

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

(Continued from page 34)

### What is Emergence?

Those who have followed me in what I have said concerning the nature of causation will have little difficulty in understanding and accepting "Emergence." The curious thing is that some Freethinkers, partly owing, one must assume, to their hazy notions concerning the implications of scientific method, and also to over-readiness to dispute any hypothesis championed by a Theist, have taken "Emergence" as a mere trick to afford plausibility to the belief in God. The fact is that both the idea and the term owes its place in modern thought to one who both in theory and in fact set aside altogether the god-idea—George Henry Lewes. It is also true that of recent years some Theists have used "Emergence" as a smoke screen for God, but for that matter other scientific ideas have been and are used for the same purpose—evolution, for example. That is the usual line for apologetic theism to take. First, a scientific theory is denounced as false because it tells against religious ideas, then it is accepted as a probable truth, finally, it is taken as true, but, properly understood, leads to a belief in deity or, if not that, it is said there is nothing in it contrary to religious ideas. I notice this attitude of some Freethinkers to "Emergence" because it illustrates a common blunder made by many controversialists. This is the mistake of trying to disprove any thesis advanced by an opponent. I mention it here because I intend supplying some examples of it later. The first rule of any controversialist should be to examine the character and, above all, the relevancy of the argument advanced. It may be that what the Freethinker has to dispute is not the thesis advanced, but the relevancy to the point in dispute. Many of the arguments commonly advanced against Freethought and on behalf of Theism are quite beside the point at issue. The rule at law is the right rule here—always examine an indictment before pleading to it.

### Some First Principles

The man who wishes to build up a completely scientific view of the world must bear two things in mind. The first of these is that the basis of all our reasoning is experience and that all our scientific "laws" are based upon experience. That is the bottom fact on which science rests, the fact which one cannot ignore without losing oneself in the morass of sheer religion (another name for primitive fetishism) or a useless metaphysic. The "matter" we talk about must be the matter of experience, not the mysterious substratum of which known matter is a mere appearance that gives us the "spirit" of the godite, or the "matter in itself," which is believed in by the god-haunted materialist. The "mind" with which science deals is the "mind" of experience, not the agency of spirit working through matter, or the fetishistic something, the qualities of which are concealed in matter. "Reality" is made up of the things we know, and the things we know are born of experience.

Second, just as all things proceed from the matrix of experience, so the quest of science is the classification of experience in both simple and complex forms, in other words a study of all events, the arrangement of events in groups, and a description of these groups in terms of natural "law." Science is not concerned with *why* things occur, it is concerned only with "how" events happen. And when it is able to answer this last question it acquires the ability to assume a mastery over natural "forces" by assembling the conditions that bring a given phenomenon into being. The work of science consists in the breaking-up of an effect into its cause—or as I have before put it, the problem of resolving a fact into its factors, so that we may repeat the destroyed fact by bringing the known factors in combination again. But it does not even attempt to prove that the laws of the factors are the laws of the fact. To do so would be ridiculous. The raw material, the only raw material with which science deals, is experience, and all its conclusions are based on experience. Apart from this we have nothing but idle and useless speculations.

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### Matter Life and Mind

Many of my readers will remember Professor Tyndall's famous Belfast Address in which occurred the startling passage (startling in those days, and set the religious world aflame and the materialistic world rejoicing) in which he said that in the "despised matter" he beheld the promise and potency of life. When Tyndall said this he did not intend his readers to assume that there did not appear in "vital" phenomena qualities which were not present in "material" phenomena, he meant simply that life had its origin in material condition; or to put it in another way, that the interaction of material events gave rise to a series of events that could no longer be described in

terms that were adequate to the earlier series. To say that "mind" arises from material and vital events, does not mean that one can find "mind" in phenomena of which an exhaustive description is to be found in laws of physics and chemistry. The expression "matter originates life," "life originates mind," mean no more than that one is developed from the other, not that one can be seen in the other in such a way that we can describe the later development in terms of the qualities of the earlier ones. That is why I have so often said that the hope of explaining life and mind in terms of physics and chemistry is "undiluted nonsense." The man who makes that kind of statement lacks an understanding of scientific method and of scientific possibilities.

Grasp this demonstrable fact and one has assimilated the concept of "Emergence." It means that as an observed fact there does arise at a certain "level" (a bad word, but it must pass) of interactive phenomena something that is not describable, or explainable in terms of "laws" which covered the earlier levels. This may be expressed in the words of Professor Lillie, in his "Protoplasmic action and Nervous Action":—

Living systems are highly special developments; they represent a higher order of synthesis, and it is to be expected that they should exhibit properties and activities that are not present in non-living systems. . . . Life has evolved from non-living matter in the past; and in the present every living organism is the seat of a continual transformation of non-living into living matter.

There is here, in this statement of Emergence, no wiping out of the lower "levels"; the "higher" is always an outcome of the "lower," as Dr. R. G. Gordon, says in his excellent essay on "Personality":—

It is very important to notice how the higher planes involve the lower planes. The atom cannot exist without the electrical charges whose special relatedness constitutes that atom. The molecule cannot exist without atoms. Life is impossible without the phenomena belonging to the realms of chemistry and physics, and consciousness is inconceivable without life and all that it involves.

Within its limits "laws" of physics cover physical phenomena. But at a certain point the phenomena before us assume forms (it must be borne in mind that we are all the time dealing with the inter-relatedness of highly complex bodies) that can no longer be exhausted by "physical laws," hence the creation of laws of chemistry, to be followed by laws of life, of psychology, etc. It is in this way that new scientific categories are created; they are essential to that complete description and understanding of the process of events at which science aims. Referring to these different "levels" Professor Dewey (*Experience and Nature*) says:—

Each of these levels having its own characteristic traits, has its own categories, as explanation is sometimes understood. . . . They stick to empirical facts noting and denoting characteristic qualities and consequences peculiar to various levels of interaction. Viewed from this standpoint the traditional "mechanical" and "teleological" theories suffer from a common fallacy, which may be suggested by saying that they both purport to be explanatory in the old historical sense of causality. The notion of causal explanation involved in both conceptions implies a breach in the continuity of the historic process.

I think that what I have said should serve to make the subject of causation and emergence clear. Those who have followed what I have said will realize that Emergence is no more than a continuation of the concept of causation, which perpetually furnishes us with quali-

ties in the effect that are not present in any possible analysis of the qualities of the factors. Those who look in the "cause" for the qualities manifested in the "effect," will not agree with me, but that will be because their minds are still clogged with the primitive conception of a "force" passing from the cause to the effect; and that, I think I have shown is a mere attenuated survival of primitive fetishism. The scientific Materialist asserts that from the atom onward, or whatever is taken as the ultimate object of experience, there is an unbroken sequence of events, but that certainty does not involve the absurd statement that we can reduce the phenomena of the later developments to laws which describe the behaviour of earlier "levels" of the evolutionary process. One more quotation from a very important work, although containing much from which I dissent (*Biological Principles*, by J. H. Woodger, 1929), may be given:—

When we say water is H-O-H we ordinarily think . . . of the properties as being . . . deducible from this composition. But these are properties of a peculiar sort in as much as they involve an abrupt change in the characters of what is characterized.

No amount of knowledge of the properties of oxygen and hydrogen would have enabled anyone to foresee that in certain conditions water would emerge. Still less would this knowledge have told us that a variation in the quantitative proportion of the atoms, and of the structural form taken by the molecule would give us hydrogen peroxide. It is this beginning of new phenomena, which cannot be ranged under the laws describing the behaviour of the factors from which they arise, that constitute "emergence." It is a conception that marks the clearing of religious forms of thought from our view of the world. It ends the habit, of which many appear to be completely unaware, of thinking of things in substantially religious terms, and so adopting a fundamental form of religion in the act of denouncing supernaturalism. If one has a right conception of causation he must accept Emergence, which is merely a continuation of causation in general. If he does not accept Emergence he then misreads the essential meaning of causation. And if he understands neither causation nor emergence, he should cease pretending to educate people in scientific thinking, and confine himself to such popular pastimes as describing the motions of the heavenly bodies, the varieties of animal structures, etc. All of these are quite interesting, and useful studies, but concerning which a man's head may be as full as an egg is of meat, and yet leave him a scientific ignoramus.

Finally, I think I ought to apologize to some of my readers for taking up so much space on what many will consider a very "dry" topic. But *Freethinker* readers are not of the ordinary type, and my correspondence gives weekly evidence of what a large number are deeply interested in these deeper currents of thought.

Next week my "cases" will be of a more popular character.

CHAPMAN COHEN

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#### ROBERT BURNS

Burns lived in this world until he died. Most poets reside elsewhere. Some in the shadowy past, some in the far-off future, some in the realms of fancy and romance, and some in the unmapped regions of ethereal dreams and speculations. They are not residents of this world. They are merely callers. They drop in occasionally for luncheon, or a night's lodging, or to have their laundry work done. Burns lived right here for thirty-seven years; lived a human life; felt the storm and sunshine; knew the sorrow and the joy; wore the laurel of triumph and felt the dagger of remorse as men have and must so long as man is man.—*Dr. J. E. Roberts.*

## "The Prophet of Nazareth"

We shall not only attack superstition, but we shall also explain it.—*John Morley.*

Man's knowledge of nature has outgrown theology.  
*Blatchford.*

A CAMEL'S hair tent in the desert was the precursor of the Christian Cathedral, and the tribal god of wandering nomads became, in the process of time, the composite deity of Christendom. Evolution has not stopped even here, for the figure of Christ is now disputing with Jehovah, and from being the heir-apparent to the throne, bids fair to become a rival rather than a satellite. Why this transformation scene? It is because the clergy realize that the older figure is too remote and unattractive to modern worshippers in the twentieth century, and that the lay-figure of Christ can be more usefully employed as a less insecure symbol of their faith.

The figure of the earlier deity is definitely Semitic, but the triune divinity of the Christian Faith is a vastly more complex imagining derived from a number of Oriental sources. Throughout all its many transformations it is always Eastern and never Western. In theology, as in other matters, it still remains true that:—

East is East and West is West  
And never the twain shall meet

Disguise the matter as you please, basically the transformation from the tribal deity to the complex creation of a later date is from a crude monotheism to a complex polytheism. Even the present-day lip-service given to the figure of Christ only proves the case. For whilst it is pretended that the fictional Christ was the founder of Christianity, it is more correct to recall that whilst "half Europe worships a Jew, and the other half a Jewess," the Christian Pantheon includes not only the Holy Trinity, but also the Virgin Mary, with Satan also on the board of directors.

The astute move of the Protestant clergy in endeavouring to make the figure of Christ the central point of the Christian Religion, so as to disarm present-day criticism, is only temporary strategy. It cannot for long be a Maginot line of defence, for the attack will now centre on the personality of Christ, and the position of the priests will become increasingly insecure. It is the beginning of the end of the Christian Religion, as known for nearly twenty centuries.

Criticism, sharp as a surgeon's knife, will dissect the figure of the Prophet of Nazareth, and will find it "such stuff as dreams are made of." Just as all the multitudinous portraits of the alleged figure of Christ are so entirely imaginary that Italian artists portrayed him as a Latin, Spaniards as a Spaniard, Dutchmen as a Dutchman, and so forth, so is the literary portrait in the Gospels as fictional as the story of Saint George and the Dragon, or Sinbad the Sailor.

The canonical and uncanonical gospels themselves are anonymous, written no one knows where, no one knows by whom, no one knows when. There is no mention of this Saviour in contemporary secular history, save the interpolated forgery in Josephus. Even the four gospels admitted as canonical are but a selection from a number of manuscripts which are known to be spurious, such as the Gospel to the Hebrews, and a Gospel to the Egyptians. There were also evangels of Childhood, of Perfection, and of Mary. The gospels were not written until a century after the supposed events narrated, and they are in the Greek language, and not Aramaic. The canonical gospels are attributed to "Matthew" and other disciples, but

one of the spurious gospels is with equal ease and effrontery, attributed to "Judas." And what value can be placed upon such narratives, when they describe a massacre of the innocents which escaped the notice of historians, and of a supernatural darkness over the entire earth, which failed to excite the smallest interest of contemporary astronomers.

Pliny has stated that centuries before his day disciples of Gotama Buddha were established on the Dead Sea. Here one is reminded of the close analogies between the story of Christ and the story of the earlier Buddha, which so largely dissipates the claim that Christianity is original and not simply derivative. The figure of Jesus Christ in the gospels is not an historical figure, it is the portrait of a god, painted with all the wild exuberance peculiar to Eastern writers. If there were a human nucleus in all this welter of exaggeration and imagination it is overwhelmed by the spangle and tinsel of the miraculous, and the consensus of opinion in the intellectual world is that miracles do not happen.

The masses in those remote times in that particular part of the world had minds as naked as their bodies. They were slaves with the mentality of slaves. Twenty centuries later there is little improvement, for priests still fool the populace to the top of their bent. Such scenes as the annual lighting of the "Holy Fire" at Jerusalem, and the equally fraudulent liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples, not only discredit the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, two of the most powerful bodies of Christendom, but almost make a decent man ashamed of his own species. Priestcraft has always battered upon the ignorance of mankind. Like the Bourbons, priests "learn nothing, and forget nothing." And, by their control of education, these pastors and masters cultivate credulity in the pupils, so that in after life the eyes are blind to facts. The Gospel legends are poured into the young ears from earliest childhood, and the "old old stories" have a familiar ring even when half believed. But the unblushing trickery of the "Holy Fire" and the liquefaction of the saints' blood should make thoughtful people think furiously.

No less mendacious is all the modern priestly "blarney" concerning the "Babe of Bethlehem," and the "Carpenter of Nazareth." It is done simply to cater for the Democratic ideas of the present day, and is just plain spoo. One thing in all this welter of fraud and faith must be obvious to every honest student of history. The Christian Religion is based upon the alleged supernatural, for Christianity itself is based upon miracles. In the last analysis it is upon the truth or falsehood of miracles that the very personality of Christ must stand or fall. According to the Gospels, it was by means of marvellous happenings that his mission was attested. It was by miracles that he attested his divine mission. It was by miracles that he is said to have won his first following. It was by miracles that he proclaimed himself the son of a god, and without credulous belief in miracles, Christianity would have long since died out and been relegated to the lumber room of forgotten things. It is not a creed of love, a religion of brotherhood, which has fascinated ignorant millions through so many centuries, and caused them to fill the priests' coffers with untold gold.

In the legends, Christ claimed that he was a god, and his "proofs" were that he multiplied loaves and fishes, healed the sick, and restored the dead to life. The whole question is reduced to one of facts. If we can believe that Christ was really born of a virgin, that he performed prodigies, that he died and was buried, and afterwards left the earth like an aeroplane, then we need not hesitate to accept the priestly pretensions for the Christian Religion. If, on the other

hand, we believe that the proofs for the miracles are inadequate, or that natural laws are never broken, no talk of love or brotherhood, associated with the threat of eternal torment, will make believable the old-world imaginative nonsense upon which Christianity is based.

The most important of the numerous Christian sects—the Greek and the Roman Catholic Churches—recognize this, and affirm that their own faked miracles are a continuation of the marvellous happenings narrated in the Old and New Testaments. Greek and Romish Church apologists tell us that the questionable “Holy Fire” at Jerusalem, the so-called “cures” at Lourdes, and elsewhere, and the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius, are precisely such as those mentioned in the Christian Bible, and that the apparition of the Virgin to children at La Salette is as genuine as the alleged miracles in Judas. These priests boast openly that their theatrical exhibitions form the latest links in a great chain that extends back to Biblical times. In other words, the two greatest and most powerful Churches of all Christendom leave Humanity chained within the prison of Superstition. It is the purpose of Freethinkers to break those fetters and set Humanity free from an old-world demonology, which has darkened a large part of the world for so many centuries. For miracles do not happen, and never have happened, except in the imagination of men.

MIMNERMUS

## Does History Repeat Itself?

A FEW months ago in the *Freethinker* the present writer asked this question: Is History Bunk? The writer expressed the opinion that *rightly understood* history is a most serious matter, and that it should concern every one of us. If that is the case, a further important question arises which will be posed here: Does History repeat itself? This, it seems to me, is one of those questions that cannot be answered with a categorical yes or no. I fear the reply in this case must be the less satisfactory, “Yes and No.” But before we attempt any answer we must, as ever, give a clear definition of what we mean by History. In this connexion History is regarded solely as a record, impartial and objective as may be, of the events caused by and suffered by human beings throughout the world. If this definition is accepted, our question can be phrased thus: Is any section of this record of human events repeated at a later period in the flow of time? Put thus the question becomes, I think, somewhat easier to answer.

No. History does not repeat itself, because what applies to man himself must necessarily apply to his activities. Men, everywhere and at all times, are changing. They grow, they grow old, they die and decompose. They, no more than anything else terrestrial, “stay put.” The “everlasting hills” are only so in Biblical poetry. Only in heaven are things quite static, or, at any rate, the chanters of that somewhat mournful hymn *Abide with me* think so, for they apostrophize “Thou, who changest not.” Even they agree, however, that men change. And if the causer of actions differ it should surely follow that their actions must vary, however infinitesimal the variation is. The variation in effect may not be measurable, but it is there. If a boy of twelve or a man of seventy-seven sets fire to a hayrick, there may be no appreciable difference in the effect as regarded by the farmer, the fire-brigade, and insurance company, but to the scientist and logician the effect will not be the same. If I seem to be talking rot, please bear with me yet a

little, and I will soon retrace my steps to what may seem firmer ground.

Not only are men changing all the time, but no two of us are alike. This needs no argument, for the whole system of finger-print identification is based upon this, so-far, unchallenged knowledge. Knowledge, mark you, not assumption. So we reach this position; that men, of which no two are alike, and who are undergoing change all the time, cause the actions which are recorded by history, and that as the causers are unique, the effects of these causes must necessarily be unique events, and these events, being unique, cannot, *ex hypothesi*, be a repetition of previous events.

Yes. History does repeat itself. But *with variations*, often with vital variations. It is all a question of the level on which events are played out. On the atomic level there is probably, not to say necessarily, no “law of eternal recurrence,” but on the level of human affairs one has only to read history to see again and again the close resemblance that events in different countries at varying times have to each other. But a minute examination of these resemblances will always show differences, differences so vital as to preclude any claim that the two events are identical. Absolute identity, if it could be established, would undermine the whole theory of evolution and, with it, the whole diversity of natural creation.

A further question now arises: Can we learn from history? This has always seemed to me one of the most foolish of questions, but as it is often asked I suppose I must treat it with respect. Even so acute an intelligence as Mr. Bernard Shaw has considered the matter as worthy consideration, for has he not opined, or let a favourite character opine (for one must not tax a dramatist with his characters’ opinions), that “we learn from history that no man ever learns from history?” That *sounds* pretty smart, and it is doubtless based on the difference in men of a capacity to learn, but if history is a “record of past events,” how is anyone to learn but from events. Maybe the emphasis should be put on the words “record” and “past,” for present events themselves have a summary way of teaching us. But unless we are mere automata reacting to the stimulus of present events we must learn from history, for there is nothing else to learn from. I think therefore we must conclude that we both can and do learn from history. That this is desirable, I have no doubt. But we must bear in mind always that there can be no exact repetitions of historic situations. That mankind is alive to the danger of wrong belief in this connexion is enshrined in the popular maxim that it is the unexpected that always happens.

I cannot do better in concluding this article than by giving a remarkable illustration of how history nearly repeats itself. One will see in this example how one small difference, that of one word, *France* instead of *Germany*, must make all the difference in the actions that we should take on the conclusions that we draw from this lesson from history. But Freethinkers will be of no two minds as to the teaching of history in this case.

In 1939 we see an enslaved country, called Germany, ruled by a despot, called Hitler. Our own ruler, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, wishes to be on friendly terms, or at least peaceful terms, with this despot, and he wishes us, the British people, to share his ideas on this subject. So far as he is able to contrive this he will force us to be friendly with this monster. On the day that this is being written, I notice that Mr. Lyons, Premier of Australia, has “rebuked” Mr. H. G. Wells for saying rude things about Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. This overseas henchman of Chamberlain wants no “disparaging remarks about” them. “Such personal insults” as Mr. Wells has

uttered are, he says, "to be deplored." Mr. Wells's "views," he said he was anxious to make clear, "were not those of the Government." I can imagine that H.G.W. is glad that Mr. Lyons makes clear that he, Mr. Wells, does not share Mr. Lyons's view. To be accused of approving Adolf Hitler is just about the lowest thing that can be said of an honest man.

Reversing the old saying, "Like master, like man," we can safely say that "Like Lyons, like Chamberlain." We know, of course, that Mr. Chamberlain, or his pal Halifax, has "rebuked" the Leader of the Opposition for his references to the German Government and its leader. (Also, somewhat illogically, he has praised Mr. Roosevelt for his attack on Totalitarianism). The insolence of these jacks-in-office! The only excuse for Mr. Lyons that I can think of is that he was educated at a convent school and has eleven children.

The position is, therefore, that for the sake of trade or a quiet life free Englishmen are to refrain from pointing out that a man or an institution in a foreign country is an evil thing. In this case it is Hitler and his gangsters. But history will show us a parallel for this case. Let us look back to the year 1852, to the France which began in that year, under Louis Napoleon, an era of repression of all free men and institutions, an era which was the precursor of all the Fascist tyrannies of our day. Then, as now, there were wealthy Englishmen, traders and others, who objected strongly to rude remarks being made of this upstart despot. The refugee, Louis Napoleon, who had lived in England, and was destined again to enjoy our hospitality, was engaged in driving other and better Frenchmen out; also to seek refuge in our realm, as did, notably, Victor Hugo. Englishmen were bidden by the Lord Halifaxes of that day in the House of Lords to bridle their tongues and adjured to remember the cotton trade. The "appeasement" movement ended in that day in a military alliance with France against Russia, which ended in the Crimean War. Mr. Chamberlain's appeasement will also end in a military alliance with Germany against Russia. The same story, but with a different country.

Now for the lesson of history. How did Britons react to this advice of the House of Lords? Well, some refused to hold their peace when iniquity was being worked. They were not strong enough to prevent the ensuing alliance with France and the futile war that came from that alliance. But many of these doubtless lived to see—1870! Foremost among these outspoken Englishmen was Alfred Tennyson, a great poet so undeservedly sneered at by the poetasters of our day. Would that more present-day poets had his "guts" and gift of poesy!

This man, who ended, alas, by himself becoming a lord ("just for a handful of silver he left us"), addresses, in a notable poem, these lords who were so careful not to offend the illiberal régime of Louis Napoleon. I wish I could quote the whole poem here, for it is not nearly so widely known as it should be. This perhaps is due in part to Tennyson's fault, for the piece has the unpromising title of "The Third of February, 1852." I would urge all Freethinkers to read or read again this poem, for the poet says there the very words that should be used now. It is eight stanzas long, but not a word too many.

I cannot refrain, however, from quoting a stanza or two. The opening one puts the matter in a nutshell:—

My Lords, we heard you speak: you told us all  
That England's honest censure went too far;  
That our free press should cease to brawl,  
Not sting the fiery Frenchman into war.  
It was our ancient privilege, my Lords,  
To fling whate'er we felt, not fearing, into words.

He goes on to say that "though we love kind Peace so well," "we must speak free, Though all the storm of Europe on us break; No little German State are we, But the one voice in Europe." "We will not," says the poet, "spare the tyrant one hard word."

Let us mark well his closing stanza, for it is indeed our lesson from history:—

Though niggard throats of Manchester may bawl,  
What England was, shall her true sons forget?  
We are not cotton-spinners all,  
But some love England and her honour yet.  
And these in our Thermopylae shall stand,  
And hold against the world this honour of the land.

BAYARD SIMMONS

### Franco's Press

FROM a tour of the recently opened Franco areas of Spain the journalist who is tactful can learn quite a lot about Franco's press, and, of course, about much else.

Some information the authorities furnish willingly so that one suspects their own belief: other facts are concealed, but the fact and substance of the concealment both tell much.

The writer soon discovered that a semi-colonial country, Spain has always had two sorts of newspapers; the native, indigenous press and the press of the Great Powers and interests. Usually both these have further divided themselves into the democratic press and the autocratic, industrialist-feudalist. To the latter groups Germany has always been the fatherland, the model and the leader of Europe: especially Hitler Germany made ample use of this feeling as the rebellion shows.

To-day Franco's press is German inspired, owned and run: the only German-free papers inside his territory are those imported from France and Britain.

The outstanding change in the Franco-German press is that the newspapers are much bigger and better equipped than they were. Several run to twelve, ten or eight pages where they were formerly only six or eight at the most.

They are well printed, bare almost of advertising, and notably German both in imprint and set-up.

Their gain in quantity, however, is lack in quality. They are over political and unread. Newspapers lying about unopened and newspaper boys listlessly shouting and practically nobody buying are common sights. Rarely does one see heads bent over newspapers.

In many small cities the evening newspapers have symptomatically expired.

Nevertheless despite the German uniformity the Spanish newspapers have individualism. The crossword puzzle, the short story, the endless gossip, the humour and much else break sporadically through the political front. Frequent too are summaries of foreign sports news and reports of bull fights.

In all newspapers political news occupies a uniformly large space, and is factually though variously written.

Correspondents from Italy and Germany appears regularly, in which emphasis is laid on their commercial prosperity. Military movements are omitted. Some papers print anti-Communist and anti-Government columns, apparently issued by authority.

Catholic news appears only occasionally.

Regularly notices are published exhorting the people to Catholic reserve in matters of dignity and prestige, and in morals, costume, public and private decency. Most papers constantly warn against lewd entertainment and lavish expenditure, as waste of the material resources of the nation.

Daily moralizings on the greatness of the leaders of the New Spain provide the newspapers' boasted highest ideal tension. In the ascription of all activity in National Spain primarily to "Generalissimo Franco, inspired by the Renaissance of the Glorious spirit of National Spain," there is real deification. It is "Under the Command of General Franco" this . . . or "By order of General Franco" that. . . .

Photographs of General Franco are taken like those of Mussolini, from the feet up, and in active poses: they are both small men.

The liveliest papers are the Carlist and Phalangist (Fascist sectarian) small weekly sheets, pages of which are often blank with censorial displeasure. Occasionally they are suppressed; occasionally the censor's nod allows an illuminating insult to pass.

From English residents and some liberal Spaniards I was able to glean some details concerning newspaper regulations. My Spanish informants were eager to voice their contempt for them. They tried to show also, despite recent definite stringencies how, with true Spanish autonomism little regulation had been assimilated.

The reportorial regulations, for instance, are interesting. Covering a meeting of prefects a reporter takes no notes, for no notes is the rule in Franco Spain. The various local and national leaders, Carlist and Phalangist particularly, German and Italian generally, often make remarks too dangerous to print.

Most reporters cover meetings, events, social affairs, Church ceremonies and other functions without political importance. Important meetings are served by a special class of official reporters often German or Italian. They supply reports of important meetings to the Government Press Bureau, which passes them to the press complete with instructions for use. Spanish resentment of German method and intrusion may explain why they are not always used as stipulated.

No newspaper, periodical, news-sheet or propaganda may be produced without special permission from the police. Since the War began there have been numerous newspaper failures and only a few important new issues, and these mainly German propaganda issues.

German influence demands that editorial responsibility is reserved for only known Fascist party men or well-known editors, or the actual directors of publishing companies. Editorial appointments must be informed to and approved of by the Prefect of the Province. Property owners only are stipulated by the demand for a heavy deposit to be made before registration.

The Police have special powers to deal with any newspaper which "by means of false or misleading news complicates the diplomatic action of the Government in its relations with foreign countries . . . depreciates the national credit . . . unjustly alarms the people . . . excites crime or class hatred or disobedience of public authorities or disturbs the discipline of employees in a public service. . . ."

Both the mechanics and theory of Fascisation are assiduously developed and almost exclusively by Germans. In this exclusive Germanization is a difficulty. For agricultural Franco-Spain and its agricultural people takes tardily to industrial Fascism and its methods.

Elaborate theories of press supervision are unsuitable for a country poorly equipped with newspapers. With industrial development sufficient to provide a national press they would be useful. Industrial development, however, would be furiously resented by the Catholic feudal agrarians who are Franco's powerful backers. Already the first tensions of the struggle between Fascist-militarists, who want industrial development for war purposes and the clerical-Fascists, agrarians pure and simple, are developing in the press. The general German imprint and set-up of many newspapers show that the Germans have imported their technical equipment.

Towards the end of his stay the writer found the only papers read in Franco-Spain: the European papers brought in by visitors.

Such are never lying about. For officially they are prohibited, and secretly they are passed round from hand to hand until they fall to pieces.

Visitors are pestered for their papers. The more cautious bequeath their collections when they leave. And wherever a receiver of foreign newspapers is a little social club appears.

Amongst liberal Spaniards there are springing up such semi-illegal clubs, similar to those in Germany for reading foreign newspapers and exchanging news gossip.

LOUIS H. BORRILL.

## The Case of Eugene Lagot

[We have received the following from the War Resisters' International, which we publish without comment.—Ed.]

If in our own country a leading Pacifist was prosecuted and imprisoned for expressing his opinions in a Pacifist journal it would generally be agreed—even by those who did not share those opinions—that a great blow had been struck at the liberty of the press and of the individual; also it would be realized that the decline of liberty would soon be felt by others in addition to Pacifists. In short such an event would be regarded as a danger signal, demanding prompt action by all who cared for human freedom.

This is what has happened in France. About three and a half years ago Eugène Lagot, a distinguished French Pacifist and a Council Member of the War Resisters' International (of which Mr. George Lansbury is President) wrote an article in *La Patrie Humaine*, a French journal. For that article he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, though he was not actually arrested until November, 1938. He is now in prison at La Santé, Paris.

The article for which Monsieur Lagot is imprisoned was an analytical account of the various types of "Conscientious Objectors," religious and rationalist. It concluded with the observation that people got the kind of government they deserved, and that armies could be abolished as soon as the people wished to abolish them and refused to become soldiers. "In order to be free, the only necessity is to cease from servitude," he quoted from a French school classic. It was such an article as any Pacifist might have written, and indeed, hundreds of such articles are written every year in this country and in France.

But the French authorities decided that such sentiments constituted an "Incitement to Insubordination of men called or re-called to military service and of young soldiers." By an Act closely resembling the British Sedition Act, and clearly quite as dangerous to the public welfare, they prosecuted Monsieur Lagot for such "incitement" and in his absence condemned him to six months imprisonment and a fine. His appeal has recently been dismissed.

The man who is thus unjustly imprisoned is a friend of humanity, who has travelled thousands of miles all over Europe sowing the seeds of human brotherhood, investigating cases of persecution (often at personal risk to himself) and labouring for the release of prisoners. For this work he has neglected his own needs, becoming a poor man—for he would never accept financial remuneration though pressed to do so. If any man has deserved the support of liberal-minded people throughout the world it is this French Pacifist who has always regarded the peoples of other countries as his brothers and compatriots, and is to-day paying the penalty of his international conception of true citizenship.

The French Prime Minister, M. Daladier, is shortly to visit Britain, and it is hoped that means will be found to demonstrate to M. Daladier that British liberal opinion is alarmed at retrogressive tendencies in France, of which Eugène Lagot's imprisonment is an example. Both in France and Britain—as also in America—the Governments tend to stress the blessings of a democratic regime, for which they profess to stand. The *bona fides* of that claim must be challenged wherever injustices occur, and specifically in this instance, by demanding Monsieur Lagot's release.

Those interested should send letters to the following:—

M. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Aux bons soins de, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de France, Albert Gate, London, S.W.1.

M. le Garde Des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, Place Vendôme, Paris, France.

In addition to this it is desirable to send a post-card to the War Resisters' International, 11 Abbey Road, Enfield, Middlesex, so that some conception may be formed of the number of letters sent to the French authorities.

## Acid Drops

Those who are living in dread of a European War may rest in peace. Hitler has assured a meeting of the Diplomatic Corps that Germany wants peace, and that the Munich agreement has shown the world the way to peace. But German rights must be recognized. And we all know what German rights mean. Munich has shown the way, and a few more meetings of the same kind will give the gangsters all they require.

For example. Someone fired a toy pistol through the window of the German consulate in Amsterdam. No one knows who did so, and in any case if it occurred in this country or in America, no particular notice would have been taken beyond arresting the offender, if he could be found. But the Amsterdam authorities after a vigorous search could not find the bullet, and later opinion leans to the "bullet" being a stone from a boy's catapult. But it gave the hero of Munich a chance to let loose a tirade of abuse against Holland with regard to that country encouraging a Jewish attack on Germany, etc., etc., and it will probably form one of the items in the charge as to the oppression of Germans by the Dutch. And in informed quarters Holland is one of the places on which the gangsters have their eyes. Incidents can always be created, and one should never forget the burning of the Reichstag by Goering & Co., in order to find a pretence for attacking the Communists, and the murder of Matteoti with the connivance of Mussolini, in whose honesty and good faith Mr. Chamberlain has again expressed his faith.

Meanwhile the fruits of Munich are being gathered. After the English and French Prime Ministers had given Czechoslovakia to Hitler, the final stroke has been given to its annexation, by Hitler demanding the return of the political refugees who had taken shelter in Prague. Another result of Munich is that Hungary has been forced to come into the Italian-Germanic group, and so gives Hitler a chance for further aggression. Meanwhile Germany is fertile with suggestions as to the ways in which other countries may buy the release of the Jews in Germany, after they have been robbed of nearly all their possessions. And in this game of brutality Italy has been forced to join. For no one pretends that Mussolini had any desire to persecute them, there were far too few of them, but orders came from Hitler, and Mussolini must do as Germany orders—unless the gangsters are outbidden by this country.

But the incident in Holland, and the use made of it in Germany, may account for the indulgence of the Government to the open propaganda of German Fascism in this country. The intelligence department carried on here must be well aware of the crusade being carried on in this country, and cannot be ignorant of the extent to which the Fascist has been built up here by Germany. This has extended to the orders to rouse the anti-Jewish cry. That, on the face of it, was not a good cry to raise. It carried with it no particular political temptation. It was a cry that appealed only to the most ignorant section of the population, and was obeyed by those who lived upon German encouragement. Was our Government really turning the blind eye because it thought that Germany might resent interference and was afraid that Hitler would start a crusade to stop the ill-treatment of Germans here, and perhaps demand autonomy for them? We hardly think things have come to that pass yet, but one never knows. The Fascist movement is poor enough in this country in point of numbers, and if one deducted from its ranks the paid members, it would be numerically poorer still. Mentally it could hardly be worse.

How easily intolerance develops. Arthur Young, the agricultural reformer, was a highly intelligent and progressive man, and his travels in France in 1789 were reprinted by the French Directory as a fine account of the evils of the ancient regime. Yet in 1797 he was answer-

ing Paine's *Rights of Man* and incidentally remarking that "if I was King of Spain, I would modify the Inquisition but not abolish it." Complete freedom of speech was too dangerous, there had been too much of it under Louis XVI., hence these troubles. See page 167 of the life of Young published by Miss Amelia Defries, under the title, *Sheep and Turnips*. Young, in his last years, 1810-20, was almost a religious maniac. The Inquisition he so approved would no doubt have burned him.

Ten members of Merseyside Left Theatre Club were bound over, with costs of £1 11s. 6d., against each, for participating in two plays, which had not been passed by the Lord Chamberlain. The title of one is: "I can't sleep." The other is: "Waiting for Lefty"; and when the manager of the Royalty Theatre, Chester, heard one of the characters say: "They'll tear Christ from his bleeding cross," he had the curtain rung down. He had rightly concluded that the words had not passed censorship. The Lord Chancellor had not only deleted them, but ruled they should never be used in any public representation of the play. Perhaps Clifford Odets, who wrote both the plays mentioned, only intended "bleeding" to be read in the Shavian sense, for a "bleeding cross" has surely never been met with outside the Roman Catholic faith.

Occupying nearly the whole of a (umpteenth pounds worth) page of the *Daily Mail* of the 11th inst, was an account, profusely illustrated, of a woman who dusts, washed the floor (stooping, not on her knees! Picture No. 2), shops, peels potatoes, cooks, and sits with her mate (Picture No. 6) in a London flat. A woman, we repeat! "What of it?" readers may ask. "Has the *Freethinker* gone crazy to publish such tripe, or is it some new training at the Zoo?" Forgive us, friends, when we spread the thrilling news that it is *really* a woman; and one who came from caviare (not naturally, of course) and a castle! In short, no less a person than a Russian ex-princess, married to a modest English traveller in cement. (Nor is this the only soul-stirring feature in the national (?) paper quoted. There is in the same issue an *actual photograph* of a skating-star's *engagement ring*, in solitary glory to reveal more clearly its pearls and diamonds!)

What are we coming to? Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" has been filmed, and is now on show in London. But the famous "I've got a little list," a topical song which we remember brought the house down when we heard it on the first night of the opera, has been omitted. The lists of *possibles* for execution included well-known political characters, and none enjoyed the song more than they who were on the list. New names were inserted as some grew out-of-date. And now the song has been eliminated because, as current characters would have had to be introduced, there was a fear that the censorship would interfere. So once more what are we coming to? Low had better look out. We are learning something from the dictators—if only the policy of suppression and repression.

Summoned by the Twickenham Corporation, Charles Louis Basham was fined 20s. and one guinea costs for creating a nuisance in Park Road, Teddington, by using a loud speaker in the street. Mr. Basham's defence was that he was a member of the Watchdown Bible Tract Society and was conducting religious propaganda. The plea was ignored. We wonder when some step will be taken to stop the Salvation Army annoying people in a usually quiet street by blaring with a full strength brass band? We are quite certain that no other organization would be permitted to create the nuisance that a Salvation Army band creates. But both in this matter and in the general one of obstruction the Salvation Army appears to be licensed law-breakers.

After a very short run as sole preacher at the City Temple, the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead's health unfortunately broke down. It was strange, for Mr. Weatherhead

himself declared the City Temple—under his management—was going to be The House of Healing. He is a bit better now, but has asked for an assistant minister to ease him of some of his burdens. And now he has consulted a doctor—yes, an ordinary or at any rate an orthodox properly diploma'd person. He has been advised—first to take a sea-trip—and when he returns he must preach shorter sermons! We remember *Punch's* advice to the Homoepaths, to the effect that if a small dose is so good, "it surely must be better still to take no dose at all."

The Rev. George Jackson, by far the most Modernist and one of the few cultured clerics of the Methodist Church, has been reviewing a number of so-called Manuals of Theology. He says they are too dogmatic, or as he says: "a frank recognition of the limitations of our knowledge" is lacking. He quotes with approval the determination of James Denney, who wrote: "I mean to leave plenty of room in my course for agnosticism." Like all Christian apologists, Mr. Jackson, of course, traces all his own theology "back to Christ"—leaving us uncertain as to the origin of all the orthodox creeds. But at least he does not shy at the epithet "Freethinker," and he amusingly—and modestly—alludes to "some reviewer who referred to me as 'an eminent divine'; it was nearly as bad as being called 'a celebrated ecclesiastic': I wanted to laugh in the foolish fellow's face." Well, well, there are not many of us who fully deserve all the hard things that are said concerning us.

Mr. Middleton Murry, that queer fish whose association with the late D. H. Lawrence has caused so many of Lawrence's admirers to gasp with wonder, has written another book. This time it is called *Heaven and Hell*. We are not surprised that one of his critics asks (in the *Listener*) "What is the opposite of 'debunk'?" He comes to the conclusion that the proper word is "Bunk," which seems just the best description of Mr. Murry's latest exhibition of his newly acquired religious creed. We hear that Mr. Murry is thinking of qualifying for "Holy Orders"; he will probably make an ideal parson. The *Listener* reviewer is brilliantly sarcastic about Murry's "notable example of bunking," namely "seeing Shelley's new Athens transformed into a *civitas Dei*, and he concludes:—

Mr. Murry's ingenuity is of the highest order. Our student will expect to meet round the corner Voltaire in a cassock and Bradlaugh in a biretta.

The Pope is indignant because some Nazi scoundrels have said unpleasant things about the Catholic Action Organization, which His Holiness describes as "the apple of my eye." But what after all is this "Catholic Action" but an attempt to interfere with liberty everywhere when it has the power to do so? Nothing is so important in the present condition of affairs, where democracy and individual liberty is constantly attacked, to discriminate between "rights" and "privileges." We are fully willing to stand up for the rights of Christians—and all other citizens. We are not at all in favour of ANY privileges to ANY religion.

Sir Philip Wilbraham-Baker has been appointed First Church Estate Commissioner, which means the management of the enormous revenue of the Church of England from its estates and investments. This amounted to £3,749,000 in 1937, of which £1,324,000 came from estates and £1,960,000 from dividends, interest, etc. It is claimed that the money is used chiefly to endow or increase "benefices," and an expenditure of £2,526,000 under this head is given for 1937. (Curious how evenly the amounts work out, what?) And it is members of this wealthy corporation who are allowed to cadge and scrounge on behalf of penurious parsons! While honest beggars are censured by the public and suffer the penalties of law! Our text, dear brethren, reads: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

Now Vicar of St. Matthew's, West Kensington, the Rev. A. Leonard Poole, seems to regret his change from a chaplainship in H.M.S. Rodney. He simply cannot understand why his congregation is vanishing. Out of a hundred couples he married in the last four years, only one remains in the parish; and 80 per cent of parents and children baptized "disappear each year, leaving no address behind." Mr. Poole is also concerned at the lateness of the hour people in his parish rise on Sundays. He has "seen householders collecting their milk in dressing-gowns well after noon on Sundays." (Most extraordinary receptacles for milk surely—dressing-gowns!) Leonard breaks out, "... dash it all, breakfast at noon is a bit thick." Let us point out that the hiatus in the last sentence quoted is not the deletion of naughtier expressions used by the vicar. "Dash it all," no. Evidently the loss of so much potential revenue has "got the parson's goat"—to adopt the reverend gentleman's idiomatic style.

We are pleased to note that an assumption that ex-Dean Inge had Nazi sympathies is not confirmed. At all events, he has aimed a piercing shaft at Hitler. In a study of Nero (*Evening Standard*, 6th inst), which otherwise reveals nothing new, he writes: "Was it Nero who gave the hint to Hitler to fire the Reichstag and throw the blame on the Communists?" A hit, most reverent sir, a palpable hit—though there is more evidence of Hitler's crime than there is of Nero's alleged setting fire to Rome.

Pastor Walter Birkett Miller, Spiritualist and married man of Rhyd, admitted that he had received "a good hiding" from the brother and brother-in law of a girl he had seduced under the pose of being a bachelor. The local magistrates made an order, with costs, against him in respect to the child which was the outcome. Miller told them that he regarded the girl merely as a companion or casual friend, in spite of his letters declaring love, and that the girl "was his, for ever."

Before the Weston, Bath, magistrates, Mr. F. A. Wilshire represented the parents of a pretty girl of 16, when a supervision order was made to place her out of "moral danger." The rector of the village in which the parents live stated that he drew the father's attention to that danger, saying: "Your daughter is, I know, the apple of your eye. I want to help you and help your girl." This drew from Mr. Wilshire the remark: "You are not in church now. Let us have the laws of evidence." On the rector's wife demurring to Mr. Wilshire's observation that it is not unusual in these days for an employer to give his maid or maids a lift in his car, he retorted: "Mrs. Bluestocking is dead." Anyhow, the upshot is that there is one more maid available for service, and under compulsion "to accept situations found for her and be of good behaviour." By a curious coincidence, the girl referred to is to become the servant of a rural dean and his wife!

## Fifty Years Ago

AMONG the charges made by the Free Presbytery against the Rev. John Robertson, of Stonehaven, is that of saying that God had to put on his spectacles to see some people's faith. This may be blasphemous, but we are prepared to go further. We venture to say that if God did put his spectacles on he wouldn't see it.

Mr. Robertson's accusers seem rather hypercritical. Why should not God wear spectacles? According to the Bible, he eats and drinks, loves a glass of wine, swears, and does a number of things just like an ordinary Christian. He has eyes also, or the blessed book is mistaken; and why, we ask again, shouldn't he assist his poor old optics with a pair of long sevens?

*The Freethinker*, January 20, 1899



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. HARPER.—We use the expression "the aim of Natural Selection is to kill, not to preserve," only on the assumption that there is some *purpose* in nature, an assumption that we reject. The same applies to the other terms. They are used *ex hypothesi*.

J. SHARPLES.—The cards were not printed by us. The Manchester Branch prepared them, and we were appreciative of what they did. They are, of course, not suitable for promiscuous distribution, but only in such cases where one has a likely subscriber in view.

H. DE MONTMORENCY.—We can only hope that the visit to Mussolini will not be followed by the same "precious fruits" that followed the trip to Munich. But seeing that Italy and Germany are still supplying the Spanish Revolutionists with arms and men, in spite of denials to the contrary, one wonders whether Mr. Chamberlain is simple enough to imagine that he can learn anything in Rome he could not as well learn in London.

VIVIAN PHELPS.—Thanks for letter. Item mentioned not yet to hand, but it will arrive, we expect, in due course. We are trying all the time to get "silent sceptics" to declare themselves, but intellectual courage is still the rarest of virtues.

S. PEACOCK.—Sorry, but no report was taken of the discussion.

WINIFRED KNIGHT.—You must not assume that because an article is not accepted that it is a sure indication that the editor does not agree with what is said. We publish many articles with which we are not in complete agreement, and some with which we do not agree at all. But the *Freethinker* is, after all, a paper with a purpose, and some subjects are quite outside our scope, others are not accepted because we have not space for them. And for some subjects there is plenty of scope in the general press. For our special subjects the press has neither room nor avowed sympathy.

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.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

## Sugar Plums

We remind those who intend being present at the Society's Annual Dinner on January 28, that all applications for tickets should be received not later than January 26. This is necessary for the catering department of the Waldorf Hotel. The smoothness and efficiency of the arrangements depend largely upon avoiding a last minute rush. Tickets 8s. 6d. each, which includes service, may be had from the N.S.S. Office or from the Office of the *Freethinker*. There will be a reception at 6.30, at which the President hopes to meet many old friends, and to make the acquaintance of newcomers whom he hopes may one day become friends.

A criticism of part of Mr. Cohen's *Materialism Re-stated* appeared in the *Literary Guide* for January. To this Mr. Cohen has written a reply, which will be printed in the February issue of that journal.

Saturday, January 14 was the day on which 3,000 places of entertainment in this country, with most of the performers, had promised ten-per-cent of their earnings and takings to the Lord Baldwin Refugee Fund. Collections were also made in cinemas and theatres on behalf of the fund. Fascists in various parts took occasion to attempt a disturbance on the very thin pretext of claiming that "Britain's charity should begin at home," and "Winter relief for the unemployed." Some excuse had to be found for the disturbance, and so nation-wide an expression of disgust at Hitlerism would not have pleased Berlin had the Gangsters not been able to assure Germans that this act of generosity on the part of the entertainment world had met with disapproval by the British public. But the offerings made to rescue Hitler's victims could have no bearing whatever on the relief of the unemployed. It was an inspired disturbance. And the *Sunday Dispatch* which so long as it could safely do so gave support to Hitler, while reporting the disturbances, took care to omit that the organized unemployed promptly repudiated any sympathy with the Fascist disturbers. One would have expected that in this country there could be found a body of men so completely callous as to object to any attempt being made to relieve the terrible tortures that the victims of Hitlerism are undergoing in Germany and Austria; but Fascism is constantly revealing the fact that beneath the greatest degree of brutality yet manifested there are yet lower degrees of human degeneration.

Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture to-day (January 22) in the East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, at 7 p.m., on "Science versus Politics." The local arrangements are in the hands of the Glasgow Branch N.S.S., and an interesting evening should result. A syllabus of Sunday evening lectures to the end of March has been prepared, and copies may be obtained from Branch officials.

A new volume, the fifth, of Mr. Cohen's *Essays in Freethinking* is in the press, and will be issued shortly. These volumes range over nearly every aspect of Freethought controversy and should serve as an arsenal of weapons for use among those who have not yet seen the light. The price, as usual, will be 2s. 6d.

The following appears in the *Sunday Times*, under the heading "One Hundred Years Ago":—

On Monday morning, after the usual parade at Woolwich of the Royal Marines, Private William Hunter, of the 52nd Company, was brought forward from the guard-room to hear the proceedings of a court-martial held on him for "being absent from divine service and deficient in his necessaries." He was found guilty and sentenced to receive one hundred lashes or nine hundred stripes. The unhappy being was stripped. No appeal for mercy escaped his lips, but his imploring eye, directed to the arbiter of his degradation, spoke more eloquently than tongue could have uttered.

Thanks in great measure to Freethought propaganda we have travelled far in humane directions the last hundred years. "Recalling to Religion" by barbaric methods was then in vogue. The recent "Recall" has not, as far as we are aware, advocated a return to such hideous methods of compulsion, but it requires a very optimistic type of mind to overlook the fact that there are elements existing in England to-day that would hail such measures with joy.

The January issue of the *Readers' Digest* contains an interesting Debate on the topic: "Legalize Divorce by Mutual Consent?" The Editor desired the Debate to be of value to the readers, and therefore obtained an agreement from the Disputants "to leave out the Religious aspects of the discussion." Much of the opposition to Divorce of every sort is derived directly from Scriptures.

"inspired" by barbaric deities. Arguments, logic, and even statistics are marshalled in defence of ideas, whose sole excuse is Divine Dictation. Like Theism itself, nobody ever accepted these ancient follies because of the so-called "reasons." The latter are invented "to substantiate an otherwise bald" and often idiotic as well as unconvincing argument.

Here is one excerpt from *I Look Back Seventy Years*, by Lacon Watson (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1938), page 140. He is describing his father, who was Vicar of Sharnford, Leicestershire, for over fifty years, till his death in 1903:—

I can only recall one occasion when we spoke at all openly on the subject of religion, when I asked him (I think it was soon after I left Cambridge), whether he had not sometimes had doubts about the dogmas of the Church. He surprised me a little by admitting that he had, at one time, before he was ordained. Somehow or other, he gave me to understand, he had managed to settle those doubts, and he determined, on the day of his ordination, that he would never allow the subject to be reopened. Henceforth his mind should be closed on that side. He regarded himself as dedicated to the service of God, a soldier who had taken the oaths of allegiance and there the matter ended. It seemed to me then an eminently sensible way of dealing with a difficult subject, and a way characteristic of his family. They had always taken the duty that lay in front of them, and carried it out to the best of their ability, without worrying themselves about introspection or debating too curiously whether the road stretching before them really led in the direction of absolute truth.

Watson goes on to say that his mother never read his novels, and his father never expressed any opinion on them, and both wished he had adopted some safe and respectable profession. Yet Watson's novels are as respectable as Trollope's.

## Some Old Freethought Journals

### *The Investigator*

No one who has followed the life of Charles Bradlaugh could doubt for a moment that, from the day in which his Christian father turned him out into the streets to fend for himself, he had the making of a leader in him. His determination, his energy and enthusiasm, to say nothing of his courage, marked his career from the onset. There were able men in the movement like Robert Cooper and George Jacob Holyoake; and both John Watts and Austin Holyoake could be counted in the front rank in those days. But young *Iconoclast*, as he called himself, pursued a line of his own, and the older men had, so to speak, to sit up. He lectured on every opportunity; he challenged all and sundry to debate; he made himself familiar with the Bible, theism and philosophy, and was never afraid of calling himself an Atheist.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find, when W. H. Johnson relinquished the editorship of *The Investigator*; that Bradlaugh took over the post. Holyoake was then at the height of his fame with his own paper, *The Reasoner*, which he ably edited. Any strictures I have made on certain aspects of Holyoake's character must not be taken as an attack on his undoubted ability. He was indeed a very fine writer, and I have always considered his *Trial of Theism* one of the minor masterpieces of our literature. He had a wonderful gift of phrase making, and the records which he left of his long life, still can be read with the greatest interest. Unfortunately the whole Secular movement was financially poor, and a good deal of the squabbling between the various societies was due to this lack of money. At this time of day, the "attacks" and "explanations" of the various rela-

tions between Bradlaugh and Holyoake can have no interest, but they occupy a good deal of space in both *The Reasoner* and *The Investigator*. It should be added, however, that while Bradlaugh and Cooper both boldly and unequivocally advocated Atheism, Holyoake seems to have hated the label and was always protesting against being identified with it. That he was an Atheist can be seen in his *Trial of Theism*, but he never liked the word. He called himself at one time a Cosmist, but eagerly embraced the word Agnostic when coined by Huxley, and an Agnostic he remained to the end of his life.

Bradlaugh, however, was not concerned with petty quarrelling, but devoted himself eagerly to the best of causes. He never shirked a debate, and he lectured up and down the country—no mean feat when we consider the special discomfort of railway travelling in the '50s of last century. He wrote his *The Bible, What is it?* studied Hebrew and Greek, and worked loyally and hard at his profession to keep his wife and children in comfort. In the number of *The Investigator* for July 1, 1858, will be found an amusing account of his first debate with the gesticulating and egotistical Brewin Grant, who always fancied himself as the supreme infidel slayer. Grant certainly had ability, but his ridiculous clowning often alienated his own followers, who felt that such conduct went badly with the advocacy of a holy religion like Christianity. Bradlaugh conducted himself, as always, as a gentleman, and he hated heartily having to debate at all with people like Grant.

In September, 1858, died George Combe, whose name is probably quite forgotten now, but whose book *The Constitution of Man* had an enormous circulation at one time. He was a great upholder of phrenology, and according to Wheeler, "he did more than any man of his time, save Robert Owen, for the cause of Secular education." Robert Owen died in the same year, and both received very sympathetic notices in the pages of *The Investigator*.

In the November issue is a report of a meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts addressed by Sir James Brooke, the Rajah of Sarawak, which gave an account of his experiences with the Dyaks. Of them, he said among other things:—

There is no religion save faint tradition; no superstition, no belief, and generally speaking, not a knowledge of a God. That sounds very curious because we are told that men have instinctively had a knowledge of a God, and that that knowledge always acts upon the heart; but practically speaking as far as my experience goes it is no such thing.

Brooke's account must have come as a bombshell to his audience who were all extremely pious, particularly when, in his description of a conversation on the future life between an old Dyak chief and a Christian friend, he said, "I thought the poor heathen without his book, the Bible, had the best of the argument."

There is an article in the journal for December entitled, "Notes on Emerson," by B.V.—the pseudonym adopted by James Thomson. It is exceptionally well written, and, if by Thomson, proves how he has mastered the English Language at the early age of 24. What a pity that the writer of such a powerful poem as *The City of Dreadful Night*, and of so many other beautiful poems and translations, to say nothing of his excellent prose work, should have passed away in such tragic circumstances! B.V.—whoever he was—saw in Emerson the mighty progenitor of Ideas:—

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. Speak what you think to-day in words as hard as cannon-balls, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again though it contradicts every word what you said to-day." After

this it is scarcely worth while to remark his thorough perception of, and confidence in, the Might of Ideas. Shallow-minded Whitefield saved hundreds: straight-minded Robespierre destroyed hundreds by the power of the inspiration of the fixed thought; yet people would rather put trust in any institution, tradition, newspaper, or what not, than in their own convictions. "The naked Derar, horsed on an idea, was found an overmatch for a troop of Roman cavalry."

As I have already said, Iconoclast was always ready to accept any challenge to debate, and his own challenge was couched in the following terms:—

To Clergymen of the Church of England, Young Men's Christian Associations, and to Dissenting Clergymen of all denominations.

I, the undersigned, challenge you, or any of you, to debate with me, either orally or through these columns, the following questions, of which I undertake to prove the affirmative:—

1. Atheism preferable to Theism.
2. The Bible history of the Creation inconsistent in itself and with science.
3. The Deluge, as related in the Bible, physically impossible.
4. The Pentateuch not written by Moses, not a revelation, neither true nor useful.
5. Jesus Christ—his existence and history as narrated in the Gospels impossible; his doctrines not calculated to benefit humanity.

"Iconoclast."

Very few of the Christian debaters of the day were, however, anxious to take up the gauntlet—perhaps because they thought Iconoclast a mere nobody. But in the end he did manage to convince the Christian world, not only that he was not a mere nobody, but that there were very few of the pious defenders of the Faith who in debate had any chance whatever with him. The Rev. Dr. Baylee got a terrible shock when he met young Bradlaugh later; Thomas Cooper lost his temper and avoided debates like the plague after his discomfiture. Neither Spurgeon nor Mursell would ever debate; while Brewin Grant preferred making faces and clowning to settling down and dealing with the difficulties Bradlaugh so ably put forward.

In *The Investigator* for 1859 will be found a report of Bradlaugh's debate with a Mr. John Bowes, and from it one can see that even at the age of 25 or 26 what a formidable debater he was, how quick to see a weak point in his opponent's argument, and how determinedly he insisted upon the exact meanings and definitions of the words used in the discussion.

Unfortunately not all his enthusiasm and courage could save his paper. It simply did not pay, and he refused, as he said, to fill his pages with appeals for charitable assistance. In his "Last Words," he said it was with deep regret that he cast off the editorial "we," to cease to edit, and to subside into the simple individual. He added:—

My reason for the discontinuance of *The Investigator* is very simple, i.e., I am poor. *The Investigator*, supported only by a small section of the Secular party, never met its expenses, and I am unable to meet the deficiency. But although obliged to cease this mode of warfare I must caution my friends of the "Open Air Mission" against the supposition that I shall cease to strive against the false religions of the world whenever I have the opportunity. . . . I war against theology because it robs man of the reality-life here, while deluding him with the shadow-life hereafter. I war because I have no choice—I must either fight or die: for it is the veriest death of all deaths, that in which man thinks not at all, but says, "I believe." . . . I war against religion because it is by and through its aid that men are perverted and become monstrosities: it prevents man's freethought utterance and action. . . . I claim not

to be a leader; I am only a standard bearer—on my flag is the word "humanity"—my constant endeavour is to elevate my colours high and still more high, and call on all the good and true to aid me in my work.

They were brave words, and Bradlaugh fulfilled them to the utmost in his life's work.

But though *The Investigator* died, it was not long before the paper which carried the name of Charles Bradlaugh far and wide—*The National Reformer*—was born. But that is another story, which I hope to retail at some other time.

H. CUTNER

## Letters to a Christian Friend

### (3) THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Some of the streams that went to make up what we call Christianity belonged to mankind's common fund of primitive religious ideas; others, religious and ethical, had been pursuing their course in the minds and lives of men for centuries; and some were from the higher conceptions of social life to which the ancient world had been slowly awakening.

Wherever mystical prophets or religious founders had arisen, not only denunciation of wealth and luxury but their renunciation—a very different matter!—had been quite a frequent feature of the preaching of a life of "righteousness," and especially among the Jewish preachers and the Greek philosophers.

Describing how in Stoicism "the mind of antiquity had not only reached in some respects its highest expression, but that expression had become popular in a way unparalleled in the history of any later school," Dr. Edwyn Bevan states: "The Stoic missionary, preaching the self-sufficiency of virtue in a threadbare cloak at the street corners, had been one of the typical figures of a Greek town for many generations before St. Paul."<sup>1</sup>

So when Christianity first entered the Hellenized Roman world, Stoicism—with its ideal of a Brotherhood of Man, derived from its "law of nature"—had "carried its message through the Cynic preachers of righteousness into the hearts of the mass of the people, and had profoundly stirred and awakened the popular conscience," Prof. G. H. Box tells us.<sup>2</sup> There are, of course, many Greek influences in Christianity that we shall not be able to examine; nor should we overlook that the real founder of historic Christianity, St. Paul—whose overpowering interest in the Jesus he had never seen was not in a human preacher, but in a supernatural risen-Christ—was steeped in Greek philosophy at his native Tarsus.

Leaving for a little while the subject of ethics in which we are mainly interested, let us turn to a very different side—the side of cults and creeds, rites and theology. Christianity grew up amid the welter of other-worldly religions and superstitions that flourished among the world-weary people of the disintegrating Roman Empire. "Salvation" was sought not in this life, with the economic organization and social conditions going from bad to worse, but in the eternal bliss of the next world; and a confusion of faiths flooded in to meet the demand.

"To satisfy the crying need for direct communion between the soul of the individual and the gods, was the common profession of the host of faiths, Hellenic and Oriental, that jostled together in the disordered

<sup>1</sup> *Hellenism and Christianity.*

<sup>2</sup> *Early Christianity and Its Rivals.*

panorama of the third century," writes Prof. de Burgh;<sup>3</sup> and Prof. Breasted relates how

all these faiths had their "mysteries," consisting chiefly of dramatic representations of the career of the god, especially his submission to death, his triumph over it, and ascent to everlasting life. It was believed that to witness these things and to undergo certain holy ceremonies of initiation would bring deliverance from evil, the power to share in the endless life of the god and to dwell with him forever.<sup>4</sup>

Usually the saviour-god was young and beautiful, had been miraculously born from a virgin or from the elements, lived a miraculous life as a healer and miracle-worker, and went to a spectacular death as a vicarious sacrifice, from which he returned victoriously as the resurrected saviour, in some instances after three days. I need hardly emphasize that this is also the Christian scheme of things—Jesus was round the 30 mark, and, of course, "tall and dark and handsome"! J. M. Robertson summarizes a number of parallels:—

Like the Christ, and like Adonis and Attis, Osiris and Dionysos suffer and die to rise again; and to become one with them is the mystical passion of their worshippers. All alike in their mysteries give immortality; and from Mithraism the Christ takes the symbolic keys of heaven and hell, even as he assumes the function of the virgin-born Mithra, Saoshyant, the destroyer of the Evil One. Like Mithra, Merodach, and the Egyptian Khonsu, he is the Mediator; like Khonsu, Horus, and Merodach, he is one of a trinity; like Horus, he is grouped with a divine Mother; like Khonsu, he is joined with the Logos; and like Merodach, he is associated with a Holy Spirit, one of whose symbols is fire. . . .

The two aspects in which the historic Christ is typically presented to his worshippers, those of his infancy and death, are typically Pagan. But indeed there is not a conception associated with the Christ that is not common to some or all of the Saviour cults of antiquity.<sup>5</sup>

Mithra, originally the Persian sun-god, became Christ's greatest rival; or perhaps one should say that Christ became the greatest rival and the ultimate conqueror of the older Mithra. The Isis-Serapis mystery-cult gained widespread influence, with its syncretized Græco-Egyptian blend in which Osiris, "the Lord of life and death, the final arbiter of human destiny," was surrounded with the halo of the Greek mysteries. So did the worship of the Great Mother, Cybele; but it was Mithraism—later in alliance with the Cybele cult—that at one time held the imperial patronage and nearly won the fight with Christianity to become the world-religion.

Mithraism, though mainly a soldier's religion, was in its later stages aiming at

the union of all gods and all myths in a vast synthesis—the foundation of a new religion in harmony with the prevailing philosophy and political constitution of the Empire. . . . Breaking with the Roman principle of the nationality of worship, it would have established the universal domination of Mithra identified with the invincible Sun. Its adherents hoped by concentrating all their devotion upon a single object to impart new cohesion to the disintegrated beliefs. Solar pantheism was the last refuge of the conservative spirits now menaced by a revolutionary propaganda that aimed at the annihilation of the entire ancient order of things.<sup>6</sup>

Its final phase, adds Prof. Box, was reached in the third and fourth centuries, "when, under imperial

patronage, it seemed on the point of becoming a world-religion . . . but the victory of Constantine altered the situation. Mithraism lost the imperial patronage, which was now given to a rival creed—that of Christianity (A.D. 313). With the loss of its privileged position it gradually sank to one of tolerance, and finally with persecution was rooted out by the victorious Christian faith."<sup>7</sup>

The similarities in Mithraism and Christianity are particularly significant. Mithraism observed Sunday as a holy day, and December 25 as the day of the birth and re-birth of Mithra. Dr. W. R. Inge, the former Dean of St. Paul's, points out that "not only did Mithra have his high pontiff, his priests vowed to celibacy and his consecrated virgins, but there is to be a second coming of Mithra, preceded by great plagues. The dead will rise from their tombs to meet him. The sacred bull will be slain again, and the just will drink his blood, which will give them eternal life. Evil will be finally destroyed by fire from Heaven."<sup>8</sup> Forms of baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, prayer and sacramental union with God, were also Mithraistic rites; Mithra was conceived as the Logos and the Mediator; and the cult had a virile moral code to help its followers to fight a good fight against evil.

Again, Dr. Lewis R. Farnell, writing about the Orphic mysteries, associated with Dionysus, which retained much influence until the last days of Paganism, says that they

contained many interesting and pregnant ideas, of which they may have found the germ in the old Thracian cult of Dionysus: the death and resurrection of the god; the divine origin of the human soul; its transmigration through a series of rebirths in this world and the next; the belief in eternal happiness and eternal damnation, combined with an idea of purgatory; and the power of the human soul to attain through purification and sacrament to complete union with God. It laid all its stress on "other-worldliness," and was the first propagandist religion recorded in Europe; for its appeal ignored the barriers of city, caste, family, or sex.<sup>9</sup>

The later centuries of Paganism are marked off from the earlier by the decay of the old civic and political religions, and the growth of private religious and "mystery" fellowships pledged to a special divinity, and giving an assurance of posthumous happiness. For the individual, adds Dr. Farnell, was "becoming more anxious about the salvation of his soul; and all the popular mysteries had come to concern themselves with this. Also, through the popularity in the later period of the cult of Asclepius, he was becoming habituated to the concept of the Man-god who suffered and was glorified after death. And in these phenomena we see the foreshadowing of the new religion that was soon to triumph."<sup>10</sup>

In its rites, its theology, and its eschatology, then, Christianity was but the superstitious child of its superstitious age. In its moral and social teachings—to which we shall return in detail—I have suggested, and shall re-emphasize, not only that it was the child of its age; not only that its teachings were on a far lower ethical plane than much of the best thought of the Pagan world; but that those primitive teachings are completely useless in the modern world, which has access to a far higher, more human, more progressive, and more practical philosophy of life and living.

<sup>7</sup> *Early Christianity and its Rivals.*

<sup>8</sup> Chapter on "The Rival Religions," *Universal History of the World* (Vol. IV.).

<sup>9</sup> Chapter on "The Religion of the Greeks," *Universal History of the World* (Vol. II.).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Legacy of the Ancient World.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ancient Times.*

<sup>5</sup> *Pagan Christs.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Mysteries of Mithra*, Franz Cumont (quoted by Prof. Box).

After all this, Charles, I do not suggest that the coming of Christianity in itself was a catastrophe for the world. In the circumstances, something of the kind—an other-worldly, individualistic, superstitious, mournfully "comforting" religion—had to come; and Christianity happens to be its name. Although it may not have had as much influence as the salvation dogmas developed by the early Christologists, the Gospel story of a human Jesus on which Christianity came to base itself—whether fact or myth—had an advantage over the older and more primitive mythologies of Mithraism and its other rivals. Nor does a study of religious history encourage one to think that the bloodshed, terror, tyranny, wars, and obstruction to social progress and human happiness that marked Christianity's subsequent career in power would have been much less had some other intolerant, supernaturalistic religion triumphed in its stead. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*

And so, for the present,

Yours affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDFAST

## The Manufacture of Life

THE artificial production of organic substances has long held out the promise of making living creatures. If chemists have not produced a living cell in the laboratory they have produced cell-like structures showing some of the phenomena of life such as orderly pattern, growth and division. As J. B. S. Haldane reminds Mr. Arnold Lunn in their excellent debate ("Science and the Supernatural"), "Chemists are gradually producing the phenomena regarded as characteristic of life." We can already make many parts of the living cell, but, as he remarks, perhaps the representative cell has 10,000 distinct chemical substances, and there are not 10,000 biochemists in the world.

From time to time claims are made that life has been produced from unquestionably non-living material, but past experience of elusive filter-passers has also been enough to raise doubts as to the purity of the original material. Still, the making of better filters is one aspect of the general advance of science. Perhaps the best known attempt to get life from non-life is that of Dr. Bastian, who sterilized his inorganic mixtures in a hermetically sealed tube at 110°C. A much later experiment of unusual interest was reported in November, 1935, by Mr. C. R. Bradlaugh Bonner. Prof. Herrera was at the time working on the continent, and Mr. Bonner details his method, which is as follows.

Drops of a pure caustic soda solution, in nine times its weight of water, fall into a solution of olive oil in petrol. A skin forms about the drops, which take all sorts of shapes, in the manner of worms, or amoebae or infusoria. These "colpoids," as he names them, move capriciously, apparently at their own will: they march in regiments or swim alone. Examined through a low-powered microscope they show small vacuoles such as found in protozoa. Their behaviour is most life-like, occasionally cannibalistic. In the course of 24 hours they develop in a striking manner a cellular structure, showing a well-defined cell-wall and nuclei, which will take on a hæmatoxylin stain in the manner of living organisms, and seen in all division stages. They are even capable of reproduction, but by fission only (as might be expected from creatures of their degree). They can put out tiny feelers (pseudopodia) and react to stimuli in a manner

strongly reminiscent of real protozoa: they appear to show tropisms. They shun water and acids; their chemical composition is in a state of continuous change just as is that of living protoplasm. Further, the blue hæmatoxylin stain slowly changes to brown, as if the thing could breathe. A slow stream of oil petrol must run through their vessel, otherwise they are killed or paralysed through the formation of crusts. A little chloroform kills them.

These "colpoids," though synthetic, display most of the characteristics of living matter. Their behaviour can be explained solely by physical and chemical laws. The reactions are due to the saponification of the olive oil by the caustic soda; hence the forming of soap membranes about drops of caustic soda solution. Inside these membranes considerable osmotic pressure is produced and potential differences, such as electrostatic, develop. The vacuoles are the result of the transfer of glycerine, water and petrol from outside the membrane to within. And so we have a creature with a skin of soap, a soul of glycerine and a habitat of olive oil and petrol.

I understand that Herrera, who holds a professorship at the University of Mexico, is an outspoken Freethinker. He offers to give full details of his last preparation gratis. The formation of colpoids is within the reach of any laboratory worker.

But I have seen no confirmation of Herrera either in *Nature* or in *Science Progress*, or any mention in the philosophical periodicals. Perhaps, then, Mr. Bonner might, at his leisure, see fit to write a note bringing the subject of Herrera's work up to date.

The possible objection that Herrera has not produced *living* cells, but cells which behave like living ones, seems to be a distinction without a difference, since behaviour is the criterion of livingness.

I have known Atheists to contend that such experiments are irrelevant, since life is eternal and is to be found in some degree wherever there is matter. This position seems to me to play havoc with terminology. Life at its lowest fades into matter, and there is no *fundamental* distinction. But we can certainly make *arbitrary* distinctions, and these latter conform to some observed point of advance in complexity. An attempt to make an acceptable distinction between what might be termed living and non-living may be consulted on p. 83 *et seq.* of Prof. Lancelot Hogben's *Nature of Living Matter*. What characterizes living matter he takes to be receptivity, reactivity and reproduction, each of which he shows to be reduplicated in some way in non-living systems.

To say life is present in matter is much less satisfactory than to say life is potential in matter. To say life is potential in matter is less satisfactory than to say life is potential in the groupings and relationships of units of matter. Prior to these groupings and relationships it may be impossible to predict their outcome. If we have already used up the term life in describing matter we are confronted with the need of finding a new word to describe the new advance in complexity. The simple-looking remark reiterated by Mr. Cohen, that when things are different they are no longer the same, is really a weighty observation.

G. H. TAYLOR

The church is dead. Snow covers the ground. Silence and heavy misery spread their wings dull against the faces of the people. The church is dead. All the long years of Christianity have come to this. All the preaching and the prayers and the psalm-singing of centuries have come to this. All the rapt outpourings of the soul to God, and hidden yearnings of ages, to this?

Edward Carpenter.

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Guide.*

## Life on Other Planets

SOME little time ago "F. Kenyon" contributed an article on this subject.

To people who have read extensively, digested Locke's *Human Understanding*—who are qualified to look at human and extra-human affairs through the right end of the telescope—it is just amazing that Freethinkers (necessarily intelligent) should waste printer's ink trying to establish that this solitary speck of dust Earth is the only grain of sand on a limitless seashore containing life.

The *kind* of life does not matter. Our own sun, which fathers and mothers our parochial solar system, is an almost unnoticeable star in the immeasurable caravan-*serai* of the illimitable moving continent of stars called the Milky Way.

It is rather shocking that people who have the intelligence to be Freethinkers should have their mental "legs" padlocked to the stocks of *evidence*—so beloved of hot-gospellers and Law Courts.

The plain issue is, of course, that creatures such as we—endowed only with finite reasoning powers—do not have the tools wherewith to probe and determine the Infinite. Even great brains recognize there is an "Infinite," you know—infinite of time, space.

To try to argue that this infinitesimal "speck of dust" is the only one *chosen* to be habited and "gifted" with life bespeaks the incredulity of the amateur adventurer in things astronomical.

It is now elementary that the spectrum establishes more than the probability of the existence of life on other planets in some shape or other within the narrow confines of even our own petty solar system.

It is doing a disservice to Freethought to hold that life exists here only. It is calculated to make man, and his "handicapper" the parson, more swelled-headed than ever.

"Fools argue—wise men know." There are, however, some things we cannot know, and therein the very sane gift of informed imagination must operate. There are countless spheres much more plenished with the "furniture" of life than is this grain of sand, earth, and we cannot afford to stem the law of cause and effect—if we would.

Freethinkers must accept the glorious if humiliating truth that greater and grander life must exist elsewhere. It is amazing that knowledgeable people should bury their noses and mentalities in the profitless mud of Anthropological, zoological, geological and other explorations and utterly miss the vista that astronomic understanding reveals. They indeed bury their heads in the sand (or mud) even if the thesis that ostriches do likewise has been debunked. For intelligent people to contend that this is the only habited globe is like the hen deciding—when it reaches the end of the hen-run—that *that* is the end of the world. Come! there's better work to do.

A.D.H.

## Obituary

JENNIE DALKIN

WE regret to report the death of Jennie Dalkin, wife of Herbert Dalkin, Secretary of the Tees-Side Branch, who died on January 11, after a long and painful illness.

Mrs. Dalkin was one of the foundation members of the Tees-Side Branch, and gave every assistance to the development of the Branch and its work in Stockton and Middlesbrough and the Tees-Side area generally. For some years she was a familiar figure at our meetings, indoor and out of doors, giving her help where she could. The Tees-Side Branch has lost a faithful friend and our Secretary a devoted wife. We wish to extend the sympathy of the Branch to her husband in his bereavement, and hope that the son who has been left behind at the age of nine years, will compensate him as he grows to manhood.

By the express wish of Mrs. Dalkin, the service at her funeral was a Secular one. Before a large body of mourners a Secular Address was given by our district

speaker, J. T. Brighton, who expressed himself with feeling on the loss of a good friend and helper in the cause.

Jennie Dalkin was only 36 years of age, and a happy contented family has lost a splendid wife and mother.

W.P.

FLORENCE GEORGINA BAKER

ON Thursday, January 12, the remains of Florence Georgina Baker were interred at Forest Hill Cemetery, London, S.E., in the grave containing the remains of her husband, who for many years was actively associated with the South London Branch of the N.S.S. Florence Georgina Baker held the same opinions as her husband, and was a constant companion in all his work in the Freethought and Trade Union movements; she died on January 7, in her 71st year, and a Secular Service was conducted at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

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

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

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

#### INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH (The Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, Camden Town, N.W.1): 7.30, Alick West—"Fascism and Religion."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. Ben Bradley (Editor *The Colonial Bulletin*)—"India and the World."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Lawrence Housman—"Artificial Morality."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, R. B. Kerr—"Could Socialism Abolish War?"

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 8.0, Debate—"Is Freethought More Reasonable and Useful than Christianity?"—*Affir.*: R. H. S. Standfast (Wallasey). *Neg.*: J. H. Winskill (Bromborough).

BLACKBURN BRANCH (Public Lecture Halls, Northgate, Blackburn): 7.0, Sunday, January 22, Mr. Joseph McCabe—"The Catholic Church and Morals." Doors open 6.30. Admission free. Reserved seats 6d. Collection. Literature for sale.

BURNLEY (Barden Club): 11.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"Word Magic."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Edinburgh, Edinburgh): 7.0, Mr. John Laurie (Glasgow)—"An Atheist Looks at Robert Burns."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead (London)—"Science versus Politics."

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Forresters' Hall, Trafalgar Street): 7.0, Muriel Whitefield.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. A. Smith—"Is Totalitarianism Inevitable?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Thomas Kenny (Liverpool)—"My Conversion to Atheism."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (Jubilee Hall): 7.0, Debate—"The Value and Truth of the Bible." *Affir.*: Mr. H. Brown. *Neg.*: Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. N. Charlton—"Catholic Action."

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