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

Views and Opinions

God and the Crisis *

The "Crisis" was not without its comic interlude. It was supplied by the Archbishop of Canterbury. On September 29, the ordinary evening broadcast of news was interrupted so that the Archbishop might throw some light on the subject. Mr. Chamberlain was again going to meet Hitler, with another lover of liberty and friend of England, Mussolini, to discuss how Germany's intentions could best be carried out. And we have the authority of the Archbishop that when members of the House of Commons heard the news, some of them said, "This is the hand of God." The Archbishop handed on the information and implored everybody to pray all night for Mr. Chamberlain, to thank God for what he had done, and to ask that "He might continue his Mercy." With a true sense of the dramatic, God had waited until the last moment before making his will evident. To have stopped at the outset the need for preparations for war would have been bad management; as theatrical people would say, it would have been "bad timing." To have altered the mind of Hitler, to have saved thousands of terror-stricken people leaving their homes for fear of bombs, to have checked the predatory aims of Hitler, to have prevented the evil of even threatened war would have been bad business—for God and the Archbishop. It was all part of God's plan, or his carelessness. Things had to be as bad as they could be, with a promise of worse to come, before God played his hand. And if this can only refill the churches, I am sure the Archbishop and his clergy would count the tortures of the concentration camps, the raping of girls, the destruction of the elementary rights of civilized human beings under German rule as being a small price to pay for bringing people to their knees—in Church.

* * *

Folly or Worse ?

A people that can be fooled with this parade of prayer are equal to any folly, and can be so easily

*These notes were written on Sunday, October 2. Up to publishing day (October 4) nothing has occurred seriously to modify anything that has been said.

deceived that no one may justly claim credit for fooling them. If there ever has been a time when the intelligence of the nation should be most keenly on the alert, it was during recent weeks. Not the ultimate, but the immediate future of civilization was at stake. But prayer is at best a process of self-deception, and at its worst an elaborate hypocrisy. At its best prayer can be made to equal "thinking things out," a process by which one carefully reviews a situation and seeks to arrive at some reasonable conclusion. In its worst, and usual form, it is a realization of feelings that are already in existence. In either case it is a process of self-deception. That a large portion of the religious public which had been panicked by talk of the horrors of war needed little encouragement to keep on praying, and to find any policy good which avoided war—for the moment—was proof that the result was due to the "hand of God." The Archbishop was playing the old game of "heads I win, tails you lose." If war did not result it was God's will. If it did, it was still God's will.

What had God been doing before Chamberlain paid his visit to Hitler? Up to that point he had done nothing to enlighten Mr. Chamberlain concerning Hitler, for Mr. Chamberlain confessed himself surprised and shocked at what most students of European affairs were well acquainted with—the extravagance of Hitler's claims. God had done nothing to soften Hitler's attitude, because his demands became more extravagant as the days advanced. But if God listened to the Westminster Abbey prayer orgie, at which Mrs. Chamberlain was a constant attendant, he must have misunderstood it, because he gave Hitler all he had asked for, and which was much more than he probably expected to get, at least for the present. Hitler was left with every reason for avoiding war, and none for making it. With Britain, France, the United States, Russia, and some of the smaller European States against her, and with both Germany and Italy manifesting discontent, the chances of Germany winning a war were very slight indeed. But "God's Hand" was at work. Some of the most important industrial and mineral areas of Czechoslovakia now pass under his control. The whole of Eastern Europe is now open to domination. His fear of war on two fronts is almost removed. Czechoslovakia, will be, if not as the German leaders said, wiped off the map, under German control. The press will be muzzled, and the country can be economically strangled at the desire of Germany. And there will always be the plan of subsidizing disturbances and then interfering on the pretence of maintaining order. There is also the further possibility of exerting pressure on Sweden and Norway. What need was there for Germany to go to war when it was able to get without war more than it could hope to get with it? And the Archbishop believes that "God's hand" was in it. One fears what God will next do for Spain. Having done so much for Hitler, he may be expected to do something for

Mussolini. Probably God will move Chamberlain and Mussolini to agree with the division of Spain into a Republican and a Fascist area, and if the Republicans do not agree the Lord will move Mussolini to send a fully-equipped army to make open-war on them.

* * *

The Human Aspect

It is not a political issue that is at stake. It is rather a humanitarian one. The transfer of territory from one State to another may often be of little importance to the development of civilization as a whole. From the purely humanitarian point of view, it was not of great consequence when Alsace and Lorraine were ceded to Germany, or when they were given back to France. There are plenty of similar cases that one can think of. In these cases the people so transferred are usually treated with decency. They are incorporated with another State, and receive common rights and common treatment, while regard is shown to what the vast majority of people in this country regard as necessary to a civilized existence. The children are not degraded, they are not denied the education that others enjoy; they are not outlawed from childhood upwards. But this is not the situation in either Germany or in such countries that come under German control. From Cologne to Vienna, German territory is dotted with concentration camps filled with men and women who are tortured, killed, and treated worse than animals, and for no other crime than that of holding opinions with which Hitler and his mob of gangsters disagree. No one is safe who is not a "true German," and a "true German" is officially defined as one who gives unquestioning obedience to Adolf Hitler. Thought is outlawed, the people are not allowed to read any other papers than such as are permitted by the Government, the heads of the late Austrian Government are awaiting trial for the "crime" of punishing the assassins of Dolfuss who for their act have been exalted as heroes; the finest brains of Germany are to be found only abroad, in concentration camps or in cemeteries. To bring millions of people under the control of such a Government is no slight responsibility, and it is made the worse for want of expressions of sympathy with a people who have been sacrificed to the power of "God's Hand." If this is all the days of prayer and the direct interposition of God may do, it is time he withheld his influence altogether.

Nor is it certain that God has given us more than a temporary peace. Of course, while Hitler and Mussolini are able to get what they wish, war may be held off. But there is a point at which the victim of blackmail feels impelled to do at the end what he ought to have done at the beginning. Ultimatums are easily concocted, and the policy of bluff and plunder has paid Germany well enough up to the present. But that game may be played once too often, even for Germany. Although there is this to be borne in mind. Prominent in the German fear was the colossal figure of the new Russia, and it is on the cards that on another occasion that ally might be lacking. With an enormous territory that is potentially self-supporting, and with a population of two hundred millions in sight, Russia may be content to spread itself eastward, and non-Fascist Europe may not then find "God's Hand" quite so effective as it is believed to have been on the present occasion.

* * *

A Question for Humanity

I do not wish my readers to imagine that I have suddenly turned war-monger, or that I have altered my mind as to the essential evils or war. I say, as I said last week in an odd paragraph, that war is at all times a bad thing, and whether one loses or wins at war one has to pay. War always leaves a people worse

than it finds them, although there are occasions when even peace may be too dearly purchased. But I would have our people decline war for some other and better reason than because it takes lives, or even, what appears to be yet more important to some, because it destroys property. I hold it as a fundamental truth that there are only two things of ultimate value in a country—its natural resources and the quality of its human material. No man or woman should be afraid to die, but there are often occasions when one ought to feel ashamed that they have managed to survive. One may always die with dignity when one cannot always live with self-respect, and what has impressed me most has been the propaganda—made fear which has made "peace at any price" so popular a cry, and with hardly a word of sympathy for the victim that has been sacrificed to secure "peace."

It is for these reasons that I beg my readers not to assume that what I have been dealing with is just a political issue. It is not. The question before the world is essentially a humanistic issue. It is that of the perpetuation of conditions in which human dignity is reasonably possible, and the dominance of huge slave States which appeal to the poorest impulses and appetites and ideas of which mankind is capable. I am not even arguing that England ought to go to war with such States because we do not like their mode of living, but we might well see to it that our association with them should be restricted to the most formal conditions, and we should cease insulting our own intelligence by pretending that we have any faith whatever in either their word or their peaceful intentions. Both Mussolini and Hitler have over and over again said quite plainly that they will keep no bond it is not to their interest to honour, and they have offered unmistakable evidence that in this respect they live up to their professions. It is useless Mr. Chamberlain telling us he has Hitler's assurance that the people of Germany have no wish to go to war with England, and that any difference on matters with which they are both concerned shall become the subjects of discussion. I will not insult Mr. Chamberlain's intelligence by assuming that he believes such meaningless jargon. Of course the people of Germany have no desire to go to war with England—if Germany can get its way without war. Of course, a difference with which we have any concern may be discussed with Germany. But who is going to determine whether the subject that turns up is, in the opinion of Germany, one with which we have any rightful concern? Never was an emptier formula framed as compensation for what has been given away. We have for the moment escaped war. For how long—who knows? Let us hope that the next time God will not show "His Hand."

* * *

Praise the Lord

We have been witnessing a manifestation of the "Hand of God." The Archbishop was so pleased with his discovery, so certain of its accuracy that he repeated it in his Sunday evening broadcast. But for the hand of God, Russia, as one of the parties with whom we should have acted as allies in the event of war, would have been present at the Munich Conference. Without God even Czechoslovakia, whose fate was being decided, might have been present also, and have said something in its defence or in mitigation of sentence. Without it Mr. Chamberlain might not have been given the job of handing the decision of Hitler to the Czechs. Without the hand of God we should not have had the promise from Mussolini, after the Conference, through his official paper, that Italy and Germany must still hold together "for the defence of their interests and justice in Europe and elsewhere." In such hands justice is secure. And the hand of God has so arranged it that we must still keep

on arming, arming, and yet more arming, because we have the assurance that differences between Germany and Britain will be settled by amicable discussions, that is if we are prepared to discuss in the Munich fashion.

The hand of God must have been exerting its greatest power when it forced Hitler, in spite of the extravagant demands made which "shocked" Mr. Chamberlain, to retreat on two very important points. The occupation of territory was to take place in four days instead of in one. And the German troops when they marched into Czechoslovakia were to wear forage caps instead of steel helmets. Even Hitler could not have things all his own way, and on these important points Chamberlain had his way.

So let us thank God for Chamberlain and Hitler and Mussolini, for without them this bright dawn would never have broken, God would never have had the opportunity to show his hand, and the Archbishop would not have been able officially, authoritatively, and solemnly to declare that the "peace" we have secured is one brought about by God.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christmas-tree Christianity

"The only absolute good is the progress towards perfection; our own progress towards it, and the progress of humanity."—*Matthew Arnold*.

"Mankind in the mass thinks slowly."—*Nevinson*.

THERE is one good thing about the apologists of Christianity. They do add frequently to the gaiety of the nation. And, in these days of continuous trouble, this is a matter of congratulation. How humorous, for example, was that silent procession of the Roman Catholics in order to protest against the Freethinkers' Congress. Priests are usually the most talkative of men. Think, for example, of the countless millions of sermons they have preached, and of the curses they have pronounced. Yet on this particular occasion they walked like a procession of wooden dolls, silly and silent. The Congress was eminently calculated to excite all religious hate, malice and uncharitableness, but the seldom humble Romanists only gave a special performance of the ghost-train. As the French officer said at the charge of Balaclava, "It is magnificent, but it is not war!"

There is an organization, entitled the Lord's Day Observance Society, which deals with the Sunday question. Most people imagine that it would be fully occupied in explaining, and enforcing, the latest Sunday Restriction Act, which, even lawyers admit, is the silliest and most complicated piece of legislation which ever disgraced the Statute Book of a country pretending to be civilized. Evidently Mr. H. H. Martin, the Secretary of this society, does not take so serious a view of his duties. Accordingly, he wrote a letter to the *Daily Herald* (London) (published on September 12), not on the Sunday Question, but concerning the Freethinkers' Congress, the burden of which was "Who's Afraid?" His exact words were that the Christian Faith has nothing to fear from these demonstrations. He then let loose his war-whoop: "The Church of Christ is the greatest force on earth for the realization of human progress," a saying which does more credit to his exuberance than to his intelligence. It is this sort of thing which makes Freethinkers smile.

Now, how does it happen that Brother Martin "trails his coat" in this fashion? Does he wish to get a cheap advertisement for the Society he represents? Or, on the other hand, is he so innocent and childlike that he believes what he has written? Let

us look a little closer at this assertion of his. "The Church of Christ," it is claimed, is the greatest force on earth for the realization of human progress. First of all, which of the hundred or so various sects of Christians is the actual, original and only genuine "Church of Christ?" Is it the very ancient Coptic Church, which is the form of Christianity professed by the unfortunate Abyssinians? If so, human slavery is the direct result of such divinely-inspired progress. Or, is it the ancient Greek Church, which permitted all the evils and abominations of the Czarism of Russia? Maybe, it is the old Romish Church, which has studded Europe with faked relics, monasteries and nunneries? And what of the Unitarians, Christadelphians, Four-square Gospellers, and others too numerous to mention? Last, but not least, is it the Established Church of England, with its coal-royalties, ground-rents, tithes, and reactionary bishops?

These varying forms of faith are as the poles asunder. The Protestant Churches are Trinitarian in doctrine, but the Unitarian Christians, as the name shows, believe in the oneness of their deity. The powerful Romish Church add the "Holy Virgin" to the divine group, which is thus fourfold. Some churches preach a hell of literal fire; others damp their enthusiasm for fireworks. In short, they contradict one another. Where is the truth amid this welter of ignorance and superstition? and which, of all these rival organizations, is the repository of progress?

Progress, indeed! The oldest of the Christian Churches, the Roman Catholic, has for its motto: "Semper Idem" (always the same). What she taught near two thousand years ago she teaches still. For her, the world's clock struck at Jerusalem twenty centuries ago, and has never moved since. What sort of progress is this? The services of this Romish Church are conducted in Latin, a dead language. A dying church, using a dead language! Is that a further proof of progress?

So far from Christianity being the greatest force for progress, it is actually impotent for good. In the late war whole nations, professedly Christian, were engaged for years in wholesale slaughter. Europe was a streaming slaughter-house, in which perished ten millions, the flower of the manhood of the Christian world. It is a complete indictment of the Religion of Jesus, which has proved itself the most powerless and hypocritical thing on earth. Recall the biting lines of the poet:—

"Peace upon earth! was said, we sing it.
And pay a million priests to bring it
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison gas."

Christmas-tree Christianity can never be a force for Progress. So far as the prelates of the different Christian churches are concerned, the profession of Christian ethics is a mockery and make-believe. Whether they be Roman Catholic cardinals, Anglican bishops, Nonconformist divines, or patriarchs of the Coptic and Greek churches, the fact remains the same. Preaching a gospel of poverty, they live in luxury and amass wealth. As for their belated boasts of their concern for the brotherhood of man, no one remembering the awful treatment of Jews and Freethinkers can but see that Christian doctrines are of one aspect, but its practices of another. In prosecuting so-called "witches," in obedience to a barbarous Biblical text, thousands and thousands of the most helpless of their sex were hanged, burned, and drowned by professors of a "Gospel of Love." And all this pernicious welter of humbug and make-believe has ever been associated with Tyranny. Indeed, Kingcraft and Priestcraft are so closely related that they represent the obverse and reverse of the same medal. In this country, the votes

of the Christian bishops in the House of Lords prove that they are the enemies of progress.

We shall never have a really civilized population until we solve this matter of Priestcraft, a problem which has baffled humanity throughout the ages. This may appear to be an extravagant statement, but let us see how this works out in the region of faith. For the Roman Catholic, his Church is the authority. But for the Nonconformist, the Christian fetish-book is the authority, as interpreted by the leaders of that particular church. Wesleyanism is the shadow of Wesley, Swedenborgianism is Swedenborg's own views of this Bible, Muggletonianism, presumably, is Muggleton's version. And if an evangelist named Jones starts a new church in an empty shop, his congregation accept the Jones interpretation of the Christian Religion. In other words, all authority boils down to the opinion of men. It is that of a college of cardinals, the trustees of a Church, or the personal opinion of the actual officiating minister, who may be a ticket-of-leave man, or a most undesirable person. Reason, in every instance, is ousted by authority.

Do not think that such an idea is too far-fetched. Religion lurks in most unexpected places. It is an ambiguous word and its calls and recalls are various. It may even assume the disguise of the fervent appeal to submit to "God," King, Dictator, and Country, on behalf of a fresh tyranny. There is no lack of religion in our recent militant Cæsarisms. One Dictator fills his opponents with castor-oil; another dictator chops off his enemies' heads. Years ago the representatives of an alleged god of mercy used the thumb-screw, the rack, and even burnt their opponents alive. To-day, they libel the living, and desecrate the dead. Masquerading in many forms, the evil principle remains. Few worse misfortunes can befall any people than that of being exploited in the name of religion:—

"Foul superstition, howsoe'er disguised—
Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,
For whatsoever symbol thou art prized—
Thou sacerdotal gain, but general loss."

MIMNERMUS.

How Did Man Evolve?

MR CHAPMAN COHEN has frequently remarked that the question to-day is not so much "Is there a God?" but "How did the belief in God start?"

Similarly it might be said that the problem now confronting evolution is not "Has man evolved?" but "How has he evolved?"

By riveting the inquirer's attention on this point the larger question might profitably be subsumed.

Now most Freethinkers, myself included, have taken for granted the *gradualness of man's descent*. We have regarded Neanderthal Man, Java Man and Peking Man as convenient landmarks showing the stages of development, while at the same time recognizing that they need not lie on the main route. Neanderthal, e.g., was merely a short-lived cul-de-sac. The inevitability of gradualness has been the accepted view of scientists, and there is not as yet sufficient evidence to destroy it.

Recent discoveries, however, have prompted another hypothesis, namely, that modern man, omitting all gradations and steps, sprung full-fledged from the loins of some hairy ape or monkey. That is, that instead of a series of gradations, with collaterals, there was a sudden anatomical remodelling of our monkey ancestor into man.

The problem may be posited thus. Has our ancestry undergone a laboured, unsteady progression from some primitive anthropoid, evidence of which is at hand in

the shape of the many no-longer-missing links? Or did "recent" man exist contemporaneous with these "links," having already emerged abruptly in some period of frequent mutational instability?

Recent finds which may be used to suggest (not establish) this newer view came to light, not in Java, or China, but in a country called England. London—Swanscombe—Bury St. Edmunds, one after another has yielded human bones like our own, at geological levels which make them at least as ancient as fossils commonly regarded as links. A recent detailed account of the London skull by Dr. Matthew Young describes it as anatomically modern, and only slightly less ancient than Piltdown (Sussex) Man. There is a similar skull of similar date from Bury St. Edmunds, and the Swanscombe (Kent) skull (by Marston, 1937) is as old or older than Piltdown, and except for thickness, anatomically modern. Other finds cannot yet be used as evidence on account of uncertain dating.

Were there, then, humans in these islands contemporaneous with *Pithecanthropus erectus* (Java) and *Sinanthropus* (Peking) and earlier than Neanderthal (N. Europe)? If so, then these latter need no longer be regarded as stages representing a gradual descent, and the difficulty of fixing links in the true line ceases to furnish any kind of loophole for the anti-evolutionist.

Evidence suggesting abrupt emergence is advanced chiefly by Prof. H. Woollard (*Science Progress*, 3rd Qr., 1938), who points out that owing to the preconception of gradualness it has been customary on a genealogical map to have the smaller brains anterior to the larger, even though found in the same period, and this without the support of palæontological evidence.

Java Man's cranial capacity at 900 c.c. doubles the anthropoid, but modern man averages about 1400 c.c. Prof. Davidson Black's *Sinanthropus Pekinensis* (1929) is at 1,000 to 1,100, and *Rhodesiensis* (Leakey), Neanderthal and *Palestinus* (Keith) from 1,300 to 1,600 in the case of the La Chapelle find, with features comparable with the Australian Aborigine. But *Eoanthropus Dawsoni* (Sussex) suggests 1,300 c.c. plus, and it became evident that "modern" man has turned up in the Early Pleistocene. In face of the later discoveries Woollard is able to suggest that modern man has perhaps descended from a lower Primate stock. (This is a possibility which might conceivably be minimised by seeing in hominid fossils pithecoïd features dropped in modern man.)

However, if the present upright form, big brain, small face, chin, gait and long legs were sudden acquisitions, the "breaks" which carried such leaps must not be wildly outside the limits permitted by existing knowledge of heredity and genetics. Yet if it can be shown that so-called human characters are already found in some degree among primates, perhaps, then, the assemblage we call human could be separated, and so give the appearance of modern man with only a minimum of graded evolution.

Where shall we look for such characters? The answer is, in one of the most interesting groups known to investigators, the tarsius spectrum. I have before (*Freethinker*, No. 28, 1935) mentioned that a first-class investigator, Wood Jones (*Man's Place Among the Mammals*) relates us directly to the lemur of Malay. In the tarsius we have a mosaic of reptilian, primitive mammalian, monkey, anthropoid and even human features. It goes back to the Eocene, and enables the assertion that human characters were present in the primate germ plasm from the first.

What chance would a totally human, or almost human, set of factors have of appearing without having to be sorted out in the course of a long evolution? The chances of such advantageous mutations might be calculated mathematically. The make-up of the

mature individual in inheritance is satisfactorily resolved on Mendelian lines into a series of units carried by "genes," strung like beads along the chromosomes. The germ-plasm is thus a mosaic of characters. Having decided which of them (a) are required for the emergence of modern man and (b) are already present in the primate stock, or could have arisen by mutation (the only known way in which a gene alters its contribution to the hereditary composition) we might proceed to estimate mathematically the chances of pro-human assemblages appearing in the same animal, and similarly estimate whether they could be perpetuated through their recipients, i.e., survive.

Whether the theory is true must await the discovery of many more fossils. If it should prove tenable it would mean that at a primate monkey level man made a comparatively abrupt appearance without ever having to be encumbered by beetling brows, chinless head and slouching gait.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Organized Freethought Propaganda

(By J. REEVES, author of *The World-Story of 3,000,000,000 Years*)

"Every release from ecclesiasticism has been also an increase in the spiritual stature of mankind. . . .

It is because the truth does make us free that the truth must come to be known . . . the only way I can see to make it effective is that the Rationalist should have a sense of obligation to its service as one of the outstanding principles of his life."

(Prof. J. H. Laski, *Rationalist Annual*).

It is hardly necessary to say that in view of the current "flight from reason," associated with religious reaction, the more intensive efforts of the churches to increase their influence and their hold on the education of the young, the systematic obscurantism combined with interference in social affairs in the interests of ecclesiasticism—more especially of Roman Catholics—and the persistent attacks on liberty of exposition and discussion, it behoves us to intensify our struggle to free our community from the baneful effects of supernaturalism.

To the statement not infrequently made that "the battle has been won," we may reply that this is true only in the sense that our case is complete, and has been accepted by a considerable proportion of the more enlightened people of the more forward countries of the world. And as regards the suggestion that we should in future concern ourselves only with "the constructive side," the reply is that Secularism is fundamentally constructive: it promotes the essential conditions which subserve full intellectual, educational, ethical and general social progress; in doing so disseminates much valuable information, while correcting a great mass of ancient error of suggestion, of information, of attitude and of practice.

In furtherance of our objective it is here suggested that some aid would accrue from the issue of a brief synthesis of our "exegesis," whether for use in conversation, in lecture or debate, in the Press, or (above all), in one or a series of manifestos issued by the Secularist bodies with a view to making our aims more widely known, and also the overwhelming mass of evidence on which our position is based.

The main sections of our propaganda appear to be those categorized below; and in each case a few examples of explanatory, illustrative and/or evidential facts and considerations have been added:—

(1) *The Common Sense, Common Knowledge and Experience Section.* This earlier and simpler form of appeal consists in pointing out contradictions, obvious absurdities and other objectionable matter in the Bible and other transcendental literature which is supposed to be revealed or inspired, and therefore "true." Though this procedure may still be accounted legitimate for incidental use, it has in the main been superseded by a more scholarly one. And this, when more widely propagated, should do more to eradicate the influence of current supernaturalist education and of occult tradition in general; should also go far to prevent "backsliding"—such as occurred in the case of at least one of the most eminent exponents of Secularism, who deserted the cause and spent the rest of her life in expounding the fatuities of Theosophy, and also in the case of a famous political writer who, after issuing a heterodox book lapsed into silence and, it is stated, has entered a more modern "spiritual" fold; and, thirdly, should induce a larger number of those intellectualists who have abandoned theological and allied beliefs to relinquish their wonted policy of silence, and to play a due part in the tardy though inevitable establishment of those twin essentials of veritable and fertile thought, Naturalism and Rationalism.

(2) *The General Intellectual and Educational Section.* In explanation of the great mediaeval European and near eastern intellectual hiatus, we cite, in the first place, the overwhelming theological obsession of the devotees of Jahweh, accompanied by the belief that ordinary learning—in which other ancient nations commonly took considerable interest—was vanity. That attitude, being adopted by early Christian protagonists, led Paul to announce that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Greek-Roman science and the good history already written fell before the old legends of the origin and early career of mankind. Ordinary literature and education also fell, largely because the only available books contained references to the rival classical mythology.

Infantilism followed—the notion that things hidden from the wise were revealed to babes—beings who (apart from their appeal in other directions), are in a mental condition which the educational psychologist describes as "one big, blooming, buzzing confusion." And this degeneration to the barbaric stage of thought is exemplified in the writings of a famous mediaeval chronicler, who recorded among other marvels that of a newborn child who could talk.

Of existing sequelae of the mediaeval intellectual abyss are obscurantism, such as the recently organized Fundamentalism of the United States and of this country; the well known "pernicious censorship" of the Press, the public libraries, publishers and booksellers exercised by the Roman Catholic hierarchy; and the general exclusion of Rationalist news and views from newspapers which print abundant religious exposition and not a little matter of the more starkly superstitious and occult kind.

Education has long laboured and still labours under the religious incubus; and the last of a series of valuable education bills to suffer ecclesiastical immolation was that of Mr. Trevelyan, the main reason for its defeat being that it did not provide building grants for church schools. Efforts are being made by clericalists to gain entry into council schools for sectarian instruction, and to exclude from those schools, by means of religious tests applied to candidates for teaching posts, all who do not hold general Christian belief.

(3) *The Scientific Section.* Here we find the chief instrument for the establishment of Naturalism. By it is to be eradicated the notion of and reliance on preternatural action, whether magic, miracle, control or guidance of, or intervention in the course of world and

universal events. The transcendental excursus of Sir James Jeans has resuscitated the ideas of creation; and as a consequence we now encounter the appeal of earnest and thoughtful religionists to modern science, and also the fatuous attempt to show that recent archæological discoveries, such as the evidence of a local, natural flood in Mesopotamia, attest the "truth" of the Bible.

Opposition to such contentions will involve copious dissemination of scientific fact and principle, especially on the evolutionary side. In astronomy we note the conclusion of Sir James Jeans that the formation of our solar system was due to the accidental close approach of our "ancestral sun" or star, and a larger body, and that the history of the system is in large part the account of the breaking up of larger into smaller bodies, gravitational forces "tearing them to pieces." And the story of natural, often devastating "accident" is comprehensively continued in physical geology.

J. REEVES.

(To be concluded)

Cor Cordium

IN the cemetery of St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth lies the heart of the poet Shelley; when his son Sir Percy Florence Shelley died in 1889 it was buried with him.

A memorial bears the names of Mary Shelley, the poet's wife, those of her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley.

The remains of Mary's parents were removed in 1851 from Old St. Pancras' Churchyard, when many graves were effaced owing to the construction of a railway below it, but the square upright tombstone on which their names, and that of Godwin's second wife, are inscribed, still remains; beside it Shelley and Mary were used to meet and plight their troth in the early days of courtship.

Shelley is one of the bright particular stars of our constellation, he was prophet, pioneer and reformer, and, as such, was inevitably vilified and misrepresented. His attitude to religion was uncompromising. Writing to his friend, Horace Smith, he asked him to inform Tom Moore: "That I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron in this particular, and if I had I should certainly employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity. I differ from Moore in thinking Christianity useful to the world; no man of sense can think it true."

Shelley and his friend Captain Edward Ellerker Williams were drowned on July 8, 1822, when Shelley's yacht, the *Ariel*, was wrecked in a storm in the Gulf of Spezzia. Their bodies were cast ashore and given a temporary burial, to await their cremation, which was arranged and carried out by their friend Edward James Trelawny.

The sea gave up the poet's body, and that of his companion, on the shore of a bay near Via Reggio. It was a lonely spot then, but a friend writing in 1927 informed me that: "It is now unrecognizable except for the sea (as at Lerici) a few unexpected sails give it verisimilitude. Via Reggio has grown into a bright watering place, with many bathing huts, and is said to be second to the Lido in popularity."

It was Shelley's friend, James Edward Trelawny, who disinterred the remains and arranged the details of their cremation.

In a letter to the *Athenæum* Trelawny described how the poet's body was slowly consumed: "The part nearest his heart being the last that became

ashes—and the heart itself seemed proof against fire, on removing the furnace nearer the sea to immerse the iron, I took the heart in my hand to examine it—after sprinkling it with water: Yet it was still so hot as to burn my hand badly."

In the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, there is a remarkable picture by L. H. Fournier, entitled "The Funeral of Shelley," in which the artist has strangely misrepresented the tragic scene. The body is depicted entire and fully clothed, the face as it was in life, but Trelawny described in detail the deplorable condition in which it was when removed from the temporary grave prepared when the remains were discovered. The hands were off, both legs separated at the knee joints, the skull black and no flesh or feature of the face remaining, etc.

Byron, Leigh Hunt and Trelawny are standing a few feet from the furnace, they are heavily clad, and Trelawny is wrapped in a long cloak, but we know it was a scorching day in August, and that "the heat from the furnace was so intense that it and even the sand on which it stood became red hot."

Byron is depicted in tights and hessian boots, an impossible costume, for he invariably wore trousers, even when swimming, to conceal his lame foot and shrunken leg. Leigh Hunt appears as a venerable gentleman with snow-white hair, he was, in fact, then thirty-eight, and the colour of his hair, even in old age, remained but little changed.

On returning to Shelley's home, the Cassa Magni at San Terenzo, Trelawny, offered the relic to Mary: "but after a fitful glance on the black and charred piece of flesh she was too shocked to touch it."

To Leigh Hunt the heart was entrusted, and in his possession it remained till Mary, when time had somewhat abated the poignancy of her grief, recognizing that she was the legitimate guardian, asked that it should be restored to her. This was done, and after her death it was found, now shrunken and dessicated, enclosed in a silken bag in a copy of Shelley's *Adonais*.

After Mary's death, in 1851, her son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, had the heart enclosed in a silver casket, and a relation of mine, when visiting Sir Percy and Lady Shelley at their Boscombe home, had the rare privilege of seeing this, and other relics of the poet, which were kept in a cabinet with glass doors in Lady Shelley's boudoir.

Shelley's yacht, when she arrived at Lerici, had the name *Don Juan* painted on the mainsail. This had been done by Lord Byron, "in his contemptible vanity," Williams recorded in his diary.

In vain did Shelley and Williams try to obliterate the "primæval stain," as Mary called it; at last a piece of the sail was cut out, new canvas was inserted, and the yacht renamed the *Ariel*.

The subsequent history of Shelley's ill-fated yacht is but little known. It was imparted to me by my friend the late Mr. Ernest Law, whose father was one of the officers who purchased her, as follows.

She was bought in 1827 at Zante—apparently on the recommendation of Trelawny, who was living there at that time—by the officers of the 51st Regiment, then stationed in the island. They paid £50 for her to the captain of a brig trading from England. Shelley gave £80 for her to Captain Roberts, who built her.

She was a seaworthy boat, the officers using her for going across to Tornese Castle, on the coast of the Morea opposite, and one of them taking a month's cruise in her to the island of Calamos. She was, however, an ill-fated craft, being soon after wrecked and smashed to pieces by breaking away from her moorings in a gale one night when the private in charge, formerly a sailor, left her to go ashore on a drinking bout.

Trelawny was strikingly handsome, as his likeness in the National Portrait Gallery shows, and Mary, on

his advent among the Shelley circle at Pisa, described him thus: "He is six feet high, with raven black hair, which curls thickly and shortly like a Moor's; dark grey expressive eyes; overhanging brows; upturned lips, and a smile which expresses good nature and kind-heartedness. His company is delightful." And when this romantic visitor told, as did Othello to Desdemona, of his adventurous life, of moving accidents by flood and field, the company at the Villa Magni listened enthralled.

In the Tate Gallery hangs Millais's fine picture entitled *The North-West Passage*. Trelawny, as an octogenarian, was the model for the old mariner, who is depicted seated in an arm-chair, an open window gives a view of the sea, a chart lies on a table by his side and a log-book is nearby. The Veteran's daughter is seated at his knee, reading from some book treating of the great adventure, convenient to his hand is a telescope and a glass of grog (The introduction of the latter is said to have given offence to Trelawny, who was very temperate) and he is supposed to have just uttered the stirring words: "It can be done and England should do it."

Trelawny seems to have been, like Sterne, "always in love with one or another princess." He proposed to Mary, who replied: "You belong to womankind in general, and Mary Shelley can never be yours." To Claire Clairmont he wrote ardent letters reminding her of "the incense they had burned on the altar of love," protesting that "my love lies too deep for words," and suggesting that she should "return (from Vienna) and be house-keeper to my houseless self."

In addition to these affairs Trelawny had at least three wives; the first was the twelve-year-old sister of Ulysses, Governor of Attica, the chief with whom he fought against the Turks. A daughter of this union was named Zella, the "lovely girl with a soul of fire," mentioned in Trelawny's letters to Claire. The child grew to be a beautiful woman; she married one José Olguin and died at Hove in 1906, aged eighty. There is a memorial to her, and other members of the Olguin family, in the Lewes Road Cemetery, Brighton.

Shelley's ashes were interred in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Trelawny purchased a piece of land close to the grave, but fifty years were to pass before he was laid beside his friend.

To the end of his long life Trelawny's veneration for Shelley's memory remained unchanged, and my old friend Watts Dunton told me that Swinburne said "Trelawny always rises when he mentions Shelley's name, and if with his hat on takes it off when talking about him."

In the village of Sompting, near Worthing, Trelawny passed his last years and died there in 1881, aged eighty-eight. His residence, known as Trelawny Cottage, remains much as he knew it, and in the garden some fig trees, which he was used to tend, still flourish.

E. SYERS.

Peace with Dishonour (September 30, 1938)

WHAT shall we say
This awful day,
When Faith and Honour pass away?
What say but this:
That God has answered Christian prayers
For peace, while Hitler still prepares
For war, and none in England dares
At him to hiss.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Acid Drops

The following examples of Germany's concern for the rights of minorities and regard for individual rights are given by the *Church Times*, in its issue for September 30. They are all recent happenings. The independent theological faculty in Innsbruck has been dissolved by the secret police. Secondary Roman Catholic Schools in Austria conducted by Roman Catholics have been closed. Some Austrian Protestant bodies have also been closed. The German Christian Students' League and the German Christian Women Students' Movement have been dissolved. Death-bed bequests to the Church have been declared illegal. These are orders which concern religious organizations alone. No form of opinion than that decreed by the State is permitted in any direction. And no political privileges of any kind, with plenty of penal restrictions and penalties are permitted to any one who is not a "true German." And a true German has recently been officially defined as one who gives unquestioning obedience to Adolf Hitler. One feels, therefore, quite assured concerning the treatment that will be measured out to anyone who is not a "true German."

The *Universe* is very angry with the scant notice given to the Roman Catholic march of "Reparation to God" over the meeting of the World Union of Freethinkers in London. We suspect that the papers probably perceived the absurdity of the whole thing, and thought the least said soonest mended. Offering the crowd that were repatriating as a consolation to God for those who had thrown him overboard was really rubbing it in. It was like making reparations to a Prime Minister by kicking him out of his post and appointing him as a doorkeeper. Curiously the paper that gave the longest notice to the "March of the Morons" was the professed Labour paper, the *Daily Herald*.

The *Universe* also gave a list of the space devoted by papers to the March of the Godly, and also space devoted to a Trafalgar Square meeting. Here it is:—

	Trafalgar Square and Clash	Silent March
News Chronicle	123 inches	0 inches
Daily Express	84 inches	4¼ inches
Daily Mirror	50 inches	1¾ inches
Daily Sketch	36 inches	8¼ inches
Daily Herald	35 inches	14 inches
Daily Mail	18½ inches	1 inch
The Times	4½ inches	2 inches
Daily Telegraph and Morning Post	3¼ inches	10½ inches

But if God Almighty took no notice why should the papers? After all if God was affronted by so many intelligent people ignoring his existence, he might have done something on his own. If people only had a proper sense of humour!

A great many people have expressed the opinion that the recent desecration of the tomb of Charles Bradlaugh was "an astonishing instance of Christian indecency." It may be unusual but by no means unprecedented for Christians so to treat the tombs of their dead enemies. We remember that our Christian General—who became Lord Kitchener and the idol of the British public—celebrated his triumphant entry into Omdurman by desecrating the Mahdi's tomb and mutilating the Mahdi's dead body. From the Roman Catholic point of view it matters nothing at all what is done with dead infidels who are going straight to hell. There is no purgatory even for the unbeliever.

The recent biography of William Whiteley, the "Universal Provider," by R. S. Lambert, does not read well to those who have modern ideas of the immorality of low wages and evil-living conditions. Mr. Lambert does not hide Whiteley's faults in these directions. But (should we say "therefore"?) Mr. Whiteley was a pious Christian. "A customer crossed the threshold before the shop was opened and . . . offered a prayer for Mr. White-

ley's success." Mrs. Constance Rowe tells the story in full in the *Spectator*. "That customer," she says "was my mother . . . and her intercession was fulfilled." As the Whiteley store was burnt to the ground five times, and as there are many stores of greater extent and prosperity in various parts of the world, where no prayer has ever been offered for success, Mrs. Rowe will have to explain how it comes that human enterprise MINUS prayer can get along at least as well as human enterprise PLUS divine aid in answer to prayer. In Mrs. Rowe's amusing intervention is involved the whole nonsensical business of Prayer. It is sometimes more tragic, but it is always as silly as this instance.

Miss Dorothy Sayers, who is now very active in propagating her own form of Anglo-Catholicism, has just written a little work entitled *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged*, in which there is a "ringing challenge" to those people who believe that official Christianity is "dull and lifeless," and cannot attract the ordinary man. She considers that the Christian Faith is the most exciting drama "that ever staggered the imagination of man," for in it "God was made man, and man killed him, and then he rose again." We can assure Miss Sayers that we agree with her—in some ways. We are quite convinced that a good deal of the life of Jesus is just so much drama, as both John M. Robertson and Robert Taylor conclusively proved. If Miss Sayers has not read their books, we have pleasure in directing her attention to them, and she will find strong proof that some old "mystery" dramas could have well provided the "dramatic" materials for part of the life of Jesus. And the rest comes from the current stories of Pagan "saviours."

We note that the Rev. A. Henderson has written a book entitled *Pagan and Christian Symbols*, in which he is quite in agreement that Christianity did adopt "Certain pre-existent Pagan rites and symbols." He claims, however, that the Christian Church carefully "sifted" the Pagan ceremonies, and accepted those which were good. Mr. Henderson manages to prove beyond the smallest doubt that Christianity borrowed largely from Paganism, and that the number of books written by Christians to show that their religion was a direct revelation from God is so much pure nonsense. The Christian publisher's "blurb" is to the effect that the book can be easily understood "by those previously unacquainted with the subject." That is the right and proper way to get the message over, and we hope most Christians will heartily agree with the author.

The Bishop of Coventry has roped in £55,777 out of the £65,000 he has asked for with which to build new churches in Coventry. It would be difficult to imagine a more outrageous waste of money. These Bishops cannot fill their old churches, yet they are continually begging for new ones. It seems incredible that more people do not see through this ramp—but religion always speaks in a certain voice and that voice is money!

The Bishop of Lichfield dealt with the Freethought Congress, the other day, and claimed that Christianity had nothing to fear from "the anti-God battalions"—a statement rather different from the hysterical squealing of many pious Christians during the past few months. The Bishop welcomed "free-thinking," so long as it was *real* freedom of thought. The only thing which seemed to worry him was that so many eminent scientists and humanists simply would not accept Christianity. He puts this down to the fact that they were ignorant of "the work of our best thinkers." "But thinkers" means, of course, religious thinkers. No others are entitled to be called "best."

While the hymn, "Simply Trusting Every Day," was being sung at Batford Methodist Church, Harpenden, the pastor's car was stolen by three men. It was found later abandoned in Luton, after an accident, the door-pockets full of green apples not there before. . . . In choirs and places where they sing, here followeth the anthem:—

Upon the Lord the pastor laid his care,
And hymned it: "Simply Trusting Every Day";
Alas! the Lord was plainly not aware
Three bad lads took the pastor's car away;
But perhaps the Lord's fed up with Christian "trust,"
(An Atheist with his own trouble grapples)
He had the car returned—but badly "bust,"
And reeking from the gases of green apples.

Certain men of Finsbury Park, London, should have a good case against a local vicar for slander or libel. The Rev. E. E. Robinson, vicar of St. Anne's, Poole's Park, is reported to have said that there are women in his parish who will not go to church, "because their husbands beat them if they do." On top of this vicious slander, its perpetrator suggests the only way to stop this victimization of wives is to *get the men into the church!* The vicar is either mentally deficient or thoroughly bad to express opinions which are dangerous to the peace of any Finsbury Park homes having reason to believe themselves concerned with the allegation.

From *Thus We Are Men*, by Sir Walter Langdon-Browne, the physician (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.), we cull the following story:—

"What do you think God is like?" said one little girl to another.

"Rather like my daddy," said the other.

"Like my daddy, you mean," was the indignant reply.

What better commentary could we have on the madness of trying to visualize a "God" for the child mind? (Or the adult mind, for that matter).

Many flowery, fertile islands in the South Seas have been almost ruined for their natives by white people, according to Haxton Mielche in *Let's See if the World is Round* (Hodge, 12s. 6d.). The author shoots a fierce dart at our boasted civilization when he says that the people of the New Hebrides "are on a very low cultural plane—they do not drink, they do not steal, and their word can be trusted." How harsh is the echo of that irony to-day! Fancy "trusting" the word of a dictator, a politician, a financier, or an average Christian in Christian Europe! We may freely admit that "the World is round," but we would certainly prefer to find more "square" people in it even on a lower "cultural plane" than Europe's.

A young aircraftman, defendant in a motoring case, was sitting in Southampton Police Court waiting for his case to be called, when a solicitor turned in his direction and called out "Neal," the name of a witness in another case.

The aircraftman rose, stood at attention for a second and then dropped to his knees. He continued kneeling until the clerk told him that Neal was a name and not a command.

We may imagine an appropriate comment from the defendant: "Ugh! they instruct me by command and commandment in such a way that I don't know which is which !!!**??*! the next church parade!"

Somebody calling himself an "Inquiring Christian" is allowed every week to spread himself in the interests of the silliest kind of Fundamentalism in that pious paper, the *Daily Mail*—and just now particularly, to get people back to the beautiful habit of "praying." The Churches have seized the chance of advertising themselves in this present crisis better than the finest of publicity agents could have recommended, and earnest Christians are now allowed to enter most churches at any time to pray to Almighty God for peace. The "Inquiring Christian" naturally goes to St. Paul's where, of course, a "noble setting for a service is staged," "the singing was magnificent," "the sermon on this solemn occasion was a sermon with a difference"—in fact we get the usual worn-to-death clichés always used for similar "solemn" occasions. A specimen of the sermon is given, and it would certainly be difficult to find more nonsense even in sermons. You must get closer to God if the world is to be saved! What a pity our statesmen do not stop everything else and get "closer to God"!

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4
Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. LAMONT.—Thanks, but we dealt with the matter some weeks ago.

(Miss) V. J. MITCHELL.—We value the good wishes of our readers. We are feeling quite well again, but must go cautiously for a little while.

E. BREACH.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for 4 weeks.

W. FLETCHER.—Next week.

G. H. TAYLOR.—Please thank all friends for their good wishes. We were indeed sorry to cancel the Manchester date, but it is due to what the doctor called our remarkable constitution that we were able to keep busy with our pen. Travelling was quite out of the question. We will make it up to Manchester before the season is over.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

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

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

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. Rosettl, giving as long notice as possible.

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.

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.

Sugar Plums

It was with great regret that Mr. Cohen was compelled to cancel his engagement for Sunday last at Manchester, but it was advisable that he should not undergo the strain of travelling and lecturing too soon. However, he is now well able to resume lecturing, and next week (October 16) will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow at 7.0. He is taking for his subject "The New Science and the New God." Glasgow is a place that Mr. Cohen visits with pleasure, and he hopes to have a shake of the hand with many of his old friends before the evening closes. The unfortunate thing about Mr. Cohen's lengthy acquaintance with Glasgow is that so many of his old friends there are now but names only. But they are always there in thought. One sad feature of living on is that one's mind becomes a mausoleum of memories of those that have been.

We do not take the number of letters received and the sentiments expressed during our recent illness, together with the hopes that we will guard our health in the future, as being mainly concerned with the person of Chapman Cohen. We prefer to think of them as being concerned with the Editor of the *Freethinker* and the President of the National Secular Society. It is the Cause that is represented rather than the person that represents it that is of importance. The individual is of importance only so far as he worthily discharges the

THE BRADLAUGH OUTRAGE

The Organizing Committee of the Conference of the World Union of Freethinkers has decided on offering the sum of £100 reward for such information as will lead to the conviction of the person or persons responsible for the desecration of the grave of Charles Bradlaugh, at Brookwood, on September 12-13. Information may be given through the Police, or direct to the Committee, 5 Johnson's Court, E.C.4, or to the office of the National Secular Society, 68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4

functions of both offices. If we have earned the respect and even the affection of so many in the discharge of the duties attendant on these two offices, so much the better. But we are now back at normal, or nearly so, and with due care will remain so.

But we are writing thus because there is one way, or rather two ways, in which our friends can help us to continue working as we have done for so long. That is by making the worries attaching to office as light as possible. And it is worry that hurts, not work. In fact, as we have so often said, we do not work, we are only occupied, and as our doctor remarked when he was called in a few weeks ago, "It is useless telling you to lie still and do nothing, because that would worry you more than doing something. All I can say is go carefully." That was wise, and we followed it, with satisfactory results.

All this is leading up to two things we wish to say. The first is this. The outburst of lying and slander concerning the International Congress has focussed attention on the Freethought movement. Many are now showing interest in it who took no notice before, and more are alive to the fact that there is a very great deal of immediate work to be done if we are to retain the advance made, and to advance farther. We hope that Freethinkers will do their share in this. The lies of men of the Hinsley type should be made to direct enquiry into Freethought. It will be the fault of Freethinkers if this does not happen. Half-hearted measures, confessions of milk and water heresy, will be of little avail. Freethought has made headway because of the courage of a few; that courage should now be exhibited over a wider area.

Next there is this journal. The *Freethinker* is and always has been an independent agency. It does the work of the N.S.S., and represents the principles for which the Society stands, with the additional freedom that comes from independence. There should be a strenuous and a united effort among *Freethinker* readers to help here. The continuous loss on the *Freethinker* is a never-ending source of care for those responsible for its maintenance. The Endowment Trust, founded in 1926, has never met the annual deficit, and of late nearly half the money, which was invested at an all round five per cent, has been repaid, and can now only be reinvested at three and a half per cent. In addition the cost of printing and paper has gone up of late years. Now we want readers to help in this matter. Let them work hard to secure new readers. There are thousands of them about, and the publicity we have received of late should help. It has helped up to the present. Our business manager reports increased sales since the Conference, and these should be still further increased. That is the way to help us, by diminishing the worries of financial responsibility. The work does

not matter—that, so far as we are concerned, is only congenial occupation. But do let us make the most of the occasion that fortune has provided for us.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will visit the Failsworth Secular Sunday School, Pole Lane, Failsworth, near Manchester to-day (October 9) and speak in the afternoon on "God's Opinion of the Bible," and in the evening on "Dictators, People, and Persecution." As questions and discussion will be invited, an added attraction is thus introduced. Admission is free to both lectures.

Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. has a visit from Mr. G. Whitehead, who will speak in the Beecheroff Settlement, Whetstone Lane, this evening (October 9), at 7 o'clock. The Branch has just finished a very successful open-air season, and deserves full local support for its winter syllabus. The meetings are also a centre for obtaining Freethought literature.

Mr. J. W. Poynter has done some very useful work by writing a considerable number of letters to the press in the hopes of checking the many lies told concerning the "Godless Conference," but we hope that no one will take his definition of Atheism as consisting in "disbelief in any deity having limited attributes—such as those having changeable thought." What attribute can one think of that is not limited? An attribute is limited by its definition. And what thought is there that is not changeable? The definition of Atheism, on the negative side is quite clear. It is disbelief in God, and as "God" must stand for some understandable subject, so long as it stands for anything, it rules out the existence as objective facts all the stated gods of the different religions of the world. And positively Atheism justifies itself by submitting the idea of God to an historic analysis which shows God to be as Freud called it the great illusion.

A Famous Victorian Freethinker

THE daughter of a minor Canon of Rochester and the grand-daughter of a bishop, Eliza Lynn nevertheless became a pronounced sceptic. Like Beatrice Webb, she was deemed the ugly duckling of the family. Both have attained eminence in the Republic of Letters, the one in sociological studies, while the other, famous as Mrs. Lynn Linton, reached high rank as a journalist and as the author of several excellent novels. The most daring of these was *Under Which Lord*, which is still one of the finest Freethought novels in the language. Her autobiography also appeared in the guise of fiction, under the title of *Christopher Kirkland*, in which Mrs. Linton reveals the inmost searchings of her heart. In later life she herself said of it: "It is an outpour no one hears me make by word of mouth, a confession of sorrow, suffering, trial, and determination not to be beaten, which few suspect as the underlying truth of my life."

Mrs. Linton's biography was penned by George Somes Layard, and appeared in 1901. In this she is clearly portrayed as a born rebel. As a child in a clerical household she naturally took the truth of the Christian religion for granted. But one day she sought a quiet spot in which to peruse Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work her father would have forbidden her to read. Then her wonder was awakened by the remarkable resemblance of the Pagan myths related by Ovid to similar stories in the Scriptures. This startling discovery greatly disconcerted her, but she brushed her fears aside, and boldly pursued her inquiries until the narratives of the New Testament became as incredible as those of the Old. In her own words: "The miraculous incarnation has been affirmed by all the Churches; and the proofs are—the star which guided the Magi, and the song of the angels in the sky

to the shepherds watching their flocks. But who can certify to these proofs? Why did not others see the star as well as the Magi?—and who knows whether the shepherds heard the song or only imagined it."

One doubt gave rise to others. Why, she wondered, did the Creator and sustainer of the Universe restrict his revelation to obscure Semitic tribes, and why were the sages of civilized antiquity deemed unworthy of the redemption accorded countless commonplace Christians who happened to be born after the crucifixion. As no satisfactory answer to these queries was forthcoming, our heroine, at the age of seventeen, discarded for ever the faith of her fathers.

Discontented with her home surroundings Eliza, who had already appeared in print, sounded her conventional parent concerning the advisability of her going to London to procure a living with her pen. The interview proved stormy, and the clergyman ordered his offspring never to mention so preposterous a proposal again. "That she, a lady and the grand-daughter of a bishop, should 'write poems for Warren's blacking or scratch up Bow Street details for a dinner' was nothing less than a degradation." The family solicitor, however, whose judgment was highly esteemed by the father, expressed a more favourable opinion of the proposal, so that the girl was permitted a year's probation in the metropolis to enable her to study in the British Museum. Then, she writes, "I set my face towards the Promised Land—the land where I was to find work, fame, liberty and happiness."

In the fifties of the nineteenth century she made the acquaintance of Robert Owen, Walter Savage Landor, Harrison Ainsworth and many other celebrities. It was in 1847 that she initiated her lifelong friendship with Landor, and that fine writer exercised very considerable influence on her style. Indeed, Eliza Lynn was paying him a visit at the time the Old Roman composed his immortal lines beginning:—

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife."

Mrs. Milner-Gibson was another intimate at whose house she met Mazzini, Kossuth and Louis Blanc. Gadshill, which the Rev. James Lynn had bequeathed to his daughters was purchased in 1855 by Charles Dickens and, at this period, Mrs. Linton became known to Cruikshank, who was conducting a vigorous temperance crusade. She was greatly struck by the artist's lack of logic when, walking in his company from Weston Marston's, they passed a drunken and quarrelsome crowd. "Suddenly," Mrs. Linton states, "George stopped, and, taking hold of my arm, said solemnly:

"You are responsible for those poor wretches."

"I answered that I did not exactly see this, and disclaimed any share in their degradation. But he insisted on it, and hung those ruined souls like infernal bells about my neck tinkling out my own damnation, because at supper I had drunk a glass of champagne, from which he had vainly tried to dissuade me."

In 1858 Miss Lynn wedded the gifted wood-engraver, W. J. Linton, whose wife she had nursed in her last illness, and to whose children she was devoted. But the permanent union of a practical and order-loving woman with a man so unmethodical and visionary as Linton proved impossible, and they separated by mutual consent, although they remained on friendly terms until the very last, and the stepmother was ever adored by the children of his earlier marriage.

Like many of her contemporaries, Mrs. Linton became familiar with the fantasies of spiritualism. The marvels of mesmerism and the romantic Rochester knockings in 1848 led to an epidemic of table turning in America. On this side of the Atlantic these wonders were at first derided, but in 1854 a New World medium, the notorious Mrs. Haydon, arrived in Eng-

land, and the venerable Robert Owen was soon victimized. Then appeared a medium, whose alleged manifestations amazed and deluded many quite intelligent people. For, with the advent of David Dunglass Home, everyone was talking of table rapping, levitation, trance-mediumship, crystal-gazing and the other accomplishments of the magician's art.

An intimate female friend of Mrs. Linton's was an early convert to the prevailing craze, and eagerly desired the latter's adherence. In connexion with this, Charles Dickens clearly intimated his own conclusions in a communication to Mrs. Linton, in which the following passage occurs: "Mr. Hume or Home (I rather think he has gone by both names), I take the liberty of regarding as an impostor. If he appeared on his own behalf in any controversy with me, I should take the liberty of letting him know publicly why. But be assured that if he were demonstrated a humbug in every microscopic cell of his skin and globule of his blood, the disciples would still believe and worship."

It has been asserted that Mrs. Linton was herself deceived but, if so, she soon recovered her sanity. According to her personal testimony she was completely convinced that all Home's manifestations were due to trickery. Yet, her conversion to spiritism was so ardently desired that the American adventurer arranged a special display for her benefit.

Now it happened that there was a dead child to whom Mrs. Linton had been deeply devoted when alive, who was known as Lizzie, but never as Eliza, although the latter was the name by which Mrs. Linton was known in London circles. At the seance Home produced what was declared to be a child's head, and, when the spirits were interrogated by the medium, and their rappings intimated that the child was the dead Lizzie, Mrs. Linton admits that she was overcome with momentary emotion. "It was called after me and dedicated to me," she whispered to a neighbouring sitter. "Yes," said Mr. Home, as if speaking in a dream. He was in a trance. "This little child was Eliza on earth, as it is Eliza in heaven and its mother thanks you in heaven for your loving care of it on earth. She is standing by you now, blessing you and watching over you."

"This bad shot," proceeds Mrs. Linton (the calling of the child by an entirely inapplicable name) "saved me from all after danger of credulity, and left me with a clear mind and untroubled senses to watch and weigh all that I saw."

Mrs. Linton was no merely superficial scoffer, for she was anxiously seeking evidence of life after death. Yet, she was compelled to conclude that although she could have compiled a volume concerning her spiritist experiences, ever accompanied by suspicion and "silent detections of imposture," nothing whatever had at any time emerged of a convincing character. "I have never seen anything whatever," she avers, "that might not have been done by trickery or collusion, and I have seen almost all the mediums. Never anywhere has there been allowed the smallest investigation, nor have the most elementary precautions been taken against imposture; and the amount of patent falsehood swallowed open-mouthed has been a sorry text on which to preach a eulogium on our enlightenment."

While Mrs. Lynn Linton was an early champion of what she regarded as the legitimate rights of women, which included their higher education, the equality of motherhood with paternity, and "that they ought to own their own property free from their husband's control, without the need of trustees, but subject to the joint expenditure of the family," she nevertheless considered that the "shrieking sisterhood" went much too far. The scorn and contempt of maternity some of the advanced women expressed aroused her anger,

and her onslaught upon the then extremists in the *Saturday Review* led to complete estrangement with earlier acquaintances. One of these wrote: "Good-bye, Mrs. L.L., I wish I could burn all your writings and take away the pens from you." But this seems ancient history now.

In 1872 Mrs. Linton published the *True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist*, which proved a sensational success. Ten editions were soon sold. The work greatly impressed the eminent Positivist, Frederic Harrison, and, as Somes Layard notes: "Another fervent admirer was that singularly misunderstood and grossly libelled lover of humanity, Charles Bradlaugh, who immediately bought one thousand copies for distribution."

Mrs. Linton ever expressed her unbounded admiration for the mental power of Herbert Spencer, while she was deeply attached to Professor Clifford and his estimable wife. Indeed the great evolutionary philosopher regarded Mrs. Linton as one of his "Grundyometers" to whom he could submit an impending publication for inspection, when there appeared any danger of upsetting Mrs. Grundy's appercart should it appear unrevised. When one recalls the persistent misrepresentation and even vilification to which Spencer was exposed, his sagacious reticence is easily understandable.

A popular journalist and successful novelist, Mrs. Linton's religious heresies were never concealed from any of her friends, heterodox and orthodox alike. In *Joshua Davidson*, and, above all, in *Under which Lord*, her Freethought was proclaimed to all the world.

From the beginning of her last illness she was fully aware of approaching death. Patiently and calmly accepting the inevitable, she died in July, 1898. Her elegy was written by her admiring friend, the great poet, Swinburne. Her body was cremated, and the ashes buried at the foot of her father's grave in the Churchyard of Crosthwaite in Cumberland, near the vicarage in which she was born.

T. F. PALMER.

Prayer and War

ONE of the speakers at the Public Demonstration of the World Union of Freethinkers made the point that the only contribution the Christian (as a Christian) has to make when the danger of war threatens is to call the people to prayer. I have just heard our Archbishop on the Wireless giving point to this remark by asking the people of this country to pray *in multitudes* for the Lord to do what seemeth him just. Just so.

In dread moments such as we are now going through when human love sees all it holds valuable and dear likely to be clutched away from them, we can understand people doing anything, even if it represented a million to one chance, to avert calamity. We can all appreciate the old lady who genuflected and bowed in Church whenever the name of the Devil was mentioned in order to be "on the safe side." Men and women have always prayed when they feel themselves helpless. But whilst they are praying some few are *doing*, and in war as in everything else God helps those who help themselves. But whether one prays or not, and this is the upshot of the Archbishop's advice, God will do what seemeth him just.

God will listen to the prayers of the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans, and then do what seemeth him just. And, if it seems to God just, he will take sides one way or the other, and the prayers will count for nothing. If God is animated by justice he cannot afford to listen to wide-spread and contradictory praying.

Our Archbishop has said it, and yet, at the same time, he says: Pray, pray, pray, the more of you there are praying, the more useful it is. But God will do what seemeth him just.

It may happen then that God will throw himself, for the sake of the Czechs or the Sudeten Germans, on the side of war. For people have prayed before this, and God, in his justice, has decided upon war. And suppose God, in his justice, and in spite of the numbers of prayers reaching him (We have no reason to suppose that God, being influenced by Justice, would accept the decision of a praying plebescite) decides that the reign of Justice will be furthered by bloodshed, what then will we have? John Galsworthy gave us an answer in the middle of the last war:—

God on the lips of each potentate and under a hundred thousand spires that millions of servants of Christ may receive from God the strength to tear and blow each other to pieces, to ravage and burn, to wrench husbands from wives, fathers from their children, to starve the poor and everywhere destroy the works of the spirit. Prayer under the hundred thousand spires for the blessed strength of God, to use the noblest, most loyal instincts of the human race to the ends of carnage.

No supernatural creed—in these days when two and two are put together—can stand against such reeling subversions.

Our Archbishop tells us that Prayer is a Mystery, but there is little less mysterious than nonsense. Let him deal with Galsworthy; let him explain, if he can, how God can be just and yet be influenced by huge numbers and these not praying for the same thing.

If God is going to be just, and prayer is to be mysteriously useful, then there is room for only one prayer: Thy will be done—or the prayer of resignation. And the expression of this prayer once should serve for a life-time. Importunity and repetition in these circumstances can only mean that there is considerable doubt about God being just—and if God is indeed a Big Man with human attributes, and feeling as the best of us do—then, surely, this is of religious attitudes the most inexcusable and the most contemptible.

In the moments of man's weakness religion is at a premium; when all is over, and God's justice has been sampled, religion suffers its nemesis. For, if God, in his justice, decides for War, then we have prayer set loose in both volume and importunity, and this is the kind of prayer that God likes best.

Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, once a prominent Non-conformist divine, told us what happened in the last Great War. One importunate prayer reaches Heaven, he said, in mournful monotony:—

Fathers, mothers, wives, lovers pray that prayer and wonder how it is with their dearest in these vallies and heights of death. . . . Oftentimes they are stricken and blinded by receiving the tidings that this one prayer the nearest to the heart, and the dearest can be uttered no more. Each name on the long list on which our eyes fasten every morning means the stilling of an importunate prayer, often of many importunate prayers, which for weeks and months and years have been lifted to God. We know very well, however, that promises which attach to prayer do not and cannot attach to every petition. We know that not all of our prayers can be granted. Not everyone can come back whole or even wounded from the battlefield.

Robertson Nicoll, then, in his endeavour to come to a religious conclusion, agreed with our Archbishop:—

We must be importunate in prayer—importunate that is, for that answer God is always willing to bestow.

We are afraid that the portion that we have italicized

will discourage the Christian business man, and will be apt to chill into non-existence the importunity of the most devout. But according to the late Sir W. R. Nicoll, it was the best line of prayer going. "Ask and ye shall receive," says Holy Writ, but it is not promised, mark you, that you shall receive what you ask for. This is a shallow interpretation confined to the uneducated. Students of High Olympus know better. They know how the Gods delight in laying verbal pitfalls. Note how ingeniously Midas was tripped up over a phrase, and his case was only typical of thousands. Perfectly in accord with precedent is the reading: Ask for bread and you may receive a stone; seek for comfort and you may receive tribulation; knock at the door of Paradise and it may be opened to you—but Abandon Hope all ye that enter there.

The circumstances calling for the prayer importunate make an appeal to us if not to the Deity, and in particular instances one does not feel inclined for either remonstrance or criticism. We must content ourselves with the fact that from a plethora of petitionings in a large number of cases some sort of human love emerges. Members of the human family feel the presence of another (or others) to be necessary to their happiness, and from this outstanding fact of love, hope of human regeneration springs. It may seem to some a black day when the imagined help of Omnipotence is dispensed with. With the help of Omnipotence the day is black enough, so black indeed that humanists cannot afford to lose the help of anyone of heart or head who, as a side line, continues to importune the atmosphere. We hope that they will learn in time to stand erect and keep their eyes very wide open indeed if they are ever to come to grips with the Infamous.

T. H. ELSTON.

Boosting The Grand Old Book

RECENTLY, when clearing away rubbish, I alighted upon an old book, published in 1860, entitled, *The Book and its Story*, by L. N. R., the book reviewed being the Bible. The author claims that his story is told with simplicity and truthfulness, and in these words claims to have received divine inspiration; "All ability to tell the story of the book is humbly and thankfully traced to its Divine author." This may account for the effusion being so saturated with unadulterated nonsense. The following dozen extracts from it, selected at random, show how accomplished were the business-like Christian scribes of 1860 in the art of lying for the glory of God:—

(1) A poor widow living on the side of the Black mountains, in Caemarthenshire, attended a public meeting. She had only one shilling in her possession, part of which she intended to lay out to buy wool for making an apron, and the other part in candles. Having heard the speakers describe the sad condition of the poor heathen without Bibles, she felt for them so much, that she determined to give sixpence out of her shilling to the collection, thinking that she would do without the apron for some time longer, and spin her wool by daylight, when the summer evenings came. As the speaker proceeded, the old woman felt more and more, till at last she determined to give the shilling altogether; "because," she said, "I can do better without an apron, than the heathen can without the word of God." She cheerfully gave her shilling, went home, and slept comfortably that night. At daybreak the following morning, a neighbouring farmer called at her door, and said, "Peggy, we have had a dreadful night; several of my sheep have been carried away by the flood. There are two lying quite dead in the hedge

of your garden. You may take them if you like, and you will get some wool from them." She thankfully accepted the gift; and thus she had wool enough to make three or four aprons, and tallow to make candles to spin it. As no one knew what she had done the day before but herself and her God, she looked upon that occurrence as a very kind providence towards her.

Providence works in a mysterious way its wonders to perform. If the facts were as stated, it had to arrange a catastrophe in order that Peggy could obtain a new apron.

(2) In the Monthly Extracts is recorded a mournful incident occurring in a district in Cornwall, where there was *not* a Bible Association. A young man, engaged in the mines, had become the subject of serious impressions, and wished to possess a Bible of his own. He had fixed his choice on the quarto edition, at 22s., which he found he could have from Truro, and had laid by 16s., when, in an evil hour, he fell into bad company, and was tempted to buy a gun with his savings for the Bible. His parents remonstrated, but in vain. The first day he went out with it, his worthless gun exploded, the stock was shivered, and a part of it penetrated the forehead of the unhappy lad, who in an instant fell a lifeless corpse. Ah! had there been a faithful collector calling at his door, he would have received his 6d. or 1s. as he put it by from his earnings, and the Bible—the blessed Bible—might have been furnished instead of the awful instrument of death!

A young man buying a gun! What an atrocious offence! No wonder God killed him!

(3) The desire of the people to obtain the Scriptures is most intense. Imagine a large market with from one to two thousand people, myself on an elevated spot, hundreds of hands stretched out, and hundreds of tongues shouting, "Oh Sahib, a great thing! oh give me a book!" Brahmins and Sudras rolling in the dust together, snatching the books from one another; respectable people with children in their hands and in their arms, imploring me to put the books in the *hands of the little ones*; books all gone, missionary reeling from the effect of dust, noise, and speaking; people imploring for more books, and in some places I have been obliged to go to police offices to rest for half an hour. I have seen Brahmin lads in tears, because they could not get books, saying, "O sahib! I ran when I heard you were here, and now what shall I do? In many places, I have been permitted to preach on the platforms of temples, Brahmins often assisting in the distribution of the Scriptures."

Brahmins and Sudras rolling in an Indian dust to secure a Bible!!! What a treat for a Christian missionary afflicted with conjunctivitis!

(4) Mr. Hill, of the London Mission, when at one time proclaiming the love of Christ and the blessings of salvation, could frequently hear the expressions of "What mercy!" "What words of mercy!" "We never heard such mercy!" "Tarry with us, sahib, and teach us more of these things. Build a school and we will undertake to send, as a beginning, eighty boys of respectable families."

(5) In 1843, the missionaries, being on a journey, pitched their tent near the encampment of a rajah, who sent to inquire of them, "Who are you?" The answer was returned, "White people—those who possess the Book of God, and beg to offer you a copy thereof in Hindustani." The rajah received it graciously, took off his turban, and cast it on the floor, putting in its stead the book upon his head: then he removed it, and pressed it to his heart, saying, "As I have placed it on my head, I will receive it into my mind. As I have clasped it to my breast, I will welcome it to my heart."

(6) Last Sabbath, at our usual Mongolian service, I requested one of them to read the third chapter of

John's Gospel. When he came to the words, "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," his voice faltered, and with difficulty he read a little farther; but when he came to the words, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." his feelings completely overcame him, and his voice was drowned with sobs and tears.

(7) Still, in 1841, the London missionaries write: "It is most delightful to see the insuperable thirst of this people for the Bible. They refuse to take their necessary food, if denied the Book, while those who obtain it will leap, kiss it for joy, press it to their hearts, and say, "Now, my eyes will close at night: now, I will try to get one for my son."

The above is said to have been the state of affairs in Polynesia.

(8) The New Zealander, even in his ignorance and dirt, used to be called "the prince of savages"; but now that he has been civilized by Christianity, his race will probably become the most powerful, as it is the most enterprising, of all the aboriginal tribes of the South Seas.

Having become "civilized by Christianity," the race is gradually dying.

(9) In an ancient Moorish city, the same gentleman disposed of 369 copies many of which were sold to the priests. As he walked along the streets of the towns where the Bible had been thus distributed, he could perceive shopkeepers and others reading their copies. Sometimes he entered into conversation with them which ended in tears rolling down their cheeks.

(10) In some parts, the desire for the word is described as a "rage," and a "famishing"; and the priests of Rome, becoming aware of this, denounced the Books from the pulpit. The government then insisted that they should be withdrawn from the country.

(11) Some of these are so poor that they have to club together to purchase a Bible, and even a New Testament, and sometimes to go without a great portion of their food for the day to procure it.

Who will venture, after such a fact, to utter a doubt as to the positive and blessed results of the work of Bible colportage?

(12) We cannot but rejoice in the fact that more than 87,000 copies have been distributed in various ways, even in Italy, and that the desire for the sacred volume is increasing continually.

The above four extracts refer to Spain, Austria, France and Italy respectively. One gets the impression from "The book and its story" that in 1860 the entire human race was stretching out its hand eagerly to receive the Bible!

It will be noticed that the author is silent regarding names, dates and places, a fact which speaks more for his discretion than his veracity.

In the sixties it was fairly safe for Christian scribes to indulge in these flights of religious fancy, because there was then no alert Freethought journal like the *Freethinker* with its vigilant Editor thoroughly to probe and expose mendacity. Nowadays they are compelled to be more circumspect, but give them a favourable opportunity to disseminate a Christian lie favourable to the Faith, and they will not fail to take advantage of it.

PRO REASON.

Honesty asks what is true. Courage faces the facts.

G. W. Foote.

Wit without reason is only a sneeze of the intellect.

Heine.

Correspondence

AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—As a Freethinker I am concerned with the opinion expressed by Mr. Bayard Simmons in his article, which appeared in the *Freethinker* for September 18. He says:

"Personally I am glad that one effect of this coming to England is that English has now definitely established itself as one of the languages of the World Union. This, after all, is as it should be, for our own tongue is more widely spoken than any other."

I think this view indicates an insular state of mind which, to me, is regrettable, especially when expressed in an article relating to an International Conference. The language mainly spoken at an International gathering may be due to practical expedience or courtesy. English people who are not linguists have cause to be glad that at this Conference English was generally spoken. That our own tongue is more widely spoken than any other is, I consider, inadequate reason for its being used at Congresses of the World Union. May I recommend an International, auxiliary, language to Freethinkers of the world? An International language breaks down national barriers, establishes the principle of equality which requires consistent freethinking, eliminates waste of time, and prevents oratory losing through interpretation its intellectual and emotional appeal.

Esperanto is a scientific, auxiliary, International language, a perfect medium for the expression of ideas, having a vocabulary for the orator, for the conversationalist and the disputant. My opinion is that Esperanto and Freethought are complementary. Esperanto aids the destruction of pedantry because it destroys the "tyranny of the words" which arises from a primitive, traditional and insular basis. It is scientific, reasonable and internationally utilitarian; an unfettered language for the expression of progressive ideas.

VIOLET I. MITCHELL.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

Lo, all the lands wherein our wandering race
Have led their flocks, or fixed their dwelling place
To till with patient toil the fruitful sod,
Abound with altars To THE UNKNOWN GOD
Or GODS, whom MAN created from of old,
In His own image, one yet manifold,
And ignorantly worshipped. We now dare,
Taught by millenniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and hate and bloody strife
With which these dreams have poisoned our poor life,
To build our temples on another plan,
Devoting them to god's Creator, MAN;
Not to MAN'S creature, God. And thus, indeed,
All men and women, of whatever creed,
We welcome gladly if they love their kind;
No other valid test of worth we find.
We gaze into the living world and mark
Infinite mysteries for ever dark:
And if there is a god beyond our thought
(How could he be within its compass brought?)
He would not blame the eyes he made so dim
That they cannot discern a trace of him;
He must approve the pure sincerity
Which, seeing not, declares it cannot see;
He cannot love the blasphemous pretence
Of puny mannikins with purblind sense
To see him thoroughly, to know him well,
His secret purposes, his Heaven and Hell,
His inmost nature—formulating this
With calmest chemical analysis,
Or vivisectioning it, as if it were
Some compound gas, or dog with brain laid bare.
And if we have a life beyond our death,
A life of nobler aims and ampler breath,
What better preparation for such bliss
Than honest work to make the best of this?

James Thomson ("B.V.")

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

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, G. Bedborough—"Godlessness."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, M.A.—"What Shall I do to be Saved?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, H. Meulen—"The Problem of Happiness."

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Mr. Barker.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Friday, L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, 11.30, Sunday, L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, L. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Mrs. N. Buxton, Miss Millard, Messrs. Bryant, Baines, Collins and Tuson.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, G. Whitehead (London)—"Science the Saviour."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Mr. R. B. Foulis—"Beliefs."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sanchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, T. L. Smith—"The Codex Sinaiticus."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Joseph McCabe—"The Social Record of Scepticism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Kings Café, Oxford Road, All Saints, Manchester): 7.0, W. A. Atkinson—"Freethought, Science and Secular Ethic."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Harvests and Thanks."

OUTDOOR

BRIERFIELD MARKET: 3.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

COLNE: 7.45, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market): 8.0, Friday, W. A. Atkinson.

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