

THE FREETHINKER

▪ EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN ▪

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

Views and Opinions

The Press and the Public

SOME time ago one of our self-styled "national" papers warned the British public not to be led away by what they saw in French papers, because "national" newspapers hardly existed in France; they were nearly all "journals of opinion." By this was meant that they represented only the opinions of those responsible for their existence, and had no "national" circulation. The explanation struck me at the time as being a first-class example of that mixture of calculated hypocrisy and self-interested stupidity which is so marked a characteristic of our "yellow" press. For when all is said and done it is just through these "journals of opinion" that one may form a judgment as to the currents of opinion running through a nation. We have two London papers that circulate over two millions daily, and a third that has well over a million and a half. Two of these three have other papers under their control, and which can, and do, run a campaign in favour of any "stunt" which a megalomaniacal owner may decide on, and who is curbed by one or two considerations only—advertisers, and probable Government action in withholding news or threatening restrictions. But let one of these papers decide on a "stunt" of any kind, or on a higher level, a policy of any kind, and that becomes a "national" matter. If the reader will carry his imagination a step further and imagine all our "national" papers reduced to one or two, from the newspaper point of view there would only be one opinion in Britain. All the rest of the daily and weekly publications would be mere "journals of opinion." We are to believe that "national" papers which by such artifices as prize giving, special articles on astrology, the amours of film stars, and so forth, are the only organs of national opinion, and the intelligent Swede, or Dutchman, or Frenchman, if he for a moment accepted so stupid a description of British opinion, might well decide that the country was inhabited by nothing but fools and knaves.

Opinion True and False

A "journal of opinion" admittedly stands for the opinion of those who bring the paper into existence, and are ultimately responsible for the paper continuing in existence. It can hardly have any other purpose for existing. It cannot indulge in the grandiose absurdities of our "national" papers concerning "England demands," or "England thinks," or "English opinion will not tolerate," as though there was only one opinion in England concerning any question, from the existence of God down to the wisdom of a Prime Minister. It stands for its own opinions only. There is really no such thing as British opinion, or French opinion, or American opinion. There are only all sorts of opinions on all sorts of subjects in Britain, France, or America. And this being the case it follows that the only way in which we can gauge the state of mind of the French people or the British people, is to consult these "journals of opinion." Nothing indeed so well exhibits the quality of a great deal of the thinking that goes on than the fact that, unconsciously, most people have come to estimate the value of an opinion solely by the number who endorse it.

It is these "journals of opinion" that are not merely the only safe guides we can have as to what opinions exist, but they are the organs that provide us with the chief guarantees of sincerity. They are kept going for the sake of the opinions they advocate. Very seldom are they avenues of wealth or roads to political honours. Unlike "our national" papers their policy results from their opinion instead of their opinion following their policy. Each stands for opinion because of its difference, not because of its identity; and the really best work of the world has been done by them. The fight against slavery, the fight for the emancipation of women, for the right of working men to organize, for freedom of speech and publication, the fight for the abolition of the tax on newspapers, these with a hundred and one other things are essentially the work of "journals of opinion." Even the paper in which these lines are published has been for fifty-seven years, not merely without making a profit, but with a comparatively heavy yearly loss. Colossal circulations have never done this kind of pioneer work. It has not done it in the past, it is almost impossible for it to do it to-day when newspapers tend to drop into the hands of men dominated by personal ambitions and are at the mercy of large advertisers who can and do often determine what a paper shall not say, even when it does not determine what is said.

* * *

Our Controlled Press

I have been led to say what I have said as a consequence of running through a very excellent "Penguin Special," *The Press*, by Mr. Wickham Steed. Mr. Steed writes on this subject with authority, and his sketch of the history of the newspaper press, with its

modern methods of production, its unrivalled modes of collecting news, etc., is in its way sheer romantic adventure. It is when we come to the quality of the modern newspaper with regard to its primary function of news distribution, and its secondary one as a creator and moulder of public opinion, that one has to record a history of retrogression instead of advancement. It is true there are still papers, weekly and daily, that struggle to keep alive the best traditions of the British press, but these are not the papers or journals that are boasting a million, or even half a million circulation. The best dailies are pleased to sell three or four hundred thousand copies, and the best weeklies are happy if they touch a ten-thousand mark. I am sure that for many the most interesting sections of Mr. Steed's book will be those which deal with the gradual enslavement of the press to men of not first class intellectual power, and men who often have no other kind of interest than they might have had in the marketing of potatoes, and have used every means to bulldoze and confuse the public mind instead of educating it. And although Mr. Steed pays Lord Northcliffe many compliments, I am quite certain that no man did more to degrade the press of England, and to lower the intellectual status of newspaper writers than did the creator of the *Daily Mail*.

We have, of course, no officially censored press in this country. It is not our way to attack freedom in so open a manner. Our press is not censored, but it is *controlled*, and it is a question whether the latter method is not more demoralizing than that of a declared censorship. A man may submit to an open censorship without personal dishonour; but to bow before an unavowed but real control, to say only what one is permitted to say, and at the same time to deny that one does not speak under any kind of coercion, to this no one can submit without a resulting personal demoralization.

That the press is controlled to some extent there can be no doubt. I may remind readers that for some months something approaching civil war was going on in Palestine without the general public being aware of it. The newspapers must have known it, but no notice was taken. In the Mrs. Simpson and Edward VIII. affair, newspaper offices were stuffed with "good copy," but they remained silent until the ban was lifted. At the time of writing Czechoslovakia has largely disappeared from the news—probably because full details of what is going on might discount the Chamberlain version of "How I brought the good news from Munich." How is this control managed? The things named would have been excellent "copy," and in the rush to be in the front all the papers could not separately have hit on a unanimous policy of silence. How is it done?

I think Mr. Steed makes it clear that one factor is the large advertisers. Another factor, hinted, rather than stated is the threat or influence of the Government in power. And, of course, a third factor, which Mr. Steed does not stress, is the inability of probably seventy-five per cent of readers of newspapers to remember to-morrow what they read to-day. Mr. Steed gives an instance of the way in which the advertisers work. Dealing with quite recent events, he says, "Fortified by the Munich agreement, Hitler publicly told Great Britain to mind her own business," and, "on pain of German displeasure, he placed his veto upon the return to office of three prominent British public men." Self-respect almost demanded that one of these men should have been invited to office if only as a reminder that the country was not taking orders from this organizer of pogroms and the torturer of women and children. Mr. Steed says "the whole nation was moved to wrath," but "hardly a hint was given the next morning in the

leading newspapers, some of which were almost apologetic." On enquiring Mr. Steed discovered that the silence was due to the fact that "large advertising agents had warned journals, for which they provided much revenue, that advertisements would be withheld should they 'play-up' the national crisis." I may remind readers that some years ago, when the Macdonald-Baldwin Government launched its economy campaign, for a little while all the papers were preaching economy. Everyone was advised to practise the most rigid care in spending. Then the big advertisers issued an ultimatum. If the papers insisted upon this "don't spend" campaign all the large advertisements would be withdrawn. At once there was a right-about-face. All the papers began to preach the duty of spending—and the advertisements continued. One may be excused the suspicion that in many cases the large advertisers are influenced by men high up in the Government. "Big business" and Government manœuvring may easily run together.

I will take one or two other instances of this unavowed control of the press—a few out of many. Some of our readers may recall a time when Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, towards the end of his career as Prime Minister, was the universal butt of the newspaper. Day after day, hardly a paper appeared without holding him up to ridicule. In a speech at Seaham (?) Mr. Macdonald "flew a kite" by suggesting that some measure might be introduced to prevent the papers publishing "false news." This fell rather flat, and the next move was an invitation for representatives of the press to meet Mr. Macdonald at Downing Street. What took place at that interview I do not know, but the fact is that at once, and almost universally, the jibes at Mr. Macdonald stopped.

* * *

How it is Done!

I must run rapidly over a few other instances. Most car-drivers will remember the Russian oil ramp. Russian petrol—first grade—was being sold in this country at twopence-halfpenny per gallon less than was charged by the Combine. One paper particularly distinguished itself in a boycott campaign against the Russian oil. Day by day it raved against buying "stolen oil," "maintaining Bolshevism" and called upon the Government to prevent the entrance of this petrol into the country. Posters and placards were distributed all over the country. To say nothing of other forms of expenditure, very large sums of money must have been spent on advertising. Then the Combine came to terms with the Russian Oil Products. A *quid pro quo* was offered and Russian oil was increased in price. At once the campaign stopped. Nothing more was said by the paper in question about the evil of buying Russian petrol. The public paid more for its petrol; the Combine had maintained its monopoly, and the public forgot all about the agitation.

Quite recently there have been a number of other things worth noting. We recently referred to the contributions of Mr. Steed and Mr. A. J. Cummings being cut out of a film News-reel. At first this was attributed to the "Censor" of films. Questioned in the House of Commons, Sir John Simon said it was done, by order of the Government because "it might have had a prejudicial effect" on Mr. Chamberlain's negotiations. That is the identical justification for censorship and suppression all over the world. In Hong Kong the British censor had *passed* a film dealing with Germany. At the request of the German Consulate the section was cancelled. A report on the treatment of the natives in German colonies—a pretty fearful exposure—was issued about 18 years ago as a Government document. Recent events having made the publication useful, applicants for it at the Station-

ery Office were met with the news that it had been withdrawn and is no longer "in print." Perhaps the Government has received a warning from Hitler that the document must no longer be issued, on pain of his displeasure. Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain having served as messenger from Hitler to the Czechs, did not feel warranted in refusing the request—if it were made.

I must confine myself to one more instance of press control. The Official Secrets Act has of late been before the public. It was passed avowedly to prevent spying, or the disclosure by Government officials of a Government secret. The Act has recently been applied as a gag for the press. The Government wishes to retain this interference with liberty of the press, and recently connived at a Bill for setting the matter right being talked out. So meetings of protest are being held, and that is all. But this is not the way in which the fighters of the old days went to work. When an Act was bad, wholly bad, and no redress was made, men and women defied the Act in the name of something higher than any Act of Parliament—human freedom. They broke the "law" and went to prison time after time. Where are the descendants of these men and women? Why does not some prominent individual do what others have done? Select a case to which the Act was not intended to apply, and defy the authorities. That has been done before, and if it were done again by a prominent politician or man of letters, the Government would not dare prosecute, or if they did it would mean the amending of the Act. A protest and submission any Government can stand. A protest followed by action is quite another matter.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

An Old-world Secularist

"For proud and fiery and swift and bold
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
Full billowed through his veins."

James Thomson.

At the height of the Bradlaugh struggle in the House of Commons, Gladstone made the finest speech of his lengthy career. Addressing a hushed and expectant audience on the "Oaths Bill" question, he introduced with startling effect the bold quotation from Lucretius:—

"To what damned deeds religion urges men."

Veiled in the original Latin, the sonorous line of the most powerful of the old Roman poets could have appealed to but few of the Members of Parliament, but the gesture was unmistakable. It was a tribute to the superb singer who "denied divinely the divine," and whose work has survived the winnowing of twenty centuries.

The Roman poet Lucretius (first century B.C.) is one of the most extraordinary, and one of the vaguest, figures in the history of literature. We feel him in his works very distinctly; he is, as it were, always present, but the details of his actual life are so shadowy and so misunderstood. Yet, in many ways, this old-world Freethinker comes closer to our modern sympathies than many other famous men of that far-off time in which he lived. Across the wide gulf of twenty centuries, across the far-deeper abyss of an older civilization, and an alien language, we recognize in him a brave soldier of the Army of Human Emancipation. A disciple of Epicurus, he attempted to popularize the great philosopher's teaching in a poem, "On the Nature of Things," which remains to this day the finest didactic poem in the world. In the history of Freethought it must always hold a prominent place; in literature it is a masterpiece.

Written two thousand years ago, the central idea of Lucretius' great poem is that the universe is governed by natural law, and mankind is free to work out its own destiny without deities. The poet saw quite clearly that fear was the fundamental motive of all religion. He denied the doctrine of a future life and its ethical usefulness. He declared the alleged hereafter to be a fable and a dream. Moreover, and this is really astonishing, he actually anticipated many of the scientific ideas of the nineteenth century. Writing, be it remembered, about half a century before the alleged birth of Christ, Lucretius perceived the truth of evolution, the indestructibility of matter, the survival of the fittest, the origin of language, the progress of society. To us these things are but comparatively recent tidings. Twenty long centuries ago they dawned on the prophetic mind of the great Latin poet "dreaming on things to come."

Small wonder that the name of Lucretius is immortalized by his Atheistic work. In this truly wonderful poem, for whole pages together he reads like a modern poet. We may gain some notion of the general effect of this masterpiece if we conceive Tennyson to have devoted his rare genius to versifying Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy," or Swinburne to have subordinated his splendid lyrical gifts to the poetic presentation of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

Lucretius is much more than a melodious singer, or a wearer of beautiful dreams. He is a crusader, man's champion against the tyranny of Priestcraft. According to him, the great curse of human nature is religion, which priests still use to fool and degrade mankind and enrich themselves. Now and again his cheek flushes with anger, as when he records, in lines of great beauty, the terrible guilt prompted by religion against the most sacred ties of humanity. Few poets have presented us with lines of greater pathos than his story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia to the "gods." In the mind's eye we see the hapless maiden trembling by the altar without power of speech, the murderous priest, the sorrowing father, the strong men powerless, and the awful end. Lucretius concludes his account with the lines that make us realize the depth of his indignation:—

"Learn thou then

To what damned deeds religion urges men.

A most marked characteristic of Lucretius was his passionate ardour for knowledge. In his contemplation of the riddle of life there is a tenderness which is as admirable as it is rare. He feels sympathy with animals as well as humanity, and he voices the grief of brutes sorrowing for their young in as tender accents as when he sings of the charms of childhood. His love of science, his austerity of character, the splendour of his genius, rank him among the really great poets, who, like stars, shine for ever in the firmament of art.

He has passages that come home to us with a sense of sincerity, and linger in the mind. Recall his beautiful language regarding death:—

"Thou not again shalt see thy dear homes door,
Nor thy sweet wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go.
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store
Thou hoarded for thine own, men say, and lo!
All thou desired is gone. But never say
All the desire as well hath passed away."

To the Freethinker such passages show the prevalence of Rationalism in educated circles in the Ancient World. They also dispose of the clerical nonsense that it was the Christian Religion that brought a note of humanity into social life. It is, indeed, but a bitter and bigoted Christian view of ancient history, which refuses to acknowledge nobility of character in great Pagans whose writings have survived

the mutations of many centuries. Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Seneca, Plato, to mention no others, showed themselves to be nobler, loftier, freer from falsehood, more reasonable, than many of the so-called high-lights of the Christian Religion. Indeed, the noblest utterances attributed to Christ may be paralleled from the writings of Pagan philosophers, to the discomfiture of theologians. What is not borrowed is but Pharisaism, naked and unashamed:—

“We are God’s chosen few;
All others will be damned.
There is no place in heaven for you;
We can’t have heaven crammed.”

When we reflect on the present condition of the so-called civilized world, when we think of the struggle between reason and religion, written in blood and fire during so many centuries, we feel it but the merest justice to acknowledge that this brave, old-world Freethinker, twenty centuries ago, fought the good fight for Freedom. Lucretius also helps us to understand the magnitude of the ages-long struggle between reason and unreason. In his day, each, as it were, armed with simple weapons, fought together. Now, Freethought, armed with far more formidable weapons, marches to battle in the far more confident hope of certain victory.

Mankind in the mass thinks slowly, chiefly because Priestcraft, as a huge vested interest, still oppresses the world. By keeping people in ignorance, priests wallow in wealth “beyond the dreams of avarice.” It is one of the most terrible of all pages of human history. Were Lucretius to reappear upon the earth and see great nations, professing to be in the van of civilization, and yet believing in hell, devils, eternal torture and bogus miracles, he would wonder what blight had fallen upon the human intellect after the lapse of twenty centuries. The doctrines of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Sceptics, prevalent among the educated classes in the ancient Greek and Roman world, were more or less rationalistic. A score of centuries later, owing to the control of education by priests, the masses are still ignorant, and the classes pay lip service to a superstition they do not believe. It is due to the Freethought Movement that this horrid incubus, which dwells in darkness and shuns the light, is passing away slowly, with all its racks, dungeons, and foul sleeping draughts. Sooner or later Freethought will lead mankind to a happier, more consummate condition of life, and to loftier ideals. To be true to truth is man’s first duty, and from it all other duties will unfold. As truthseekers we live for the highest.

MIMNERMUS.

A Plea for Penal Reform

THE publication of Beccaria’s *Crimes and Punishments*, in 1764, was evidence of a novel humanitarian impulse with which Bentham in England and Voltaire and Montesquieu in France, were associated. A vast literature concerning penology has since accumulated, and Mr. Leo Page has recently added an important contribution to this mournful theme. This volume: *Crime and the Community* (Faber, 12s. 6d. net), is arranged in three parts, which treat respectively of the theory, practice and reform of the English penal system. Every statement made has been carefully weighed by the author who is an experienced barrister, with first-hand knowledge of court procedure and prison administration.

Leo Page does not mince his words when reviewing the ignorance and ineptitude of many who administer the law in Courts of Summary Jurisdiction. Still, he

is scrupulously fair to the prison authorities as well as to the convicts and other prisoners whom he has carefully questioned and studied after his occasionally unannounced and unexpected visits to Dartmoor, Parkhurst and other penal establishments.

It is urged that nearly all who write about prisons, apart from ex-convicts whose edited sensational stories are published from time to time, possess no inside acquaintance with them as our prisons are not open to inspection. On the other hand, declares Page: “I can at least claim that I have recognized the need for such foundations upon which to build, and this book is the result of the study of many prisons. I am deeply indebted to the Prison Commissioners for their permission to enter such of the local and convict prisons as I wished, and to make freely, both from officers and men, such inquiries as I desired.”

The problem of criminal treatment is a complex one, and there seems no royal road to its solution. But the partial success of the more humane methods now adopted conclusively proves that the merciless procedure of past times is damned beyond redemption. And not only does Page aim at the enlightenment of the general reader, but he desires the adherence of the legislator and of those who administer the criminal law.

Criminal charges are tried in the High Courts, Quarter Sessions, and by stipendiary and unpaid justices. The High Court Judges are almost invariably competent men. Still, so late as 1870, when the fusion occasioned by the Judicature Acts of that year led to the trial of criminal cases by Chancery Judges, utterly unacquainted with criminal procedure, sentences of a most savage character were inflicted, which aroused universal condemnation. Even now as Page points out, the follies of the past are sometimes repeated. “Over and over again cases come to light of confirmed criminals whose lives of misery and wickedness have been due in large measure to judicial ineptitude.” And again: “Until penology forms part of the professional training of a lawyer, or until its study becomes to be recognized as the first duty of a Judge, we may find a lesson for to-day in the stories of the blunders and inhumanities of the Judges of 1870.”

Even now prisoners indicted for certain crimes receive far more heavy sentences from some Judges than others, and the most earnest efforts are sometimes made by the accused’s legal advisers to antedate or postpone a trial when it is known that a Judge of peculiar predilections would otherwise preside at the trial.

It is mournful to remember that save for a few splendid exceptions, the legal profession has obstinately opposed nearly all rational amendments in criminal procedure. Recorders and Chairmen of Quarter Sessions do not escape criticism, and Page suggests that although stipendiary magistrates who sit in the London Courts and those of other large towns are barristers of at least seven years’ standing, yet they are not always above reproach.

The Shallows and Silences of Real Life, as Maitland once termed them—the unpaid Justices of the Peace are those most severely censured by our authority. For the J.P. is “Almost always a layman; he has had no training in judicial impartiality or experience of the courts; he has but rarely the slightest knowledge of prisons. Yet the courts made up of these magistrates deal with an overwhelming preponderance of criminal charges which are heard in the courts of this country.”

The chapter narrating the history of criminal law is intensely interesting, although its descriptions of the

prison horrors of the past are harrowing. Fox's picture of the eighteenth century prison is reproduced. "In the reeking bestiality of these filthy dens, felons and debtors, convicted and untried, young and old, with no more distinction of age, condition or sex than they could afford to buy from the gaoler were herded together, chained, starving and half-naked." No wonder that typhus, then known as jail fever, accounted for the death of a quarter of the prisoners annually. In our more humane era the prisons are at least models of cleanliness and the sexes are completely segregated.

The revolting cruelties of the old penal system were largely the outcome of the erroneous belief that the most direful penalties were necessary to prevent the commission of crime. The humane Romilly was vindictively assailed when, in 1810, he introduced a Bill into Parliament to substitute transportation for capital punishment for the then felony of stealing five shillings or more from a shop. The sagacious Lord Hewart's predecessor, Ellenborough, when strongly opposing Romilly's proposal in the Gilded Chamber, stated that "Your Lordships will pause before you assent to a measure so pregnant with danger to the security of property." As Page comments: "It was indeed a cruel age. It is dreadful to find that the Archbishop of Canterbury and six of his fellow prelates were amongst the large majority who defeated Romilly's measure."

There now exist many penological schools of thought. The widely accepted theory that the delinquent must be made to suffer retribution for his sins against society, Page dismisses as indefensible.

He cogently declares that: "A considerable proportion of those who habitually commit crimes have had small training or opportunities to be other than what they are. . . . Poverty, environment and heredity rather than deliberate election have made them lawless and dangerous. Such men must be restrained." But the community has no moral right to deliberately punish for purposes of resentment, and the psychologist, Professor McDougall, is quoted with approval when he asserts: "That the fuller our insight into the springs of human conduct, the more impossible does it become to maintain the antiquated doctrine of retribution."

Also, the doctrine of deterrence appears discredited by the lessons of the past. The primary objective should be the reclamation of the delinquent. But, unfortunately, this principle is not universally applicable. Still, it is the ideal ever to be aimed at. Obviously, the reformation of the offender is not only advantageous to himself, but is a valuable asset to the entire community. Yet, nearly all who speak with authority apparently admit that certain types of delinquents remain impervious to permanent amendment. These, it is urged, should be restrained until, if ever, it seems advisable to restore them to liberty. It must be remembered that whether in custody or at large the confirmed malefactor remains a member of the community. Yet, however sympathetic our attitude, it must be conceded that: "Society cannot be asked to submit indefinitely to the depredations of particular members, or to allow for ever activities which by the force of evil example are doubly vicious." Where, however, there is promise of reform the mildest methods are advisable both in the interests of the well-being of the community and those of the criminal. But the most careful discrimination is essential, for lenient treatment is usually regarded as a sign of weakness by hardened malefactors who are only too anxious to resume a career of crime.

The Juvenile Courts with their special procedure try offenders under the age of 17, where they may be

fined, bound over, placed under probation, imprisoned, or the charge dismissed. Older delinquents up to the age of 23 may be consigned to a Borstal Institution, and these modern methods have attained a fair measure of success.

Various prisons were inspected by Leo Page, who gives instructive descriptions of Dartmoor, Parkhurst, Wormwood Scrubbs, Maidstone, Pentonville and several other gaols. The experimental prison at Wakefield is an institution where first offenders are placed. Here many improvements have been made. With these selected offenders greater latitude is granted. "After a few weeks the men are not locked in their cells between 6.30 in the morning and 8.30 at night; they eat, talk and associate freely with others, and spend time when they are not working, not in solitude and brooding, but in companionship; week-ends are not mere days of stagnation, but opportunities for health, games and recreation." Men engaged in land reclamation dwell in open huts from Monday until Friday, when they return for their baths and other requirements to the prison.

Also, at the Borstal called the North Sea Camp in Lincolnshire, similar humane methods are adopted, and the training of the inmates in healthy surroundings has so far proved satisfactory. Yet, as Page points out, the obscurantists still view these experiments with disfavour. He recalls that "only recently a Christian minister wrote to the *Times* (September 25, 1937), a letter in which he advocated 'short, sharp sentences, which incidentally allow a place in our penal code for the lash and the birch.'"

Our author expresses sound views concerning abnormal offences and he holds that the services of the psychologist and trained physician will accomplish more practical results than any conceivable mode of punishment conducted on customary principles. Sexual aberrations, above all, call for the care of the pathologist. "The practical and urgent legal reform in this connexion in all such sex cases—as indeed in all abnormal cases, such as senseless and purposeless thefts, arsons or malicious damage cases—the courts should have the advice of a psychiatrist." Let us trust that the time will come when the services of science will be requisite in every Court when complex problems emerge in the course of a trial.

Little is said in this sincere volume concerning the part played by poverty in the prevalence of crime. The important appendices, however, furnish much for reflection and recent reforms are indicative of further instalments. The co-operation of the general public with the professional law reformer is a consummation devoutly to be wished. For the task undertaken is not less onerous because it concerns "primarily the friendless and the frail, the wicked and the weak." As Page concludes: "If we try to follow Truth and Mercy as our guides, the little that each of us can do will be of value to the whole. Each of us may feel the rich reward that we have done whatever in us lies to lift into its final place one stone of that great edifice which should be the temple and the home of Justice."

T. F. PALMER.

A man's honest, earnest opinion is the most precious of all he possesses: let him communicate this if he is to communicate anything.—*Carlyle*.

Charles Lamb, in his younger days, had to take down the self-assurance of Coleridge by sending him eight pertinent questions, of which the last was this: "Whether an immortal and amenable soul" may not come to be damned at last, and the man never suspect it beforehand?"

Going Pious

But I've been put into a dreadful passion by two of my cleverest girl pupils "going off pious!" It's exactly like a nice pear getting "sleepy."—*John Ruskin.*

ROUND about adolescence the "religion bug will get you if you don't look out." This is the way God works in all countries, and for all creeds. The youngster is caught up in some emotional disturbance, often fostered by a religious ceremonial, or a revival service, and the meaning of it is, so the religious pastor informs him, that some six thousand years ago Adam and Eve made a mess of it in the Garden of Eden; and as in Adam we all sinned, we all became worthy of eternal damnation but—Praise be to God—God sent his only Beloved Son and belief in him will save us all from Damnation.

That is what "going pious" means in Christendom. In other climes, the significance of Conversion is otherwise. There, it vouches for the truth of another set of legends. A youth in England goes through the phenomena of exaltation and experiences something he cannot quite understand. If he has been well-trained in infancy about Jesus and the Blessed Mysteries, he will connect his experience with these mysteries, as it is intended, and hoped, by his betters. If he has escaped this training, his "spiritual exaltation" may lead him anywhere. Nowadays youngsters go as easily on this wave of exaltation towards Communism or Fascism, as towards the Gospel of Christ and Him Crucified. It may even result in a bitter animosity to the Faith once delivered to the Saints. Shelley, who underwent what would once have been called "religious" experience, is a case in point.

Psychologists are aware of the phenomena and have them classified. They even recognize their utility, provided the opportunity is there for wise guidance. With this guidance, it may become the youngster's introduction to a life of social usefulness. If, however, he gets into the hands of unscientific interpreters, he is nobbled for some form of obscurantism, and his value to the community becomes a minus quality.

In orthodox households papa and mamma do a little rejoicing when their children find grace. Their offspring have "seen the light." The children themselves, however, don't know what the experience vouches for (God falls short as regards detail) so they—the parents—follow up the emotional moment by an endeavour to fasten their children with hoops of steel to the creed of their forefathers by sending them to a weekly Bible Class to be followed, in time, by a partaking of the Blood and the Body. They (their children) count then as units in the Household of Faith. They are of the *elect*. If the phenomenon however should prove slight in its intensity and the Blood and Body stage of religious experience is not reached, even then it is a matter for congratulation, for the next year may see another spiritual upheaval take place, and this time the Divine Influence may prove more efficacious, and Winifred may become a good Catholic, a good Churchwoman, a good Baptist, a good Plymouth Sister.

Religious bodies hail the process with enthusiasm. Up go statistics! The Flood of Divine Grace is acceptable. The enthusiasm is not, however, universal. Ruskin, it will have been noted—when he had to suffer the epidemic amongst his pupils, was put into "a dreadful passion." I remember when, at the age of twelve, I walked into my north-country home and announced that I had found Jesus, my father, too, was distinctly annoyed. In fact, there was no mis-

taking his irritation; he had no *personal* criticism to make, but it was very evident that he would have been better pleased had the flames of Pentecost escaped me. Like Ruskin, he would, no doubt, have had the little intelligence I then possessed concentrated upon human affairs. He did not wish me to get into the way of deriving sustenance from Ghosts. And the special Wesleyan Ghost he had had experience of at close quarters, and he knew the questionable ways it had of manifesting itself.

Much can happen in a year. Friends of mine, probably equally distressed by my "conversion," lent me Ingersoll's lectures in pamphlet form. I lapped them up with avidity. In just about a year's time I attended a similar revival-ceremony in the same building by the same pair of revivalists. This time I went intent upon discovering how it was all done. I found out. I saw how an "emotional crisis" can be stage-managed. I noted the effects of music and singing, and of eloquence deliberately intent on bringing about a spiritual orgy. I saw the youngsters bursting into tears and being led to the Penitent Form, but this time, I was not of them. I noticed one old drunken reprobate who had succumbed a year before, once more hurrying towards salvation. In short I became acquainted with the school and technique of Elmer Gantry.

The ultimate effect of the Lord's visit in my case was therefore an impetus to do something to bring to nought his Kingdom on Earth. I trust even in those days it had other implications. Ingersoll was a good mentor. The Kingdom of Man on Earth I knew, even then, I was endeavouring to further by such means. I still think that it is the profoundest misfortune that can happen to anyone to be led away from good social work by getting concerned about his or her miserable soul. I think the spiritual pride engendered in the majority of cases is an obnoxious thing, an ungenerous thing, and harmful in great measure to social progress.

"Good pears gone sleepy." An excellent phrase! At the threshold of a useful life with all its problems confronting and "intriguing" them, God thinks of the young persons' immortal souls. He speaks to them, saying: Now, I am giving you, your chance. Read my Book. Go to my Church. Worship me. The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom. I'm *telling* you. Listen, listen, listen. If you don't listen, or if you think I'm not worth listening to, you'll be damned. You will have lost your chance. Think of your Immortal Soul. The Soul is the Thing that matters. The Soul is immortal, the body mortal. The Soul! Your Soul! Get your Soul all right and when you're certain about that, try to attend in turn to the souls of Winifred Bloggs, Thomas Dubbin, George Gibley. They'll think you a nuisance, but don't let that deter you. You will have got Salvation so don't be mean about it. Save *their* souls. They too, have souls. Eternal Souls!

This, to the religious person, is the meaning of the phenomenon of conversion. Unfortunately, it distracts from the work before them the well-meaning youngsters who feels an impulse to do practical work for Man. It teaches them to tend their souls. This is harmful. There is no hope for this world until the supreme selfishness, the saving of one's soul, is eradicated from the minds of men. One cannot afford at any moment to allow any good, hopeful, human material to "get sleepy."

T. H. ELSTOB.

Truth, frankness, courage, love, humility, and all the virtues, range themselves on the side of prudence, or the art of securing a present well-being.—*Emerson.*

Acid Drops

The Government appears quite to have thrown over the rule that Lord Palmerston laid down for his Cabinet—"It doesn't matter what kind of a lie we tell, so long as we tell the same lie." Thus: Early September—Our armaments are well advanced. We have new types of aeroplanes and air-defences that will surprise any enemy who attacks us. Trust the Government.

Early October, when the enthusiasm for the Munich Pact was losing its glamour—We were unprepared for war. We were lacking in the right type of planes for both attack and defence. (Inference, the Prime Minister did well to come to terms knowing how unprepared we were). But trust the Government.

Sir Samuel Hoare, November 25 (when comments were being made as to why we were so unprepared and was beginning to have political reactions)—"It is alleged that the Prime Minister capitulated because our defence forces were weak. I definitely contradict such a charge. Our rearmament had reached a stage at which we should have shown ourselves unshakeable in the early days of a war, and irresistible as the war progressed." Moral as before: Trust the Government. But what a departure from the rule of Lord Palmerston.

"Our business as ministers of religion," says ex-Dean Inge, is "to set before the people the Christian standard of values which is so clearly laid down in the New Testament." Really Dr. Inge ought to have done better than this. The Bishop of London might have managed this much. For the great question, the question that has split churches, is exactly what is the Christian standard of values? Is it concerned primarily with the next world, or with this one? The fundamental standard of values, so far as we can see, is just belief in Jesus. All Christians have believed thus far, but when it came to saying exactly what this meant, and what it involved, there has been a devil of a row, and Churches have been wrecked, and built, upon the different interpretations.

The General Secretary of the National Sunday School Union says that of the children who come to the Sunday schools, 80 per cent "slip through their fingers," and do not connect with any Church in their after years. Mr. Denholm must feel much like an ardent angler who is just pulling a fish out of the water when it wriggles itself free and disappears. And the worst of it is that nowadays the Sunday school fish are getting more wide-awake, the bait is less tempting and the hooks will simply not stand the strain.

Mr. J. S. McAnulty, who is President of the Catholic Young Men's Society, said, the other day, that the next religious war will not be "a battle of cracked skulls and broken limbs, but a war of shattered altars and broken Hosts." He wants to resist the "heavy artillery of propaganda" which is so busy these days. Well we hope that the war will not result in "shattered altars," etc., except in a metaphorical sense; but we are glad that the propagandist attack is being recognized. And that we can assure Mr. McAnulty that it will be pushed home till victory is ours. So far, we are content with our many victories.

According to the *Universe*, the Catholics in Austria who are in the midst of the Jewish pogroms are convinced it will be their turn next. "They know the persecution is coming. There are plenty of signs of it." They are hoping, of course, that the foul physical violence employed against the old and the helpless by Hitler's gangs will not be put in force against them; but the following secret instructions given by Dr. Alfred Rosenberg to the teachers in the Austrian schools show what is coming to them:—

It is your duty to proceed with the utmost cunning against a Church which is in itself cunning and strong.

The children must be weaned from the pernicious influence of Church power. They must be taught to deride the old and foolish conception of Christ, which is not compatible with the true German "Weltanschauung." The Jews and the Church are the enemies of the State. It is for you loyal teachers to help make sure that both are erased.

The Christian Evidence Society's 68th Annual Meeting took place, the other week, but it seems to have been a very tame affair. Those valiant souls who defied Atheists in the bad old days when—we are told—Materialism was rampant, appear very subdued just now. The Bishop of London, who was in the chair, said that "many things had happened since he had taken the chair for the Society forty years ago"—a remark which must have impressed the audience hugely with its high intellectual content. He added that during the crisis everyone "turned to God," which, of course, might pass if only "everyone" was properly defined. Dame Beatrix Lyall, who had often spoken from the C.E.S.'s platform, was quite sure that "people were hungry for news about our Lord"; while the Secretary was quite astonished to find that Russia, which had been so much in the limelight before the Freethinkers' Congress, actually did not send one delegate! Mr. Harfit's innocence is so very surprising. And the rest is silence.

Mgr. Canon Marshall declared, the other day, that he was "not afraid of the Atheist, the Revolutionary, or the Persecutor," but he was afraid of the apathetic and indifferent people in the Church itself. It is, of course, amusing to see how the Roman Catholic Canon lumps "Atheist" with "Persecutor," when he knows as well as we do that his Church never ceased to persecute when it had the power, and that the very essence of Freethought is complete tolerance. However, we agree in some measure that apathy and indifference are very dangerous to many things, and particularly to religion. But what can be done about it when a Church has been found out? For it is a fact, however unpleasant it may be to face, that even born Roman Catholics are finding their Church out. That is why they prefer to go hiking, or motoring, or golfing, or even walking down a country lane rather than going to church or boosting their apathetic belief.

All this has upset Fr. Woodlock too, for he thinks it is awful for a man to enjoy the "beauties of nature rather than a stuffy church." He considers all this "cant and humbug." So he has come to the conclusion—arrived at by countless preachers before him—that "England is no longer a Christian nation." For Mr. R. O'Sullivan, K.C., the real trouble was that in England the people preferred "the secular school, the register office, birth control, the Divorce Court, and euthanasia." If this were true we consider it splendid news, but we can quite understand the doleful faces among the Catholic members of the community. They are at last beginning to see fine words prove no progress; it is figures that count and they prove that at last the Catholic Church is really losing ground.

The Rev. W. H. Hulbert, addressing a Lancashire Conference of the Layman's Missionary Movement (We presume this is a movement for inducing laymen to pay salaries to parsons) said that Africa offered the Evangelist's opportunity. We should have imagined there were better opportunities at home, with less cost in travelling expenses. But the greater opportunities appear to be that the faith "the African has in the witch-doctor can be transmuted." We agree to that with one reservation. Transmuting usually signifies raising to a higher level. But if the parson is to take the place of the witch-doctor we see no difference in the quality of the faith. One is about as good and, in the circumstances, as artful as the other.

But we do believe that provided the poor African can be kept free from contact with the knowledge of civilized people, he may be induced to transfer his allegiance from

the local superstitions to the Christian ones. For they are fundamentally identical. Jesus curing disease by faith and prayer is not vitally different from the way the witch-doctor cures disease. Prayers for food, or for rain, or for victory, when offered to the local deity, are substantially the same as the prayers which are offered to the Christian God. The miracles of the Bible are not vitally different from the native ones. All the native does is to rechristen his old beliefs by giving a different name to his God, and having a medicine-man with a different dress. Mr. Hulbert, when he spoke his piece, "said a mouthful." But we acquit him of any intention of packing so much truth in so small a compass.

A resolution was brought before the Church Assembly on November 18, that as the standard of wages had "risen greatly, partly as the result of collective bargaining," the Archbishops of Canterbury and York should appoint a committee to consider the matter. The motion was dropped on the ground that the situation was already under consideration. We raise no objection to the clergy trying to get a rise in wages, but we would point out that the rise in the wages of working men would not have been what it has been save for the fact that they were ready to refuse their labour unless better wages were paid. Now we suggest that, if the clergy want more wages, they, too, should go on strike. Let them decide that they will not conduct services until they get what they consider is a living wage. Are they afraid to do so because the people would then discover that whether Church services were conducted or not things would go on just the same? After all, when working-men go on strike, the general public is likely to miss something. What would people miss in the case of a strike of the clergy?

Mr. Collie Knox, in the *Daily Mail*, often expresses his strong views against some of the ridiculous religious services and talks which disfigure the B.B.C. broadcasts on Sunday. The other day, he wrote of them in scathing terms, "The utter pseudo superiority of B.B.C. religion and its windbag labels is fatuous and past belief"—but he then went on to say that the speakers should study "the language which Christ talked to His people"—a language which was direct and "to be understood by all sorts and conditions of men." Well, we should like to see what most people would make of some of the "simple" speeches which we are told Jesus made in *John*. We should even like to see how many of them could be understood by Mr. Collie Knox. And we should like him to explain why there are hundreds of books published annually to "explain" the sayings and doings of Jesus, and why Christians have been at loggerheads as to their exact meaning for nearly 1900 years. Jesus might have wept, but what he meant on many occasions the Lord only knows!

While we approve of the general idea of the *Methodist Recorder* that there should be a Museum in which all the Relics of Wesley and Methodism could be deposited, we think the expenditure of £10,000 for the purpose borders on the ridiculous. It would be best to hand over the whole bunch of remnants to the British Museum, where they could be kept in a convenient cellar to be added to until the whole history of religious superstition might one day be an interesting if horrible collection for the use of students of primitive absurdities.

It has been ruled that the length of girls' shorts in athletic contests should be decreased. This decision will, it is surmised, shake the Holy Roman Church to its depths.

Our Primate's "God" has a lot to put up with. His worshippers (God's: not the Primate's) are at one moment beseeching his "Almightiness," and at another moment "telling him off" for neglecting to make man do "His will!" Poor Dr. Lang had to beg the Church Assembly (November 14) to

lay before God the continued violation of His Will, such as the miseries inflicted on the people of Spain, the cruel slaughter of life going on in China, and, not least, the

recent outbreak of renewed and fierce persecution of the Jews in Germany.

Hydra-headed divinities are difficult things to deal with, but it is surely time some *definite unchangeable* attribute was given to the only true and Christian God. Hitherto, the divine will—granting that God has a "will of his own"—is very much like a certain brand of cigarettes, puffed and blown about as *man* wills.

The ineffable Winnie—Ingram, Bishop of London, not Churchill—who is retiring next year, told the same Church Assembly that he felt

like the old lady who, after 37 years, was about to vacate her house, and was engaged in tidying up and seeing that the bath was ready for the new tenant.

It is quite refreshing that his lordship's notoriously poor means may enable him to leave Fulham Palace in a decent enough condition for his successor. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and we trust the penurious prelate will be able to afford a bath in his retirement—if only on Saturday night, like most of his old "flock."

The retiring (!) Bishop then asked the Assembly:—

Is it right for the Church to acquiesce in dreadful housing conditions, and in the workers of the land being under-paid? Can nothing be done for those who have no work at home to be given a new chance in the Empire? Can nothing be done to mitigate the misery and moral degradation of unemployment?

The answer is easy. It will be found in the records of the Bishops in the House of Lords, of whom Dr. Ingram himself has been one for so many years. On practically every occasion the Bench of Bishops has been asked to support or further legislation of social amelioration, the answer has been a lemon. Or, to reply to the Bishop of London's two particular questions above: NOTHING—so far as he and his Church are involved.

John Peter Birtwistle was once houseboy to a curate. His "extreme piety" so impressed a member of the congregation that John was helped to Oxford as a candidate for holy orders. Now John, at the age of 39, has been sentenced at Leeds Assizes to 12 months hard labour for forgery and false pretences—including 56 cases in connexion with football pools. But John's pious promise had also ended in his obtaining £307 10s. from his land lady, almost the whole of her life savings. The prison medical officer declared John a sexual invert. The judge hoped the sentence would be John's saving. The hope may be justified if John has entirely lost his piety.

Fifty Years Ago

PAINE'S *Age of Reason*, says Professor Fiske, is "fast sinking into complete and deserved oblivion." But the statement is false. Thousands of copies of the volume are still sold yearly. And even if the statement were true, it would not amount to much, for very few books last a hundred years. Professor Fiske is a worthy man—in his way—but his head must be turned if he expects to be read at the end of a century.

The Freethinker, December 2, 1888

Czecho Freethinkers' Relief Fund

Previously acknowledged, £170 8s. 10d.; R. B. Kerr, £1; Leicester Secular Society, £1 10s.; G. Wood, £1; A. D. Hodgkinson, 2s. 6d.; Miss V. L. Mitchell, 5s.; A. W. Frost, 7s.; Miss Frances Warne, 10s.; No name enclosed, 2s.; J. Henson, 2s.; Total £175 7s. 4d.

We shall be obliged, if there is any inaccuracy in the above list, or if any subscription is not acknowledged; if those concerned will write at once.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. W. FROST.—Papers sent. Have placed postal order to credit of Czech Fund.

A. HANSON.—You omitted to send the source of the quotation. We must have some indication of this before publishing. One may be called on for proof.

E. HENDERSON.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

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.

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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

To-day (December 4), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Monseigneur News Theatre, Princes Street, Edinburgh. The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. Reserved seats one shilling.

Efforts are being made to put the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. on a footing more representative of the numerical strength of Freethinkers in the area. This can only be accomplished if those unattached will join up, or support the Branch in its work. Speakers from London will occasionally lecture in the Bristol Street Council School, and a scheme of advertising will give the meetings a wider publicity. Mr. R. H. Rosetti, will lecture there to-day (December 4) at 7 p.m., on "The Churches and the Threat to Civilization," and the Branch officials are hopeful of a big response from friends and sympathizers of the local movement.

In sending a subscription for our Czech Freethinkers' Fund, F. Warne writes:—

May I take this opportunity to thank you for all the help I have obtained from your writings, and from the *Freethinker*. Unhappily for me they did not come under my notice till eighteen months ago.

We have underlined the last sentence in the hopes that all our friends who wish to help will take the hint. There are any number of potential subscribers for this journal, just round the corner, and there are few who read the *Freethinker* for some time who do not cut adrift from the old religious faith, even if they do not become active workers in the cause. We trust that all our well-wishers will make a note of the point.

SPECIAL

WE are pleased to be able to report the recovery of the Bust of Charles Bradlaugh, which was stolen from the grave of Bradlaugh on September 12/13. It was found on Albury Heath, near Guildford. Save for the damage done in removing the Bust from the plinth, it is undamaged. There is no clue yet to the perpetrators of the outrage.

There has been of late a lively discussion at Pontypool over the proposal that the *Freethinker* shall be placed in the public library. The discussion began in the Council Chamber and was continued in the local press. Some excellent letters have appeared, and in a case where the refusal to admit the *Freethinker* is an obvious exhibition of religious bigotry, all the logic and the common sense have been on the one side. We congratulate both the local Freethinkers and also the others who have seen to it that their religious prepossessions have not prevented their acting with some regard to decency and justice.

Some of the discussion, from the religious side, was quite amusing. Councillor Jones, for example, complained that he found in the *Freethinker* nothing that was not hostile to Christianity. For that reason he did not want it in the public library. Anyone but a complete bigot might have bethought himself that Freethinkers pay rates equally with Christians, and the extent to which the Christian differs from the Freethinker is not greater than the extent to which the Freethinker differs from the Christian. He might also have remembered that he was not elected to the Council to protect Christianity from attack, but to carry out the secular administration of the district. And when a man who is elected for one purpose uses his position to defend something which he, as a councillor, is not elected to defend, and to deny an equality of rights to those who are entitled to support he shows that he is unfitted to do anything but carry round the collection bag on Sundays, that is if his fellow-believers care to trust him with so religiously—important a job.

Meanwhile, when the Council has enough justice and common-sense in its composition, we are quite ready to send a weekly copy of the *Freethinker* to the library post free. We do that to a large number of public libraries in the country, and in most instances it is read much more than the religious papers that are there displayed.

Glasgow saints are reminded that Mr. J. V. Shortt of Liverpool, will speak in the East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, this evening (December 4) at 7 o'clock, on "The Freethinker and Freewill." We can assure Mr. Shortt of a hearty welcome, and the audience of an interesting and forceful address.

There are some optimists in the world, and we think their presence may often cheer the downhearted. It must be very pleasant for the Sunday Schools, closing their doors for lack of scholars, to have the "assurance" of the Rev. H. V. Capsey, who says:—

My strong conviction is that, so far from being an obsolete institution the Sunday school is only now beginning to use its enormous possibilities for young people and the strengthening of the Church. What I do feel, however, is that, with the knowledge that young people at about the age of fourteen have been leaving our schools in such tremendous numbers of late years, it is both striking and blameworthy that the Church—our Methodist Church no less than others—has not risen to her duty and devoted all her energies and resources to tackling this urgent issue.

It is not Mr. Capsey's "strong convictions" which impress us, it is his admissions. Mr. Capsey is head of the Methodist Sunday School department. When he admits "tremendous" losses, he knows what he is talking about.

Freethought and Beginners

FROM time to time there are sent to the *Freethinker* interesting and instructive letters from new readers. Most of them, after stumbling about in perplexity, rather horrified at their unbelief in the religion to which they were brought up, and even more frightened at the word "Atheism," suddenly discover that there is a weekly journal devoted to propagating heresy in all religions, and to bring about complete unbelief in everything "supernatural" as a prelude to sane and rational thinking. It comes at first as rather a shock to find that there are large numbers of people who far from hiding it, do their best to glorify their Atheism, and who are better and happier for their casting-off the superstition and credulity which go to the make-up of religion.

Many new readers are content to peruse the *Freethinker* every week, and say little about their conversion. Others, armed with the new weapons of heresy, are out to make converts, or at least, engage in a battle royal with the stout-hearted defenders of the old order; and it is here that, to their dismay, they often come a complete cropper.

Reading a few numbers of our journal will, of course, if a man can think at all, make him see the folly and stupidity of believing in a "divine" revelation, or in gods of any order, but it does not necessarily follow that he can, with this little preparation, engage successfully a keen controversialist on the other side.

The religious weapons have not been forged in a week. They are not altogether wielded by fools. The various Churches have not held their power over mankind without having something more than sheer ignorance and stupidity behind them, or even fear. One of the great counts against the Church is that they have so often enlisted in their service some of the greatest and brightest intellects of mankind; and reading a few numbers of our paper is not going to dethrone these people very easily, however much the new convert feels he has truth and righteousness on his side.

Nor is reading just one book against "God" going to equip a man for meeting a trained thinker and reasoner on the other side. For example, if anyone wants to learn a foreign language it is not enough to go carefully through a grammar, and then imagine one is able to talk and understand that language. You might learn its rules, and even a good working vocabulary, but fluency is required when conversing with natives, and this means a mastery of words and phrases so great that they come directly into the mind almost without thinking as they do in one's own language. To achieve this requires long and arduous practice; the ear has to be trained completely anew, and the mind stored with fresh matter, and this often takes years. Moreover, adults never learn a foreign language without an accent which betrays them; it is almost hopeless to try to acquire the correct intonation which will pass muster among those born to the language.

Yet it is quite a common thing for the new Freethinker to feel that he is ready to meet the most consummate logician on the other side armed only, let us say, with the *Age of Reason*, and some of the arguments he has picked up in a few weeks. He wants to talk the new language perfectly—so perfectly, indeed, that the other fellow cannot tell he has been at it for a very short time. And he is astonished when he comes a cropper.

There are, of course, geniuses who master the most abstruse subjects before the average person has even got into an elementary stride; we must leave them out of our count. They soon show their mettle. The

Robert Taylors, the Bradlaughs, the Ingersolls, the Footes, take their places in the movement because they cannot be suppressed, but even in their cases it is nonsense to imagine that they did not have to pass through an apprenticeship. One can trace their advance from what can be called youthful crudities to the matured and reasoned work which made them famous. But they did not reach those heights without hard work.

Most new readers fall over the arguments for the existence of God. Behind the defenders is an army of thinkers, and whole libraries of books. It is true, of course, that the defence has had to abandon line after line, and that it is now fighting in the last ditch, so to speak. At the same time, the same old defences crop up again and again for the unwary attacker, and he imagines if he has demolished them he has won the battle. Alas, Theism is very hydra-headed; it has had a long life, and a not altogether unsuccessful one, for even now many people who imagine that they have completely shredded the outworn belief often find themselves still in the grip of its ghost, as it were. They will not "dogmatically" deny that a God could not possibly exist; they prefer to stand on the "I don't know," and "You don't know" as a safer position. They will utterly deny a Devil; they will ridicule a Geni or a unicorn; but they boggle at denying a "God."

It is not easy, let me admit, to discuss Theism with some of the Church's great thinkers and writers. Aquinas holds his position as perhaps the greatest thinker in the Roman Catholic Church because his defence of the Theistic position is backed up by some of the cleverest and most subtle arguments that man has ever produced. It requires a training in philosophical reasoning beyond that which is possible for many to achieve to meet easily such a caustical writer.

Thus, when we are asked to recommend a "good" book which will demolish Aquinas, Mansell, or, let us say, even Eddington in one fell swoop so that someone entirely untrained in philosophical terminology can completely annihilate their arguments, we are asked rather more than is possible. Even such works as our Editor's *Theism or Atheism* or the *Grammar of Freethought* presuppose a good deal of previous reading and studying for their complete understanding.

But this does not mean that a beginner should lose heart. It simply means that he is not likely to demolish the great men on the other side before he has gone through the first weeks of an apprenticeship. A man like the late G. K. Chesterton can put up—as he has done—a very plausible fight for his Church and all it stands for, but it took him some time before even he could do that. One must not expect to dislodge him without acquiring the information necessary for dealing with the fallacies on which such writers flourish.

And that training is not at all easy. Freethought demands stern service, and the arguments which support it are not always glib and facile ones. The "rewards" are very meagre, in actual physical terms. But if the would-be Freethinker is true to himself he will find in the intellectual integrity that Freethought brings all the happiness that a great ideal can bring; and it is worth striving for.

Freethinkers should make a point of *buying* what they can in the way of books as against just *borrowing*. A book should be at hand when one is in the mood for study or when one has the time to learn something afresh. Arguments should be gone over and over again. They should be thought out and mastered. Problems should be set and solved. Let me give one as an instance.

Those Freethinkers who—like myself—are convinced that there never was a "Jesus Christ," should take a work in favour of his existence and answer it point by point, argument by argument. Let them take, as a definite example, the book written by the semi-Rationalist, Dr. Conybeare, against Robertson and Drews entitled *The Historical Christ*, and let them put down in a note book clearly their replies. Such a lesson would prove valuable study, and equip them in their struggle for the intellectual emancipation of mankind. They will not find it easy, but the attempt will be worth while. And it may lead to other studies in the same direction.

H. CUTNER.

The Christian God

SMITH: "Suppose we have a chat on the subject of religion. To begin, I should like to have your opinion of the Christian's idea of his God.

Robinson: "I cannot believe in an object or thing unless my mind can form a mental image of such object or thing, and I cannot therefore conceive the reality of an all-powerful ruler of the universe. Such a conception concedes the right of a self-elected despot to do as he wills, even to the extent of condemning countless millions of souls to eternal and indescribable torture, a repulsive idea contrary to all the principles of morality. Presumably the vast majority of Christians recognize how manifestly unjust it is for a human being like, say the late Czar of Russia, to possess absolute power over his subjects, yet they see nothing incongruous in a self-elected God assuming arbitrary power over the entire world, and using it in a merciless manner. The Christian's conception of his God does not harmonize with my reason."

S.: "Nor with mine. Christians say the world was created by God, but how he came into being is left to the imagination. Although they pretend to have solved the riddle of the universe they cannot shed a particle of light on this all-important fundamental point."

R.: "Christianity cannot be true unless the Genesis story of the origin of man is a fact. Its complete structure is built upon this foundation. Scientists have proved beyond doubt that the story does not possess even a modicum of truth, and agree that the real origin of man was correctly expounded by Darwin, who, we know, arrived at his conclusions after prolonged study and many experiments. The writer of Genesis cannot be identified. All that is known of him is that he derived his story from a Babylonian myth, and that he was ignorant of science, and many of the things that are common knowledge to-day."

S.: "That is so. My chief impression of his story is one of astonishment that so many people still believe it."

R.: "The Bible is the chief authority for the Christian's belief, and his conception of the origin of the universe, albeit little or nothing is known of its compilers. There is nothing of value in this book as a guide to domestic life, nothing about art, science, literature or education, and nothing in it that could not have been produced by ordinary imaginative writers."

S.: "If it were the work of a God, it ought to be vastly superior to any book produced by man, but obviously this is far from being the case. Its manifold absurdities, impossibilities and self-contradictions satisfy me that the truth is not in it. I never read apologetic works of its supporters without my unbelief being strengthened, for they are invariably

a rehash of fallacies which have been oft refuted and not infrequently they display acute disagreement among themselves. One of their familiar assertions, about which there appears to be no disagreement, is that the self-contradictions of the Bible prove its genuineness for, if the book had been faked, the writers, they say would have been careful to make their statements agree! Is it possible to find a reviewer of a work recording secular history who would dare to advance such a reason for any self-contradictions appearing in it? And would a jury convict if the witnesses for the prosecution proved that there was no collusion among them by all submitting conflicting evidence?"

R.: "An idiotic argument. The Bible serves little useful purpose except as an interesting record of the barbarous events of a bygone age."

S.: "I cannot discern the hand of a God in our daily lives. If the frequent recurrence of the calamities with which we are so familiar is, as we are told, a sign of his wrath then I contend that the Christian possesses a God which he could profitably dispense with. If there were a God I believe he would, in this world, discriminate between his supporters and detractors in favour of the former, but he does nothing of the kind. The Freethinker is as safe from his interference as the most devout Christian, and the gambling-den is as secure from lightning and fire as the tabernacle; in fact more secure if it has a lightning-conductor and the latter is without one."

R.: "I believe that if there were a supreme being he would communicate his desires to his subjects in a manner which they all could readily understand. It would be such a simple matter for him to do so. His eternal silence surely is presumptive proof of his non-existence."

S.: "Christians say that the favourable answers they receive in response to prayers to their God is a proof of his existence. They cannot, however, produce a particle of convincing evidence to show that their needs would not have been satisfied without their supplications. On the other hand we know that it would be fatuous to pray for the restoration of a missing limb, the cessation of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and the innumerable other evils which will occur to anyone giving the matter a little consideration. We seldom hear Christians dilate on their prayers which are unanswered, and which obviously far outnumber the seemingly favourable responses."

R.: "Like all games of chance these appeals to an Almighty are governed by the law of averages for a certain percentage *must* inevitably appear to be answered favourably. The Christians' belief in the efficacy of prayer is a pathetic fallacy."

S.: "Many Christians claim that without their religion they would be impelled to follow their own natural inclination to sin. I believe those who take this view are unsound at heart, and are bound eventually to disgrace themselves whether they remain Christians or not. People who claim that morality is dependent on pleasing a divine authority apparently do not admit that a good life is admirable for its own sake. I believe that voluntary goodness uninfluenced by restrictions, other than those imposed by the law and public opinion, is an ethical ideal for which all should strive."

R.: "I agree. What have we to show for 1900 years of Christianity? The wars, persecutions, poverty, ignorance and misery which have disgraced the past are still much in evidence, and speaking generally the Christian Churches appear to be more concerned with the erection and maintenance of beautiful edifices, ritual, artifices to entice their straying sheep back to the fold, and the glorification of

their clergy than with wars and persecutions, and the amelioration of the condition of the masses, complacently leaving this work to the humanists, among whom are to be found many Freethinkers. Also, I believe that the individual Christian is in no respect a better citizen than the Freethinker. If the prison authorities were consulted it would be learnt that the proportion of freethinking criminals is not higher, perhaps not so high, as among Christians; the divorce judges, and other competent observers would affirm that immorality among Freethinkers is not more prevalent than among Christians; the Court officials would admit that the word of a Freethinker who affirmed is at least as reliable as the word of a Christian who cannot be trusted to speak the truth unless he kisses a so-called holy book; among themselves the clergy would admit that the envy, hatred, malice and uncharitableness prevailing in their flocks could not possibly be surpassed by any body of Freethinkers, and professional men and tradespeople would assure us that Freethinkers pay their bills as promptly as Christians."

S.: "I do not believe that their religion makes Christians virtuous. In some instances, notably in their attitude towards heterodoxy, it makes them the reverse for it condones, and even encourages, any kind of untruth which appears to lend support to the maintenance of their crumbling creeds."

R.: "Yes, and with requisite power, fortunately lacking, their religion would impel them to persecute Freethinkers by prison, rack and possibly the stake. Lying and persecuting for the glory of God are two evils inseparable from the Christian faith."

S.: "The influence of religion can undoubtedly be traced in the recent despicable outrage at the grave of Charles Bradlaugh at Brookwood. No; religion does not make Christians more moral than Freethinkers."

PRO REASON.

Nature Notes of a Freethinker

I HAD watched the swallows over the common in October. How long would they stay? The weather was mild, and if a vicious bite by an insect was any indication of their food being about, there were bites in abundance. On October 14, the swallows were with us; on October 15, they had gone. The flocking and final flight for a foreign land is a wonderful event. On October 21 I saw a young house-martin between the railway lines at Ewell East Station; he was fluttering between the railway lines until picked up by a man. The man told me later on that it was quite all right after being thrown or shot into the air. I wonder. It had missed the great flocking of its kind; it may be, as a friend has tried to explain to me, that each migrant bird has a compass in its head. A bird-lover at Abinger tells me of young swallows sitting in a row on a telegraph line late in the evening; strange, he thought, they always disappear through an open door in the barn. But on close inspection, he found that, accidentally, the wrong door was left open, and the swallows would not enter. A closing of this, and an opening of the familiar door brought the swallows inside. Young swallows are a pretty sight—glossy black, rich orange and white, combined with a graceful shape—and what to me, in birds, is trust from these pretty creatures, makes them all that legend can create for them. Their song, on an early summer morning, might teach us, if we are capable of being taught, what an immense amount of things there are in life that do not matter.

On the grass were some pieces of bread, and a female blackbird came up to them quickly. At that moment, a crow flew over, and as there was an element of doubt about the kind of bird it might have been, the blackbird stopped before pecking, and looked upwards. It could not afford to be mistaken if the bird overhead had been a hawk. The blackbird was getting its referent right. The word "referent," Mr. Stuart Chase states in his *Tyranny of Words*, is a technical term contributed to language by two authors on the subject, Messrs. Ogden and Richards. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Chase has rendered a great service to those of the human race who prefer to leave the exploitation of ignorance to inferior minds. The way of the reformer, for liberty of thought, for freedom of speech, or for any advancement of mankind is rough and hard; there are no glittering prizes. But, I think, there is the reward of retaining one's self-respect. The *Tyranny of Words* is, I hope, the beginning of a new chapter in history, when words will be chosen with care, and when the line of communication between speaker and listener will be clear. In some ways, the magnificent effort of the author reminds me of the warning note made by the cock blackbird to his own family and other bird families that a hawk or a cat is about. "Get your referents right," he seems to whistle. And Mr. Chase, when high-sounding words are being used by political actors, warns us in his book to get our referents right. It is salutary, and I make no apology for bringing the *Tyranny of Words* into these notes. When birds do not get their referents right, they are caught in traps, shot, or killed.

A visit to Blakeney Point, the Bird Sanctuary, on the coast of Norfolk, will amply repay the nature-lover. There are new species of birds to be seen with different habits from those inland; and the student is once again reminded that the more he knows, the more there is to be known. From the motor-boat, scraping the bottom of the creek for a good distance, I saw a pair of Oyster Catchers. A bird-watcher at this place, in his book entitled *Sea Swallows*, tells of a friendship he had with an Oyster Catcher: "The old chap knew me extremely well, and when I lived on the Britannia, my houseboat, he visited me every morning as soon as I went on deck. Alighting on the shingle bank, he would stroll up and down, and we talked to each other, yes, talked in our respective ways. When night came and the lamp was lighted, he flew over the houseboat and always wished me good-night in his own fashion. I well understood him, and we were indeed regular pals." That last word is good gipsy language for brothers. The Ringed Plover could be seen; he is a pretty bird, with a swift flight, and very handsome with his black collar. Away in the distance, through glasses, we could see hundreds of black-backed Gulls on the sand and shingle. A solitary Heron would fly majestically through the clear summer air, and the sedge-warbler, with his musical jumble, unceasing each day, could be heard from the rushes. The sand on the Point is fine, white, and clean; the spiky maram grass in banks and tufts is a fitting colour to it, and when the sun shines there is a memorable picture. The place is chiefly inhabited by tern, which the author, Robert J. Pinchen, describes as *Sea Swallows*, and his book, published at a shilling by Green & Co., Lowestoft, is a useful addition to bird records. It is written in simple language, contains facts, and I was pleased to have my own view confirmed by the author in his words:—

"For birds, when you understand them, really do talk and become friendly with you." Thoreau re-

cards it in *Walden*, that one day a sparrow perched on his shoulder—and, “I feel that I was more distinguished by that circumstance than I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn.” And, in talking to a landscape-gardener about Blakeney Point, as we crossed a common with the air full of thistle seed and gold finches, he exclaimed, when I mentioned the book, “Oh! that’s by old Bob Pinchen; I know him well.” It is no small honour to be known in the world as a friend of birds.

NICHOLAS MERE.

P.S. It is November the twentieth, blowing and raining, and we ARE honoured; our tame thrush, who takes food from our hands is singing under the kitchen window.

Religious Views

THE Vicar’s wife had been advertising for a maid, and the applicant she was interviewing seemed to her a likely person to fill the post. “Now, Mary,” she said, “before I finally engage you, I would like to ask if you have any religious views.” Mary replied that she hadn’t any; but, she added: I have some splendid picture postcard views of Blackpool.

One of the happy results, according to Mr. Chamberlain, of his visits to Herr Hitler was that he had got to know what was in Hitler’s mind, and Hitler had got to know what was in his mind. Well, the vicar’s wife would have no difficulty in grasping what was in the girl’s mind, as Mary had delivered the goods, so to speak; her views had an objective reality that could be verified by reference to the scenes depicted. The word “view” comes to us from the Latin *videre*, I see; but it is used in many secondary senses, as when we speak of political, or social, views. These, of course, refer to national ideals or social ambitions. Religious views are mostly based on the authority of the Bible, but the fact that many of these views have crumbled into dust, shows that they were not built on a sure foundation. The belief in witchcraft, or slavery, or the belief in an eternal hell, beliefs which were once thought to have a biblical sanction, no longer exercise the public mind. The comforting doctrine that God created the world in six days, about six thousand years ago, was as firmly fixed in the Christian creeds, as well as in the popular imagination, as any belief could be. But, now, no less a person than the Bishop of London says that it took God two thousand million years to create the earth! And even then He made it so infernally hot that He had to wait more than one and a half thousand million years to allow it to cool sufficiently before it was a fit habitation for man. He seems to have had a lot of bother with the proper distribution of “heat”; while His ideas of “fitness” were like Bret Harte’s heathen Chinese—peculiar. In some parts of the Earth still, it is so hot that if you venture out at mid-day you are likely to get sun-stroke and in other parts you are liable to be frozen to death at any time. One might have more faith in the Bishop’s honesty if he were found making an effort to expunge such childish views from his Church’s creed. If he were to proclaim such heretical doctrines from his pulpit, it is possible that some of the congregation might lose their religious bearings, and imagine that the Devil himself had got into the church, and was masquerading as a divinely appointed priest.

One of the religious views that dominated the Christian world for long centuries—and is still taught in all its repulsive horrors by the Catholic Church and the Salvation Army—was the doctrine of an eternal

hell. A writer in a current magazine tells of having unearthed in an old bookshop in Glasgow, a copy of eighteenth century poems, written by a Mr. James Maxwell, known as the “Paisley Poet.” One of the poems was written for the edification of his oldest son, William, aged eleven. William would appear to have had the doldrums or something, and the poem must have been written to dispel the gloom of the boy’s mind. Unfortunately, the writer only quotes one verse of the poem, but it is sufficient to reproduce the religious atmosphere of the eighteenth century. It runs:—

O dreadful thought; for evermore
In hell’s infernal chains to lie!
In endless burnings there to roar
And long for death, yet never die!

If this did not cure William of the doldrums, I’m afraid his case was hopeless. Still, the old belief lingers. Sitting in the park a few months ago, my meditations were interrupted by the approach of an old gentleman who sat down beside me. I was in no mood for conversation with a stranger, but I had to listen to his tale. He began by telling me of the number of Freethought lecturers he had flattened out in his younger days, and the argumentative weapons he had used in their slaughter. Happening to mention the word hell, I said I was not aware that such a ghastly doctrine was held seriously by any one at the present day. His chest expanded to its fullest dimensions, and banging upon it with his clenched fist, he loudly exclaimed: “But, there is, sir, and I’m one of them.”

Passing a meeting house of the Brethren recently, I saw posted on the door a bill announcing an address by one of their leading lights, on “When is Christ coming?” Curiously enough about the same time I was handed a leaflet issued by another sect, assuring me that Christ was already here, busy separating the sheep from the goats. I expect He would find the goats in the ascendancy. This belief has had a chequered career. The early Christians of the first and second centuries were convinced of the speedy return of Christ in their day, but, gradually, owing to the disappointment of their hopes, the belief was allowed to lapse. In recent centuries it has been revived by some of the smaller sects, who are generally regarded by the rest of the Christian believers as “cranks.”

Dr. Draper says that besides the Pelagian, the Nestorian and the Eutychian, the number of heresies that rent the early Church were “innumerable.” Indeed, it is safe to say that there never has been a time in the history of Christianity when there was any agreement as to its doctrines. Very early in the Church’s career, disputes arose as to its beliefs and administration. It began with the quarrel between Peter and Paul, and we find the Apostle Paul boasting that he had withstood Peter to the face! If anyone should have known what were the articles of the Church’s constitution, it was surely Peter, who had followed Christ in his desultory wanderings, and listened to his discourses. But perhaps Christ himself was to blame for leaving his estate in such a mess; because of all the questions that were put to him by the Pharisees, and Sadducees, and his own disciples, during his mission, none of them ever received a straightforward or definite answer.

Even when Pilate asked him: “What is truth?” he held his peace. It may be that the pale Galilean did not understand the philosophy of the question from the point of view of an educated Roman; but seeing that he himself laid claim to being “The Way, the Truth, and the Life,” his silence seems inexcusable. His answer might have saved his followers from slaughtering and burning each other in after-times, simply for want of some authoritative utterance as to

the truth he had come to proclaim. But the opportunity passed, and all he left to the world was a heritage of conflicting views, and their sordid results.

The Bible as a Court of Appeal to determine "true" Christianity, has now no standing. The Bishop of London says the Bible is NOT the Word of God, it only contains His Word. Only the Bishop forgot to tell us in what part of the haystack the needle is likely to be found.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

A Line that strikes like Lightning

"LIFELONG fighter against puritan taboos, he is a pattern of two puritan virtues—industry and frugality."

This sentence appears in the course of a strikingly fine appreciation of the internationally famous Norman Lindsay in *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney, N.S.W., Australia), of August 20. Under an impressionistic study of the writer-artist by Syd Miller are the words, "No orgies for him, except in paint or print." Mr. Lindsay's frugality is clearly self-imposed, for he enjoys an income that has soared to £7,000 a year.

These few preliminary particulars, it is hoped, will serve to heighten interest in the following extract from *Smith's* article:—

The Rev. John Williams, missionary, was Lindsay's grandfather; and Lindsay has spread anti-Christian propaganda with reckless passion as fervently as his grandfather spread Christianity.

He had influenced more young painters and writers than anybody in Australia.

Most striking of his essays in blasphemy was a wartime cartoon he did for *The Bulletin*. It was never printed. It showed Christ sitting on the knees of God, saying, "What did you do in the Great War, daddy?"

What a rip-roaring line! Almost might it be said that Voltaire himself would have envied it. Within the same given number of words there could not be expressed anything more incisively destructive of the superstitious belief in the Bible.

A few further particulars may well be given regarding the man from whom it comes.

"To his three sons," we are told, "he has always been a faintly aloof elder brother whom they call Norman. They have all been affected by their father's whirling personality. Jack and Philip write historical novels, peopled by the same swaggering braves and hungry wenches that crowd Norman's pictures. Like their father they prefer the European past to the Australian present.

"Raymond, the only son to remain in Sydney, revives in paint the Australia of colonial days.

"One week-end at Springwood"—the father's N.S.W. country home—"a young girl guest, who had not been in the Lindsay set before, was having a shower. Royster-ing Lindsayites started a frolic in the bathroom until Norman Lindsay came in, kicked everybody out, and went out himself.

"The nabob of the nude intervened to protect maiden modesty."

Here we have the true Lindsay in vivid contrast with the Lindsay that appears to be revealed in some of his paintings.

Jack's name, of course, is familiar to readers of the *Freethinker*. Sydney friends relate that, in his earlier years, he had a grudge against Norman for misleading him in art and politics. But it is certain that—neither in the past nor in the present—did Jack ever need an apology for his father.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Obituary

EDWARD SNELLING

WE regret to record the passing of yet another of the Old Guard in the person of Edward Snelling, on November 23, at the age of 81. Mr. Snelling was one of the oldest living members of the National Secular Society, and attended the Hall of Science Classes. We remember him as a hard working member of the Walthamstow Branch

of the N.S.S., of which he was for some time chairman. Persistent in his ideas, he was of a naturally quiet disposition, and so long as the work went on he obtained all the satisfaction he desired. Freethought in this, and we presume, in other countries, owes much to men and women of his type, who find in the doing of the work sufficient payment for the efforts they have made. In his later years he worked in connexion with the South Place Ethical Society, although his membership and his interest in the N.S.S. continued. This journal had no greater admirer than Edward Snelling. We last saw him only a few weeks before his death in the *Freethinker* office, where he was a frequent and welcome visitor. His death was the immediate consequence of an accident, and although we are a full ten years younger than was our old friend, we know that one's recuperative powers are not what they were as one approaches the end of the term. A son and daughter survive him. We tender our sincerest sympathy, and note the passing of one who worked well for a great cause.—C.C.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, A Lecture. Weather permitting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. J. B. Hayward Chairman, Clapham Labour Party—"Labour's Immediate Programme."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor T. H. Pear, M.A., B.Sc.—"The Psychology of Conversation."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Ivor C. Lewis—"V.D.—Why?"

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BEDLINGTON (Miners' Welfare): 7.30, Tuesday, December 6, Mr. N. Charlton (N.S.S.)—"A Modern Pilgrim's Progress."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools, Birmingham): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"The Churches and the Threat to Civilization."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Miss A. L. Bully (Neston)—"Saving the Race."

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

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Monseigneur News Theatre, Edinburgh): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"The New Science and the New God." Reserved seats 1s.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool N.S.S.)—"The Freethinker and Freewill."

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Forrester's Hall, Trafalgar Street): 7.0, Dr. Dunlop (Glasgow)—"Foods and Pads."

HYDE (The Socialist Church, Hyde, Cheshire): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"Religion in a Changing World."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner—"Truthfulness, Not a Christian Virtue."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Demonstration by Local Speakers.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near all Saints Church): 7.0, Mr. W. Fletcher (Birkenhead)—"Religion, Science and Freethought."

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

FREEMASONS as well as others wishing to become members of a Lodge suitable for freethinking men, should write for information to—RHIMBA c/o "Freethinker," 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP

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

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

Name

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