to the *Daily Herald* on the Labour right, we have been bombarded by articles on the benefits which the church has brought to Humanity. Probably if some of these editors were to read *Christianity and Conduct*, by Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, they would soon realize exactly what part the church has played in human affairs. But then, it is also possible that they have read this book and, perforce in order to get their pennies, consider that pabulum for the fool is more profitable than thesis for the genius.

Yet, the idea which has actuated this article is the part which the radio has played, and is playing, in the effort to "clear the streets (and probably the brains) on Sundays."

Some time ago I read in a newspaper or magazine a commentary on the benefits which the radio has bestowed upon us. Amongst other things, the writer deplored the corruption of the press, but concluded happily that at least the radio was still serving the fundamental interests of Mankind. Apparently for this writer the fundamental interests do not conflict with the rights of controversy for whatever good has come from the B.B.C., we are never offered balanced topics. We are compelled to listen to a preachment by some clergyman—a preachment devoid of sense, rather than hear a disquisition on Atheism by some scientist. Yet, even this is not the impelling force for the inditing of this article.

Every Thursday, at 2.50 p.m., the general public is treated to a talk on the supernatural by various speakers. These people relate their experiences sometimes in quavering tones, other times in joocular tones, the latter probably to give the listener the idea that he is not to take what he hears too seriously. This subtle form of church propaganda—trying to make men and women understand that there are incidents in their lives beyond "materialist" comprehensions—has put before the hearer a fair array of persons of different occupations (and probably credos). One man tells us of the experiences of the two women who, while in the gardens of Versailles Palace, come upon men and women in the costumes of the eighteenth century. Another tells us how he is inspired to sketch a casket for Canterbury Cathedral. Then still another relates how he has been ten minutes outside time to receive the warning of "a woman with Italian countenance," not to travel on a

certain train; and how that train is wrecked on its trip toward the Azur Coast. We are then treated to a talk by a colonial official, who says that a man who is to take up a post in a distant village meets with mishap by going off the straight road leading to the village, and taking a circuitous route—the meanwhile riding over friendly natives' hands which point toward "danger." Then still again, we hear how a woman foresaw air-raids.

As if all this did not satisfy the gullible public, the B.B.C. has found it necessary to insert in its weekly publication, *The Listener*, further examples of the intervention of the supernatural towards its favourites.

Yet, the space allotted in the *Freethinker* does not permit one to enumerate all the absurdities foisted on the public. The outstanding fact from these talks has been that these apparently extraordinary occurrences are all capable of explanations. While at the moment of listening, the listener may be amazed by the various stories he hears, if he waits until a day has elapsed, so that his mind has had time to winnow out the natural from the so-called supernatural (the Atheist, we hope, will not have to wait that long) he will discover that the apparently inexplicable is soluble by logical ratiocination. The Versailles experience; the Canterbury Casket; the divagating African official; the amateur prophetess who could foretell air-raids; all of these can be understood by a little cool thought.

If—by some chance—there are certain phenomena which cannot be explained by the usual processes of logic, then, the fault is not in the thinker, nor in the experience, but rather in the questionable truth of the report.

ROBERT S. BLUM.

### Acid Drops

To pre-scientific generations there was something fitting in hailing with ceremony and rejoicing the rebirth of the sungod. The sun was an obvious source of light and heat, and so much depended upon it. Civilization began with agriculture, since agriculture involved a settled life, and no great advance could be made by nomads. And, to men engaged in agriculture, heat and moisture were the prime factors. So, the sun and the moon took their place in primitive mythology, not merely as time measurers, but as factors of procreation. They were personified, of course, and formed part of the world of living intelligences which born of man's misunderstanding of the quality of natural forces, and fashioned by his hopes and fears and speculations, have come down to us in the religions of the world.

Sungods were as common in antiquity as could be. They were everywhere. Apollo was a sungod. Hercules was a sungod, so was Indra of India, so was Jesus. They were all born at the turn of the year, and the birthday of Jesus Christ was actually fixed, so says St. Chrysostom, to make the birthday sungod of Christianity, harmonize with that of the pagan sungod. The twenty-fifth of December was the birthday of Mithras, born in a cave, as Jesus was born in a stable, and Mithras was called the "Invincible God." Some of the early Christian writers actually punned on the name and said that the Pagans styled the date the Birthday of the Sun, so Christians called Jesus the Sun of Righteousness."

All of this was quite harmless in its way; but, as Gerald Massey said, when the Christian Church took what was becoming generally recognized as a piece of mythology, and was in the stage when what was once accepted as sober truth was being treated as mere symbolism, when the Church took this legend and insisted on its being literal history, the whole thing was made absurd. In this as in so many other directions Christianity represented a step backwards, and in support of its pretensions, the Church entered on that lengthy career of forging, lying, suppression and brutalizing which has left its marks on life even until to-day. Take

away from Christianity all that belongs to a world-wide mythology and there is nothing left. Take from the world all that the Christian Church did to lower the sense of truth and justice, to distort morals and establish false views of man and life, and some of the worst features of modern life would disappear.

Most of these myths about the gods have taken their place in the world of fairydom or goblinom, which give such delight to children, and form such useful material to scientific enquirers as to the intellectual development of humanity. It is due to Christianity that of this vast mass of admitted myth, that of the sun-god and vegetation god and gods incarnated in men we have the jumble of mythological characteristics that go to make up the figure of Christ, treated by the ignorant as literal history. We emphasize the word "ignorant" because even large numbers of eminent Christians nowadays admit the mythological elements in the character of Jesus Christ, but they retain the language of the past as though they were dealing with Julius Cæsar or Henry the Eighth. In their sermons, the clergy talk of what Jesus did and said, of his trial and execution, of his sufferings on the cross, etc., etc., as though there could be no question as to the reality of the story. But take away the mythological elements—the god-man, the date of the birth, the virgin birth, the impossible miracles—and what we have left is of no religious value at all. As a holiday carrying with it a memento of the childhood of the race, then all could take part in it, and most do take part in it, with no more thought of a crucified god than they have of Mithras or Odin. As the Church presents it, it is one of the world's great historic impostures.

The wife of a wealthy French industrialist was recently acquitted on the charge of attempting to murder her lover, who had been her flying instructor, and whose mistress she had been for five years. In court, the lover admitted having married his typist "two months ago." He said he had "thought of marrying" the mistress, "but reflected that his religion would not permit him to marry a divorced woman."

While scooping up their mouthfuls of caviar—at five-shillings a spoonful—how many of our readers know that its value would have been less "by nearly 50 per cent if it had been removed from a dead fish"? Therefore, as a writer in the *Evening Standard* informs us, the sturgeon (some of which weigh 1,000 lbs.) is slit up "the belly from chin to tail," and the roe lifted out into sieves. "A group of men may earn £80 on a single fish," and usually leave off fishing till it is all spent, "asking God to send them another such during the season. . . ." And God continues to oblige, knowing that the slitting of a live fish is necessary to fall in with the gustatory whims of an important section of mankind.

It seems that Germany is paving the road for a denial that there has been any persecution of individuals, or killing of individuals, from babies to old people, under Hitlerism. Dr. Dietrich, the "Press Chief," has just announced that the individual simply does not exist. Man is a mere collective being that exists only in the corporate form of the nation. The individual is a myth, and as a non-existent thing, the German Government can now say openly that no individual has ever been maltreated under German Fascism; for how can one kill or ill-treat that which does not exist? But a country in which the individual is not recognized as such is what used to be indicated when we spoke of a slave state. And certainly Germany has qualified for entrance into that category. Other States have merely held slaves. In Germany, the Slave State is complete—the most complete in form and actuality that history has yet seen.

In this land where no individual exists what place has Hitler? Is he a non-individual? The answer is that he is an incarnation of all individuals, of the nation. That establishes the truly religious character of German Fascism. For our readers may remember that this is pre-

cisely the way in which some of the Bishops referred to the Coronation ceremony of George VI. The King was the incarnation of his people. Hitler is the incarnation of the German people. The two semi-divine personages meet.

The Press and Publication Board of the Church Assembly have just issued *The Case of the Church of England Against Rome*, by Archdeacon Clarke. The book is described by the *Church Times*, as "outspoken, clear, comprehensive, and true." And the Anglo-Catholic organ adds that "in recent years the Church has shown a gentleness and charity in its dealings with Rome which have been repaid by misrepresentation, and a controversial virulence that, with such notable exceptions as the *Tablet*, has often reached the limit of vulgarity." And while recognizing the "glory that is Rome," it has never ceased to recognize "the intellectual obscurantism, the compromising opportunism, and the grotesque arrogance, that, alas, are also Rome." These delicate epithets will probably be reciprocated in future numbers of the offending Roman Catholic journals, and they should prove additional testimony to the well known *bon mot*—"How these Christians love each other!"

Fr. S. Rigby does not like the slight on Dickens made by his fellow Catholic, Mr. Titterton, who said that Dickens really did not know what Christmas meant. The reason given for this statement is that the great writer dealt more with the "pagan" side of Christmas than with the religious side. Fr. Rigby deduces many of Dickens' Christian utterances to prove how thoroughly Christian he was. Granted; but in spite of that the whole tenor of his novels is Secularistic. Very rarely does Dickens appeal to God to put matters right in this world. Reform should come from man himself, from wise government, and from a good heart. That Dickens professed belief in Christianity is true; that he left it out almost altogether from his books—except in some cases to satirize it—must be obvious to any reader.

Referring to Archbishop Hinsley's promotion to Cardinal, a press gossip describes the magnificence of Cardinals' robes: the red cassock, long mantle of scarlet silk, and cape of white ermine. But, curiously enough, the mantles are "made in Germany by a firm of Lutherans," who alone have the secret of the special dye. It is an equally curious fact that the crosses and other emblems of Christian churches are made by orthodox Jews! A very accommodating God and a very tolerant Virgin, it appears.

The *Streatham News* issues a two-page supplement in which over twenty local churches say they "Unite to Invite" patronage. Their big "displayed" advertisements are supposed to indicate how "united" they are, but outsiders will observe that only orthodox Protestant churches "unite": but their "union" is of the usual Christian exclusiveness. On the second page of this supplement some well-known persons "appeal" for these churches to be filled. Mr. Hugh Redwood describes "What a Christian Streatham Would Mean"—and can only predict that then "We might see men and women ready to stand for election as followers of Christ." We did not know that anybody needed an "election" for advertising themselves in this way. Mr. Redwood seems to object to "Party Leaders." He wants Christ to take their place. But Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Attlee can at least be voted down and out at the end of five years. Christ is an absolutist who wants to "reign for ever and ever."

Another contributor to this "supplement" is Dr. Maude Royden, who asks, "What is the Use of Religion?" As she does not answer her own question, we assume that she realizes the entire uselessness of religion. Mr. Owen Nares—who modestly admits that his only claim to be an authority on religion is his occasional rôle of stage clergyman—writes:—

To many people the need of religion can be satisfied simply by the act of prayer; and it cannot be denied that the supplication of however indefinite and unsubstantial a Divinity can be of great comfort, even to the most sceptical.

Apparently Mumbo-Jumbo is as effective a god as any other, and one need not believe in HIM while deriving "great comfort" from prayer to Him. One could hardly say less for a discredited patent medicine.

Pastor Loughbottom is demanding that he shall be given freedom of the air. "Thousands of folk" have written the B.B.C. for him asking that he should be allowed to broadcast a gospel service "from the best known working-class church in Liverpool with a congregation of a thousand or more singing in the good old-fashioned way." "Who is it who stops the Protestant Pastor from conducting a service on the air?" he asks. "Send your protests to the B.B.C." But two or three pages later comes a complaint from a member about the B.B.C.'s Sabbath degradation.":—

When people should be moving for attendance at public worship, I was astonished at the stuff being put across by the wireless. The rising generation is fast losing the love of and respect for the Sabbath Day. . . . We should protest and get things shifted at this point. . . . B.B.C. worship is about 1¼ hours of the Day of Days—how about the other 12 or 15 hours?

Sometimes the fight against Christianity becomes too ridiculously easy. At least, not the social fight against vested and invested Christianity, but the exposure of Christian pretences in a light in which those who care to read may read. For frequently those pretences come tumbling over one another in gay-assorted company with the practical illustrations of their own absurdity. Thus, in a recent issue of the *Protestant Times*, whose back page proclaimed: "Papist Council Members Walk Out: Return after Prayers," we read:—

Five Roman Catholic members of Durham City Council walked out of the Mayor's Chamber at Durham when the Chaplain to the Corporation rose to say prayers. The prayers were in accordance with a resolution passed at last month's meeting of the Council. The rest of the members and Corporation officials remained standing, and the Dean began, "Let us remember that we are in the presence of God, and that without His help all our labours are nothing worth." . . . and it was asked "that we should serve Thee better, and love our neighbours more." . . . The Lord's Prayer was repeated by members of the Council. . . . As Dr. Alington (the Chaplain) left the Chamber, the Catholic members returned and took their seats at the table.

The editor, who elsewhere devotes much of the issue to the injunction, "Love the brotherhood," comments, "These Romanists only absented themselves from prayers because of the bigoted intolerance of the most tyrannical priesthood in the world"; while in another place the "Roman Catholic crowd" became "Politicians! Agitators! Racketeers! They were born so. They imbibed it with their mothers' milk. Crooked thinking and subterranean methods and politic intrigue and disloyal propaganda come natural to them."

The *Protestant Times* thunders against Roman Catholic employers having Roman Catholic employees—and carries an advertisement: "Wanted—Protestant employers to employ Protestant men." The principle is wrong on an "R.C." ticket, but right on a "Protestant" ticket! The objection appears to be not that other people are doing various things, but that they are doing them more successfully than the Protestants.

Talking of Christianity's "central belief on which we are all united as a people," is a reminder of the sad fate of the Liverpool Christian (probably legendary) who wanted to form a United Christian Church. He hunted up the list of Liverpool denominations, which ran into about thirty, ranging from Anglican and Roman Catholic, through various forms of Free Church, Independent Free Church, United Independent Free Church, Re-

formed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, one or two of Scotland and of Wales, the Protestant Reformers' Church, through Churches of Christ, Scientist, Churches of Christ (ordinary), Catholic Apostolic Churches, to the German, Danish, Finnish and Norwegian Churches and the Greek Church of St. Nicholas (leaving out the Church of Humanity and the Liverpool Buddhist Mission). Diversity did not dismay him, but, sad to relate, he did not form his United Church. For he was shocked to find that not one of the thirty odd denominations would agree with him that his own belief was the only true Christianity.

"A question of first-class importance is greatly agitating the educational world," according to a *News of the World* "special." A Surrey local authority has received a bid from Church-school managers to buy an existing council school, and it is said the local authority "is willing to sell at the price, and then make a grant of 75 per cent towards the cost, just as it would if it were a new school built by the denomination" concerned; In other words, a *publicly and secularly-created asset* is to be transferred as a gift to the Church! Our contemporary comments: "It is a new problem whether a local authority can sell a council school for use as a denominational school." It is *more* than a problem; the bare suggestion is a *public outrage!* Eternal vigilance may be the price of Liberty, but it is certainly the absolute essential to prevent the churches from *taking liberties.*

Life imprisonment is the portion of the Rev. Ellsworth Newton of Pittsfield, Illinois, for the murder of Mrs. Maybelle Kelly, who, having changed her mind about "eloping" with the "Reverend" was battered to death by him. The "Reverend" is said to have had affairs with many of his parishioners, and at his trial "frenzied women" screamed protests that he was innocent. "Dozens of lavish presents from women now decorate his cell." What it is to be one of the Lord's chosen!

## Fifty Years Ago

We humbly beg John Milton's pardon, but the Star of Bethlehem was not a morning star; it was an evening star, and it heralded the longest, the darkest, and most disastrous night in history. The twilight lasted till the fourth century; then every star of Paganism had faded from the sky, and the Star of Bethlehem was without a rival. No wonder, therefore, it attracted universal attention. It was like a lamp in a sepulchre. Religions, says Schopenhauer, are like glowworms; they require darkness to shine in. When the sun of reason illuminates the sky they are invisible and forgotten.

Century followed century and the darkness deepened. Neither the sunlight of science, nor the moonlight of poetry, visited the earth. That one star only gleamed through the black night, and as its colour slowly but surely changed from golden to crimson, it turned the atmosphere into a mist of blood.

Christianity robbed Rome of its energies. The poison of an abject superstition crept through the blood of the masters of the world. The Hercules among nations, as Heine says, was effectually consumed; the "helm and armour fell from its decaying limbs, and its imperious battle-tones degenerated into prayers of snivelling priests and the trilling of eunuchs." The death-agony of Rome lasted for centuries. Priestcraft alone triumphed in the confusion, and when the Barbarians fell upon the prostrate carcase, rending and dividing it, the Church had become the mistress of every art of imposture, and soon the northern conquerors were subdued by her spiritual diplomacy. The Pope sat like a spider at the centre of a mighty web, he darted his priests to all parts, and they returned laden with spoil. His foot was on the neck of kings, his bishops took precedence of nobles, his lowest priests lorded it over laymen, and by the end of the eleventh century God's viceregent on earth was absolute master of the feudal system of Europe.

*The Freethinker*, December 25, 1887.



## SPECIAL

We have received some half-dozen replies to our recent note concerning the sending of orders for books and pamphlets, the letters containing postal orders, which have not reached us. In every case the orders have been discharged in full. The loss is ours.

On enquiry the police inform us there has been a miniature epidemic of letter-box robbery lately in this district. A watch is being kept, but it is not easy to detect the thieves. Will those who send postal orders for books be good enough to retain the counterfoil, properly filled, and also cross their orders "Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch?" This will enable the orders to be traced, and perhaps lead to the capture of the thieves.

We are getting a special form of letter-box made, which may make pilfering more difficult. And those who don't receive an answer to their letters within three or four days will help by at once writing us.

We have never had this experience before, and expect that the present burst of thefts will soon die out. But it is annoying while it lasts.

## THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MRS. E. JONES.—Will try and do something of the kind early in the New Year.

I. MACKENZIE.—Mr. Cohen is booked for Edinburgh on February 6. Please make yourself known to him if you are at the meeting.

H. BLMES.—It is astonishing that people should go so long a way round to "explain" what did take place on a particular occasion, when the obvious explanations of either lying, cheating, or misunderstanding, lie at hand. Tell a man a story a little out of the usual concerning normal things and he will wonder whether he is being told the truth. Tell him that you saw the spirit of your grandmother heaving beef bones at the spirit of your grandfather, he will not question its truth further than wondering if such things exist. Mention of the other world seems to stifle whatever common sense many people possess. That is why the religious fraud and its derivatives are so easily worked.

FOR Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—M.R., 58.

G. P. HARRIS.—We note the Rev. Morse-Boycott's opinion that "cocktail and crackers without Christ is a heartless thing," but it takes a parson to discover it. And we are ready to wager that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred if the choice lay between taking one of the two Jesus Christ would run a very bad second at a Christmas party.

W. S. READY.—Thanks for reference.

D. MATTHEWS (Transvaal).—We are obliged for New Year's greetings, and appreciate your belief that the *Freethinker* has done so much for the Freethought movement at home and abroad. The information that you have found the *Pamphlets for the People* excellent for distribution among Christians is also welcome. Mr. Cohen hopes to write several new pamphlets early in the New Year.

J. SHARPLES.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

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

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

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

Mr. Cohen's audience, on Sunday last, in the Birmingham Town Hall was a little below the usual in point of numbers, but the severe weather and the nearness to Christmas would account for this. But no lecturer could desire a more appreciative body of listeners. Every point was well taken, and no time had to be wasted in elaboration or repetition. Mr. Cottingham, the Branch Secretary, occupied the chair.

Mr. Cohen is now taking a little rest from lecturing (which is a synonym for being hard at work in other directions) until January 16. He will then speak in the Stratford Town Hall. This will probably be his only lecture in London this season.

A warm exchange of greetings between London and Provincial Freethinkers will, as usual, be a pleasing feature of the Annual Dinner in the Holborn Restaurant, on Saturday, January 22. Applications for tickets are increasing, and will continue to do so as the date of the Dinner approaches, and it must be remembered that if there are any disappointments it will be for those who put off applying for tickets until the last moment. Points to remember in applying for tickets are number of tickets required, and the name of each diner. State if Vegetarian. Eight shillings to be enclosed for each ticket. The General Secretary, N.S.S., will attend to the rest.

Will members of the National Secular Society please note that all subscriptions become due on January 1. Each member will have received a notice, but this comes as an additional reminder.

The Secular Society, Limited is issuing shortly a sketch of the life of Henry Hetherington, by Mr. Ambrose Barker. There is no life of Hetherington in print, which is rather a slur on the lack of attention paid by Freethinkers to men who helped to make the movement. Hetherington played a big part in the life of his time, was a pioneer of the Trades Union Movement, published the first working-man's newspaper, and was an early worker in the field of popular Freethought propaganda. His heresy earned him the application of the boycott, and he was three times sent to prison. One of his works *Cheap Salvation*, was actually written in prison.

The Glasgow Branch N.S.S. is arranging an Opera Night for Saturday, January 15, with proceedings as follows. Supper will be taken at Cranston's, Renfield Street, at 6.30, followed by a visit to the Kings Theatre, to witness the performance of the "Yeomen of the Guard." All those wishing to join the party should obtain tickets, 5s. 6d. each, from the Branch Secretary, Mrs. Whitefield, 351 Castlemilk Road, Glasgow, S.4, or at the Sunday evening lectures arranged by the Branch in the McLellan Galleries.

We have received many congratulatory letters on our publication of J. M. Robertson's vindication of Thomas Paine from the charges against him that were supported by Sir Leslie Stephen. It is really a pity that it has been out of print for so long. Certainly no admirer of Paine should be without a copy. We are glad to report that it is selling well. The price is sixpence, postage one penny.

The story of "Poor Richard's Books," is told in Mr. Austin Gray's new book, *Benjamin Franklin's Library*. William Penn's was the first Public Library in America; at least James Logan, Penn's secretary, left books which became the nucleus of the great Philadelphia Library. But it was the young Freethinker Franklin who raised the money, and did most of the work in establishing what to Penn had only been a beneficent dream. The author tells us something about the nature of Franklin's well-selected collection:—

There was history and science, biography, civics, Cato's Letters and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. There was nothing that was frivolous. On the other hand, there was not one work of theology in the collection.

## Early Victorian London

LONDON is the greatest seaport and manufacturing town in the world. The centre of Government, the press and the publisher's activities, it still remains the leading financial capital of the civilized globe. Its prodigious growth during the last and present centuries was rendered possible by the railway, a series of excellent roads converging on the capital, and the imports by sea, which supplied the metropolis with the food and raw materials essential to its sustenance.

Still, while the capital's population had increased 222 per cent since the 18th century, it has slightly surrendered its relative importance when compared with the recent growth of provincial cities. As R. H. Mottram states in his informative essay: *Town Life in Early Victorian England* (Oxford University Press): "Between 1801 and 1831, Manchester had risen from 95,000 to 238,000, Glasgow from 77,000 to 200,000 Birmingham had doubled and Liverpool was two and a half times its earlier size." London's increase, however, during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century was from 865,000 to 1,500,000, while at the 1931 census its population amounted to 8,202,818.

Both north and south of the Thames London's expansion had been vast. The Borough (Southwark) now extended to Bethlehem Hospital and the Elephant and Castle, and more than a mile along the Old Kent Road, while Lambeth, Bermondsey and Rotherhithe had occupied a considerable expanse of former country. Westminster, Hackney, the Tower Hamlets, Finsbury and Marylebone, had widely advanced. But the City itself contained fewer inhabitants in 1831 than in 1801, and its residential population has continually fallen ever since.

Fine mansions for the wealthy and influential there were in plenty, but as the working community increased its houses were made mean and small. Overcrowding and the erection of dwellings, mostly two-storied, along the roads or on selected building sites resulted. Villages such as those of Islington and Camberwell were embraced by the extending metropolis. Unfortunately, the town-planning scheme devised by Wren, after London's Great Fire was disregarded, and Greater London has engulfed in haphazard fashion immense stretches of rural land in Kent, Surrey, Essex and Middlesex, while its invasion of Bucks and Herts seems merely a matter of time.

Strange as it appears, so recently as 1831, the busy Commercial Road, had a few houses only, and Bethnal Green did not then belie its name, while domiciles merely ribboned Pentonville and the City Roads. What is now Euston Road adjoined crowded Somers Town, but Regent's Park stood solitary, and a small number of scattered houses occupied the angle separating the Marylebone and Edgware Roads.

The speculative builder erected houses on a large scale in Marylebone and the district between Oxford Street; and Regent's Park became the residential area of the risen Middle Class, but Bayswater proved a serious grievance to its southern contemporaries. So recently as 1850 the Westbourne region discharged its nauseating sewage into the Serpentine, and it is asserted that "an evening stroll by the waters sometimes ended in sudden fever, collapse, and death."

The mortality-rate of London has long been the lowest of any leading city in the world. Still, the well-known report of John Simon on the Sanitary Condition of the Metropolis in 1848-9 caused grave misgiving. The water supply was shown to be contaminated, and a *Quarterly Reviewer* declared that both the Thames and the Lea were polluted with "guano, stable dung, rotten sprats, and other top dressings of the market-garden and finally the discharge of all the London sewers." The New River supply north of the Thames was satisfactory, but it was alleged that at least one of the water services south of the river provided noisome puddle from the neighbourhood of the outfall of a sewer. Even the state of Smithfield, in the City itself, was utterly deplorable.

Again, in districts such as Belgravia and Mayfair, mansions had been built above sewers, which emitted a disgusting stench. Ironically enough, Seven Dials possessed better sanitation. Yet, it is on record that at Buckingham Palace: "Her Majesty's apartments were ventilated through the common sewer, and were less salubrious than King Alfred's primitive abode, where the horn lantern had to be invented to protect the candles from the wind that blew through the chinks in the walls, but it was a clean wind, not sewer draught a thousand years earlier."

The insanitary state of the more congested areas may be inferred from the fact that in what is now Hanway Street, W., the cesspools occupied thousands of square feet in a plot of nine acres of land where 282 houses were standing, while in unsavoury St. Giles', the rookery consisted of 95 miserable dwellings, into which nearly 3,000 people were packed. And, perhaps more amazing still, it seems that the Directors of the Bank of England were the recipients in 1835 of an anonymous missive, which stated that the writer not only "had access to the bullion-room, but would meet them there when they pleased. They made an appointment, and at a stated time saw a man emerge from the middle of the floor of the place where the bar gold was housed. He had walked up the old sewer from Dowgate. The survival of these old medieval rat runs, some of them 16 feet in diameter . . . was perpetuated by the extraordinary local government situation."

Beyond the city boundaries, London was mostly maladministered by 300 bodies, consisting mainly of corrupt vestries, notorious for their extravagance, jobbery, and neglect of public duties. The roads remained uncared for, and the streets were ill-paved. The soot, dust and street refuse were compounded into black slime whenever rain fell. Sam Weller's "London particular," the dense, asphyxiating and malodorous fogs of the past, which shrouded the Metropolis in darkness and gloom, were very different to the pale mists which condense in autumn and winter to-day.

Reform began in 1844, with the Building Act and the Sewers Act in 1848. In 1855 the Metropolitan Board of Works was created and, greatly as this body has been reviled, it rendered very important public services until, in 1888, a Unionist Government instituted the London County Council in its stead. The administrative powers of the London School Board were later conferred on the Council, which has also taken over the functions of the recently abolished Boards of Guardians.

With Metropolitan expansion easier, cheaper, and more rapid transit became necessary. Until 1830, there were no inexpensive conveyances. Stage coaches ran to Hampstead and other suburbs, but these were beyond the means of the workers. The railway was yet to come. One conveyance was a primitive omnibus, which ran from Lisson Grove to the Bank, but most toilers travelled to and fro on foot. There were cabs as early as 1837, but these were superseded by the more convenient and comfortable hansom in 1850.

But the City was now being superseded by the rapid development of outer industrial London, while the growth of the docks, with their enormous shipping, and its associated industries supported an immense population permanently resident east of the Tower.

The scarcity of housing accommodation led to the London slum. The lack of controlling authority, extortionate rents, an immoderate birth-rate, the heavy consumption of intoxicating beverages, the chronic poverty of a large section of the people, were also contributory causes. Even when old and insanitary buildings were demolished the prohibitive rentals of the new structures drove the tenants of the destroyed houses to find shelter in other rookeries. "That is why," remarks Mottram, "that in 1849, at Calmel Buildings, Orchard Street, Portman Square, Cunningham found a court 22 feet wide surrounded by 26 three-storey houses, down which ran a common sewer the effluvium of which was sickening." These houses were horribly overcrowded and unclean, yet were rented at £20 to £30 each.

Oil lamps illuminated Grosvenor Square until 1846, although gas had been in use in London since the opening of the century. The uproar of the busy streets was deafening, but it was only in 1838 that wood blocks were laid in Oxford Street. Yet, the macadamized roads with all their vibration and black slush in wet weather long remained, even in the West End. The London of that date was "an endless roar of traffic, under an opaque sky and a steady drift of smuts, sending up, according to season, fountains of mud or whirlwinds of dust."

Theatres and other entertainments were numerous. Clubs for the affluent abounded, and the poor man's haven, the inn, then happily unrestrained, was popular. Tea-gardens flourished; one of the last to disappear was at Swiss Cottage. The 40,000 watermen of the eighteenth century no longer carried travellers along the river for the railway had arrived. The penal system was slightly reformed, and those shameful debtors' prisons, the Fleet and the Marshalsea so poignantly portrayed by Dickens, were demolished. The Fleet dated back to the days of Richard II., and was ever a scene of desolation and woe. Victims of the Star Chamber and other unfortunates had languished there and now the Memorial Hall occupies its site. So late as 1776, when Howard visited the prison it was crowded with nearly 500 penniless people—the debtors with their wives and dependents.

T. F. PALMER.

Parents should never permit instruction to ruin the education of their children.

## Samuel Butler's Note Book

### II.

H. FESTING JONES, Butler's biographer, put the selections from the *Note Books* he published under various headings—beginning, as one would have expected, with "What is Man?" On this and on Birth, and Death, and Reproduction, Butler has indeed many pregnant things to say. Here is a point of view which is not always considered by most of us who are inclined to complain that we are "unlucky," or that we have not had the chances we should have had:—

When I am inclined to complain about having worked so many years and taken nothing but debt, though I feel the want of money so continually (much more doubtless than I ought to feel it), let me remember that I come in free, gratis, to the work of hundreds of thousands of better men than myself, who were often much worse paid than I have been. If a man's true self is his karma—the life which his work lives, but which he knows very little about, and by which he takes nothing—let him remember that he, at least, can enjoy the karma of others, and this about squares the account—or rather far more than squares it.

As for the question, "Is life worth living?" Butler thought this was "a question for an embryo, not for a man," an epigram of profound truth.

Butler did not shirk any subject—though, of course, it is open to a specialist to say that he was inadequately equipped for discussing some things. It is, however, only natural to find him putting down his thoughts on such a question as "Mind, Motion, and Matter." It would have been impossible for him to discuss some of the subjects he deals with in his books, had he not had some definite opinions on metaphysics and philosophy. On Motion, for example, he says:—

We cannot define either motion or matter, but we have certain rough and ready ideas concerning them which, right or wrong, we must make the best of without more words, for the chances are ten to one that attempted definition will fuzzle more than it will clear. Roughly, matter and motion are functions one of another, as are mind and matter; they are essentially concomitant with one another, and neither can vary, but the other varies also. You cannot have a thing "matter" by itself which shall have no motion in it, nor yet a thing "motion" by itself which shall exist apart from matter; you must have both or neither. . . . It is a mistake therefore, to speak about an "eternal, unchangeable, underlying substance," as I am afraid I did in the last pages of *Luck or Cunning?* . . . for if the substance is eternal and unknowable and unchangeable, it is tantamount to nothing.

There is much more than this in the long note which Butler devotes to the subject, and there is subjoined still another note on Matter and Mind:—

People say we can conceive the existence of matter and the existence of mind. I doubt it. I doubt how far we have any definite conception of mind or matter, pure and simple. What is meant by conceiving a thing or understanding it? When we hear of a piece of matter instinct with mind, as protoplasm, for example, there certainly comes up before our closed eyes an idea, a picture which we imagine to bear some resemblance to the thing we are hearing of. But when we try to think of matter apart from every attribute of matter (and this I suspect comes ultimately to "apart from every attribute of mind"), we get no image before our closed eyes—we realize nothing to ourselves. . . . Matter and mind form one another, i.e., they give to one another the form in which we see them. They are the helpmeets

to one another that cross each other and undo each other and, in the undoing, do and, in the doing, undo, and so see-saw *ad infinitum*.

Those who are fond of philosophical disquisitions on the nature of Matter and Mind would perhaps find some of Butler's notes either illuminating or the opposite; in any case they provoke thought, and should at least make the modern Materialist think his position out once again. The curious thing is that in the selections given in this section by Festing Jones I did not come across anything definite on *Vitalism*, the particular subject upon which Butler is supposed to have spoken with authority. Nor is the word found in the index of either of the books giving selections from the *Note Books*.

It is only to be expected that as he was a fine artist himself Butler would deal with art and artists. There are, in fact, many most interesting comments on pictures and their makers. For my own part, I found these exceptionally interesting because Art has always fascinated me. One might profoundly disagree with such a "contrary" critic as Butler seems to have been sometimes, but he is always worth considering in spite of that. It is the same with his opinions on music. Most critics will perhaps agree that Beethoven is greater than Handel; but Butler had worshipped Handel since he was twelve, and in the opinion that of the two, Handel was the greater, he proudly declares that he never wavered. He says:—

It cost me a great deal to make Ernest (in *The Way of All Flesh*) play Beethoven and Mendelssohn; I didn't simply *ad captandum*. As a matter of fact he played only the music of Handel, and of the early Italian and old English composers—but Handel most of all.

Ernest Pontifex was, of course, Butler himself.

Music lovers will find a great deal of most interesting discussion in Festing Jones' *Selections* on various aspects of the art to which I confidently send them. Whether they will agree with some of the opinions expressed is another matter.

Butler liked to talk about his own books in his notes: and I was not, therefore, surprised to find the following about his famous namesake, the author of *Hudibras*:—

I was completing the purchase of some small houses at Lewisham and had to sign my name. The vendor, merely seeing the name, and knowing none of my books, said to me, rather rudely, but without meaning any mischief: "Have you written any books like *Hudibras*?" I said promptly: "Certainly: *Erewhon* is quite as good a book as *Hudibras*." This was coming it too strong for him, so he thought I had not heard and repeated his question. I said again as before, and he shut up. I sent him a copy of *Erewhon* immediately after we had completed. It was rather tall talk on my part, I admit, but he should not have challenged me unprovoked.

In publishing and selling his own books he noted that the balance against him was £350, and what little chance they would have had with the public had he not had some money of his own. And he realized that "the neglect of one such man as the author of *Hudibras* is compensated for by the petting of a dozen others who would be the first to jump upon the author of *Hudibras* if he were to come back to life. Heaven forbid that I should compare myself to the author of *Hudibras*, but still if my books succeed after my death—which they may or may not, I know nothing about it—anyway, if they do succeed, let it be understood that they failed during my life for a few very obvious reasons." Butler attacked "people who were at once unscrupulous and powerful," and

he made no alliances. Moreover he attacked the vested interests—the Church and Science—and that meant—so he claimed—that he would never get a fair hearing during his lifetime. At the same time, he "assured anyone who has money of his own that to write fearlessly for posterity, and not get paid for it, is much better fun than to write like George Eliot and make a lot of money by it." Lovers of that great writer will not like Butler's sneer.

But Butler did not like a good many of our great writers. He thought Carlyle "a fraud"; and he was glad to think that Lady Eastlake "hated Ruskin and Gladstone," and hoped she would hate Carlyle also. He did not like Plato, but thought that, after all, he preferred Plato to Carlyle.

Butler, in fact, seemed to feel a sort of satisfaction when he heard of the death of a great man—"Perhaps," he said, "it is because successful men are generally humbugs." He did not like Tennyson, or Thackeray, and he thought Dickens was vulgar. Festing Jones added that Dickens was worse than that, "He was moral." And I certainly part company with both Butler and Jones at that.

It is, of course, quite impossible to do justice to such a unique work as Butler's *Note Books* in a couple of short articles. But I can assure the reader that he will find the published selections exhilarating, fascinating, and provocative. One need never agree with such a "perverse" person as Samuel Butler in order to find in his work extraordinarily good things. But he was above all a Freethinker. And for that we can all take him to our hearts.

H. CUTNER.

## Nature Notes of a Freethinker

"Next was November; he full grosse and fat  
As fed with lard, and that right well might seeme;  
For he had been a fating hogs of late,  
That yet his browes with sweat did reek and steem,  
And yet the season was full sharp and breem:  
In planting ecke he took no small delight.  
Whereon he rode not easie was to deeme;  
For it a dreadfull Centaure was in sight,  
The seed of Saturne and faire Nais, Chiron light."

Spenser.

SLOWLY the limbs of trees begin to take a clearer outline as the leaves fall. The trunk and boughs of each kind have their own characteristic shape and pattern. The elm in tiers, the sycamore with straight boughs that make an acute angle from the trunk, the long and wandering boughs of the oak—some stretch out in formation like a river on a map, the willow boughs that appear to have been fixed in their formation by the wind; none of them lose any of their dignity, when frost, wind and rain have beaten the waning sun. They have stripped and do not look ridiculous. In the prose works of Whitman, I was more than interested to learn that, at the age of sixty, the old warrior used to wrestle with trees—to take their strength. Just whimsey it may be; a notion that a scientist could probably flatten out in two minutes. "I hold on boughs or slender trees caressingly there in the sun and shade, wrestle with their innocent stalwartness—and know the virtue thereof passes from them into me," he wrote; after all, it is a theory that can be tested, and one's experience is—one's experience. At the end of a day's tree planting of silver birch, poplar, beech and lime, it may have been imagination, but there was in me an unusual feeling of strength—I only state it as an experience. A friend of mine, in that county of strange speech and customs, Cornwall, was, when a boy, tied to a sycamore tree—he was, in

this way, to be cured of asthma. Time has blurred his recollection of whether or not the method was successful. He had confided to me that, as a boy, he also used to talk to trees, but then, his part of the county was lonely; human companionship was lacking; wooden dolls owned by little girls receive many confidences from their possessors. It would appear that association with trees by gardeners, nursery-men, and foresters is the cause of health; this may be, in a remote way, the idea of Ingersoll in action, who stated that, if he had made the world, he would have made good health infections. My friend, the late Arthur B. Moss, enjoyed recalling this piece of positive and constructive suggestion in the making of a world that steadily refuses to be subdued by concrete roads which wear out and break up, by mines that become exhausted; I could show any interested sympathiser with the earth and its maltreatment, an old rusty motor-car in the West Lyn River. Trees and bushes have clutched it as if to say, "Here, out of this." The old car is covered with vegetation, screened with woody limbs from the earth, and even iron will, in time, be sucked back again to earth, smothered—and beautified. Tree lovers will find this idea worked out in another way by Miss Clare Leighton in her fanciful book entitled, *The Wood that Came Back*. It can be obtained at the quite reasonable price of one shilling and sixpence from W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., Cambridge. As the giving of presents at any season is a joy to the giver, this book will be ideal for that purpose, and you will laugh at the story of two human beings at whom Time laughed, smiled, or grinned, according to your mood and taste.

Rather late in the day, as time is reckoned in the world of new books, I have just finished reading *The Story of San Michele*, by Axel Munthe. In my previous notes I have ventured to touch on the subject of the Self, but, in line with the same idea, I found on page 408 of the thin paper edition the following statement:—

The sooner we realize that our fate lies in ourselves and not in the stars, so much the better for us. Happiness we can only find in ourselves, it is a waste of time to seek for it from others, few have any to spare.

This is not an unfamiliar idea to those who have served the god of austerity by reading, study and learning. William Blake, Swinburne, Sir Thomas Browne, Emerson, Traherne, Marcus Aurelius, and Cicero, knew this idea of the Self, which is not to be confused with selfishness. Put in another way, Meredith's novel, *The Egoist*, is misnamed; it should have been correctly called *The Egotist*, and Richard Le Gallienne, who praises Meredith, falls into the same error as his literary idol. To return to this novel, the bird-lover will find in it abundance of sympathy for feathered citizens of the world. The author has Defoe's touch in clear writing. On the authority of Frank E. Beddard, we are told that the brain of the goldfinch is one-fourteenth of the entire weight of its body; the body of the domestic fowl is 412 times heavier than its brain. There is some sort of profound moral here, but as it is Christmas I can only indicate it. In places, the world compares unfavourably with the field and the farm yard.

A good book shortens a long train journey. *Maid Marian* and *Crochet Castle* have made me jump up in a hurry at my destination. The inside of a full railway carriage mostly resembles a living tomb; each reader is hidden by a rampart of leaves, and the

traveller with no taste for newspapers cannot unfortunately take his eyes out and put them in his pocket. Logical nonsense, big type, women who have lost their ugly fat, murder plain, and blue murder, and everything which shrieks, "I exploit ignorance," assails the sight—together with the conclusion that here is government by newspaper. When a station had eaten up four male passengers (each with newspaper) they were replaced by two women with three children. One on the woman's knee was trying to eat a cigarette paper. The little girl opposite to me was a rosy-cheeked, big, bright-eyed, chubby cherub. She was trying to get together neatly more cigarette pictures, and still more came to her from an old man in the corner. "That's a frush," she said. "No, dear, it's a nightjar," corrected her mother. The atmosphere of the compartment was now genial; the nursed youngster was continuing his efforts to eat the cigarette card; newspapers were put aside and everybody was prepared to talk to everybody. I hope Joan will go on with her collecting of bird pictures. Jefferies, who had to fail at novel writing in order to find out his strength, remarks in *The Dewy Morn*: "All of you with little children, and who have no need to count expense, or even if you have such need, take them somehow into the country among green grass and yellow wheat—among trees—by hills and streams, if you wish their highest education, that of the heart and the soul, to be completed. Therein shall they find a Secret—a knowledge not to be written, not to be found in books. They shall know the sun and the wind, the running water, and the breast of the broad earth. Under the green spray, among the hazel boughs where the nightingale sings, they shall find a Secret, a feeling, a sense that fills the heart with an emotion never to be forgotten. They will forget their books—they will never forget the grassy fields." Joan, as she grows older, will want to know of other birds besides the "frush," and youth is the field in which the sweetest memories should be found to be stored for delight in maturer days. We have a thrush who runs to us like a chicken; so near to us he comes that we can count the spots on his golden breast. Then there is the Great Tit, who will alight on my hand for a piece of nut; this I am told by a bird lover is most unusual for that species, but what interests me most is the fact that he is the only one out of about six who has the courage. Again, with the common house sparrow, I have noticed out of the usual flock we encourage there are three or four of an independent turn of mind. They forage about on their own, and find food that is missed by the flock. There is this variability in behaviour of birds which is unexpected.

There is a story of a Baron, who, in his early life, was very poor. One wonders when poverty will be treated as a disease! This Baron, on cold nights, had a blanket to cover him, but his trouble was peculiar. The blanket was short in length so that when his feet were covered his head and shoulders were cold. When he could, by manoeuvring, get his head and shoulders warm, his feet and lower legs were cold. Paradise was found by him when he could at last afford to buy another blanket long enough to enable him to be warm all over. I had a pet greenfinch which would take sugar off my finger, and, one Spring morning, as I could not endure its captivity any longer, I let it go. It haunted the window and trees for years after. With the triumph now, of being able, by patience, to get a wild bird in the garden, to come to my hand (in the biggest cage ever), I am the Baron's equal; the achievement may scarcely be worth chronicling in 1937, but there occurs an element of doubt in making this statement. It might, after all, be worth recording, in a dispensation when,

for various reasons, human beings were too clever to be happy. But, on December 22, owing to the peculiar construction of the universe, and, in spite of dictators, acknowledged and otherwise, who each have only one neck, the Sun will begin to rise earlier from his cradle, and that, I think, is the best reason for speaking about a Merry Christmas.

NICHOLAS MERE.

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## Correspondence

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### SHAKESPEARE STATUES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—“Mimnermus” is far from accurate in saying that there is “one solitary public statue of Shakespeare” in London. From the literary point of view I am Laodicean about the matter, for I do not accept, as “Mimnermus” knows, the claims of the Stratfordian and marvel at his credulity in this regard. It was, however, unfair to Londoners.

There is quite a list given in my *London for Shakespeare Lovers* (Methuen). In addition to the Leicester Square statue Mimnermus knows, there is a bust in the Churchyard of St. Mary, Aldermanbury; Shakespeare figures with Milton and Chaucer on a fountain in Park Lane; he is on the facade of the City of London School, Victoria Embankment; on the Albert Memorial; outside the Hammersmith Library; outside the West Ham Library.

Inside buildings Shakespeare is in the British Museum, Southwark Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. Mimnermus slightly misquotes the famous passages from *The Tempest* (it is “We are such stuff as dreams are made on”); in the Abbey it has been absolutely maltreated. A line is incorrectly placed, and the last reads “Leave not a wreck behind.” The word should be “wreck,” meaning a cloud, and this, of course, much more forcibly conveys the meaning.

W. KENT.

(Editor *Encyclopedia of London*).

### THE POISON OF POETRY

SIR,—In his first sentence “Goth” accuses me of “error, prejudice and inconsistency.” In his last sentence he writes that my “effort is worse than valueless.” Between the two he repeats his accusations of “prejudice, or worse,” of “wilful prejudice or crass ignorance,” and of inconsistency. And he adds the further accusations of “gross bias” and “obliquity.”

To confound me still more he implies that I bestowed on hymns “the name of poetry,” when in fact I never mentioned hymns at all. He drags in the side-issue of alliteration, to which I made no sort of reference whatever. And lastly he declares that I think “freedom of thought pernicious”—an opinion I have never held or expressed.

I can only think of one excuse for this effusion. “Goth” must have been suffering from the effects of an over-indulgence in poetry!

C. S. FRASER.

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## National Secular Society

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REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD DECEMBER 16, 1937

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the chair.

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to West London, Liver-

pool, Kingston, Manchester, Chester-le-Street, Greenock Branches and the Parent Society.

Details in connexion with the 1938 Annual Conference were under discussion. The President reported the ruling of the Gateshead Corporation concerning the sale of literature, and reserved seats for his Town Hall meeting. The ruling was challenged, conditions for hiring the hall did not permit the sale of literature inside, and the conditions were observed, but literature was sold outside. The question of reserved seats was settled by conceding the position taken by the N.S.S.

Preliminary arrangements for a lecture in Edinburgh by Mr. Chapman Cohen in the New Year were settled.

Matters arising out of correspondence were dealt with and the Secretary instructed. It was decided that the next meeting of the Executive be held on Thursday, January 13, and the proceedings terminated.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

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## The Wolf of God

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WITH the full fury of a poet's scorn,  
I hate this ugly thing called Christianity;  
It surely is the vilest faith yet born,  
The greatest blot of all upon humanity:  
I shall not live to see this monster perish,  
But for its end an ardent hope I cherish.

I scorn its wily minister, the priest,  
Who with much unctuous words affirms a lie;  
'Tis better far to face a wild beast  
Than breathe the poison of the presbytery:  
The jungle harbours nothing quite so vile;  
No snake or tiger can the mind defile.

Yet well I know that wolves are made by sheep,  
That for the wolf the sheep are much to blame;  
For wolves but ravage when the sheep-folds sleep;  
The congregation shares the parson's shame:  
Until the wolves are bravely faced and beaten,  
The sheep will still continue to be eaten.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

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

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 6.45, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield (Glasgow N.S.S.)—“Woman and her Struggle.”

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. Arthur Copland, G.S.S.—“No Peace on Earth.”

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With floral design and quotation from Ingersoll 2d. each 7 for 1s.

# NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - . . . CHAPMAN COHEN.

General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

68 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1865 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

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

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

### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### MEMBERSHIP

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

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

Name .....

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