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

Views and Opinions

Ourselves and Others

THE date on this journal coincides with the first day of the New Year, so we may this week talk about ourselves. And by "ourselves," I mean the *Freethinker* and all for which it stands, above all for the great Cause of Freethought. It was in May, 1881, that the first issue of the *Freethinker* appeared under the editorship of G. W. Foote. A little more than a year later Foote, as a recognition of his editorship received a pressing invitation to spend a year in Holloway Gaol. The invitation was not to be declined, and there was not to be even the now customary twenty-five per cent off for those who met with the complete approval of their hosts. The reason for so pressing an invitation from so distinguished a source was that "blasphemy" had been committed. Horrible crime! and yet a unique one. For alone among crimes "blasphemy" is an offence that is determined primarily by geography, and next by mere opinion. In a Mohammedan country there is nothing blasphemous in criticizing the Christian God. It may be even counted for religious righteousness. On the other hand it is not blasphemous to attack the Mohammedan God in London. But it may be blasphemous to attack the Christian God here. The unique quality of blasphemy does not stop at this. In England when a man is charged with blasphemy it is impossible for the judge to say, with all the evidence before him, whether a crime has been committed or not. The man charged cannot say whether he has committed it or not. The jury alone can say yes or no. For while blasphemy is always a question of geography, in this country it is also a question of time and opinion. What was blasphemy in 1738 was not blasphemy in 1838, and what was blasphemy in 1838 is not blasphemy in 1938. It depends entirely upon the opinion of the jury. The man charged with blasphemy is or is not guilty in accordance with what the jury thinks ought to be said

about religion, and the jury of to-day may differ considerably from the jury of to-morrow. Blasphemy is the most ridiculous offence known to man. It is equal to imprisoning a man for speaking disrespectfully of the equator.

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Nemesis

Incidentally Foote's sentence brought its nemesis—to Christianity. For many years legacies intended for Freethought had been declared illegal. Freethought had in this manner been robbed of many thousands of pounds, and nothing was commoner than to find Christian speakers and writers taunting the Freethought movement with its poverty, and demanding to know what we had done with the money of which they had robbed us. Some years later Foote took Lord Coleridge's reading of the law of blasphemy at his trial, and upon that founded the Secular Society, Limited. A legacy was contested, and the case was fought, and won, right up to the House of Lords. The *Church Times* said the final verdict placed Christianity and Atheism on the same level—quite an unconscious compliment to Christianity. But a legacy to a Freethought Society is now as secure as one left to the Church of England.

Foote's prosecution never stopped the issue of the *Freethinker*. It was issued all the time Foote was in prison. It has been issued every week since. In its fifty-eighth year of publication, it has now a wider and deeper influence than ever. As Lamb said of certain writers, it has become "damn good to steal from." It goes wherever the English language is spoken, and if our girdle round the world is not a very wide one, it is still there. And it has continued without ever for a single week paying its way. In that respect it may well be proud of its friends in all ranks of society. It has done its work in complete fearlessness of friend and foe. No man could ever buy praise or place in the *Freethinker*; no one ever evaded necessary criticism on account of friendship or from a desire to gain favour. This is the tradition associated with the *Freethinker* of which I am most proud. I have kept this tradition in being, and I hope to hand it on untarnished to my successor.

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Loss and Gain

One other thought connected with the past, but which goes forward to the future. When the *Freethinker* commenced the career of what was destined to be the longest lived Freethought paper in this country, and which is now actually the oldest Freethought paper in Europe, it looked as though the battle for freedom of speech had been secured with no reasonable prospect of what had been won being again lost. The freedom of the Press—and above all a free press for the "common" people—had been fought (mainly by Freethinkers) and won. Beaten on the fields of science, philosophy, and to a

smaller extent, sociology, the Churches were fighting in retreat, not with any apparent hope of regaining lost ground, but rather in the hope of securing some territory which they could hold securely from the enemy. The state of the world to-day proves that this forecast concerning the security of Freethought was rather premature. The main principle upon which Freethought rests is now challenged over a large part of the world, and in some countries independent thinking has again become one of the most serious of crimes. Slave States (It is more euphonious to call them "Authoritarian" or "Totalitarian" States, although both terms stand for States in which the individual possess no rights whatever with regard to freedom of movement, speech, thought, or publication) and even in this country we have many people in high places, and holding Government positions, who hardly trouble to show their deep sympathy with these servile States. "National necessity" is a phrase that goes far with these people as a means of fooling others, and the issue of war or peace is placed before an unthinking public when the real issue is that of war, and something even worse than war. We have again to reargue positions and principles that were fifty years ago generally accepted. Even allegiance to a party is converted into adequate grounds for sacrificing the independence of its members. It is so easy to say that if one transforms social conditions one will transform opinion. There is a certain truth here, but experience has shown that this transformation of social conditions may as easily strike at freedom, thought and expression as otherwise. The bulwark of physical servitude is always that of mental slavery.

These things, however, while disappointing, need not be disheartening. Progress would not be the comparatively rare, hesitant thing it is if it occurred with the smooth regularity with which a marble rolls down an inclined plane. Liberty, as it has been well said, is not something that is achieved, but something that is always being achieved. We gain an elevation to-day, only to recognize that we have a new elevation before us that we could not before recognize. And in addition there are recurring periods when the darker human forces reorganize themselves and we are forced to defend the ground already gained. But tyrannies, autoeracies, dictatorships, offer nothing new in the world. Mainly, as with those twins of stupid cruelty, Hitler and Mussolini, they arise from the freedom that has been gained, and they disappear in time as a consequence of the irksome control they impose upon the people. The cases are few in which tyrant succeeds tyrant, and that is so because tyranny lacks the inherent power of perpetuation. Physically weak parents may repeat themselves in their offspring, but with each generation the type moves to extinction. Freedom may expose a people to risks, but it at least is in line with all forms of real progress. It leaves the road open to experiment, and unless the story of evolution is one of nature's greatest impostures, freedom of experiment is nature's chief road to advancement.

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Our Future

At no period of its existence was the *Freethinker* more necessary than it is to-day. I do not know any other avowed Freethought paper, and I am acquainted with nearly all that have been issued, that quite covers the ground this one does. And the relations between it and its readers have been peculiarly intimate. Some time back I asked for the names of those who had taken in the paper for fifty years, and was astonished to find how many "filled the bill," and how staunch their affection was for "our paper," as many of them called it. The complaints I had was from

the less than "fifties" who suggested that they might be given a chance to say how they first became acquainted with the paper. Well, here it is. Let them send a brief account, the briefer the better, how they met the paper, and I will print a selection. It may help, too, in many ways.

Here is another experiment I suggest. Most of the *Freethinker* readers are what is called "bookish" men or women. They must from time to time in their reading come across passages, dealing either with opinions of facts, that would form a useful item in a notebook of Freethinking items. These may be statements in connexion with the origin or development of religion, some pregnant facts that are concerned with the history of the Christian or other church, some vital facts in ethics, in science and so forth. I suggest that they make a faithful copy of these passages, short or long, and send them to me. I have had the idea of putting together such a volume myself on these lines, but that would represent only my own point of view, and I should like to get the points of view of others. My job will be that of selecting and editing. It is an effort in co-operative authorship, and I think the result should be a useful volume. Anyway, we will see what comes of it. It is important that in every case name of author, page and volume, with the date of the book and full title shall be given.

Finally. At the beginning of last year an offer was made that every new subscriber might have the *Freethinker* sent him for a year on payment of the usual subscription of 15s. This subscription also included a selection of five-shillingsworth of publications of the Pioneer Press, free. We are repeating this offer, and we are expecting a good response. Many of our existing subscribers took advantage of the offer to make a present of a year's supply of the paper to someone in whom they were interested.

And now another final word. To wish everyone a Happy New Year in existing circumstances sounds rather sarcastic. I am not one who can rest content with Mr. Chamberlain's assurance that we may have peace and happiness at Christmas because war with us had been averted—for a time. It is like inviting a man condemned to death to rejoice because his execution has been postponed for a day; and a "peace" purchased at the price of Munich sounds rather too much like "God bless me and my son, and God damn thee and thy son," to be considered really comforting. So I must content myself with wishing every *Freethinker* reader and his family—where they exist—every possible happiness, and I know they will join me in wishing increased prosperity to the "best of Causes."

CHAPMAN COHEN

Do the joys of Paradise pall on the pleasure-jaded sense of the "Elect"? They look off in the distance to the tortures of the damned, where Destruction is naked before them, and Hell hath no covering; where the Devil with his angels stirreth up the embers of the fire which is never quenched; where the doubters, whom the Church could neither answer nor put to silence; where the great men of antiquity, Confucius, Buddha, Fo, Hermes, Zoroaster, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; where the great and gifted and glorious, who mocked at difficulty, softened the mountains of despair, and hewed a path amidst the trackless waste that mortal feet might tread the way of peace; where the great men of modern times who would not insult the Deity by bowing to the foolish word of a hireling priest; where all these writhe in their tortures, turn and turn and find no ray, but yell in fathomless despair; and when the Elect behold all this they say, striking on their harps of gold, "Aha! we are comforted, and thou tormented, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and our garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb."—Theodore Parker.

A Fly on the Wheel

Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man!

Matthew Arnold.

Rough work, Iconoclasm, but the only way to get at Truth.—*O. W. Holmes.*

It is a rare thing for Roman Catholics, Protestant State Church ecclesiastics, and Nonconformist divines, to agree. For Catholics hold that Protestant views are damnable; Anglicans contend that Romish teaching is a vain invention of "Satan"; and Nonconformists echo, "A plague on both your houses." Yet this apparent miracle has happened. A manifesto has been issued concerning the recrudescence of Jewish persecution, which bears the signatures of a Roman Cardinal, a Protestant Archbishop, and a Nonconformist divine, or, to be quite exact:—

Cardinal Hinsley
Cosmo Cantaur
J. Scott Lidgett.

And curiously, although this is a Protestant country, the name of the Romish Cardinal stands first. The manifesto itself is, like the curate's egg, "good in places," but it should make a thoughtful reader think furiously. For, after deploring the prevalence of Anti-Jewish feeling in this country (East London), it goes on

We wish to affirm that we believe racial hatred and discrimination to be contrary to the spirit and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly there are difficult problems requiring mutual understanding for their solution. We therefore urge all Christian people to observe the supreme law of Christian brotherhood in their relations with all people.

It was said that Coleridge's long-winded metaphysics were "only his fun." And the sly fun of these three elderly ecclesiastics gains enormously when it is contrasted with the dry testimony of historians and chroniclers. Historic Christianity did not worry about human brotherhood. The world was divided, from its narrow point of view, into believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, sheep and goats. Christians burnt other Christians for a mere difference of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. And all kinds of Christians persecuted Jews and Freethinkers. It was not until the advent of Democracy, with its evangel of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, that Christian priests began to pretend, hypocritically, that their religion taught such things at all.

So far as this country is concerned, the Christian Church was far more in earnest in supporting the governing classes than in identifying herself with any scheme of human brotherhood. The Bishops, in the House of Lords, where, of all places, they showed their sense of equality, incurred an amount of hatred which only a perusal of their votes can explain. They were defenders of absolutism, slavery, and the bloodthirsty penal code; they were the determined opponents of every political or social reform; and they had their reward in the contempt of the Democrats which has lasted to this day.

Of late years, Christian apologists never seem to tire of boasting, untruthfully, of the alleged toleration of the religion they profess so loudly. Yet the Christian Bible absolutely reeks with bigotry and persecution, and the Old Testament Hebrews were expressly ordered to kill heretics. According to the legends, the early apostles of the so-called "Religion of Love" were also saturated with this same spirit of persecution. Saint Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and Saint John, the beloved disciple, said, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him

God speed." Saint Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the infant Christian Church there is plenty of malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness, and the subsequent bloodthirsty history of Christianity after its accession to secular power justifies the sober student of history in regarding bigotry and persecution as of the essence of that Oriental superstition. Indeed, while Christianity survives, the recrudescence of religious persecution is not only possible, but highly probable. To say that a two-thousand-years'-old religion which threatened eternal torment in a fiery hell for heresy and unbelief is opposed to persecution on earth is but to gloss the plainest of facts. The Blasphemy Laws are still on the Statute Book of a country supposed to be in the van of civilization, and are at any moment liable to enforcement. They are the standing menace of a dying creed to those who smile at its ancient ignorance and childish fables too ostentatiously.

Besides the logic of the Christian doctrines, such as the fall of man and the redemption by blood, the character of its Sacred Scripture must be held partly responsible for the terribly intolerant principles of the Christian Churches. The Old Testament reflects the ideas of a low stage of civilization and is full of sheer barbarism. Such sentences as: "I will make my arrows drunk with blood," sound utterly remote and repugnant to modern ears. But the overrated New Testament is a worse obstacle to human progress, because it reaches the damnation of the majority of the human race, and perpetuates the disgusting savagery of an eternal hell-fire. By adopting such books; and by pretending that such mischievous nonsense represented divine wisdom, Christian priests have done untold harm to human development. There is also a direct injunction to persecution in the text: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and tens of thousands of the most helpless of their sex were done to death in obedience to so terrible a command.

Yet Christian priests conveniently forget all these things, and, pointing to the "Golden Rule," pretend to find a Religion of Love in such a pronouncement, which was a commonplace in religion before the advent of the Christian superstition. It was taught by Gotama Buddha, it was embodied in the teaching of Confucius, it was in the teaching of the great Pagan philosophers. The Golden Rule is not primarily Christian, but it was stolen by Christian priests. And what a comment on the alleged benevolence of Christianity is such a text as: "Depart from me ye cursed into the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels," which is simply crude demonology, and indistinguishable from sheer Mumbo-Jumboism.

If there were any inherent tendency towards benevolence and brotherhood in the Christian Religion, how is it that Abyssinia is the most backward of all countries? Abyssinia has been Christian for a longer period than Britain, and the Coptic Church has a far longer, and more respectable lineage than the modern Protestant faith represented by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the fancy religion advocated by the Rev. Scott Lidgett. Yet Abyssinia remains the last stronghold of the infamous Slave Trade, long after it has been abandoned by all countries with a shred of civilization. As for Britain itself, what benefit did this country derive from Christian ethics? After many many centuries of Priestcraft, the State was actually compelled to enforce national education, for the simple reason that sixty per cent of the population was illiterate. It was then found that a large number of citizens were living in slums under the direst condition, a fact that had escaped no more than passing attention throughout the Ages of Faith and

Ignorance, when Christianity was at its height of power and glory.

The Christian Churches are still entombed and imprisoned within the covers of an Oriental fetish-book, reeking with old-world ignorance. Men ask for the bread of knowledge, the Churches offer but the stone of superstition. Priestly teaching is no longer of any practical use, for it represents but a sluggish back-water in the river of human knowledge. The great waters of thought roll on, and bear us further and further away from the ignorance and superstition of the past. This process of devolution will not be unduly retarded by the audacity of three elderly gentlemen who hope to save the reputation of the vested interests with whose success they are so comfortably bound up. Christianity has nothing to do with civilization. It is like a fly on the wheel of a locomotive. Both go round together, but the motive power is not derived from a two-thousand-years'-old superstition, however noisily its claims may be sounded by men who are more nearly related to African witch-doctors than representative of modern culture.

MIMNERMUS

Asoka: the Benevolent Indian Ruler

REMARKABLE monuments in India testify to the rulership of the wise and humane Emperor Asoka. These memorials are found in widely separated regions in the Presidency. The uncultured section of the people view them in all reverence and awe. One of these inscribed boulders is known as the "letter rock," and is credited with the possession of magical and medicinal powers. Emma Hawkrigde, in her recently issued *Indian Gods and Kings* (Rich and Cowan) intimates that: "The peasants wash the rock with water, and give the result as a drink to sick man or beast. . . . These rocks found at such distances as from Peshawar district to the Madras and Mysore States, are edicts of the first Indian Empire, written by the Emperor Asoka."

This sagacious monarch reigned from 274 to 237 B.C., and many fantastic stories have been invented concerning his earlier career. According to one ridiculous legend, Asoka became supreme after the deliberate murder of ninety-nine of his brethren. It has also been asserted that he was an incarnation of cruelty in the opening years of his reign, but this is likewise a fabulous tale.

It is perfectly true that in 261 B.C., he extended through conquest his vast inherited dominions. He then annexed the State of Kalinga on the coast of the Bay of Bengal, but this was the sole aggressive undertaking of his long rulership, and he was so ashamed and appalled by the miseries and horrors of warfare, and especially by the sufferings of the conquered population, that he solemnly resolved to avoid any further conflict.

It is shrewdly surmised that the Emperor's repugnance was in large measure due to the teachings of the Buddhist missionaries who denounced war as wanton wickedness, because at this period Asoka became an earnest convert to Gautama's philosophy. In his admirable essay on Asoka, Vincent Smith assures us that the Emperor "solemnly recorded in inscriptions engraved in the rocks his 'profound sorrow and regret' for the misery caused by his ambition."

Nearly every Indian potentate revelled in military glory and the maltreatment of neighbouring communities, while intellectual activities became the province of the Brahman priests. Asoka, on the contrary, strove to combine statesmanship with cultural life.

His beneficent conduct has been gratefully remembered by posterity, and perhaps Kopper is justified in his contention that: "If a man's fame can be measured by the number of hearts who revere his memory, by the number of lips that have mentioned, and still mention him with honour, Asoka is more famous than Charlemagne or Caesar."

As the grandson of the virile and ambitious conqueror, Chandragupta, Asoka succeeded to a wide-spread Empire distracted by internal conflict. Chandragupta, the founder of Asoka's rich inheritance rose from the ranks of the people in Maghada, a dominion of the dimensions of modern France. This territory was situated in the Ganges plain, and its inhabitants were apparently less Aryan than Dravidian in race. In the course of his Oriental adventures, the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, instituted Greek ascendancy in the province, but after his early death in Babylon, the adjoining Indian tribes rose in rebellion, and it is surmised that Chandragupta then became their leader. In any event, he ascended the throne of Maghada and then proceeded to annex several States in succession. Thus, he became master of a well-compacted kingdom in North Western India.

Then Seleucus, who inherited a remnant of Alexander's dismembered Empire arrived from the West on a conquering expedition. The Indians and Greeks were drawn up in battle array, but for some conjectural reason no carnage occurred. Instead of fighting, Seleucus conceded to Chandragupta the Greek possessions as far West from India as the Kabul Valley in exchange for 500 trained military elephants. Arrangements were also made for accrediting an ambassador to the Indian monarch's court.

Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara, a ruler of colourless character whose child, Asoka, was destined to rival, if not eclipse the renown of the famous Akbar himself. When he came to the throne, Asoka found himself encircled by a system of espionage, intrigue and danger. So menacing was the poisoner's art, that the palace kitchens were jealously guarded from view. Then several tasters were required to sample each dish and determine its purity before it appeared on the royal table. Female slaves examined all his clothing to certify that these garments were unpolluted, while beauty specialists applied cosmetics to their own faces to ensure their purity. Then to make assurance doubly sure, the King slept in a different chamber every night.

Trained by the Brahmans in Hindu traditions, in which the sacred Vedas, and Sutras conspicuously figured, the youthful Asoka's studies in statecraft were not neglected. He was skilfully coached in the four departments deemed essential to a ruler who desired to succeed by the devious systems of compromise, open hostilities, bribery, and the encouragement and subsidy of unrest in other States. Technical instruction was also imparted in the art of arousing suspicion between allied peoples, abetting treason in foreign armies and insurrection in their cities.

All this seems very reprehensible to the modern mind, but malevolent methods of this character are not unknown to-day after nearly 2,000 years of Christian teaching. This insidious instruction appears mainly responsible for Asoka's military enterprise in his early life, the pangs and miseries of which he so bitterly regretted. As already intimated, he turned from the horrors of warfare to the pacific doctrines of the Buddhist evangelists. It has been truly said that Asoka's conversion to the philosophy of peace "made the fortune of Buddhism and transformed an obscure local sect in the basin of the Ganges into a dominant world religion—perhaps the greatest if measured by the number of its adherents."

A humanitarian spirit henceforth pervaded Asoka's

system of government. Taxation of the community was discarded as the be-all and end-all of administration. Important agricultural improvements and instruction in secular subjects, as well as in ethical philosophy were undertaken. Many amenities such as the planting of trees to furnish shelter to wayfarers with the growth of mangoes for food on the highways, and the sinking of wells for the poor traveller, weary and worn by the tropical sun, replaced the wickedness of war. Herbs were extensively cultivated, whose medicinal properties served to relieve sufferers from the many diseases that raged in India.

More than two centuries before the Christian era, hospitals, both for the care of man and the lower animals were erected, endowed and administered. Again, the many beneficent activities of Asoka were not restricted to his own extensive Empire which embraced the whole of India save a small area on her Western coast and the further south of the peninsula. These were introduced, owing to Asoka's solicitude, into the dominions of neighbouring friendly powers.

All forms of faith enjoyed toleration in India, while the Emperor despatched missionaries abroad to announce the glad tidings of Buddhism to all who cared to listen. The conversion of Ceylon is said to have been accomplished by Mahinda, Asoka's son, while his daughter is reported to have abandoned court life to serve as a Buddhist nun, and to have conveyed to Ceylon the celebrated slip from the sacred bo-tree under which the Enlightened One is said to have meditated at the time of his awakening. Asoka himself acted for a time the part of a strolling monk, in which he gained a clearer insight into the lives of his subjects than he could ever have obtained in his palace. He then returned to his administrative duties, both as ruler and supreme judge, with whom all appeals rested.

Asoka's complete conversion to Buddhism was gradual, but subsequently his missionary expeditions were remarkably successful. Burma and Siam were both induced to adopt the faith by the indirect influences of Asoka's messengers. It is even suggested that this missionary crusade's activities may be faintly traced in the theories of the Gnostics and Manichean Christian heretics.

Indeed, avers Vincent Smith: "For many centuries the impulse given by Asoka's systematic missionary propaganda made Buddhist institutions a prominent feature in Indian life; and as late as the seventh century A.D. Buddhism, although slowly decaying, was still a power in almost all parts of India. The extension of the Buddhist faith to Tibet, China and Japan through the agency of the Indian missionaries at various dates, was an indirect consequence of Asokan propaganda." Truly, the part performed by Asoka in the annals of Buddhism is second only to that of the founder of the cult.

Still, that eminent authority, Professor Rhys Davids concluded that the elaborate foundations laid by Asoka in the land of its birth were partly responsible for Buddhism's rapid decay. Its permanent supremacy in India necessitated the continuance of powerful kings who were prepared to prolong Asoka's efforts. But this great monarch's successors proved weaklings, and his dynasty soon declined. For several succeeding centuries conflict prevailed in India and few districts escaped disaster.

Not until five centuries had fled did any potentate appear who approached the stature of Asoka when, in the fourth century A.D., the Gupta Kings occupied the throne. Meanwhile Brahmanism completely recovered its earlier ascendancy, which it still maintains, and the purer faith of Gantama, the Buddha has long since almost vanished from the scene of its Asokan honour and glory.

T. F. PALMER.

Fine Sentiments

CHRISTIANITY survives nowadays by allying itself to fine sentiments. The Christian looks around, culls a few flowers from any convenient source, strings them up into a nosegay and calls it Christianity. The process is sometimes conscious, but, for the most part, it is unconscious. It would be foolish to deny that the Christian presentation is in many quarters put forward for what are no better than "business reasons." The Church is a property, and as such must be conserved. The invention of life-saving devices occupies the attention of one type of ecclesiastic. From such a type emanates the Commission's *Report on Doctrine*, a volume which strives to reduce Christian Doctrine to the irreducible minimum, and to retain as nominal supporters of the Church those nebulous individuals classified by Mr. H. G. Wells as men of Good Will. Those concerning themselves with social problems, who are now listened to by hundreds of thousands, must by any conceivable kind of means be induced to believe in a sort of a something, a "shadow of a shade," around which, by some necromancy, circles every decent emotion and aspiration of the human race.

Yes, we have the professional Christian, but more numerous are those who have been taught to believe in youth that Christianity is an idealism of superb and ethereal qualities; those who mix up such terms as "ethics" and "morality" with the Christian religion because the confusion is encouraged by many whom they believe to be very excellent people. This excellence is taken for granted; being a Bishop, a Dean, even a curate, is taken as a demonstration of excellence. The Church is a Magnificent Institution; a Bishop therefore shares in this magnificence; a curate adds his little pail-ful of grandeur owing to his fortunate contact with the Divine. The utterances of these saintly people take on "value" because of this connexion. A clerical utterance may, indeed, sound like nonsense, but the unfortunates who have been steeped in a religious atmosphere know there must be something of God in it; know that there must be a tinge of the *Sermon of the Mount* concealed in it somewhere. And so the nonsense becomes divine elucidation; an inspired piece of wisdom. There is no such thing therefore as religious nonsense. What the irreligious think to be such is a kind of sense enlivened by spiritual vision. It may have heavenly implications, but, certainly, it has no earthly use.

Fundamentally the Christian Church stands for soul-saving; historically it has done so, and social progress has come at times to a stand-still. The Christian Church has been out for converts all the time; each convert has meant another brand plucked from the burning. The decent man, who is fair-minded, and who tries to give his fellow man a square deal, has not been a person up to recently that the Church wasted perspiration over. *Guiding* these men in the difficult art of living has been neglected, and in consequence an incalculable amount of excellent material has been wasted to humanity and diverted to psalm-singing, weird sacramental dietary, and other forms of soul-nourishment. But interest in man's bodily and cultural needs has gained ground in spite of religion; men have ceased to bother about their eternal welfare, and have become engrossed in the mundane. Saving Souls is not regarded as fit occupation for grown men with average ethical equipment; the business is in fact regarded as rather contemptible. So less and less stress is being put by the Churches upon the importance of man's soul, except as an antithesis to his "body," which term still has to many a slightly disagreeable significance due to puritanical reiterations.

If in order to live one must play ducks and drakes with the Gospel, the choice becomes obvious: The Gospel must be changed. The Oracles of God must be knocked about a bit. It is an interesting job for casuists, and allows illimitable room for ingenuity. What God thinks about it, God only knows. At any rate, the modernist is perfectly willing to take a chance on that point.

We are told that even if we don't believe in the Virgin Birth (although, by the way, never forget, there are species of plant-lice in which the female needs no male to reproduce her kind) we can at least agree that the Sermon on the Mount is the Goods; that to take no thought for the morrow is a sublime social sentiment; and that when Jesus sent Dives to Hell for being rich, and Lazarus to Heaven for being poor, he proved himself to be the first great Socialist—particularly when he clinched it by saying how difficult it would be for a Bishop to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Remember in one chapter (which, of course, we know has been interpolated in the gospel) how Jesus refused to be unimaginative and unkind about the woman taken in adultery, and asked for our sympathy for her. Lots of good stuff there is in the New Testament! Why won't you allow us to preach about it? O, yes, we know there are things we prefer not to talk about, but, please, be reasonable. Why not be glad we are developing as all institutions develop? Why not encourage us, rather than criticize? We agree with you quite a lot; why not agree with us when you can, and say so?

It is right that all human institutions develop, but should we indeed be sympathetic with a Holy Church trying to live on a selected bunch of fine sentiments? Is there any hope for society if its dynamic has got to come that way? Has the amount of dynamic the Church possesses even to-day anything at all to do with its ethical precepts? Has not the safety of that portion of man's make-up, the *soul*, still got hold of the reins in the Churches as far as you find them an operative force at all. Isn't "getting right with God" still the accelerating factor with the pious. Dives, for instance, knows he is going to make, some day, the attempt to get through the needle's eye. He has listened Sunday in and Sunday out to Christian fine sentiments. Yet he still has faith that when he faces the needle's eye, he'll find one of the apostles who, for a consideration, will show him another, and more manageable, way into the Holy of Holies.

An ethical system to be any good has to be systematized, and the Christian Bundle of Beatitudes defies systematization. Confucius gave us the Golden Rule before Jesus, and it required no divine parentage in his case to bring the precept to light. Of course, if mankind would only reflect a little more, and apply some of the teaching they consider good, the world would be a better place. But even a bag full of miracles at the Birth of Jesus and some astounding natural phenomena at his Death, couldn't set mankind in the way of taking no thought for the morrow. Even the gift of eternal life and the privilege of being one of the few chosen to gather round the Footstool couldn't force the idea into man's skull that this was a precept worth acting upon.

The world is chock full of excellent sentiments. There is more for a thoughtful man to ponder over and act upon in *Aesop's Fables*, than there is in the New Testament. No God was responsible for them; it was just the work of a man who used his eyes and his brains. The man who looks for wisdom and is eclectic will learn much for his guidance, if guidance he needs, from the past. The man who is not eclectic, will confine himself to the New Testament, or some such book of Holy Glamour, and find no consistency in it. He will read about devils and the

prayer of faith healing the sick, he will know—if he is serious and thoughtful—that the Gospel, if it was for an Age, was not for all time. He will know that the attempt to bring forward Humanity by the preaching of Fine Sentiments only, is hopeless and, if inextricably mixed up with Bad Sentiments, False Science, and a Mush of Mystery, is about as useless a way of spending one's time in this Year of Grace as one could possibly imagine. If this is the best answer to what to do with our lives, mankind is indeed in for a bad quarter of an hour.

T. H. ELSTON

Problems of Colouring

A REPLY TO CRITICS

To scientists Evolution is a concrete fact. Nevertheless it presents problems which can be grouped under three headings: (1) Factors which *cause* changes in living organisms, (2) The nature of the changes thus produced and (3) The consequences of such changes. Evolutionary theory must therefore consider all these heads. Professor Cuénot's theory comes in the first category, as it offers environment as a factor capable of producing evolutionary changes. Cytology and genetics deal with the problems of the second group. Darwin's theory of natural selection falls into the third group, as it deals with the consequences of evolutionary change.

The article under this title which appeared in the *Freethinker* of November 27, did not touch on this Darwinian theory; it was a criticism, in the light of modern research, of old interpretations of certain colour phenomena.

These interpretations displayed two weaknesses: (1) an assumption that the eyes of all animals are similar in capacity to those of human beings, which is, in most cases, not true; (2) that no account is taken of the rôle played by other sense organs in the animals in question, whereas the nose and ear are, in other mammals, more developed than in man, and the part they play is more important than that of the eyes. It is therefore possible that colour patterns may have quite a negligible survival value.

Professor Cuénot's statement was mentioned because it fits the facts. An association of living organisms in a given environment is influenced by the latter, and similar changes occur in them irrespective of the changes being harmful, neutral or useful to each particular type of organism. The harmful ones, as Mr. Fisher explains, die out, and the useful ones thrive, but *the neutral ones persist as well*.

Mr. Fisher admits the existence of neutral modifications when he speaks of cave-dwelling forms and of deep-sea fish. When he says ". . . and a feature developed under conditions no longer operative leads to an atrophy of this feature . . ." he assumes that it is the new environmental conditions which cause the change, for, otherwise, how could the organs become atrophied. He thus agrees with Prof. Cuénot that environment is a factor of causation.

To take the matter a stage further, if the reaction between an environment and the organisms living in it is identical for all the organisms, the series of changes thus produced will be in all cases similar, and the organisms will tend to resemble one another in a greater or less degree. The more the reaction is prolonged, the greater the resemblance. This offers a *possible* explanation of mimicry. Such changes need not be useful to the organism which undergoes them, nor harmful; they may be merely neutral. In this case the mimicry, so-called, is apparent only, a matter of coincidence. Such an explanation can not be over-

looked when consideration is made of the results obtained by many experiments dealing with animal colouration. A dazzle pattern need not *always* be of use to the animal possessing it; its presence need not *always* be explained in terms of usefulness; for it may be merely the outcome of the reaction of an environment on the particular creature. So long as the pattern is not definitely hurtful, menacing the animal's existence, it will persist with the environment.

The experiments referred to in the article were *not* to discover whether the "mimicry" had a general survival value, but a particular one, that of protection against enemies. The results demonstrated that this particular value was not possessed in these particular cases. This did not mean that the colouring might not be of use in other directions, perhaps for catching prey, as Mr. Fisher suggests. The laboratory cannot reproduce all the conditions of natural environment, let alone the effect of time, but the efficiency of a single character, in the case of these experiments the eyesight of the insect's enemies, can be studied by means of comparable experiments repeated a large number of times, from which a statistical graph can be drawn.

Mr. Fisher should not overlook the part played by chance in modifying the results of natural selection. For example, let us suppose frogs spawn in a series of pools, one of which is more exposed than the others and consequently is dried up in a very dry spell of weather. The tadpoles in it all perish, no matter how well their characteristics would have helped them against other dangers, and the tadpoles in the other pools survive although, perhaps, less well equipped to escape from living enemies than those in the first pool. Many drastic and violent changes occur in nature, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, landslides, floods, etc. Present-day fauna and flora have survived such cataclysmic events, with a possible modification of the effects of natural selection.

The criticism, both published and private, to which my article in the *Freethinker* has given rise, shows an unexpected lack of knowledge of modern Continental research, and of ideas which are part of ordinary university teaching abroad. A detailed treatment of the subject, complete with bibliography and references, is to be found in *L'Adaptation*, by L. Cuénot, Professor at the University of Nancy, first published in Paris by Gaston Doin et Cie, in 1930.

E. BRADLAUGH BONNER

Acid Drops

The "Answers to Correspondents" column in Roman Catholic papers are very interesting, and show to the informed reader a lively sense of confidence in the simplicity or ignorance of those who ask questions. For instance, the *Universe* recently answered one enquirer, evidently troubled that his prayers had not been answered that "Prayers for temporal favours are not always answered." We like the "always" in this answer, although the important question is "Are *any* prayers answered?" The number is quite immaterial. As Voltaire said of the Saint, who after being beheaded walked 100 paces with his head under his arm, one can believe ninety-nine of the steps, it is the first one that offers difficulty. Another consideration is that petitions for prayers are accompanied in Roman Catholic Churches with a donation of money. We should like to know if the money is returned when the prayer is without an answer.

Another correspondent is told there never was a law in the Church that heretics should be put to death. Well there are lies, damned lies—and Roman Catholic replies

to semi-moronic correspondents. True, the paper might have gone further and asserted that the Church never put a man or a woman to death for heresy, and then it would have practised truth as understood by Roman Catholic papers and by Roman Catholic writers of the type of Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Mark, it is not said that the Church did not wish the death of heretics, or arrange for it. That would be too much of a lie for even the Roman Catholic Church. All we get is that the Church had no law for putting heretics to death. Why should it have in the light of the following facts?

The Church, on the strength of the famous forged "Donations of Constantine," and the still more famous Isidorian forgery, claimed supremacy over every Christian Church, and a little more than inrefential supremacy over the secular powers. As one of the greatest authorities says, "The Roman Pontiff became the rightful owner of Western Europe, and Kings held their territory only by their suzerainty." Monarch after Monarch owned allegiance to the papacy. There was, it is true, a usage, rather than a law, which forbade a priest taking part in a judgment of death, but there is no doubt whatever that the Church forced the secular power to carry out the death sentence for heresy. It was the Church that created the "crime" of heresy, it indicated the punishment with which it should be met, and it went so far as to excommunicate magistrates and princes who refused to inflict the penalty.

We are not writing an article, merely some odd paragraphs, exposing a Church that for forgery, lying, and brutality, easily holds the world's record. We pick up a volume of Lea's elaborate and exhaustive history of the Inquisition, the authority of which has never been successfully questioned, and running rapidly through its pages select the following:—

(Pope) Leo the Great insisted with the Empress Pulcheria, that the destruction of the Eutychians should be her highest care. . . . (Pope) Pelagius the First carefully explained that this conduct was not persecution, but love). . . . The second Lateran Council, in 1139, orders all potentates to coerce heretics into obedience. . . . (The frequent repetition of this bears unmistakable evidence that alone the secular powers were not so violently inclined against religious heresy.) The decree of the Council of Verona, in 1184, commanded that all secular potentates should take an oath to carry out the ecclesiastical and secular laws against heresy. . . . The Church undertook to coerce the sovereign to persecution. The monarch held his crown by the tenure of extirpating heresy, of seeing that the laws were sharp and were pitilessly enforced. . . . The Council of Constance (1418) decreed that all who should defend Hussism should be treated as relapsed heretics and be punished (by the Secular Authorities) with fire. . . . St. Thomas Aquinas says "Heretics are not to be tolerated." The tenderness of the Church permits them to have two warnings, after which they are to be abandoned to the secular power to be removed from the world by death.

There is plenty more that might be cited. Lea well says the pretence that the Church took no part in the executions for heresy is a modern lie. It is history written to order; it is the policy of knaves imposing on fools.

The Rev. Conrad Noel has been afflicted with a loss of sight, from which we are heartily glad to say he has now recovered. The *Sunday Chronicle* heads this item of news, "Miracles save Vicar's sight," which merely illustrates the fact that in the newspaper world it pays to play to religious stupidity. It is true that the details given contradict the heading, but newspaper owners know that big headlines will overcome any amount of ordinary type, and once the falsehood, in large type, is swallowed, no amount of small type will correct it. It was Ingersoll who said with regard to the statement that some preacher had under pressure corrected a lie, that a lie would be all round a town while truth was putting its boots on.

To be just to Conrad Noel he merely says that he fasted, took a nature cure, went on a special diet, and be-

lieved implicitly that his sight would return. We are glad that his confidence was justified, and hope that he will retain his sight to the end. But quite obviously this kind of treatment would have acted as well without prayer as with it. We know doctors in London who could point to return of sight by much the same methods as Mr. Noel adopted. But they did not put it down to a miracle, and had they done so the Medical Council would most probably have struck them off the register. The Medical Council would, we take it, raise no serious objection to one of its members saying that God cured his patients. But let him habitually "leave it to God," and not merely would the council depose him, but it is probable the courts also would have something to say. More, without any medical training we will undertake to cure many a complaint with prayer, faith, trust in God—and a doctor.

We said recently that the Bishop of London was easily the most foolish man who ever occupied a high position even in a Church. Here is a sample from one of his farewell sermons:—

The incredibly strong God had come down to earth and lived as an ordinary Jewish workman in a humble home. He had allowed himself to be taken and crucified and slain. Talk of the incredible strength of God! We have got to think of his incredible love.

Now we do not deny for a moment that this is real Christianity, but is there any other parson in Britain who to-day would put a silly legend in such a way that no civilized person could deny its silliness, and who at the same time prides himself on his cleverness in saying it?

The Bishop has been again dwelling upon his bearding Freethinkers in Victoria Park nearly 50 years ago, when he addressed "vast" crowds, and silenced the Atheists. Well, we were there at the time, and those who are still able to recall the crowds will remember that the larger crowds were usually round the Secular platform, and that the Bishop cut anything but a brilliant figure on the rare occasions when he offered direct opposition. As an attraction to Christians Ingram was easily beaten by a black lecturer, Celestine Edwards, who was sent out of England for reasons the Christians would rather not talk about.

Mr. George Robey, who has just celebrated his fiftieth year as an entertainer, says he is not a "practising Christian." That is something to his credit, for a man who was an actual practising Christian would stand a good chance of being sent to either a prison or an asylum. Christian theory has to be liberally diluted with common sense for it to be tolerated.

A report from Sing Sing prison, dated October 1, was published in the American *Daily News*, the other day. It states:—

While this institution received 1,456 unrighteous men in the State fiscal year ending July 1 last, a survey made public to-day discloses that there were found among them only three sinners who do not believe in a hereafter.

All have lacked respect for law, but very few are irreligious. The views expressed by the arrivals show only three Atheists. There are: one Mohammedan, one Spiritualist, 18 Christian Scientists, 170 Hebrews, 552 Protestants and 711 Catholics. Warden Lawes arranges religious services for Mohammedans or Spiritualists, but members of other denominations are privileged to attend services of their choice.

In one of the reviews of the *Letters of T. E. Lawrence*, the pious critic takes pains to point out that Lawrence "was essentially the religious type of man," though "that he should have had this temperament and have no faith to make it valid . . . was a tragedy, not only for him, but for his time." Whether Lawrence was actually an avowed Freethinker we do not know, but it is obvious that his letters show he had absolutely no religion. There seems no older trick of these Christian critics than this

one—to say a man (particularly if he is a famous one) is "essentially" religious when he is obviously the very opposite; and it is a piece of downright impertinence. Both Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were claimed to be Christians "without their knowing it" and they took good care to take the claim as an insult.

Christmas comes but once a year. The "Film Critic" of the *News-Chronicle* gives an amusing account of the "Prince of Peace" film—not intentionally funny, of course, but only silly. "The part of the Infant Christ" is "taken by a baby chosen by a clergyman." The Virgin Mary part is taken by Mr. Isidore Ostrer's daughter. We suppose the baby's father is too sacred a Personage to be shown at all—which is a pity as it still leaves us as puzzled as before. But is HEROD too amongst those whom it would be blasphemous to represent? Or is it sheer ignorance which is "represented" in the following shocking "howler":—

Nero is shown giving the order for the Massacre of the Innocents; but the Massacre itself is left to the imagination. The film closes with the Flight into Egypt.

Nero indeed! Nero was not born at the time of the alleged "Slaughter of the Innocents."

The *News-Chronicle* picture-page gave us in Christmas week an excellent photograph of a very common-place—and delightfully familiar—sight, namely a baby. A three-weeks-old baby. We don't mind the fond parents or even the exaggerating reporter describing the child as "beautiful, ethereal" (whatever that may mean) "and with fair blue eyes." But—being Christmas-time—we have to see in this picture "a baby from a humble London home who has been chosen to play the part of Christ in a new film." Poor baby, what harm has he done! The "humble" is just "humbug"! It is pure showmanship and money-making as usual with these semi-religious baby-snatchers to whom the word "sacred" is a synonym for pantomime, exploiting babyhood, motherhood and the poverty described as "humility."

Fifty Years Ago

MR. GLADSTONE has blurted out a piece of advice to the Italians on a burning question which they rightly regard as purely domestic, and as to which they are very jealous of foreign interference. He has actually suggested that the difference between the Monarchy and the Papacy might be decided by international arbitration. It almost takes one's breath away to see such a suggestion emanating from a statesman of Mr. Gladstone's position and influence. One can scarcely believe that he realizes the gravity, or indeed the nature of his proposal. Arbitration is a most excellent method of settling disputes, but it cannot determine the conflict of opposite principles, and it certainly cannot be applied unless the contending parties are willing to accept a compromise. Now in the Papal difficulty both these conditions are absent. To deny it is to show a deep ignorance of the problem. The Pope, representing the Church, and the King, representing the State, cannot possibly embrace Mr. Gladstone's sentimental proposal. They are irreconcilable antagonists. They are animated by opposite principles, between which there can be neither treaty nor truce; and both want something which cannot be divided. . . . The Pope claims a divine right to rule over Rome, not simply as a priest, but as a king. How can he compromise a principle like that, a principle asserted for a thousand years, a principle which cannot be modified without making the Papal infallibility the laughing-stock of the whole world? On the other hand, King Humbert claims to rule in Rome as the sovereign of Italy. To leave it would be to leave his capital. He will not go until the armies of Europe force him away—and when will they begin the expulsion? Mr. Gladstone's suggestion, in face of a conflict like this, is little better than asking two hostile armies to sit down to cakes and ale.

The Freethinker, January 6, 1889.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. H. BOWLES.—Sorry we are unable to spare the time to answer at length your questions. You will probably gather our attitude from a closer acquaintance with our publications. We suggest the *Grammar of Freethought*, and *Letters to a Country Vicar*. We are always ready to consider the publication of articles antagonistic to our views, but they must be of a kind that is interesting to the ordinary reader.

L. ROMANIA, JNR.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

C. A. MORRISON.—We note your hearty appreciation of the part played by Mr. Rosetti in his recent debate on Spiritualism. Will pass on your letter.

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

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

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.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

On Sunday next (January 8) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester. The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. Admission will be free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seats at 1s. 3d. each. Mr. Cohen was prevented visiting Manchester earlier this year, but hopes this time to meet many old friends if only for a brief hand-shake.

We hope that all those interested have made a special note concerning the date and place of the Society's Annual Dinner. This will take place at the Waldorf Hotel, Kingsway, on Saturday, January 26. The Waldorf has a reputation for the excellence of their dinners, and there will be the usual first-class concert, and speeches. The price of the tickets will be 8s. 6d. each, and early application will help to make the necessary preparations easier for those who are responsible for the smooth running of the function.

We are looking forward to seeing a good representation of provincial members and friends. Later a list of convenient trains will be published. In mentioning "friends" as well as members we would like to stress the frequency with which many who have later been found to

be good supporters of the Cause have made their first personal contact with us at these dinners. That is a point always worth bearing in mind.

The ban on the *Freethinker* by the Pontypool Council, which refuses to have the paper in the Free Library, is still providing material for a very lively discussion in the local press. Some very excellent letters have appeared on *our side*, and the usual mixture of cant and humbug on the other. We can say this without being accused of partiality, for nothing but a mixture of bigotry and ignorance can account for the refusal to permit—so far as their power extends—to favour one body of ratepayers at the expense of another body. We hope our friends will keep up the fight. If they require parcels of the *Freethinker* for gratuitous distribution, they may have them sent, carriage paid, on application.

A letter reached us, the other day, from Manchester, apparently from one who has recently made acquaintance with the *Freethinker*:—

Please accept my thanks to you and your staff of the Pioneer Press for their interesting and valuable Xmas present of the *Freethinker*. . . I intend becoming a subscriber to your paper in future.

Evidently one of those "just-round-the-corner" potential subscribers to which we have so often referred.

Dr. Daniel Powell has recently died in South London, where he lived a very useful if lawless life. According to the *Sunday Referee*, this man has been visited by 25,000 women begging with pathetic voices, "Save me from having this baby." There is no doubt that Dr. Powell only performed an operation in those cases where it was an act of humanity to relieve suffering women from utterly useless pain, when such pain was likely to endanger two lives—their own and a child's. Nothing but a "religious" objection can account for the moral callousness which stands in the way of an alteration of the law which would legalize abortion (in duly qualified hands, of course), in the interests of life and health. The clerical opposition to Birth Control is still stubborn enough to keep many poor women in ignorance of the most ordinary safeguards to health. If Birth-Control knowledge were accessible at all Maternal Welfare Centres and Hospitals, the need for abortions would be very rare.

Lord Rothschild has decided to offer Tring Park to the British Museum, according to the *Evening Standard's* "diarist," who thinks that the step would "make it possible for the Museum to concentrate their entire collection at Tring." It would, he argues, "be quite accessible (Tring is only 25 miles from London)" and its "dispersion in time of war would be materially assisted." Now, should there be a prospect of such a move, it will surely invite the indignant protest of the many to whom the Museum is something more than a show place. What about the students, scholars, research-workers and famous men who have found, and continue to find material there for some of the world's best work? Like most of those whose aspirations for knowledge too often leave them far behind in the economic struggle, the majority would find the fares prohibitive—only 25 miles though the distance be. Perhaps the originators of the idea mooted had the Zoological Society in mind, and assumed that Tring Park with its 300 acres would establish a sort of intellectual Whipsnade! They would soon be disillusioned by the failure of the British Museum as a National asset if its principal patrons had to go all the way to Tring when they wanted to consult the exhibits, archives or library now so centrally situated. And here it is likely to be as safe as in a conspicuous spot in the country, concentrate on London as an enemy may. The bare suggestion of its removal is, obviously, based on viewing the Museum as a show place and holiday attraction. A view quite in keeping with the mentality of some of our ill-bred "authorities" rampant to-day.

The World of Books

Mr. Upton Sinclair has written, for him, a rather unusual book. *Our Lady* (Werner Laurie, 5s.), is not a life of Jesus, neither is it a life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is a mere imaginary episode in the life of Mary, and it may be written for no other purpose than making Mr. Sinclair's disassociation from the Christian superstition clear and complete. Let us hope that this is the case. No better service could be done to the cause of general honesty in society if all public men who have given up belief in the Christian religion would say so plainly and unmistakably instead of cleansing their conscience by saying they no longer believe in the grosser superstitions of the Christian religion, and then immediately offering terms to the Churches by insisting on belief in the moral greatness of a personality, whose real claim to notice is entirely based on the superstition they have just disowned.

It has often been said in these columns, sometimes solemnly, sometimes facetiously—but still seriously—that Mary is the only person who could definitely say who was the father of Jesus, and she plumped for Joseph. Mr. Sinclair opens his story at the point where Jesus, about whom little is said, is leaving home—not the comfortable upper-class home that ex-Dean Inge gives him but a very poor cottage—on a religious enterprise connected with some religious movement already in existence. Then Jesus fades out of the picture.

Anxious about the future of her son, Mary visits a sorceress to find out the future of her family. She is promised a view of the future, and sees something of the future. She regains consciousness in a football match in the United States. She finds herself sitting by the side of some Roman Catholic priests, who are deeply interested in the game. Mary can talk only Aramaic, a language with which one of the priests is familiar. Conversation convinces him that Mary is actually the mother of Jesus, also that she is quite unaware of the Holy Ghost episode, and treats the idea of the Church concerning Jesus as God incarnate as downright blasphemy. Mary's comment on the religion which "tells about Our Lady, and about the son she bore while she was a virgin, and about the three-headed God, I do not believe a word."

Alarmed at this comment by one who should have known whether the yarn was true or not, the priest reports to his superiors, Mary is taken to a religious home and the decision is arrived at that Mary is possessed by demons. Exorcism is resorted to, and at a critical point Mary recovers from the trance into which she was thrown by the sorceress. She complains that she is not satisfied. "I asked to see the future of myself and my son; and nothing I saw has anything to do with me." And if Mary actually lived, and actually bore a son, that is precisely what one would expect her to say. The Church's chief witness for the virgin birth, the only one who could speak with any authority, knows nothing about it. We do not think that real Christians will welcome Mr. Sinclair's book.

* * *

It is curious that in spite of the many works published that deal with Galileo, there are few, particularly in English, that present a clear and precise account of Galileo's scientific discoveries. There is, of course, wide recognition of his importance in the history of science, such works as Professor Burt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, is an example of this. Still if one were to ask the ordinary

reading-man what exactly did Galileo accomplish, the answer would not be an easy one. Everyone knows that he was at war—at least in conflict—with the Church, and the fact of that contest has served with ordinary men and women to hide his great importance as one of the founders, if not one of the principle founders of modern science. Even the very fine *Galileo Galilei and the Roman Curia*, published in English in 1877, leaves the account of his scientific labours incomplete.

For that reason one welcomes *Galileo and the Freedom of Thought*, by Dr. Sherwood Taylor (Watts & Co., 7s. 6d.) which does give a very general view of the extent and importance of Galileo's work. There are a few illustrations, and enough descriptive matter to enable an intelligent reader to follow in the steps of the Master. Go back a little, a very little, earlier than Galileo to Copernicus, and the reader will have the beginnings of the greatest scientific revolution in the history of man.

One is inclined to blame the Church for its treatment of Galileo, but an impartial student might well ask what other could the Church do. With the burden of an inspired revelation from God, room for criticism is out of place; at most there can be only a criticism of interpretation, and when to this there is added a powerful Church claiming the right to dictate man's opinions on all subjects, we have a position similar to what is developing in Germany with its Aryan history and Aryan science. Consider the state of thought when a noted Florentine astronomer could controvert the astronomical and physical discoveries of Galileo with this:—

There are seven windows in the head, two nostrils, two ears, two eyes and a mouth; so in the heavens are there two favourable stars, two unpropitious, two luminaries and Mercury alone undecided and indifferent. From which and many other similar phenomena of nature, such as the seven metals, etc., which it were tedious to enumerate, we gather that the number of planets are necessarily seven.

Moreover the satellites are invisible to the naked eye and can therefore have no influence in the earth, and therefore would be useless, and therefore do not exist. Besides, the Jews and other ancient nations, as well as modern Europeans, have adopted the divisions of the week into seven days, and have named them from the seven planets; now if we increase the number of planets the whole system falls to the ground.

What could a scientific worker do against such muddle-headed religious obstinacy as this?

Galileo's work was at the beginning of that renaissance of genuine Materialism, which was to go so far and to mean so much during the next three centuries. We think Dr. Taylor is right in counting the three hundred years that followed Galileo as the equivalent of that three centuries of development in ancient Greece which has meant so much to the mental development of mankind.

There is a sufficiently complete account of Galileo's fight with the Church, his imprisonment, when seventy years of age, and it is told without passion or exaggeration. It is interesting for all to remember that it was not until just a little over a hundred years ago that the Roman Catholic Church officially admitted the movement of the earth round the sun.

* * *

We remember reviewing many years ago, and with all approval the first English edition (1903) of Professor Elie Metchnikoff's *Nature of Man*. It was a careful and highly suggestive study of evolutionary man, with an account of his still very incomplete adjustment to his surroundings, with chapters on old age and biological death. After the lapse of 35 years,

it is astonishing how little of it needs revision or rejection. That is, one may suppose, because Metchnikoff, one of the greatest micro-biologists of his day, was also a philosopher, and had a fine grasp of first principles of scientific thinking. Whatever adjustments were necessary to the work has now been provided by Dr. C. M. Beadnell, in a new edition of the work (Watts & Co., 5s.). Dr. Beadnell has done his share of the book well, and we express the hope that an edition of a later book, issued, in English in 1908, *The Prolongation of Life* (English edition, 1908) should follow the *Nature of Man*. This work follows the same lines as the first one, and is indeed a continuation of it.

* * *

In *Eighty Six Years Young: Confessions and Conclusions* (Heath Cranton, 3s. 6d.), the author, Mr. Henry Wright, provides an interesting account of a quietly (intellectual) adventurous life. He has travelled much and observed much, but while the book will be interesting to those who have been his contemporaries, say, for the past half century, to the present generation the significance of the names mentioned—those of prominent Freethinkers and men and women eminent in the political, religious and theatrical worlds—will be largely lost. The book appears to have been compiled from note-books or from a retentive memory. A little more detail concerning some of the events mentioned would make the work much more interesting to a wider body of readers.

QUONDAM

William McDougal (d Nov. 1938)

THE death of Prof. Wm. McDougal removes a notable worker in psychology, animal psychology, group psychology and sociology, and a keen opponent of Materialism.

In a brief article the particular aspects of McDougal's work selected for notice will depend on the writer's own leanings, and I shall here attempt no more than the briefest outline of his opposition to Materialism and to behaviorism, opposition which in the latter case is, I am prepared to believe, largely valid.

McDougal posits two fundamentally different types of causation, namely, mechanical and teleological, the former being spacial and the latter probably acting on space. What he terms the psychic structure is non-spacial; "psychoplasm we may regard as a modification of the ether, and therefore as physical though immaterial." In a purely mechanical explanation of any living or mental phenomenon, he contends, there is invariably something left over, an unexplained residue, and so "the organism is not completely harnessed in material structure." (*Modern Materialism*.)

The mark of animal behaviour is striving and purpose, i.e., teleological causation (see *Body and Mind; Animism; Psychology* and other works). Mechanical factors are captured, controlled and dominated in the purposive striving. The goal acts like a magnet on the agent, making action always in some degree intelligent. Instincts are "rudimentary intelligence," giving pleasure and awareness of the aim.

The organism, he maintains, is moved by its "propensities" (see *The Energies of Men*), a phenomenon like hypnosis being due to "submissive propensities."

McDougal became an avowed animist in psychology, this being foreshadowed in his contribution, *Hormic Psychology*, to the symposium *Psychologies*

of 1930. Hormic action, he there held, dominates the mechanical factors, which, though they are subject to mechanical causation become subject also to the (presumably) higher type, as the instruments used by his "entelechy."

An obvious general reply to McDougal would be for the Materialist to attribute the inadequacy of physiological science to account for his "unexplained remainder," to the incompleteness of our knowledge. McDougal's anticipation of this argument is that the Materialist explains *only in terms of the type known*.

It follows from this that his own accounts rest on data of a type *unknown*, or more exactly, on principles imagined but not established, and he is certainly in error if he suppose that advances in scientific knowledge are favourable to such vitalist presumptions. As Levy observes, the history of science is "littered with such discarded principles." (*The Universe of Science*). For the notion of a causal agency unrelated to the mechanistic process, not itself rooted in simpler factors percolating to mechanical units, there is no precedent in fact and no warrant in scientific method.

With all due respect to McDougal's scientific qualifications it must be insisted that this division of experience is quite contrary to scientific method, and is in this case the work of a psychologist interested in the construction of a philosophy of animism. It should not be taken as representative of scientific thought. An equally eminent psychologist, Prof. G. Burniston Brown, says "Mechanism remains the method of scientific thought because it is the method that works. . . . There is no dependable basis for the view that the peculiarities of living systems require a type of scientific investigation different from that demanded by non-living matter." (*Science Progress*, 1st Qr., 1935). A considerable portion of Hogben's *Nature of Living Matter* is devoted to an exposition of the fundamental unity of scientific method. He, J. S. Huxley (*What Dare I Think?*) Max Planck (*The philosophy of Physics*) and others have all stayed to demonstrate this same fact. The latter remarks that the sciences form a single, interconnected system, and a law dominant in physics is not broken in biology or psychology.

In other words, the scientist does not say, "Up to this point mechanistic determinism suffices: from now on I must suppose any determinism to be teleological in nature." Confronted with an unexplored remainder, the hypothesis he frames is not in terms of an unscientific conception such as entelechy or soul, but of the type of deterministic causation successful in the past, and of which our knowledge is yearly increasing. If entelechy is to explain certain aspects of behaviour, what is going to explain entelechy? The conception is unscientific because it is not investigable. Moreover, the history of controversy is fatal to its claims, and the history of primitive thought shows how it first appeared. Ultimately, it pertains to the great rift of thought which divided, and divides, the religious from the scientific way of thinking—a theme which has been effectively treated by Mr. Chapman Cohen. McDougal was evidently carrying the "ghost of a God."

Whether we need a ghost's ghost to account for animal instinct may be decided by what is already known about hormones, enzymes and tropisms.

G. H. TAYLOR.

If Midge will pine and curse its hours away
Because Midge is not Everything For-Aye,
Poor Midge thus loses its one summer day;
Loses its all—and winneth what, I pray?

James Thomson.

Australia has Reason to be Proud of Him

IN its issue of October 22, *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney, N.S.W.) devotes a most appreciative page to Judge Foster (Melbourne, Victoria), beginning with the following incident:—

When in 1934 the Judge asked a boy witness in Melbourne County Court what would happen to him if he told a lie, the boy replied "I'll go to hell, sir."

"Don't you believe it, sonny," said the Bench. "There's no such place as hell."

Citizens made a fuss about the remark:

"There are no fears of devil or hell in the lives of my little children," said the Judge in defence; "and I would like to feel that other children are spared the mental fear and distress I experienced as a child."

"How do you know there is no hell?" he was asked.

"It is like any other question," he said, "Is there any evidence. I know of none. As a Judge, I am not expected to believe without evidence."

Judge Foster followed Sir John Latham as President of the Rationalist Society (Victoria), and is able to find no more evidence of heaven than of hell.

Sir John Latham is the present Chief Justice of Australia. Judge Foster's rejection of the Bible, it is clear, is frank and forthright. Legal history, I venture to say, does not reveal a greater example of moral courage than his remark from the Bench to the boy witness—a remark made regardless of the Government through which he holds his appointment, and in defiance of the traditional Christian sentiment of the community generally. A robust, humanitarian force has Judge Foster similarly proved himself to be in endless other directions. For example:—

On trial before Foster, a man was found guilty of a sex offence.

Medical evidence had shown that he was not responsible for his actions.

Instead of imposing the short gaol sentence usual in similar cases, Foster gave the maximum penalty allowed by the law—ten years with hard labour. Again citizens were astonished.

"I do not anticipate for a moment," said Foster, "that the victim of this sentence will have to serve it."

"I have imposed the sentence because it is the only way I can awaken the Government to its responsibility in regard to sex-delinquents, whose actions are due to pathological states.

"These delinquents should not be sent to gaol. They should be sent for treatment to a special institution."

Since Foster said that, Victoria has established an institution of the kind he suggested.

Another time, Mr. J. M. Gullity, barrister, was pleading in General Sessions on behalf of a client charged with theft. For three years, he said, his client had been living with his wife and children on the verge of starvation.

"The speech of the counsel for the defence," said Judge Foster to the jury, "is a very strong indictment of the social and economic system under which we are at present living and suffering."

"I wish he could make that speech in some place where its effect might be to produce a change in the conditions responsible for the great hardship and the disastrous consequences I see so much of in this court.

"I feel sometimes like making such a speech myself. But I can't. I have to view this case as one in which society must take some step to protect itself, and I am the organ of its pronouncement."

In this way, I might continue with quotation from *Smith's Weekly*—all to the resounding credit of this

great reforming, uplifting figure. I shall content myself, however, with a few extracts from various parts of the article. Thus:—

Beyond the intermittent rows over his provocative utterances from the Bench, Victoria knows nothing about him. Attempts by the press to follow up the rows and satisfy public curiosity concerning Foster are firmly repelled.

He is 6 feet high, dark in complexion, 52 years old.

"Laughter in court," when he is present, is never due to a wisecrack from the Bench.

On the ladder which led Foster to the County Court Bench, the presidency of the Jam, Pickle, and Sauce Makers' Union, and Vice-Presidency of the Victorian Labour Party were rungs. But the wider public knew him in war-time as the pacifist hornet of Prime Minister William Morris Hughes.

Most of the cases under Hughes's War Precautions Act were defended by the handsome, loud-voiced young barrister. To him the wide censorship powers given by the Act to the Cabinet seemed a wanton invasion of civil liberties.

President of the Camberwell A.N.A. in 1912, Foster resigned from the A.N.A. when it went conscriptionist.

The fight climaxed when Foster was himself prosecuted for making an anti-conscriptionist speech in which he fiercely assailed Hughes.

Leading Counsel were briefed by the Government against Foster. But he knew the holes in the War Precautions Act as a fox knows the home paddock. He was acquitted.

Foster's war-time career as a pacifist was far from pacific. Brawls, bashings, police patrols, and ambulances gave the sound effects to his performances. His courage was never in question.

Finally, the writer in *Smith's Weekly* refers to the talk on freedom, which Judge Foster was widely-publicized to give through the Australian Broadcasting Commission in May last, adding:—

Mr. Hughes is still in the Federal Cabinet; and the Federal Cabinet controls the A.B.C. The Commission told Foster that certain passages of the talk would have to be cancelled before it could be broadcast nationally. He refused to alter it.

The result, of course, was that the talk was not given. But the Federal Cabinet, while it controls the A.B.C., does not control the Australian press. The outcome was that the talk was published in full throughout the Continent. Might not many speakers over the air in Britain no less than in Australia, with infinite credit to themselves, follow the high example set by Judge Foster in promptly and decisively scorning to become the mere mouthpiece of the puppets who, for the time being, happen to find themselves in control of the national broadcasting services?

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

LEAVING IT TO GOD

Dr. William Osler, having been invited to inspect a famous London hospital, was proudly shown about by several physicians and surgeons. Finally the charts were reached, and he looked them over carefully, observing the system of abbreviations: SF for scarlet fever, TB for tuberculosis, D for diphtheria, and so on. All diseases seemed to be pretty well under control except one indicated by the symbol GOK.

"I observe," said the famous doctor, "that you have a sweeping epidemic of GOK on your hands. This is a symbol not in common use in American medical circles; just what is GOK?"

"Oh!" one of his hosts lightly replied, "when we can't diagnose, God Only Knows."

Quoted by Walter Neale in "*Life of Ambrose Bierce.*"

Prayer

"It were better to have no notion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him.—Francis Bacon.

Few of us during childhood escaped forming a poor opinion of God. The first impressions we got of him from our seniors were not at all favourable. When angry they took his name in vain. And when they swore by him they did not rejoice and do it wholeheartedly like the tribe of Judah! (2 Chron. xv. 14).

The picture of an eye, framed in a heavy mould, with a motto underneath it—THOU GOD SEEST ME—was hung in a prominent place in our living room to impress us with God's omnipresence. The impression we got from this was that God was nought better than a spy.

Our earthly father was an austere man. And our heavenly father was an austere God.

The early impressions we got of Jesus were just the opposite. To us he was "a friend for little children, above the bright blue sky," though he seemed at times anything but that. Our prayers were all directed to him so that he could, on our behalf, square father God. We were taught to pray:—

"Gentle Jesus meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity
Suffer me to come to thee."

We were reminded of sins we were thought old enough to have committed, and told that we must repent and ask forgiveness. And our prayers being more likely to receive the attention of Jesus, than those of our elders, because of his fondness for little children, we were asked to intercede for "The whole Damm family." The advantage taken of our physical and mental weakness—all for our good!—was appalling. Our strength was to be made perfect in weakness. We were to glory in our infirmities so that the power of Christ might remain with us throughout life. Physically we took no harm, but our mental garden was planted full of noxious weeds which entailed years of labour in uprooting.

Superstition has cursed the world, and pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies enable it to keep doing so. "Superstition is the reproach of the Deity," says Bacon, and "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation: all of which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not." (*Of Superstition*).

We were taught to depend upon a power outside ourselves. But our physical development, and an early introduction to Burns and Byron, minimized this teaching. Our earliest glimpse of freedom came from Burns' *Holy Willie's Prayer*:—

"O, thou wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best Thyself,
Sends aye to heaven, and ten to hell,
 A' for thy glory,
And no for ony good or ill
 The've done afore thee."

The doctrine of predestination had occupied our minds for some time. Burns opened our eyes to its absurdity. How can any sane believer waste time asking God—"a being in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning"—to undo what he has already done, and cannot undo without denying his own existence?

The conclusion of *Holy Willie's Prayer* is similar to David's in the Psalms, and to most people's who feel benefited by self-hypnotism:—

"But Lord, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temporal and divine,
That I for grace and gear may shine
 Excell'd by nane.
An' a' the glory shall be thine;
 Amen, amen!"

Man has always made his god after his own heart, in his own image, which seems feasible enough. But where man maybe goes wrong is in making God a moral being. God's book repudiates morality—"I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (Isa. xlv. 7); and "thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." (Ps. l. 21). Dean Inge, in his *Outspoken Essays*, Vol. II., p. 24, tells us that: "There is no evidence for the theory that God is a merely moral Being, and what we observe of His laws and operations here indicates strongly that He is not."

That the Lord was a god after David's own heart is made very evident in the book of Psalms. David, at the best, was but an impulsive savage, sympathetic at one movement, fiendishly cruel the next. The Cursing Psalms (particularly the six.) are hellish things. It would have puzzled his Satanic Majesty to have penned anything more diabolic. And yet David could instance himself as a proof of the Lord's uprightness!

When the Lord speaks out of David's mouth he says, sometimes, significant things, e.g.—"Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself"; at other times something silly, e.g.—"I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide and I will fill it (Ps. lxxxv. 10); and "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." (Ps. cxliv., 1).

But it is (say) 3,000 years since David lived, and it behoves us to treat his memory as kindly as possible for we are now after 3,000 years of *uplift!* doing horrible deeds which would, probably, have been too bloody for him. Poor old, fighting, fornicating, murdering, Psalm-singing David! At the end of his stormy day, the particular friends in whom he trusted having left him—his circle narrowing to a lonesome point—he could but liken himself to a sparrow alone on the housetop, or when musing in his ingle-nook, to a bottle in the smoke—a wizened, old, skin bottle hanging in his chimney. The dregs of the wine of life could not restore his natural heat, and a remarkable tonic—1 Kings i. 1-4—proving useless, the poor, old, dying king gathered the clothes of his bed together with his palsied hands, and fell asleep.

Much might be said for and against the Psalms of David. Bacon says much in a few words: "If you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs, as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon." (*Of Adversity*).

"Throughout the rituals of Christendom," says Tylor, "stands an endless array of supplications unaltered in principle from savage times—that the weather may be adjusted to our local needs, that we may have the victory over all our enemies, that life and health and happiness may be ours." (*Primitive Culture*, Vol II., chap. xviii).

A frequent note struck by David, throughout the Psalms—"Remember that the increases of our produce is the increase of your worship, and that its diminution must be the diminution of your rites" (*Ibid*), is to be found often among native prayers. Also requests of a similar kind to that of the Scottish *Meenister*: "We implore thee to send down a blessing so large that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

And the two following, from the same source, speak for themselves:—

(1) "O Lord thou art like a moose (mouse) in a dry-stane dyke aye keekin out o' holes and crannies yet we canna see Thee."

(2) "A wee while after oor waddin' I noticed that the wife gaed tae the dirt-hoose (earth closet) three

times a day (morning, noon and night) an' speirin' if she wasna sae weel, she tauld me, efter a lot o' haverin' tae read the saxt vairse o' the saxt chapter o' Mattha' an' gaitther sense" (Matt. vi. 6).

Many scripture admonitions are curiously interpreted!

Among the many interesting things that Tylor (1832-1917) has to say about Prayer (*Primitive Culture*, Vol. II., chap 18) the following is very significant:—

Another powerful tendency of civilization, that of regulating human affairs by fixed ordinances, has since early ages been at work to arrange worship into mechanical routine. . . . Its extremest development in Europe is connected with the use of the rosary. This devotional calculating-machine is of Asiatic invention; it had its origin at least its special development among the ancient Buddhists, and its 108 balls still slide through the modern Buddhist's hands as of old.

The Prayer Mills of Tibet come next under observation. Praying-wheels, inscribed with prayers, are fixed in a running stream, or in a current of air, to insure speedy revolution—each revolution counting a prayer.

Now, why shouldn't our gramophone be made use of as a praying and preaching wheel? We have already got records of hymns, speeches, etc. And, surely, prayers and sermons must follow in due course. And what a boon they will prove to many people! A gramophone placed by a sleepless man's bedside fitted with the record of a sermon that would produce "sweet and innocent sleep" would be invaluable. "Perhaps the greatest triumph of all moral writings, including sermons," says Arthur Helps, "is that at least they have produced some sweet and innocent sleep." And, like Dogberry, "I cannot see why sleeping should offend."

We now get entire Church Services by Radio, and a much greater measure of mechanical service could be got from the gramophone. So much indeed from both these two devices that, during the next war, they should liberate about one hundred battalions (100/1000 men) of warriors from among the clergy!

Then finally, this evolution of mechanical service is doubtless taking place that the scripture may be fulfilled, regarding the city of the future, which saith:—
"And I saw no temple therein." (Rev. xxi. 22).

GEORGE WALLACE.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD DECEMBER 20, 1938

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Elstob, Bryant, Ebury, Silvester, Bedborough, Griffiths, and the Secretary.

A number of apologies for unavoidable absence were read.

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

New members were admitted to Bradford, Glasgow, Tees-Side, Kingston, North London Branches and the Parent Society. Reports of decided improvement in Birmingham meetings were received and provision was made for further lectures. The first notice concerning the next Annual Conference was ordered to be sent to Branch Secretaries. Correspondence from various sources was dealt with, including a question on the N.S.S. Badge from Chorley Branch. Progress in arrangements for the Annual Dinner in the Waldorf Hotel, Aldwych, on Saturday, January 28 was reported. The next meeting of the Executive fixed for Thursday, January 19, 1939, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

An Outline of History

FOR THE CHILDREN

ABOUT 5,942 years ago there was nothing anywhere but God; no ground to stand or walk on and no people to stand or walk on it, no sky, no trees, no plants, no animals or birds or fishes or insects and, of course, no stars or sun or moon, just God and nothing else.

This time is called the beginning. If any of you, children, had been alive then, there would have been nothing for you to stand upon, or to lie upon or to sit upon and nothing for you to eat or drink. Although God was there He could not, except by the wise things He did later on (which will be told to you in these lessons) have helped you to live because, you see, God cannot be seen or touched or laid hold of. He is what is called invisible and immaterial, which means that no one can see or touch Him.

So then, God made the earth and He made light; but He only let the light show when it was not dark.

Then He made mornings and evenings, and he made them come one after the other with the middle of the day in between, so as to keep them apart. This shows the wisdom of God, for it would not have been at all nice for the mornings and the evenings to come both of them at the same time with nothing in between; people would not know whether to get up or to go to bed.

Another wise thing God did was to make the water that is up in the clouds stay up there till it comes down; it comes down as rain. This was called dividing the waters under the firmament from the waters over the firmament. This, again, shows the wisdom of God because, if this had not been done, there would be no rain and, so, no rivers, lakes, streams, ponds or pools and the ground would be so dry that nothing would grow.

In our next lesson we will tell you of many more wise things that God did.

ROBERT HARDING

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.7 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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 PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, John Langdon-Davies—"Prospects for Reason in 1939."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4) : 7.30, "The Centenary of John Morley: Freethinker. Mr. W. Kent (South London Branch N.S.S. Editor, "Encyclopaedia of London.")

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, Miss Edith Moore—"The Crime of Catholic Instruction."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, A Social.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Discussions led by Mr. Thompson.

TWO NEW PAMPHLETS

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