

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

THE
FREETHINKER

▪ EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN ▪
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVIII.—No. 1

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 1938

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>A Happy New Year!—The Editor</i>	1
<i>Grim Greatness!—Minnermus</i>	3
<i>Revival in Slimtown—T. H. Elstob</i>	4
<i>Keeping them Holy—Louis H. Borrill</i>	5
<i>My Reply to John O'London—C. S. Fraser</i>	10
<i>Can a Freethinker be a "Britisher?"—Ronald Standfast</i>	11
<i>Freethinkers Fare—Edgar Syers</i>	12
<i>Whose Image?—William W. Harvey</i>	13

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

Views and Opinions

A Happy New Year!

1938, and a Happy New Year to all our readers in all parts of the world. We can repeat this much used phrase in a less formal spirit than probably any other journal in this country, because the relations between the *Freethinker* and its readers have always been of a peculiarly intimate character. Many of the letters we receive refer to the *Freethinker* as "our paper," and we like the expression. It is not *your* paper, or even *the* paper; it is *our* paper; there is an assertion of a common partnership, a statement of joint responsibility. It could not be otherwise. The *Freethinker* has existed for over fifty-six years, not merely without making a penny of profit, but always with a constantly recurring loss. It is the oldest Freethought paper in Europe, and stands more firmly on its feet than ever—thanks to its devoted friends. During the war the editor of a well-known London paper said he could not see how, with so many papers falling, the *Freethinker* could survive. He made a mistake. He had overlooked a very important fact. The *Freethinker* never had paid as a commercial proposition, and those who had kept it alive for so long, were not likely to let it die in consequence of a mere war. What our friend had regarded as a weakness was really a source of strength. The *Freethinker* can depend upon its readers because it has never bothered about them, and as a recognition of this, they have bothered about the *Freethinker*. The *Freethinker* has always been what they call in France a journal of opinion, and real men and women appreciated the work of those who write without worrying whether those who read were pleased or offended. The "largest circulation" papers have more readers, we are certain they have not better ones, nor do these papers exert a more lasting influence on the world of thought. So we can wish all our readers a Happy New Year, knowing that among them we can count an abnormally large proportion of friends.

Man and His Past

Man is a walking museum of antiquities in his bodily structure, and also in his mental and social habits. This custom of wishing friends well at the period of the New Year is an illustration of this. So is the fact that the New Year is always a time of rejoicing. Christmas links up with the New Year on this fact. And in neither case is the association accidental. Both of them mark the turn of the year, and so soon as man learned to grow his food that fact became of supreme importance. It was also in line with primitive mentality that joy at the turn of the year should be expressed in terms of what we have come to call superstition. Among man's earliest and most pressing needs are those of protection against enemies, animal or human—or animal *and* human—and the getting of food. And of these the most persistent and least escapable is the need for food. In the earliest stages of human culture these two needs are met by the supposed aid of coercive and mimetic magic. These are early man's principal, and, so far as a conscious recognition of forces goes, the only methods of making certain that he gets what he needs. The whole mass of modern Christmas and New Year observances and customs illustrate survivals of these primitive beliefs, modified, of course, by late "rationalizations" and additions.

On this head there can be no substantial questioning by those who know and understand the developments in anthropology during the past sixty or seventy years. Early man's great problem centred round the general question of fertility—of the earth, of man and of animals, particularly when we enter the period when animals were domesticated. And in the fertility of the earth the sun is one of the most important factors. There is scarcely a custom associated with Christmas and the New Year which cannot be traced, not merely to pre-Christian religions, but to a time when we can almost watch them being manufactured. That Jesus Christ is partly a vegetation-god there can be no doubt whatever, any more than that his birthday is linked up with the date of the pagan sun-god, a fact of which the early Christians made no disguise. The Christmas pudding just as surely owes its existence to the sacred cakes that were made and ceremonially eaten at the Roman Saturnalia, and many other pre-Christian religious festivals. At the festival of the Saturnalia there was the same feasting, giving of presents, and a general burst of good-will, as takes place at Christmas. The fires of Christmastime were so many symbols of the sun, and the burning of the yule log was, by a process of imitative magic rife among the early religions—a magical way of helping in the increase of the sun's heat. The Christmas pudding was derived from the sacred cakes that were baked and eaten as part of a religious ceremony. This is found in ancient Mexico, in China, in India, and in many other parts of the world. The

fact that these cakes are often in the shape of the sexual organs, plainly links it with a fertility custom, and a form of mimetic magic.

The "Waits" is a custom not quite so common to-day as it was a matter of a couple of generations ago, but this takes us back to a general superstition connected with the need for getting rid of evil spirits, who were believed to be peculiarly powerful at the New Year. The word itself is derived from old French, and means a watch. The English watchmen, who preceded the regular police force, were called "waits," and it was most probable that the original function of these "waits" (watchmen) was to look out for evil spirits and dispel them. Among the Tyrolean peasantry to-day, one of the duties of the head of the house on the eve of the New Year is to go through each room, and by means of set formulæ and holy water, cleanse each from the influence of evil spirits. The fact that there is still popular the superstition that one may have a happy month for every mince-pie eaten during the first month of the year, points indisputably to the origin of that tasty production. The mistletoe is a sacred plant in many parts of the world, particularly it was so with the Druids in these islands. In some parts, when mixed with food, it was held to favour procreation among animals, and in the Torres Straits the natives thought that mixed with the food of a pregnant woman it would produce twins. The holly was a sacred tree in ancient Rome, and even its natural death was accounted as being so serious that penances to ward off the anger of gods followed.

Anyone, in short, with a very slight acquaintance with the results of modern anthropology can spend many an amusing and instructive hour in tracing origins. The rule is first the rite, then the myth, then the rationalization which often transforms the matter into a social or ethical convention. Follow that rule, and by working backward one can trace a host of customs to their beginnings. Of course, most of these customs have lost their magical value to the majority of those who take part in them. But there are still vast numbers of people who have a sneaking kind of a feeling that "there may be something in them after all." And, of course, most of them have become so mixed up with "rationalizations" of one or another kind, that it is sometimes not easy to trace them to their particular source.

* * *

Ourselves and Others

We may leave magic and mythology and come back to ourselves—and others. That the New Year should be a period of rejoicing is, if one may use a not too sensible phrase, quite natural. What is a certainty to us to-day was not so certain to our remote ancestors. To them the sun might not regain strength, the earth might not recover its fruitfulness. At any rate these things were under the control of supernatural beings who were somewhat erratic in their behaviour. That the New Year should also be a period of the passing on of good wishes is not quite so obvious, although, as we have pointed out, it was also a time when evil spirits were supposed to be particularly active, and so the custom of passing on good wishes may well have originated in wishing one's friends freedom from the assaults of ill-disposed "souls." But the custom is here, and in a world in which good-will does not play too powerful a part, it is a custom worthy of retention.

We said at the opening of these notes, that no paper ever had more loyal friends and supporters than the *Freethinker* has enjoyed. They have met all reasonable demands quickly and completely. But our ideal of making the paper self-supporting has not been

realized. That was, probably, an unrealizable ideal from the outset. There has never been a paper of this class, one that was fighting a religion deeply rooted in the past and backed by many kinds of vested interests, that has been able to pay its way on sales. If that were the case propaganda would not merely be easy, it would be almost unnecessary. We set ourselves an unrealizable ideal, but that kind of ideal is, after all, the only one that is worth fighting for. An ideal that may easily be realized is not an ideal at all, it is a mere aim. So I am not asking our friends that as one of their New Year resolutions they shall make the *Freethinker* financially self-supporting, but that they shall make an endeavour to see that it goes into a larger number of hands, and so increases its usefulness on behalf of one of the most *unselfish* causes for which one may work.

What can be done at this end is being done. We have also revived our offer of last year, to give to every new annual subscriber the privilege of selecting five shillingworth of the Pioneer Press publications. We have gained many new readers in this way. Those who cannot do this, might either take an extra copy for giving away to a possible new subscriber, or send us the name and address of one, with postage, for a given period. Or lastly they may have sent to them a number of copies of past issues for distribution. The *Freethinker* needs to be better known *by being read*. It is well-known otherwise, it is personal contact that is required.

We ought to bear in mind that there are, in all probability, stormy days ahead. Not quite so stormy, one hopes, as our Freethinking brethren on the continent have experienced, but still stormy. We have never disguised from ourselves the probability—nay, the certainty that as Freethought became what the Churches call more "dangerous," that it would meet with a greater and more united opposition from the religious world. Freedom of thought in religion is universally the prelude to freedom of thought in science, in sociology, and in life generally. Dictatorships have an attraction for small minds, mentally lazy people, and for all kinds of threatened vested interests. Freedom is not something merely to enjoy. It is something to live, and to live for freedom is to be ready to guard what has been won and to be always looking for more.

So among our New Year resolutions (one should always make a number, so few are persisted in or realized) let there be one to do something for Freethought. Let us remember that religion is still firmly established in the state schools, and the Churches are receiving from the Government every encouragement for its extension. Sabbatarian laws are still in operation, and licensing justices, the police and magistrates do what they can to enforce both them and their own prejudices. The blasphemy laws, always possible of an extended application, are still unrepealed. The boycott of Freethought publications and news is still very active, and the more dangerous because it is unconfessed. Abroad, censorship exists open and avowed. Here it is active but unavowed, and, as a consequence, more demoralizing. Where the censorship is avowed men know that what news they get is "cooked" and unreliable. Where censorship is stealthy, news is accepted as truth.

We are not disheartened at what has happened and is happening. It is all part of the long warfare of opinion. We find comfort in the fact that a truth once initiated cannot be eternally suppressed, a fact that is more obvious to-day than it was some centuries ago. That truth is expressed in a favourite passage of ours from Ruskin:—

There is nothing in the world that you cannot keep quiet save the reasoning in a strong reasoner's brain.

You can keep a child quiet in a room, a tiger quiet in its den, you can quiet the winds with shocks of artillery, you can quiet the sea with mounds and bars, but you cannot quiet the thought in a thinker's brain. And there is nothing in the world you cannot quench except the conviction in a thinker's heart. You can quench the violence of fire, you can quench the bitterness of strife, you can quench ambition, you can quench faith—yea—and though much water cannot quench Love, neither can the floods drown it, yet under ashes at last you can quench love, but until the time comes for ashes to fall to their ashes, you cannot quench the truth in a strong Thinker's soul.

We leave it there, with the heartiest of good wishes to all our readers in all parts of the world, and with a hope that they will all do what lies in their power to advance the greatest cause to which men and women may devote the best that is in them.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Grim Greatness!

"The very things we boast of will one day be quoted to prove our ignorance."—Emerson.

"What man has done forms but the prelude to the things that man has yet to do."—H. G. Wells.

YEARS ago, a steel-plate engraving used to adorn the walls of many Christian households, depicting Queen Victoria handing a Bible to a gaudily-clad African chief, with the remark: "This book is the source of England's greatness." The tale, like so many others, was a religious fake, but it answered its sorry purpose. Even to-day, when steel-plate engravings are museum pieces, the lie is still printed in the less reputable religious press, and in tracts. What is worse, simple folk believe this nonsense, for the pious innocents are very credulous. There can be no question that the centuries-old supremacy of Priestcraft has been built deliberately on the foundation of sheer popular ignorance.

This "greatness" is the triumph of a class, not a nation. Modern civilization, which priests claim as "Greatness," is a patchwork affair. Its roots are far anterior to the Christian Superstition. For example, our laws are based on the jurisprudence of Ancient Rome and other Pagan sources, and have nothing to do with "Gospel" teaching. Our universities and public schools, in spite of priestly control, have a curriculum which is saturated with the spirit and teaching of Greek and Roman culture of the Classical period. Plato still has a great influence in educated circles. In literature our great poets have always derived inspiration from their great Pagan predecessors. Undeniably, modern culture owes precious little, if anything, to the Christian Superstition, with its stolen Oriental legends and borrowed Eastern mummeries.

So far as concerns the upper classes a certain liberality of thought manifests itself. Did not Arthur Balfour write a fine *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, and Viscount Amberley deal a very shrewd blow at Orthodox belief? Benjamin Jowett, a "Christian" professor, spent half a lifetime translating and expounding Plato, and Bishop Colenso, a right-reverend Father-in-God, exposed the myths of the Pentateuch almost as mercilessly as Robert Ingersoll or Thomas Paine.

It will be apparent that much of our culture is reserved for the upper-crust of society. The great public schools charge from £150 to £300

yearly to educate a scholar. At the large private schools the cost is less, but quite beyond the reach of working-class parents. The cost of State Education runs into millions of money yearly, but the people who benefit are the builders, the equipment makers, educational publishers, clergy, teachers, and, last and not least, the poor scholars themselves. These unfortunates have the slenderest outfit to face the world that can be imagined. George Clark told me himself that there would have been no room whatever for his numerous commercial colleges if State Education had been really satisfactory. And he added that elementary school pupils were very difficult with regard to shorthand and typewriting, for the simple reason that they could not spell properly. That is a serious indictment, and it is still as true as when he uttered it. What is the use of such a farcical system of education if, after nine years the majority of the pupils cannot do more than read and write imperfectly? Small wonder that such pupils fall an easy prey to priestly and other charlatans in after life, and each generation has an undue proportion of simpletons.

Modern society is not an unmixed blessing. As John Morley pointed out, it is a paradise for the wealthy, a purgatory for the middle-class, and a hell for the poor. This is not mere rhetoric, but is borne out by facts. The overwhelming number of men and women in this country are bossed and fleeced from the cradle to the grave. From the time the parson clutches his christening fee until the undertaker takes a big slice from the insurance money, it is exploitation all the way. One quarter of a man's earnings go to a landlord for providing a roof over his head. Through fear of unemployment, he is sweated and underpaid. Even the unfortunate man's amusements and relaxation are censored by pious and reverend Nosey Parkers. He is not allowed to see a stage play or a music-hall show on Sunday. On that day the radio programmes are given over to pious speeches and parsons. On that weekly holiday he cannot be served with modest refreshment except at certain fixed hours, and dance-halls and race-tracks are tabooed. Everything is done to make his life miserable, whilst on the Continent, from Moscow to Marseilles, men and women enjoy themselves to the top of their bent. It is high time that working-men remembered that they were human beings and not worms to be trodden upon by men of not superior intelligence than the flower of their own class.

Malnutrition may partially explain this knock-kneed and abject submission. If the body lacks nourishment the mind is affected. In the poorest parts of London the misery is appalling. In Dockland and Slumland, I have seen young women of thirty years wrinkled and wizened like women of sixty, and children too undernourished even to play. I have known men workless so long that when they have at length secured a job, the flesh has peeled from their hands from the unaccustomed tools. This truly horrible state of affairs is repeated all over the poorer parts of England. It is the canker that will destroy our civilization unless it is dealt with drastically. Things have got to such a pitch that young thieves and criminals at Borstal and other punitive institutions are better fed and housed than the honest outsiders. Christians are disgusting in boasting the greatness of our civilization. In such matters they are so deceitful that they do not realize how vilely they are lying.

Notice how one evil brings another in its train. There are 853,000 overcrowded dwellings in England and Wales, and this helps the enormous death-rate from tuberculosis and infant mortality. Lunatics and mental defectives number 480,000, a truly ap-

palling total, when one remembers their fecundity. Lambeth Palace, one of the residences of the Archbishop of Canterbury, is surrounded by vile slums, and all the Cathedral towns have their distressed areas. This has been the condition of affairs for nearly a thousand years, and the clergy have been so happily complacent that they now boast that this glorious civilization is due to the beneficent influence of their holy religion.

The blunt truth is that modern society suits the aristocrats and the plutocrats quite well, and the clergy rank themselves with the upper crust. To them the people represent something to be exploited and robbed. This is the reason why they boast that such a state of society is heaven-sent. Battering on their fellow-men, they proclaim themselves a sacred caste apart. They think that they honour this country by absorbing millions of money, a thank-offering from the innocents they exploit. Such a type belongs to the age of Feudalism, and not to our own time. Does not their own Church Catechism bid the working-people order themselves "lowly and reverently" toward their betters, which means the people with money?

For fifteen centuries "pennies from heaven" have dropped on these reverend charlatans. No wonder they admire the civilization that produced such happy results—for them. Fortunately for this country, there are Democrats who wish to remould this present overrated civilization nearer the heart's desire than is dreamt of by a mere handful of medieval humbugs. The greatness of England cannot much longer mean the wallowing in every luxury of a hundred thousand favoured ones. Inevitably, it must mean the greatness and happiness of a whole people. It may not be this year; it may not be this decade. But, as certain as night follows day, this thing will be done, and the dreams of the pioneers will be brought within the realm of reality:—

"One or another
In money or gifts may surpass his brother,
But whoever shall know,
As the long days go,
That to live is happy, has found his heaven."

MIMNERMUS.

Revival in Slimtown

III.

"To float the POOL OF SILOAM needed cash; also guidance; guidance which it was not in Angus's power to take or leave. Those who paid the piper naturally insisted on choosing the tune, and the advance of Three Hundred Pounds that Angus obtained from accommodating financiers was without what is known as worldly security. The lenders pointed out to him that prizes for the first week or two would have to be greatly in excess of receipts in order to "draw" his public. This, however, would be recouped as when the pool increased in volume, and cash flowed in, the loss on the initial weeks would figure in the "expenses" of the later pools. For the conditions of the pool were that the expenses had first to be deducted from receipts, and, after that, ninety per cent was to be returned to prizewinners. The remaining ten per cent was to be devoted to 'spiritual' objects.

"There were not many entrants, naturally, for the first week of competition—"

"How do you come to know that, Ebenezer?"

"Well, Frank, one of the postmen told me that he

was sure the postbag of Angus did not go up by more than a hundred during the week, and he wouldn't be far wrong. Angus's Penny Pool couldn't have brought him in a fiver, at a generous estimate, for that week. But, owing to the providential loan, Angus was able to announce that the winner for that week had given four correct winners out of twelve, and had become the winner of £24 11s. 4d. on division. This announcement had a startling effect. Those who contributed to the major irreligious pools were used to having eleven correct out of twelve without touching, so you can imagine that the announcement created almost a sensation. The second week, about 2,000 letters were delivered, each containing a Postal Order from 6d. upwards. Angus, this week, announced that the winner had spotted seven out of twelve and his prize amounted to Seventy-three Pounds, ten shillings, and 2d. I should think, after that, that the weekly amount of the pool paid for its prizes on the lines laid down, and in three months at most, the sum of Six Hundred Pounds, as payment, with a little interest for the accommodation, was repaid to the speculators. After that the Pool was in Angus's own hands, and the spiritual assets of his Chapel went up by leaps and bounds. Collections were still taken at the evening service, but these were a mere formality. The dropping of them altogether was indeed advocated by some of the more spirited of the brethren, but Angus considered the taking of a collection had become so indenti-mixed up—with religion in the popular mind that to drop it was risky.

"Angus had no doubt about the ultimate success of the POOL OF SILOAM, after the first month. It was then agreed to erect at break-neck speed an enormous building in the heart of Slimtown, in the centre of which was to be the new Wesleyan Chapel or Hall for the Sunday services or meetings. A huge staff soon became necessary. Every person who was a member of the congregation had priority right to week-end employment, and, as it all figured as *exes*, the pay was generous. It was ruled that to offer inducements to the spiritual was both a human and a sensible move. The number of communicants went up enormously. The huge central hall was capable of seating four thousand worshippers, and it was easy to see from the way things were going that that amount of accommodation would soon be required.

"This, of course, took time. It was not until the third year of his ministry that the building was erected and the services or meetings set a-going. All round the hall were offices of varying sizes and, whilst the services went on, the examination of coupons was proceeding. Foreseeing some trouble from some of the old Sabbatarian elements in his congregation, Angus countered this by having printed on the outer door of each office 'The Sabbath was made for Man, not Man for the Sabbath.' In the main Chapel or Hall was a huge picture painted of Jesus standing by and commending the shepherd who saved the life of one of his sheep on the Sabbath; and a small-scale reproduction of this picture was on the walls of every office in the building. Very early on, Angus booked a film called *Joseph and his Brethren*, and in his remarks he referred to our Lord's action in the case of this non-Presbyterian shepherd. Never was he so eloquent; never was he so sincere! If it was right, he argued, to save a *sheep* on the Sabbath, what about Human Souls? The *Sentinel* and the *Shriek* printed the entire discourse in their Monday issue, and, as a gentlemanly *quid pro quo*, Angus gave them a half-page displayed advertisement of the POOL OF SILOAM, the cost of which, of course, came out of the Pool's Deduction No. 1, the Expenses.

Testimonials as to the minister's personal worth grew almost fulsome—extravagant in both these

journals. Personal interviews between the Editors and Angus were frequent. Letters, you see, were occasionally sent to the press by disgruntled persons (generally of other sects), masquerading as highly religious, which were critical of the Means of Grace that Angus served up. It was the custom of the Editor, on these occasions, to pop along and see Angus and explain the situation. Angus would read the letter over. Sometimes he would say to the Editor, in his factious way, 'Print; warts and all,' this being a subtle reference to the writer's grammar and misspelling. Sometimes, he would suggest that the letter had better not be printed, in which case, some notice would appear to the effect that a letter had been received 'on cheap stationery' complaining of the activities of the Reverend Angus Tura, and, the paper would go on to say, 'We think we are correctly interpreting the feelings of our readers when we say that we feel it inadvisable to print mean-spirited comments on the work of a popular preacher, who is by now generally admitted to be one of the greatest spiritual forces in the Kingdom. The mere fact that Mr. Tura's activities has led to a diminution of the unemployed in Slimtown, and the consequent almost complete abolition of the dole in that town should be sufficient to keep such ungenerous voices for ever still.'

"Such a close understanding with the Press was very necessary for, in spite of Angus's vigilance, mistakes of tactics were occasionally made. Once, for instance, one of the more orthodox members of his congregation (a man who had often openly disagreed with Modernism) considered himself aggrieved. This man—John MacTavish—had thought he had made one of the huge prizes in the Cross Word Competition Number 32 a certainty by sending Five Pounds worth of Alternatives. Unfortunately, as a solution to the *Light 8 (across): a parent (two letters)*, he had banked on *Pa* and *Ma* as the only two possible. When the correct result was announced (for which £231 was awarded), it was discovered that the correct answer to 8 (across) was *Da*, and this unexpected ruling put him amongst the Also Ran. He was a good, sound, religious man was MacTavish, but a poor sportsman, and it was impossible to convince him that he had not been tricked. He sent what he termed an *exposure* to the *Sentinel* and *Shriek*, and both these Editors appeared on Angus's doorstep at the same moment. Angus saved time by dealing with them together. He read the exposure and then said simply, 'If you two gentleman will oblige by keeping the letter back for a few days, until, in fact, after the next issue of the *Weekly Notes*, you will probably find that Mr. MacTavish will not take the matter further.'

"Angus was a true prophet. The coupon of Mr. John MacTavish for Crossword Number 33, was found to be correct in every particular, and the sum of Three Hundred and Six Pounds awarded him. The incident died a natural death. Not only was Mr. MacTavish satisfied from that moment as to the probity of the competitions in the *Weekly Notes*, but his awkward insistence in the Chapel Counsels upon some old-fashioned doctrinal points comprised in the Scheme of Salvation was never again noticeable.

"That will be Six Shillings, Bill. Three and Six for yours, and half-a-crown for the little girl's. Thanks."

T. H. ELSTON.

Keeping them Holy

AN eminent American divine recently gave it out that while the majority of people were not professing Christians, they did not profess a denominational Christianity, go to church regularly, or actively uphold ecclesiastical ideals, nevertheless, they were, he hastened to assure his Christian hearers, "Christians by habit." He meant by this, he said, that the basic concepts by which they lived their everyday lives were Christian. Christian ethics translated into habits guided them in all they did. It was comparatively easy to change peoples' beliefs he said, but much more difficult to change their habits. "In men's conservative clinging to the Christian habits, which have served them best, is the great safeguard of the Church of Christ." Which is a little candid, and perhaps rather un-Christian to Christians, though there seems to me to be a wholesome leavening of truth in it.

For it must be admitted, I think, that the majority of people profess no denominational Christian belief. The figures for church attendances, the decline in church membership, and the wailings of the clergy at these developments prove it so. To rationalism, godlessness, Materialism, Communism, Atheism and many another mental or physical development of these times the Churches attribute the loss of their own. And rightly enough, the anti-religious drift goes on. Yet orthodox religion wields enormous power still. How is this so?

In view of the palpable numerical weakening of the Churches, might it not be thought reasonably enough that their obscurantist powers would be visibly weakening too? Yet we know that they do not weaken as their numerical strength would seem to warrant or grow as ineffective as their philosophies are. How is it that the Churches are still so strong and hold such undisputed sway over so many minds: how, when Christians are few and these few become fewer?

The solution of this apparent paradox is provided by the American clergyman. This division of Christians into the active and the habitual shows that while the army of working and believing followers is small, the reserve of unconscious Christians is immense. The mistake which many Liberals and Free-thinkers make is to equate the strength of Christianity with the number who follow and practise its outward ritual. It might be true to say that when these are at their lowest ebb as in pre-Hitler Germany, the power of Christian ethics is most strong, subtly played upon as these primitive essentials of the average man are by the wily politicians of the Church in a moment of domestic stress for large numbers of people. For while many people reject the more patent absurdities of organized Christianity out of hand, the rejection is of the obvious absurdities only. Thus they dispute the miracles of the Bible but, for instance, accept in toto the Christian reinforcement of the idea of the privileged position of man over woman as the Lord of Creation. Essentially their rejection is superficial. It is not the result of a conclusion come to by a logical process of reasoning and consequently intellectually held. Their attitude is compounded of serio-comic contempt of Christianity partaking more of the nature of a gibe, and probably a joke against Christianity's mummery. They do not know, of course, that they who have made this gesture have discarded, perhaps not even so much as the garment of the faith, much less the philosophy which goes with it, and which all unknown to them is still running their lives. The result of this is pathetic to see, for the victims in all ignorance that they are still enslaved by Christian prejudices, proclaim themselves

Sign on a church in Sullivan County U.S.A.: "What Do You Know About Hell? Come In and Hear Our Organist."

free from such taints, and naturally make no effort to rid themselves of them: surely there is none so degraded as the enslaved who believes himself free: none upon whom chains are more firmly rivetted.

If the average "right thinking" respectable man and woman prides himself and herself upon not being interested in religion, in impartiality, being above the warring sects, the astute church politicians have no such illusions. They know with an instinct trained by association with the weak side of human nature, the half-hearted Anti-Christians which the majority of people are and the weaknesses in the armour of their resistance. With great skill they are able to direct their barbed shafts at the weak spots they know, and, behold in the world around (!) how unerringly the arrows find their marks! Voicing a Christianity that has little apparent connexion with the orthodox Christianity of the Churches, and expressed through secular organizations and upon non-specifically religious matters, the wily clericals find only too many people willing to become Christian in every other detail, than the support of a Christian sect. Which is all organized religion wants despite its sectarian bleatings about empty pews. How much really does it matter if people only rarely go to Church provided they regulate their lives by Christian ethics, use the Churches social functions in weddings, funerals, christenings and the like, and accord to the Churches and their prelates powers and beliefs, honour, distinction and place? Were there many enthusiastic church-goers their congregational democracy might damp the ardour of the socially ambitious clerical.

So, defeated in its object of gathering the flock into the separate sects, it concentrates its efforts upon a powerful sustained propaganda of Christian opinion upon secular issues to see that Christian opinion influences the ordinary man. Is there any social, political, industrial, literary, artistic or other committee, with the certain exception, of course, of rationalist societies, upon which clerical authorities do not figure? Manifestly it is the greatest horror to the churches that there should be an activity which is not suitably permeated with the Christian spirit, or some body of men or women, particularly the key classes of the community, such as doctors, nurses, technicians, scientists, journalists and authors, which has not had its critical faculties softened by the soporific of Christianity.

So, from the ordinary man's presses, political organizations, scientific associations, literary societies and so on flows this stream of Christian-and-secular opinion and knowledge. Is it any wonder that scratch an average non-Christian and you find a lay-Christian underneath completely and comprehensively equipped with all the Christian foibles and prejudices, and more strongly entrenched in them because in normal circumstances they are disavowed. In normal times this is the favourite Christian tactic. At all junctures of history it has done two essential jobs for the average man and woman. It thinks for him and, what is involved in thinking, it comforts him too. This is natural. Most people are too scurried and tired by the business of making a living to think much for themselves. Inevitably they adopt the line of least resistance. They think with the loudest voice, and with the voice with the message which is most easily absorbed by, and most comforting to, the harassed and mentally tired. The Churches make it their good care to see that they have the loudest and most bromidal voice.

Their work in this direction is very successful. How successful and how deeply the average layman is Christianly-minded at the core, is shown by his resort to Mother Church in his weak and his strong moments, and at other minor crises in his life: especi-

ally is he beholden to the Churches in major crises. Times like the present when the increasingly rapid tempo of events gives an appearance of continual crisis, are specially favourable for religion to present itself as the one sure rock amidst flux.

The average person goes to Church to be married, to be buried, perhaps to offer thanks when business prospers, maybe to ask to be delivered from drought, certainly for victory in war. Like the mother is to the young child, the Churches are to the mass of the people—at their beck and call when they are frightened, hurt or distressed: at the same time as they supply this everyday practical help, they furnish the mental background upon which people can cushion their lives. Christianity softens the terrors of our various worlds with its doctrines of the Divine thoughtfulness behind them all—it is peculiarly apt for those who cannot stand the revelation of the truth.

An illuminating example of how the fatherly thought-providing, question-dulling function of the church works, especially in crises, used in this case to the advantage, and perhaps at the behest of the ruling political party, was the occasion of the Archbishop of Canterbury's broadcast after the Abdication of the Duke of Windsor. After the success of that manoeuvre it seems highly likely that the Churches will be increasingly habituated to such practices, their comforting slogans, their time-honoured soothing syrup for old pains administered when the mental infants cry and want their comforters.

In any major crisis that is likely to loom in the near future, such as a prolonged, perilous international situation or a big general economic slump, it is likely that many thousands of people will find their way back into the Churches. It is as likely that organized religion will use the occasion in other ways than by its usual tactic of offering haven to the worldly distressed. It may make a big effort to assert that material sway which it still so hankers after though now it so hypocritically disclaims. Rationalism should be able to use this occasion to show people the immediate rôle of religion regarding the evils of the time, and thus convince them of the wholly reactionary rôle of Christianity in every sphere of life.

LOUIS H. BORRILL.

Acid Drops

Christmas is a time of jollification. Also, and so far as the Christian clergy are concerned, it is a time of pretty tall lying. We have not in mind the general untruthfulness implied in the presentation of Christianity to the people, but to the almost gratuitous lying indulged in with regard to Christmas itself. The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, for example, writes in one of the papers on the enjoyment people have in Christmas festivities, and asks them to remember that they owe their enjoyment at Christmas time to Jesus Christ. Other parsons follow suit. Mr. Weatherhead says:—

The origin of the giving of presents at Christmas takes us back to the practices of ancient pagan Rome. The Romans on all festive occasions used to give each other presents. But the interesting thing is that we do not do it because the Romans do it, but because the early Christians, copying the Romans, did it. So that the stream of origin is Christian.

Why this is not even a moderately plausible way of lying. The early Christians copied something from the Romans. If the Romans had not had this thing the Christians could not have copied it, therefore the thing ceases to be Roman, and we have to thank Jesus Christ that the custom exists. What supreme confidence Mr. Weatherhead must have in the stupidity of his admirers! No wonder when there is such an expression as

"Christian truth." It certainly is unlike any other kind of truth.

After Mr. Weatherhead and his clerical brothers-in-arms, it is a relief to find an article in the *Star*, by Arthur Lawson, dealing with some of the fundamental beliefs of Christians, and showing their origin in pre-Christian times. Fortunately for the Weatherhead species, most newspaper readers forget to-day what they read yesterday.

There are not many who will believe that the epidemic of proposals that set in for local councils to open their proceedings with prayer is either spontaneous or due to the direct inspiration of God Almighty. In many cases the proposal has been turned down, in two or three it has been adopted. In our judgment it is part of the "wire pulling" that has been going on to prevent the Archbishop's recall to religion being an obvious "flop." There has been nothing to prevent councils being stupid enough to open their proceedings with prayer—except their own common-sense, but in a recall to religion campaign that commodity is reduced to a minimum. Nor was there anything to prevent members of a council praying on their own. Evidently to be effective the prayers had to be issued with the formal approval of the Chairman of Slocum-cum-Slosh. Then the Lord would sit up and take notice. But we should like these councils that adopt prayers before conducting business to publish a certified account of the difference between the wisdom displayed before and after the era of collective prayer.

In the case of the Stoke Town Council, a room was set aside for those who wished to pray before coming into the council chamber. According to the Stoke *Evening Sentinel*, three or four availed themselves of the opportunity. We fancy the Lord will not be impressed. But even that is a larger proportion than Parliament recently provided when a special prayer-meeting was arranged in the House of Commons.

At Hexham the proposal to have public prayers at council meetings was rejected by 14 votes to 8. The proposal was made by the vicar. One of the members said it was the committees that most needed prayer, but that, of course, would not give the advertisement the vicar was after. Or it may be that the recording angel does not attend to little hole-and-corner gatherings. It must be something big and general. Anyway the Hexham Council is to go its way without asking God to help them.

Still another item to give heart to those who are looking for revival of religion as a consequence of the year of "Recall." The Archbishop of York explains that the Bible is not read so much nowadays, because there is such "a multiplication of easily available literature." That we imagine is a confession that the Bible can only hold its own so long as there is no competition. If that is a correct analysis of the situation, it is a poor compliment to "God's word." But as is the case with most religious apologies it is not true, or rather it suggests a falsehood. It implies that the Bible was at one time the literature upon which people fed. And that is not true. Bible readers were always in a small minority, and there are probably more readers of the Bible now than there ever was. The picture of the English people all engaged in reading the Bible as a recreation is just about as true as the snowy Christmases that some people think was the regular rule long ago. The trouble is not that the Bible is not read, but that it is now read in the light of better knowledge than our forefathers possessed. And it is a queer compliment to pay the Bible to say that so soon as other reading is at hand Bible reading suffers a slump. Which is another way of saying that the "appeal of the Bible to the human soul" is so much parsonic bunkum.

Roman Catholics in America are greatly annoyed at the film "Zola." It is too much to have a man like

Zola, the Atheist and Socialist, the writer who exposed Lourdes and Rome, and helped so materially in making public the part played by the Church in the infamous plot against Dreyfus, made the hero of a popular film. *America*, the leading Roman Catholic paper in U.S.A., and which we are told "usually speaks only after consultation with high authority," refers to Zola as "particularly the exemplar of anti-Christian tradition," and is also protesting against a projected film, in which George Arliss figures as Anatole France. It describes Anatole France as "a cynical Atheist, apologist for Lenin, and æsthetic voluptuary." *America* is quite worthily upholding the Roman Catholic banner. One cannot say anything worse of it than that.

We cannot say that we are much in love with films as instruments of propaganda, but if we must have them, films featuring men like Richard Carlile, Thomas Paine, and Charles Bradlaugh, three men whose careers abound in dramatic situations and in invaluable services to humanity, would certainly counteract the lying and grossly dishonest religious propaganda that is always in operation.

We referred last week to the great falling off in attendances at Church of England Sunday schools. Now a correspondent of the *Church Times* says that in America the Episcopal Church "is on the downgrade," although he "hopes not permanently." It is suggested that some help may be derived from "an aggressive evangelicism, and more thorough and systematic pastoral care." This may, of course, do something, but we do not see how it is going to stop people discovering the truth about Christianity. Preaching a lie is not likely to prevent a number of people finding out the truth, and that is the real trouble that has overtaken the Christian Church in every country.

What a charming gentleman must be the Rev. Richard Pyke. And how simple. He believes—at least he says—that :—

Just now we are beset with a kind of spiritual miasma which breeds all kinds of noxious beliefs. The heresy of our age is "a low creeping" kind of thing. It expresses itself in licence and lust, but its roots are in an entirely unworthy conception of God.

Who but a Christian minister could insinuate that those who disagree with him—all heretics—are "low creeping kind of things," and their opinions are expressed "in licence and lust?" And we are asked to admire this person's own "conception of God," which he considers "entirely worthy"—worthy, probably, of the Rev. Richard Pyke.

There is a nice paragraph in a Roman Catholic booklet entitled *Thoughts For Freethinkers*, by Mgr. Canon Barry. We are quite happy to find the Freethought cause "saddled" with the crime of advocating "Birth Control"—and we are sure that Charles Bradlaugh was proud of the accusation. But Canon Barry denies justice to the many brave women who have faced obloquy in this and other fiercely opposed and once unpopular movements. Here is Canon Barry's tribute :—

The best known champion of Malthusian practice, as you are doubtless aware, was Mr. Bradlaugh, who termed himself "Iconoclast," or the idol-breaker, and who was commonly regarded as an Atheist. At all events, he fought against the Christian creed with might and main. It is melancholy to record that in this detestable warfare on the English race and religion, women took their part; but we need not delay to mention them.

One feels rather sorry that Canon Barry's parents were not 100 per cent Malthusian—in practice.

No one will be surprised to find that the average Christian convert in Japan is just as sure that the war against China is a "holy" one, as the most rabid imperialistic and "pagan" Japanese. According to a letter by the Rev. P. G. Tsujii, rector of St. Andrew's Church, Yokohama, it seems that the Japs are "not fighting the Chinese people at large," nor would they ever "do such a thing as to bomb innocent people intention-

aily"—and so on in typical Christian terms. In fact, Mr. Tsuju firmly believes "that God gave us the war to defeat the common great enemy of Christianity, and we must rise against the enemy, not only as Japanese subjects, but also as Christians." All this reads exactly as do some of the extracts from similar clerical pronouncements given in Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*. There are few people who can get up a case for war better than a thoroughly religious Christian, and in this Japanese converts are not one whit behind.

"To me the Salvation Army 'religion' is pure heresy," writes the Rev. George Potter, Vicar of St. Chrysostom's, Peckham, S.E. He thinks his abode, so near the "Army" training centre at Denmark Hill, accounts for a visit from one of the "lasses," who insisted on kneeling on the Vicarage door-mat and saying a prayer for the household. As becomes a fellow-Christian, the Potter is "grateful for the prayers," but feels that "this was a bit overdone." A Christian can well "dissemble his love," so long as another does not poach on his preserves.

The United Protestant Council are expressing their concern at the proposal of some leading members of the Church to "encourage the state of celibacy among the younger clergy," and have memorialized the Archbishop of Canterbury and York to that effect. In their statement they say:—

Every one who knows much of Christian life in the universities and of ordination candidates realizes how large a proportion of the very best men for the ministry in the future are the sons of clergy, and have grown up in a holy happy Christian home, and owe everything under God to the marriage of a godly minister to a godly wife.

This is only another form of the "Give me the Child" argument. As long as the innocent and unsuspecting youngster can be surrounded with the religious atmosphere, there is hope for him. Otherwise, that is, if left to develop naturally and freely, he will become an outsider, and perhaps even he may go to swell the ranks of the "Godless." For the clergy, at any rate, they argue, *The Full Quiver*.

The United Protestant Council also state that the Scriptures are against celibacy and commend marriage. Well, the Scriptures can be quoted for and against on almost every subject. Still it will be hard to find a more lukewarm advocacy of marriage than that attributed to Paul, the founder of orthodox Christianity. He said, "It is better to marry than to burn." The modern Christian enthusiast about marriage never lingers lovingly over that text. One gathers it was one of Paul's little slips.

According to an article in the *Times*:—

Fascism encourages tradition in order to stimulate the dream of national grandeur. On December 11, when Parliament last sat before the holidays, the heroic disabled ex-officer Signor Del Croix in reciprocating the good wishes of the President of the Chamber, said that Fascism had abolished the New Year's greetings, but respected "the sacred tradition of Christmas because Catholicism is not only religion but is also the civilization of Rome: Eagle and Cross, Church and Empire.

National grandeur, of course, is an ideal of bigness, a military ideal; a country full of men of the sergeant-major type. Onwards, Christian Soldiers! The Sacred tradition of Christmas, it is well to note, is considered useful to this end.

The spirit of love has manifested itself this Christmas. "Pius XI. loves England," says the New Cardinal (Hinsley) after being presented with his red hat. "I love Moslems," says Mussolini, and drops pamphlets (as a variant on poison gas) over Palestine, to advertise it. In the same way the fox loves the poultry, the spider loves flies, and an Englishman loves roast beef. A devouring love!

There are 542 students in Beloit College, a co-educational institution in Wisconsin under the ægis of the Congregationalists. Miss Joyce Hartman and Herbert

Krauss, senior candidates for honours, induced 412 of their mates to tell them in concrete terms how they stood on religion. Three hundred and four out of 412 students signified they did not accept miracles, the rest either not answering or not affirming a belief. Sixty-nine conceive of Jesus as unique. Three hundred and eleven think he was a man of high morality, though not different in the human sense. Only 68 believed in the inspiration of the Bible. Can we wonder at the insistence of the clergy on sound religious training for the child before he is able to weigh and consider opinions?

A custom which was practised in York during the Middle Ages, but had been discontinued during the last two or three hundred years has been revived, and a large lamp which had been placed in the lantern tower of All Saints' Church, Pavement, was lighted according to ancient custom. The lamp will be lighted each evening at dusk until the New Year. "Let there be Light and there was Light," is a favourite Christian aphorism. It seems hopeless to expect any interpretation of light which is helpful and uplifting to come from a religious source.

Fifty Years Ago

It is true that times of transition are times of trouble; but to pretend danger to morality through the decay of religion is vastly exaggerated if not completely false. The serpent does not slough its skin till a new one is prepared. Beneath the religious sanctions of conduct the natural ones have been growing. With most people the religious theory is at best never more than one of the motives to conduct, and it usually is by no means the most important. There is indeed no necessary connexion between religion and morality. Prayer, sacrifice, praise of a deity, and the other accompaniments of worship may figure as substitutes for right conduct, but they can do little to ensure or increase it. Religion, indeed, has been the enemy of morality by directing human attention to another world: and because this other world has been esteemed all-important, religion has encouraged reliance upon credulity, superstition, dogmatism, sectarianism, and persecution. Much which the Bible and the Church have declared to be right, the best part of the world now feels to be wrong. Even those who pretend to follow these authorities select, modify, add to, and sink out of sight some or other of their express teachings. Those, moreover, who claim supernatural authority are found to be as much at variance as those who put forward no such pretence. Few will now argue that morality derives any support from the belief in the Trinity or the vicarious Atonement. These doctrines are slowly sloughing off from Christians themselves. Yet there was a time when they were believed to be all-essential. A Unitarian will not deny that the highest moral life is compatible with a disbelief in miracle and the freest handling of Scripture, while the Deist will possibly allow that it is compatible with the rejection of a God.

It is certain that as enlightenment spreads morality must be founded, not on our ignorance, but on our knowledge. Those are its worst enemies who maintain that it needs the support of the supernatural. These clerical alarmists are doing their worst to make men palter with their consciences, and pretend to beliefs that are no longer credible. Society, under their guidance, becomes an organized hypocrisy, each pretending to believe in a heavenly providence, and to be looking forward to celestial happiness, while his true object to comfort here on earth. Religion is thus responsible for the errors of those who are gradually escaping from its influence. The only manly course is to repudiate religion and its sanctions, which, by making morality dependant on another life, have turned it upside down. The safety of morality, as Professor Huxley says, "lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, or this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in the fixed order of nature, which sends social disorganization upon the track of immorality as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespass."

The Freethinker, January 1, 1888.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. HAWKES....The argument that if there is a God there is profit in believing, and if there is not a God, one loses nothing in believing, is a very old one, and nothing we know of better illustrates the essential selfishness and mental cowardice of Christianity—to say nothing of the stupidity of believing in order to be on the right side. That adds hypocrisy to the other qualities already named.

"GORN."—Sorry, but we have had to close the discussion on "Poison and Poetry."

H.D.—Shall appear as soon as possible

A. F. CARWOOD.—Thanks, but we are unable to use.

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. Roselli, 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.

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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

Applications for tickets for the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on January 22 are coming in unusually early this year. If the demand continues it looks like being a case of "house full." The Dinner is always a very enjoyable function, and we believe the coming one will be well up to last year. Tickets are 8s. each, and may be obtained from the Freethinker office or that of the National Secular Society.

For those Provincial friends who wish to attend the Dinner, and this year the number bids fair to be larger than usual, there are day excursions from all parts enabling visitors to stay to the end of the musical programme. The prices of the tickets are: Birmingham, 6s. 6d.; Wolverhampton, 6s. 9d.; Nottingham, 7s. 3d.; Sheffield, 14s. 6d.; Leicester, 11s. 6d.; Manchester, 16s. 3d. Further details may be obtained from the N.S.S. Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

If anything would blow skyhigh the pro-Franco propaganda carried on by papers such as the *Daily Mail*, and the underhand support given it by some of our leading politicians in this country, it would be *Spanish Document*, by the recently liberated *News-Chronicle* correspondent, Arthur Koestler. In the full sense of the phrase the book deserves the name of "A Human Document." Not even German Fascism has outdone in outright, deliberate, and unbridled brutality the Fascist campaign in Spain. And the significant thing is the acquiescence with which it has been received by the general

press. It would appear that direct contradiction is impossible. The lying of the Roman Catholic Press ought to be powerless against this document. "Ought"! But care will be taken outside the Roman Catholic press that *Spanish Testament* is forgotten as soon as possible.

The following passages will be of interest:—

The Catholic Church is the largest landowner in Spain. This explains why the Spanish peasants' struggle for existence was bound at the same time to be a struggle against the secular power of the Church. The anti-clerical character of all Spanish mass movements since the seventeenth century is a direct and inevitable consequence of the temporal power exercised by the Spanish clergy ever since the expulsion of the Moors.

With the dawn of the industrial era the Spanish Church assumed as dominating a position in the commercial world as it had hitherto done in agriculture. It controlled banks and industrial concerns, owned urban house property, and had adopted the most up-to-date business methods of modern capitalism. Until 1936 the tramways system in Madrid belonged to the Church. A number of typical cabarets, with their, to English ideas, very *risqué* programmes, were controlled by holding companies with clerical capital. Among the "big five" banks of the Iberian Peninsula was the Banco Espiritu Santo, the "Bank of the Holy Ghost," which largely helped to finance Franco's insurrection.

It is essential to appreciate the peculiar position of the Spanish Church in order to realize that the struggle of Spanish democracy against the clergy is not an anti-religious struggle, but a purely secular, political struggle waged against an extremely secular political opponent—a struggle which all the Western democracies waged successfully centuries ago when they set to work to lay the foundations of a liberal era. It is the struggle of Henry VIII. against Rome, the struggle of France in the eighteenth century for the Rights of Man.

The Spanish clergy, in whose traditions the stake and the torture chamber of the Inquisition live on unforgettably, still possessed to all intents and purposes until February, 1936, that power and that mentality against which Rabelais, Voltaire, the Encyclopedists, Tom Paine and Godwin all inveighed.

The anti-clerical demands of the Spanish Popular Front in the year 1936 were not a whit more radical or "red" than those of their writers of the age of enlightenment; separation of Church and State, distribution of Church lands amongst the landless peasants, secular education, freedom of religious worship, freedom of speech and freedom of the pen. If this is anarchism, then John Stuart Mill was an anarchist; if it needed the inspiration of Moscow to raise these demands, then Cromwell was a hireling of Stalin. The truth is that the Spanish Popular Front was not striving towards a Soviet State or a Bakunin Utopia, but towards one goal alone; the raising of the Spanish State, which had never yet succeeded in emerging from the clerical feudal stage, to the constitutional, material and spiritual level of the great European democracies.

The calculated brutalities of the Franco campaign are almost unbelievable, but they are set forth with a directness and, on the whole, a restraint, that carries conviction. The apology for them that there are brutalities on both sides, is just a cowardly expression of sympathy with the Fascist clerical campaign by those who are ashamed to be downright supporters of it. The statement that cruelty is common to all Spaniards, particularly when it comes from those who profess liberal and Freethinking sympathies is ignorance, or worse. Spanish human nature is like human nature as a whole—subject to the play of the social influences in which it has developed, and in private intercourse the Spaniards, as a matter of fact, are generally notable for their kindness and courtesy. But for centuries the Spaniards have been kept by Church and State, educationally, on the lowest of European levels, and it has been encouraged to brutality by a Church that has been even among Christians, notorious for its greed, its intolerance, and its encouragement to ferocity. If there is one form of ignorance which Freethinkers, above all others, would regard with the greatest contempt, it is the common "All Spaniards are like." All Germans, or Frenchmen or Englishmen are "like that." Freethought ought to be more than a cheap and comfortable hatred of Christianity. It should involve something approaching a scientific and liberal survey of life as a whole.

My Reply to John o' London

[In *John O'London's Weekly* for March 19, there appeared certain comments written by John O'London himself. These comments refer to me by name and criticize an article of mine entitled "Logical Atheism," which was published in the February 14 issue of the *Freethinker*. I was in complete ignorance of this criticism until a short while ago, when an unknown correspondent—to whom I express my thanks—sent me a copy of the August 2 issue of the *Rationalist* (Melbourne, Australia), in which, under the heading "Atheist: A Meaningless Term," Mr. W. Glanville Cook examines John O'London's arguments and supports my position.]

I would have considered it a courtesy on the part of the Editor of *John O'London's Weekly* if he had sent me, at the time, a copy of the issue in which his comments appeared. Doubtless he had his reasons for not doing so. But it was owing to his failure in this respect that I was prevented from putting in a more prompt reply. For news to travel from England to Australia and back again takes time—hence the delay. However, since the subject is one of which the public seldom tires, such delay could not render my reply less topical or pertinent. In spite of this, the Editor rejected it with the excuse that he did "not feel justified in returning to the subject after such a long interval." Perhaps if he should ever feel "justified" in returning to it after another long interval—which, with my knowledge of Christian tactics, I confidently expect he will—I trust that I shall not again be so unfortunate as to become aware of his comments in a similar roundabout fashion. The following article is a word for word reproduction of the article submitted to *John O'London's Weekly* on December 5, with the exception that a short introductory paragraph has been replaced by this present explanation.]

JOHN O'LONDON (to whom for brevity's sake I will hereafter refer as J.O'L.) begins his comments by saying that "a denial or active disbelief in the existence of a Deity cannot rest on any thinking worthy of the name." I gather, from later references, that J.O'L. is an admirer of Mr. R. W. Jepson, whose book on *Clear Thinking* he quotes, and who recently broadcast a series of talks on the same subject. Despite this J.O'L. does not seem to have noticed that the foregoing statement is a typical example of one of those tricks of argument against which Mr. Jepson warns his readers and listeners.

"My thinking leads me to deny the existence of God," says Fraser. "Then your thinking must be unworthy of the name," answers J.O'L. "Why?" asks Fraser. "Because," says J.O'L., "the denial of God's existence is a sign of thinking which is unworthy of the name." Is that not begging the question?

But let us consider the statement as it stands. If denial of the existence of a Deity rests on thinking "unworthy of the name," then denial of the existence of Ra, Thor, Wotan, or any other Deity of a dead religion also rests on thinking "unworthy of the name." Does J.O'L. believe in the existence of these Deities as strongly as he appears to believe in the existence of God? If not, was the thinking which led to his doubt or disbelief in them "worthy of the name"?

When I say "There is no God," J.O'L. declares that I am denying what I am "not in a position to deny." According to him, all I can say is that I have "no experience of God." Let us examine these two statements, beginning with the second.

If by "experience of God" is meant experience of a word in the English language and of the circumstances associated with its use, then the statement is untrue. In any case such experience does not prove that the word *God* refers to something which has existence in reality. The mere presence of a noun in our language is no evidence in proof of the reality of that to which the noun is intended to refer. Many

names and nouns—such as Jabberwock, satyr, phlogiston—refer to inventions of the imagination which have no real existence at all. On the other hand, if the phrase means experience of a real person, having the attributes usually assigned to him by believers, then I admit that I have had no experience of such a person. But if the word *God* refers to a non-entity (as I claim to have proved), it would be impossible for me to have had experience of it in that sense.

As for my not being in a position to deny God's existence, I admit that absence of experience cannot prove the truth of non-existence. But I do not base my denial on such feeble grounds. Every denial must be the denial of something previously asserted. My denial is the outcome of, and is based upon the assertions of God-believers. Were it not for the absurdity of these assertions, I would have nothing to deny. It is, therefore, the believers in God's existence who have actually placed me in the position to make my denial.

"Wisely," continues J.O'L., "Mr. Fraser does not try to prove that his own disbelief is right. On what possible fulcrum could he raise that opinion with proof?" In answer to this simple question I will ask two other simple questions. "How can one have disbelief unless there is already a belief to disbelieve?" And: "Having proved a particular belief to be wrong, is that not precisely the same as proving the corresponding disbelief to be right?"

If my proof of God's non-existence were faulty, then my disbelief would be faulty to the same extent. But J.O'L. makes no effort to prove my arguments faulty. On the contrary, he admits that they are "clear, Q.E.D. thinking," than which "in its way nothing could be more cogent." The phrase "in its way," looks like a sly dig implying that there are other ways more cogent. But nowhere does J.O'L. give an example of those more cogent ways of thinking. He merely says that "the argument seems to end with itself," which is what any conclusive argument must do. An argument which does not end with itself is obviously inconclusive. He also says that "it is but proof on paper, 'coldly correct and critically dull.'" Without actually *speaking* my proof, what else could I do but put it on paper? As for its being "coldly correct and critically dull," I have no doubt that J.O'L. would have preferred it to be hotly incorrect and uncritically exciting. But my aim was to talk sense, not to provide readers with exciting nonsense.

Apart from these irrelevancies, does J.O'L. make any attempt to answer my arguments with better ones? Let readers judge for themselves. He quotes an imaginary Deist as saying: "You have shown me that I do not understand the ways of God, but I knew that already." This Deist seems to justify his ignorance on the ground that he is aware of it! But I was not discussing the "ways of God." How can one do that except on the assumption that God's existence is already proved? Without such proof, it is begging the question to speak of "God's ways."

This same Deist continues by quoting Job and St. Augustine, both of whom take God's existence for granted without attempting to show that their assumptions are well-founded. That is a simple trick which anyone can perform. To borrow St. Augustine's words: "Boobah is more truly imagined than expressed, and he exists more truly than is imagined." Would that convince anyone of Boobah's existence or reality? And to cap this vague rubbish J.O'L. ends this paragraph by saying: "You do not make Atheism logical by showing that Deism is illogical." In other words, by proving the statement "God does not exist" to be true, you do not prove the statement "God does exist" to be untrue. Well, well!

The rest of J.O'L.'s comments appear to be an attempt to discredit my arguments by discrediting the thinking which produced them. It begins with the curious statement that "It appears that clear thinking is not always Thought." I wonder if anyone, including J.O'L. himself, really understands what that sentence means. I gather that, having admitted my thinking to be clear, J.O'L. regrets the admission and now looks for a means of escape. So, by a trick of typography, he invents a superior kind of thought which he writes with a capital T. What a pity that he is unable to give us some samples of it!

But I refuse to be led further up the garden path by such irrelevancies. If God-believers can do no better than assume the existence of that which has to be proved, and then proceed to assert as truth what they have assumed, it is high time that someone should make them realize they are no better than frauds. What would J.O'L. think of me if, having assumed him to be a crook, I were to assert that he is indeed a crook? Would he calmly bow to my explanation that I had arrived at my opinion by Thought, with a capital T?

C. S. FRASER.

Can a Freethinker be a "Britisher"?

So many things are told us so often and in so many different garbs in this Age of Publicity that a Freethinker finds he must be continually on his guard against adopting any kind of fact or belief merely because of its repetition, its source, or its favourable associations.

All around us we see people suffering from what I call this "acceptitis." They accept statements without proof merely because those statements have been repeated until they become familiar, or because they have become familiar with, and blindly trust, the people who make them. They "haven't the time" to examine for themselves the bases of a fact or belief, and its merits or otherwise. Anyhow, why waste time, because it's "sure to be true." And unfortunately the Age encourages them by bestowing more reward on the man with a mass of inaccurate and undigested scraps of information, than on the man who knows one thing accurately.

It is, of course, better to think inaccurately than never to think at all; and we cannot have the advantages of general popular education without getting for a time, at any rate, some disadvantages to go with them. But do we always give sufficient recognition to these disadvantages, in our work, our propaganda, and sometimes in our impatience?

It is not knowledge alone, or education alone, which makes for social progress; what matters is the right application of knowledge. And to-day full weight must be given to the fact that with the growth of popular education, and the ever-widening boundaries of mankind's scientific and social knowledge, there has inevitably increased at their side the evil of "tabloid" knowledge and the worse dangers of labels, of "coloured words," and of inarticulate ignorance made articulate.

Such labels and catchwords are part and parcel of our daily life, from the usually frank cynicism of the commercial advertiser to the more sinister manoeuvres of political and economic exploiters. Most of them are fairly obvious—to opponents. One which seems to collect more scalps than the average is the label which is pasted across a fourth of a map of the world—the "British Empire."

It may be objected—in these days when we are all becoming amateur psychologists—that "Britisher" as used in the title of this article is itself a "coloured word," betraying bias against the person thus described. But that is not its purpose. If an "imperialist" be held to imply a militant (if not "fanatic") believer in the Empire and its extension, then the more moderate "Britisher" can (however inaccurately) serve our immediate purpose here of indicating an Englishman or Englishwoman who, while not imperialistically aggressive, nevertheless accepts, and is prepared mentally to defend, the British Empire as it at present exists.

Now, if a Freethinker hears a bishop repeat once more the suggestion that only by turning to the "Christian solution" can the world save itself, he merely smiles. His knowledge, in that direction, at any rate, is proof against "acceptitis," however frequent the repetition and however bright the publicity. But if he hears Mr. Eden, or Mr. Chamberlain, or Mr. Churchill, or Mr. Rightwing-Labour, or Colonel Blimp say that the British Empire is the best guarantee of world peace—as one or the other of them is saying every day—is his armour protection against the repetition of a statement on this more controversial plane? Will it arouse in him the same critical defence as if the word "Christianity" had been used instead of "British Empire"?

After all, he is a member not so much of the British Empire as of the "owners" of the British Empire (marking the British Empire as such from the British Commonwealth as such), and therefore he probably shares, to some extent, the herd belief that British administration is God's gift to the world, particularly to the native races. How far has he been able to free himself of that herd belief, and keep his judgment clear of the insinuating atmosphere all around us of the "great and glorious British Empire"?

What prominence in his examination of its bases does he give to the fact that in parts of that Empire "British liberties" simply don't exist; that in by far its largest part it is an empire of dominant whites and oppressed blacks; that a colour-ban which would be indignantly rejected in London operates in part of Africa? Is he at all perturbed by the serious hardening of anti-native policy in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and elsewhere?

Does he stop to think it out when he reads that a Bill has been introduced into the Kenya Legislature to regulate further the position of the "squatter," a Bill that seems to treat the African in his own country worse than a land-slave in medieval England? A "squatter" is already forbidden to live on any estate except by the authorities' permission, and on condition of working 180 days in the year for the "owner" of the land (often, apparently, for nothing except food). Under the new Bill, according to a correspondent in the *Manchester Guardian*, he will have to work for the land-owner not 180, but 270 days in the year for the privilege of living his miserable life there. If he gets drunk, he may be gaoled for a month or fined 100 shillings—the equivalent of ten months' wages at the ordinary rates. And on the sale of the estate the "resident labourer" (no, not "land slave"—"resident labourer") must complete his contract of servitude, which may be as long as five years, with the new owner.

When we speak of "British democracy," let us not forget that that democracy has a half-sister about whom we hear much less at home—"British dictatorship." When we give ourselves a pat on the back with our democratic right hand, let us not forget what our left hand doeth.

And apart from the way in which Britain got, keeps, and rules her empire, how far is it true that

that empire is the world's "best guarantee for peace"? How far is it true that we are loved and respected the world over (Germany, Italy and Japan apart just now!), and admired for our honest, just, wise dealings?

"Is it not understandable that the sacro-sanctity of the Empire, and of every line, visible or invisible, connecting up the Empire, does not seem to the foreigner to be the clue to the world's happiness?" wrote A. A. Milne in a letter to the *Times* on the vexed question of colonies.

Wherever the foreigner looks, he sees a British interest; wherever he moves, he is reminded that in one step he will be endangering a British interest. Barred from Australia, he enters China: the massacre of women and children begins; and our Ambassador voices the Cabinet's indignation that on the sacred British Embassy "22 splinters of bombs" were allowed to fall. So peace-loving are we. . . .

To the rest of the world the British Empire is not a guarantee of peace, but a guarantee of trouble; and will continue so to be until for our present motto, "What we have we hold," we substitute the more gracious one, "Noblesse oblige." It would also be an advantage if just occasionally we could discard that hypocrisy which, to the foreigner, is so infuriatingly characteristic of England.

We announce complacently that we have done all we can for peace; we offered to disarm; we set the example . . . and so on. Just so might the great landowner offer to reduce the number of his man-traps if the starving villagers threw away their guns and stopped poaching the preserves which he had appropriated from the common land.

Milne goes on to argue from this that colonies taken from Germany after the war should be returned to her. Others argue from the same facts that all colonies should be given up by whomsoever possessing them, either to become self-governing communities or in some cases to be aided towards that end under international control.

And a Freethinker, whatever his political loyalties, will surely not attempt to solve the problem from a European view, from the aspect of the peace of Europe and the safety of himself and his immediate neighbours, regardless of the rights of the residents in those far-off colonies. He will not consider that when he talks of liberty, he means only liberty of the white race, or liberty of Europe, or the liberty of England, France, Germany, Italy and the other nations called for some reason "great." He will say that liberty, if not a common heritage, should be at least a common goal. He will say that at the table of liberty shall sup not only white, but black and yellow and red; not only European, but African and Indian and Asiatic; not only England and France, Germany and Italy, but all those subject peoples and minorities, whether in fatherland or colony, in dependency or mandated territory, whose cry for freedom and justice, so faint amid the big drums of rival empires, is that same cry which echoes in our own hearts at home when our own personal interests are at stake.

He will consider neither liberty honoured nor justice served while there remain in this world any peoples who can call themselves by no other name than that of subject peoples. He will with affection remember some of the most valiant fights of Bradlaugh on the non-religious battlefield; he will think of the hand which framed that object of the National Secular Society, "Secularism seeks to realize the self-government of the people." And he will say to himself: There are not my people, and your people, and other people; there are only people.

RONALD STANFORD.

Freethinker's Fare

A REFERENCE to Shelley's Pythagorean diet in the *Freethinker* suggests the query: Are vegetarians less religious than those who eat their fellow men or their more distant relations?

There are not many anthropophagi now, but their belief that they acquired the attributes of their victims by assimilation still survives in the eucharistic celebration, as we were recently reminded when a priest professed to have found drops of human blood in the chalice.

Shelley's diet was vegetarian, but his biographer, Thomas Love Peacock, recorded one lapse from grace when the poet, with his wife Mary and their friend, Charles Clairmont, set forth on a boating tour to visit the source of the Thames. During the trip Peacock prescribed hot and well-peppered mutton chops to Shelley, who, ever careless as to his food, had been living "chiefly on tea and bread and butter."

Many admirers of Fitzgerald's *Omar* are probably unaware that "Old Fitz," as his friends styled him, always asserted that the great secret of health was not to eat meat.

In the "dedication" in *Tiresias*, Tennyson refers to his friend's diet, and his own attempt to adopt it:—

Old Fitz who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile.
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your spreading garden-tree,
And watch your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter, at his prayers.

Fitzgerald was one of the unorthodox.

Voltaire often referred, in his delightful tales, to the iniquity of killing animals for food. The Phoenix in the fairy story of *The Princess of Babylon* provides a feast at which there were a hundred delicacies, among which no disguised corpse was seen. In the same story we read how the lover of the Princess is received in the mansion of an English milord. He is questioned by his host as to whether good roast beef was to be had in his country, to which query the guest replies that in his part of the world people did not eat their brethren.

The guest then proceeded to explain that the diet of his countrymen was that of Pythagoras, of Porphyry, and of Plutarch; but this was too much for milord, "who went off into a profound slumber."

Rousseau stated that "one of the proofs that the taste of flesh is not natural to man is the indifference which children exhibit for this sort of food, and the preference they give to vegetables, and milk, porridge, pastry, fruit, etc."

Among contemporary vegetarians who are unorthodox, Mr. G. B. Shaw is probably one of the best known; indeed some years ago he remarked with his usual candour that Tolstoy and himself were the only vegetarians in whom the public were interested at all.

That Mr. Shaw has the courage of his convictions may be assumed from a contribution which he made to "The Academy" a few years ago when suffering from some ailment: "My situation is a solemn one. Life is offered to me on condition of eating beefsteaks. My weeping family crowd about me with Bovril and Brand's Essence. But death is better than cannibalism. My will contains directions for my funeral, which will be followed, not by mourning coaches, but by herds of oxen, sheep, swine, flocks of poultry, and a small travelling aquarium of live fish. It will be,

with the single exception of Noah's Ark, the most remarkable thing of its kind."

Mr. H. S. Salt, who must be well known to readers of the *Freethinker*, is another veteran vegetarian; we had a pleasant botanical ramble on the Downs near Lewes some years ago, and my mentor in that delightful pursuit seemed quite tireless.

Among my own friends I recall many Atheists, Rationalists, Freethinkers, heretics (or whatever the correct word is) who are vegetarians, but they are, like myself, to fortune and to fame unknown.

Do a majority of unbelievers favour a vegetarian diet? Would they say with the hospitable hermit in *Edwin and Angelina*? :—

No flocks that range the valley free
To slaughter I condemn.

My old friend, Sir Ray Lankester, used to affirm that "so far as a priori argument has any value, it suggests that the most perfect food for any animal is the flesh and blood of another animal of the same species."

This is a purely theoretical justification of cannibalism, but if such a regimen ever should be adopted vegetarians would view it with detachment unless—unless—but that would be too cruel, "a dismal thing to do" :—

the Walrus said . . .
"And you are very nice!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"Cut us another slice."

EDGAR SYERS.

Whose Image?

JUST how soon Adam fell after creation is not stated, but the inference has always been that he took to sinning pretty promptly. It is not recorded that he did anything of importance before the event took place, except to look over all the animals for a help-mate. (Gen. ii. 20). Finding none that suited him, the Lord was obliged to divide up some of the material already used in making Adam, so taking out a rib, he fashioned a woman.

Here was something quite different from anything previously known in the Councils of Eternity, for all the angels up to that time had been males.

It is hardly surprising that Eve went bad, being a first experiment, so to speak, but with Adam there can be but one conclusion: either a bad model or poor workmanship. Regardless of Satan's tragic fall from grace, if the "sons of God" were attracted from heaven by the beauty of the "daughters of men" (Gen. vi. 20), our inference is confirmed; and we are left wondering moreover as to the attractiveness of that celestial home, lighted only by Jehovah's own countenance. (Rev. xxii. 5).

Of course, Jehovah was new in the creation business, having never attempted anything of the sort before; and, outside the heavenly hosts, had had no companions.

He must have been getting bored himself, for after sitting idle countless of millions of eternities, he suddenly broke out with an exclamation (Gen. i. 26), which must have startled the other gods out of their wits: "Let us make man in our image . . . and let him have dominion over the fish," *et cetera*.

This was giving up a good deal of dominion; and I doubt the other gods' approval, for, in the very next verse, the word *own* (in the King James version) is italicized. "So God created man in his *own* image," indicates that the other gods were not represented, either in the image or in the process.

According to the Bible, there is no question whatever that man was created in the image of the Jewish god Jehovah, or Yahweh, who was not like any of the other gods of antiquity. One can hardly help speculating what difference it would have made to history if some of those other gods had contributed to the early makeup of mankind. The Greeks, for instance, made some images that look pretty good even in these days.

The history of the Chosen People, as revealed in their holy book, shows how consistently they followed the divine model. Our first parents may have committed an "original sin," but, on the whole, they well vindicated their maker. Thus we read in Deuteronomy iv. 24, "*For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, EVEN a jealous God*"; and in Chapter vii., verse 16, this Lord God directs them in these words: "*Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver unto thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them; neither shalt thou serve their gods*" (which in modern terms means, go to any other church). In Chapter xiii. these faithful followers of Jehovah are told what to do to one who departs from the faith: "*Neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shall thou spare, neither shall thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death and afterwards the hand of the people. And they shall stone him with stones until he die.*" Verse six specifically states to whom this injunction applies, namely: "*thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend.*"

(Merciful heavens! What a way to treat a friend! Jehovah's witnesses please take notice! And why do the Jews complain about Hitler?)

Deut. xiv. 21, is a gem: "*Thou shalt not eat of anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger.*" What hospitality! "*Or thou mayest sell it to an alien,*" adding (Oh so naïvely) "*for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God.*" What price holiness!

One might go on to illustrate indefinitely. Let us skip to 1 Samuel xv., where King Saul learns to his sorrow that "*to obey is better than sacrifice,*" even though obedience meant simply another cold-blooded murder. It was merely a case of obey your priest anyhow. And, "*Agag came in unto him delicately* (How I love that expression) saying, *Surely the bitterness of death is past.*" Notwithstanding Samuel said: "*As thy sword hath made women childless so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord.*" Samuel, be it noted, was King Saul's spiritual adviser. Oh shades of Rasputin!

Again and again throughout the Holy Word the command goes forth from God: "*Spare neither men, women or children*"; although in Numbers xxxi. we have the plain injunction to divide the unmarried females among the soldiers. This may have been an exception to the rule, but war is war; and the Chosen People didn't appear to have anything else to do in those blessed days when men walked and talked with God.

There is one alternative to the idea that God made man in his own image; and to most thoughtful observers of history, just the reverse of this proposition seems justified. Gods have been created in man's image. An intolerant race will have an intolerant god. We worship the qualities we admire in ourselves. Naturally we want others to bow down and worship them. So we make an image. As we become humane our conceptions of God become humane. This has been true in all history. Show me the kind of god you worship, and I'll tell you what kind of person you are. The appearance of gods on

this planet is coincident with the appearance of man. Fossil man made images of gods but, strictly speaking, no fossil gods have ever been dug up. We may, then, speak of fossil gods only in a secondary sense—Secondary to man himself.

If then, men in the past have made imperfect images of God from poor models, what sort of a god are we worshipping to-day? When we view the tragedy of the Jewish people throughout history, is it not time to point to the underlying factors in their psychology: clinging as they have always done to an ancient conception of a god who is an exact reflection of a state of barbaric society, characterized by intolerance, cruelty and superstition. Such a god should shame both Jews and Christians alike, and his very name should be banished from every house of worship.

Reconstruction comes slowly. It is always fought against by the priestly class whose profits are derived from established totems and taboos. The only hope of this world is that individuals, rising above the mentally enslaved masses, demand better, saner and more truthful concepts to guide them, than those born in the ignorance and superstition of the past.

If we *must* have gods to worship, there is little hope that we may find our perfect model in the tomes of ancient history. The nearest approach to an ideal is attributed to Jesus of Galilee, who compared God to an earthly father. This at least was a humane conception. But his early followers made a god of Jesus little better than Jehovah. He is supposed, by some of the most devout, to return suddenly "in the clouds of heaven," (like a Mussolini or a Franco) *to avenge his enemies!* Oh YE GODS! (Thess. iv. 16). (Isaiah lxiii. 1-6).

WILLIAM W. HARVEY, M.D.

Correspondence

A NEW YEAR APPEAL

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The New Year seems to be a suitable time at which to make this appeal. Freethinkers are proverbially slow in coming together for concerted action: a natural tendency with those who think independently on every issue. Mass Appeals and Mass Action are not in keeping with Freethought and Scientific Philosophy. Still, there are times when it is obvious that Freethinkers can best expose the frauds, follies, and failures, of "Godism" by having some united form.

The Evil Influence of Religion cuts across all Political Parties. It helps "Re-actionary," and hinders "Progressive," People and Parties. In this connexion, some very interesting—sometimes funny—contradictions can be noted in the desperate attempts now being made by paid representatives of "God" to regain their hold upon the minds of men and women for Religion. These efforts shall surely fail; but they are a danger to Human Happiness, Freedom, and Progress. Hence the value of non-Party-Political Freethought, as maintained by the N.S.S.

In Yorkshire there are a few Branches of the N.S.S.; but there is a great number of Freethinkers and readers of the one and only "Free." Such Branches act as centres round which Freethinkers can find mutual support in their efforts; and they also provide means of social and intellectual intercourse. There are many Freethinkers in the West Riding Districts round Keighley; and I should be more than glad if those who are willing to come together as non-Political Freethinkers would write to me. If even six individuals come together for a common purpose; the increase in strength is far more than merely numerical: it is much more than six times. That—at least—is a case of Quantitative change leading to Qualitative change! So, let us do it now.

H. STEWART WISHART.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

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

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

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. W. Kent (Editor *Encyclopedia of London*)—"London for Heretics."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, J. T. Gilmour—"The Old Year and the New."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, F. C. Saphin—"Wring out the Old, Ring in the New."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

ACCINGTON (Ritz Cinema): 6.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Roman Catholic Menace."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetsstone Lane): 7.0, B. Little (Liverpool)—"Flogging a Dead Horse."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, W. Parry (Liverpool)—"Church Revenues."

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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.

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