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

Views and Opinions

Now and Then

DEAN SWIFT had a theory concerning the bishops the British Government appointed to Ireland. He said they were just disguised highwaymen. He used that term in its exact sense, not as a mere picturesque expression but as a statement of a discovered truth. For, he said, the English Government always send us wise, good and godly men. But they never arrive. So he put forward the theory that on their journey to Ireland these wise and godly men were attacked on Hounslow Heath by highwaymen, who after murdering the bishops, put on their clothes, came to Ireland, and, posing as bishops, took the salaries attaching to the posts. It is rather a suggestive theory, and something on these lines may explain what becomes of the wise and upright and independent legislators the British electorate send to Westminster.

I am inclined to some such theory as Swift's to account for the existence of an article which appeared in the *Church Times*, just after Christmas, dealing with the remarkable star that led some wise men to the spot where Jesus was born. Everyone with any critical knowledge of the Christian religion knows that for any account of the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ we are practically restricted to the pages of the New Testament. All the references outside—granting their genuineness—could be written on a sheet of notepaper. Christians in the mass are not aware of this, and, as I said last week, the artfulness of the clergy of all denominations takes every care that they shall not receive instruction—or as little as is possible—on this point. Their sermons, and the articles in such a paper as the *Church Times*, refer to the life of "Our Lord" as though they were dealing with data that is at least as certain as the life of General Booth or Charlie Chaplin. The article that has set me wondering is signed "M.K." (Perhaps these initials stand for More Kid, or Merry Kidder. I do not know, but it may also be Swift's theory in actual operation). Someone may have cap-

tured the editor of the *Church Times* disguised himself, and then let loose as good a piece of leg-pulling as I have seen for some time.

* * *

A Wonderful Star

The article is concerned with the star that appeared to three wise men who were led by it to the village in which Jesus was born, and then remained stationary over the Inn. M.K. opens boldly, thus:—

When the star first appeared to the Wise men of the East, it doubtless caused a local sensation.

Observe the artful way in which Christian readers are informed that no one outside the New Testament heard of this unique astronomical occurrence. A local sensation! This unbeliever in disguise knows quite well that the nearest star to the earth is so far away that taking the orbit of the earth as a base line, it is only within recent times that astronomers have been able to detect a parallax; and the merest dolt knows that night after night the stars appear to be in the same position. But this star not merely travelled over a distance of, say, a hundred miles at such a rate that the Wise Men could follow it as a guide, but could detect it standing still just over a village inn. If anyone will try to decide whether an aeroplane at, say, ten thousand feet elevation is just over the local Pig and Whistle, he will have some idea of this remarkable cuteness of the Wise Men, knowing that the star stopped just where the child was born. And all it caused was a local sensation. Why it would, even in those days, have caused a world sensation. In Egypt, in Greece, in Rome, probably even in India, the news of so remarkable a star would have created a stir. No star ever behaved like it either before or since. I congratulate the artful "M.K." for so cleverly suggesting the absurdity of the whole story—even if he has been compelled to sandbag the editor in order to do it.

Like other New Testament stories—the number of the early Christian martyrs, and the miracles worked—the information concerning these wise men becomes more precise as we recede from the supposed date of the occurrences. Mr. Merry Kidder places the fact before his readers in this way:—

It is doubtful whether the story of the miraculous star was at all well-known beyond the Wise Men's native cities and Jerusalem. . . There is nothing to show that it was so much as heard of in Rome at the time, much less a nine-days wonder.

The artfulness of it! One could not better suggest to an orthodox audience, doubt as to the truth of this New Testament yarn. "M.K." is calling attention to the fact that the tale of the star and the wise men has really no existence outside the pages of the New Testament. He is saying as plainly as he can, without giving away the game he is playing, "My dear re-

ligious friends, you must realize that if this phenomenon of the star and the shepherds existed outside the imagination of the writer of the first gospel, it must have been known to the whole of Palestine, and, as Palestine was in contact with Alexandria and Rome, through these centres known to the whole of the civilized world."

Not satisfied with this undermining of the simple faith of *Church Times* readers, Mr. Kidder next cuts at the manner in which Christian legends have grown up by saying that it was left

to a host of saints and poets and painters to embroider the theme with all the resources of spirituality and art. It was they who decided that the Magi were three in number, and traced the lineage of each of them from one of the sons of Noah. . . . Pious fancy exalted them to the rank of kings who wore their crowns even at night (as they are to be seen sleeping three in a bed, on a capital at Autun) and the cathedral of Cologne contains what are claimed to be their remains discovered in Persia by St. Helena, that indefatigable imperial excavator of sacred relics.

Did ever a man say more clearly to his readers, "My friends you have been swallowing one of the wildest yarns ever written. It is a tale that rests upon the statement of one man, who says that something happened to another man, which if it did really occur, would have been a world wonder, unthinkable to science; and then bit by bit the tale was embroidered by priests, by poets and painters, in the interests of priests"? I would really like to know what the editor of the *Church Times*—presuming he is still living—thinks of it all.

* * *

Heathen Blindness

It is only proper to note that Mr. Kidder is not the first to use this method of saying that the Christian legend is pure myth, by pretending to chide contemporaries for not noticing, or for not recording the Jerusalem Miracles. It was done more than a century and a half ago before "M.K." by that master of solemn satire, Gibbon. The touring star was not, it must be remembered, the only one of the marvels that accompanied the life of Christ. For he was born without a father, he rose from the dead, the dead came from their graves at the crucifixion, and a darkness rested over the earth for three days. There was also a slaughter of little children in the hope of killing the newly-born God. But, again, no one outside the New Testament seems to know anything about these tales. I do not mention the multitudes that followed Jesus, the sick people he healed, the miracles he worked, because these were the common stock in trade of wandering preachers. But the other things? This is the way Gibbon handles the subject in his *Decline and Fall* :—

How shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences that were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? . . . The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this event which ought to excite the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the life time of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the

earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature—the earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses—which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe.

No one ever wrote "absurd" over the face of the Christian mythology more plainly than is done in this passage—and no one has ever been able to better Gibbons's "solemn sneer."

* * *

What Might have Been

"M.K." has one final drive at the established theology. He asks, "supposing that last Christmas was the first," and "If Providence had willed the Epiphany star to appear to wise men of the East in the days of the radio, the aeroplane and hustle." "M.K." thinks there would have been newspaper splash, correspondents sent to Jerusalem, interviews with scientific men on the vagaries of the star, and then a fade-out, leaving only a few wise men and shepherds to worship at the Bethlehem stable. That is a rather dangerous suggestion to make to real Christians, it might set them thinking about their creed. Suppose the editor of the *Church Times* had heard from one of his neighbours that his daughter had just given birth to a baby, but it had no earthly father; it was all between his daughter and some hitherto unknown celestial being, called the "Holy Ghost." Would he accept that story? Suppose another man told him that he had seen several bodies rise from their graves in the village graveyard. Would he believe that, or would he say to his wife when he returned home that poor Smith was either suffering from delusions or he was a liar? If last Christmas had been the first Christmas, if the Christian Church had never existed, if there had been no long reign of that Church, with its stamping out of ancient culture, and its opposition to science and learning and freedom of thought, if the ancient civilizations had persisted, with only a moderate decree of enlightenment, if all these things had been, we of to-day would be living in another world, and of the kind of reactions of that world to a first hearing of the Christian superstition there would be little doubt.

A man who had developed in a society that was not burdened with the deadly legacy that the Christian era has given him would decide that the only sane way to judge the past was in the light of present knowledge. He would reflect that events which are improbable or impossible to-day would have been as improbable and as impossible two thousand years ago. He would decide that as when a man dies to-day he remains dead, so would be the case in A.D. 0. He would say that as there is a father and a mother to every child born to-day, so it was in the past. He would say that visions of angels and devils, of conversations with "spiritual" beings, are amongst the oldest, the best known, and the easiest explained of the world's stock of superstitions. And he would dismiss the Christian account of things in the same way that the better-educated Romans did—as just a variation of the superstitions already in existence. I do not think that even the newspapers in the supposed changed conditions would find a public likely to be impressed by a stunt on the lines of the Bethlehem star and the "wise Men."

Unfortunately our history has not been that which I have just imagined. On the contrary, it has been a history in which the dice have been heavily loaded against a scientific view of life. And all of us are more or less at the mercy of the superstition, the ignorance, the dislike to informed and careful thinking

that is a large part of our Christian contaminated legacy. But I do appreciate the attempt of "M.K." to stir the religious readers of the *Church Times* into a critical activity with regard to their religious beliefs. And, above all, I would dearly love to know the reaction of the editor of that godly paper when he discovers how "M.K." has been pulling his leg.

CHAPMAN COHEN

A Doubting Dean

The mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade.—*Dean Swift*.

Swift is Rabelais in his good sense.—*Voltaire*.

THE whirligig of time brings in its revenges, says Shakespeare. *Gulliver's Travels* has been filmed, and in thousands of cinemas the happy laughter of children proclaims their delight at the adaptation of Jonathan Swift's ironical dissection of his fellow-men. It is strange, indeed, that this sombre genius should appeal to children, but his work is as popular as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

That a satirist such as Swift should be loved by children is not the only paradox associated with his name. For Swift was a Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and at the same time a heretic. He joined the Church for the same reason that Henry of Navarre became a Romanist. "Paris is well worth a mass," said Henry, and Swift hoped for a Bishopric, with all its social status and emoluments.

Not many people realize that Swift was but a "rice-Christian," and orthodox writers do not enlighten them? His biographers, Scott, Johnson, Thackeray, and others, describe Swift as a religious man. A candid opinion, however, compels us to say that the great Dean was a Christian in name only; that he remained in the Church for power, patronage, and profit. In fact, Swift was not merely not a Christian, but he was almost devoid of religious feeling. The author of *Gulliver's Travels*, and the *Tale of a Tub*, was intellectually incapable of being a real Christian. *The Tale of a Tub* is one of the most tremendous indictments of the Christian Religion, from the purely intellectual side, that has ever been given to the world. *Gulliver's Travels* expresses little but scorn of the human race, with its Lilliputian bitterness, and its Brobdignagian coarseness.

Voltaire himself, an excellent judge, regarded the *Tale of a Tub* as casting ridicule on all forms of the Christian Truth. The great genius who wrote that critical book was perfectly aware of the logical inferences of his propositions. The bishops who advised Queen Anne, when they counselled her not to appoint Dean Swift to a bishopric, were not without sagacity. There can be no doubt that Queen Anne and Voltaire, a most incongruous pair, were both right when, from their very different points of view, they regarded Swift's literary work as anti-Christian.

Swift was irreligious, and a life-long dissembler. He could be coarser than Rabelais, and profaner than Voltaire. Men have been burnt alive for treating sacred subjects less offensively than Swift treats the Christian rite of holy communion. Consider the facts of his life. Brought up in the household of the epicurean, Sir William Temple, he was educated in the library of an avowed Freethinker. Why Swift took "holy orders," except for the loaves and fishes, it is difficult to say. Probably he put the cassock on for a comfortable living, but he was irked by the needlework of Noodledom, and choked by its bands. Swift was the boon companion of Pope, and a friend of the freethinking Bolingbroke. He deliberately chose

these sceptics as the closest friends of his life, and the recipients of his confidence and affection. It is not difficult to imagine him joining in many a profane argument and blasphemous jest over Pope's port, or Bolingbroke's burgundy. It is significant, nay, almost conclusive, as to the total insincerity of Swift's religious pose, that he advised John Gay, the wildest of the wits about town, to turn parson, and look out for a seat on the Bench of Bishops.

The paper Swift left behind him, *Thoughts on Religion*, is merely a set of excuses for not openly professing disbelief. He says of his own sermons, truthfully, that he only preached pamphlets. They have no special Christian characteristics, and might have been preached from the steps of a Mohammedan mosque as well as from the pulpit of a Christian Church. There is not a word of cant, for Swift was too great and proud for that cowardly and sorry device. Even in masquerade he was still magnificent. Freed even by the worldly standard of theology of the eighteenth century, his sermons are singularly secular. The following amusing passage from Swift's sermon on the fate of Eutychus, who fell out of a window whilst listening to Saint Paul's preaching, will illustrate our meaning:—

The accident which happened to this young man in the text has not been sufficient to discourage his successors; but because the preachers now in the world, however they may exceed Saint Paul in the art of setting men to sleep, do extremely fall short of him in the working of miracles; therefore men are become so cautious as to choose more safe and convenient stations and postures for taking their repose without hazard of their persons, and, upon the whole matter, choose rather to entrust their destruction to a miracle than their safety.

To rival such writing as this it is necessary to turn to Gibbon's famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the "Decline and Fall," in which that greatest of all English historians "saps a solemn creed with solemn sneer." But the surest indication of Swift's real irreligion is given in the very striking verses on the Day of Judgment, which were not published till after his death. They were sent by Lord Chesterfield in a letter to Voltaire, but everybody can now read the biting lines:—

Ye who in divers sects were shammed,
And came to see each other damned
(For so folk told you); but they knew
No more of Jove's designs than you.
The world's mad business now is o'er.
And Jove resists such pranks no more.
I to such blockheads set my wit!
I damn such fools! Go, go; you're bit.

It is difficult to understand why Swift's biographers should have perceived sincere religiosity in these caustic lines, but the eye of faith is capable of regarding Montaigne as a Methodist, and Rabelais as a Romanist.

It is, of course, true that in ecclesiastical and theological controversy Swift always took the orthodox side, for outwardly he was always loyal enough to his employers. For the scholarly Deists of his time, such as Toland, Asgill, and Collins, he expressed contempt. He refers to "that quality of their voluminous writings which the poverty of the English language compels me to call their style." In his famous and sinister argument upon the inconveniences which would result from the total abolition of Christianity, he dips his pen in vitriol. But it is all "pretty Fanny's way," and all purely dialectic fencing. Swift's polemic was aimed at guarding the loaves and fishes of that Church, of which he was a paid official; just as a counsel will argue for whichever side pays him his fees. If Swift's sword was

sharp, it was a double-edged weapon, as may be seen by the sardonic climax :—

To conclude: whatever some may think of the great advantage to trade by this favourite scheme, I do very much apprehend that in six months after the Act is passed for the extirpation of the Gospel, the Bank and East India stock may fall at least one per cent. And since that is fifty times more than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason why we should be at so great a loss for the sake of destroying it.

Pastidious, sensitive, proud, witty, sardonic, the great Swift moves among the lesser religious fry like a Renaissance Cardinal through the sordid pages of Christian Evidence. When face to face with death, Swift was honest enough. The mask slips from his features, and we see for a brief moment the real man, and not the actor. When he wrote his own epitaph, he utterly disdained any religious allusion. A pillar of the Church, he refused to permit any pious platitudes upon his tombstone. A dignified worldliness, an appeal to the memory of the fellow-men, but not a syllable of Christian belief.

Here lies the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of this Cathedral Church, where fierce rage can tear the heart no more. Go, traveller, and intimate, if you can, an earnest, manly champion of freedom.

The original is in sonorous Latin, and the dates were the only additions. His allusion to his fight for freedom is quite genuine, for he fought for the liberty of Ireland. Rabelais and Renan, both great men, and great sceptics, left the Christian Church, and chose the road to intellectual freedom. Swift stayed in the Church, and failed in his ambition. In spite of his life-long servitude, Swift was a disappointed man. He had to be content with a petty deanery, when his ambition was at the very least a bishopric. The fierce rage, of which he wrote as *lacerating his heart*, was intensified by seeing smaller men pass him in the race for power. He had prostituted his great and splendid genius. And he died, to quote his own painful words, "like a poisoned rat in a hole."

MIMNERMUS

Letters to a Christian Friend

(22) SOCIALISM AND THE TEACHING OF JESUS

MY DEAR CHARLES,

If the Jesus Christ of the Gospels could come to life and move among us to-day, teaching and doing the things recorded of him long ago, I shudder to think of the number of well-intentioned people who would condemn his teachings and actions as un-Christian. What surprising discoveries he would make about what he "really meant" by his teachings!

What, for instance, would Jesus have to say to a "Christian Socialist" who complains that one cannot be a Christian or live a Christian life under Capitalism, because social conditions make it impossible? In an old I.L.P. pamphlet, *Socialism and the Teaching of Jesus*, George Benson develops the theory that "humanity fails to approach a Christian mode of life, not because of inherent wickedness, but because social conditions continually fight against it and make it impossible; and that . . . practical Christianity is impossible until our social system has been brought into

conformity with Christ's teaching." Jesus would doubtless deplore Mr. Benson's lack of faith in the strength and goodness of God, to whom "all things are possible"; and would inform him that it is possible to be a Christian and live a Christian life under any social system.

Reading this pamphlet, I feel it to be a great loss to mankind that it was not Comrade Benson rather than Comrade Jesus who was entrusted with the responsibility of the Christian revelation 2,000 years ago, for not only is he far more up to date, but he seems to have so much better an idea than Jesus of what Jesus meant by his teachings. As regards the "many people who consider themselves devout Christians who are also strong defenders of the Capitalist system," he declares: "They seem to be utterly blind to the hopeless contradiction between the two, a contradiction which cannot be harmonized unless we assume that the Gospels are incorrect or that Jesus did not mean what He said." But surely neither of these assumptions is at all necessary? The Jews to whom Jesus preached his gospel of *personal* belief and conduct and *spiritual* reward, were no strangers to the contrasts and oppressions of "capitalism" in its then form. "The two great facts that made Palestine an unhappy and desperate country were over-population and over-taxation, and these are the basic economic facts behind the Gospels," says Lord Stamp (*Christianity and Economics*), who quotes Dr. Grant (*Economic Background of the Bible*) that "Ancient Palestine was crowded to its very limit," and Dr. Klausner (*Jesus of Nazareth*) that "Palestine thus came to possess a class of poor, destitute, and unemployed and landless peasants, side by side with a class of wealthy farmers, great landed proprietors, and rich bankers. The former waned poorer and poorer, sinking into mendicancy, crushed and depressed, hoping for miracles. . . ." These were the people to whom the Gospel was preached, to whom was offered the way of the Christian life. Did Jesus ever suggest that such oppressive conditions made it "impossible" for an individual to live a Christian life? Did he ever suggest that a change of the very bases of those economic conditions was "necessary" before an individual could believe in and practise the "way" he taught? As we have seen in a previous letter, the priestly dues and the Roman taxes pressed very heavily on the Jews, yet had Jesus any condemnation of either? What did he answer when asked if it was right that the Jews should have to pay the tribute imposed by Rome? According to Benson, he said, "No, it is not right at all. It tends towards making a Christian life impossible. You should not be expected to render unto Cæsar that which Cæsar demands to support this un-Christian capitalistic system." But what he said according to the Gospels was: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." It is not necessary to "assume that the Gospels are wrong, or that Jesus did not mean what He said"; it is only necessary to assume that Benson is wrong.

Again, we are told that "the fundamental and anti-Christian cleavages in our society are due to the private ownership of capital and land." Jesus, then, according to Benson, condemned private ownership. But did he? According to Stamp, complete with texts, "He (Jesus) recognized the ownership of land, and the relation between landlord and tenant (Mark xii. 1-11; Matt. xxi. 33-41; xx. 1-6; Luke xx. 9-16) . . . Possessions are assumed as a social process without condemnation (Mark iii. 27; Matt. xii. 29; Luke xi. 21-22) . . . There was no suggestion that poverty was socially curable (Luke vi. 20; John xii. 3). . . ."

Indeed, against this nebulous condemnation of Capitalism which Benson tries so hard to put into Jesus's

mouth—mainly on the ground that Jesus taught "Service, Brotherhood, Love (or to call Love by its economic equivalent, Co-operation)"—let us put part of the more detailed analysis by Stamp of Jesus's actual reactions to aspects of the economic system of his own day.

"Christ (writes Stamp) commented often upon the contrast between rich and poor, and unequal distribution of wealth. But He dwelt most emphatically upon the moral risks of wealth to the individual owner (Matt. x. 21; xix. 21; Luke xviii. 22; Mark iv. 19; Matt. xiii. 22; Luke viii. 14; Mark viii. 36; Matt. xvi. 26; Luke ix. 25). The act of material accumulation was contrasted with spiritual wealth (Matt. vi. 19; Luke xii. 33). He did not suggest that the rich man, as such, was an economic or even a moral evil in his environment (Matt xxvii. 57; Mark xv. 43; Luke xxiii. 51). The home in Bethany that meant so much to Him was certainly "well off" (John xii. 3).

"He also showed that riches were sometimes gained by inexcusable means, and that restitution was proper (Luke xix. 2-10), but beyond that did not specifically condemn the *process* of acquiring wealth. But He placed very high the proper *disposal* of wealth, when made, by individual volition, not by compulsion. And the value of the act of charity lay in its *initiative*—it was not a social process (Luke iii. 11). . . .

"Undue preoccupation not merely with wealth, but even with modest material accessories of life, was reproved (Matt. vi. 25-31; Luke xii. 22-29). It is not clear that He promised *material* satisfactions to those who themselves ignored the methods of securing them (Matt. v. 11; Luke xi. 13, seem to relate to spiritual advantages). . . .

"Possessions are assumed as a social process without condemnation (Mark iii. 27; Matt. xii. 29; Luke xi. 21-22). But Christ went a long way towards suggesting that poverty in the things of this world might receive comparative adjustment in the things of the next (Luke xvi. 19-31; Matt. v. 6), or in *spiritual* counterweight now (Luke vi. 20; John xii. 3). He indicated that in spiritual matters sacrifice (Mark xiv. too nice a calculation of material sacrifice (Mark xiv. 3; Matt. xxvi. 6; Luke vii. 36; John xii. 3).

"There was no suggestion that poverty was *socially* curable (Luke vi. 20; John xii. 3), though much of the intention in the references to the poor seems to be more consistent with poverty of *spirit*. There is a famous exegetical controversy on the difference between Matt. v. 3 and Luke vi. 20. In most cases Luke is thought to emphasize the evils of poverty more than Matthew. . . .

"He (Jesus) recognized the ownership of land, and the relation between landlord and tenant (Mark xii. 1-11; Matt. xxi. 33-41; xx. 1-6; Luke xx. 9-16). The absentee landlord had a claim to draw "his fruits," and a genuine grievance against those who did not render them. The employer was justified in adhering to his contract with some though he went beyond it with others (Matt. xx. 1-6).

"Various aspects of service are emphasized, which confirm rather than impugn the relationship itself. The parable of the faithful and wise servant or steward, compared with the negligent and inconsiderate one (Matt. xxiv. 26; Luke xii. 42); and the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv. 14-30) are significant. . . . We are told that the servant is not greater than his lord.

"The passages on lending and debtors (Luke vii. 41; xii. 59; iv. 6, 34; Matt. v. 26, 42) throw little light on the relationship from our point of view. Those on buying and selling (Matt. x. 29; Luke xii. 6; Mark ix. 15; Matt. xxi. 12; Luke xix. 45; John ii. 16; Mark vi. 37; Matt. xiv. 16; Luke ix. 13; John vi; Mark viii. 8; Matt. xv. 37; Luke x. 35) convey no particular ethical

teaching—they accept the current practices without question. . . .

"The clearest fact that emerges from this survey is that Christ did not condemn the institutions and relationships of His day; He accepted them with a rather astonishing acquiescence—the priestly taxation and the Roman yoke. What He insisted on was that the measure of personal authority actually given to each person in the system by higher authority must not be exceeded or abused, and the duty imposed must not be shirked. . . . He was not a political revolutionary, or anything but law-abiding, calling for the highest personal morality *within the system*."

What on earth is the good of people like Benson—for all their good intentions—trying to tell us that Jesus, through his other-worldly teachings, condemns the economic bases of the capitalism of to-day when he so obviously did not condemn the economic bases of the capitalism of his own day?

No doubt there is a "hopeless contradiction" between teachings of "Service, Brotherhood and Love" (teachings which have been the stock-in-trade of almost every preacher since the art of telling other people what to do began), and the practical necessities of capitalism; but not a more hopeless contradiction than that between other-worldly Christianity as taught by Jesus, and the Gospel according to Benson.

Regards to all at home.

Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDEFAST

Shelley's Atheism

(Reprinted, *The Freethinker*, 1892)

(Concluded from page 5)

SHELLEY'S essay "On a Future State" follows the same line of reasoning as his essay "On Life." He considers it highly probable that thought is "no more than the relation between certain parts of that infinitely varied mass, of which the rest of the universe is composed, and which ceases to exist as soon as those parts change their positions with regard to each other." His conclusion is that "the desire to be forever as we are, the reluctance to a violent and unexperienced change," which is common to man and other living beings, is the "secret persuasion which has given birth to the opinions of a future state."

If we turn to Shelley's published letters we shall find abundant expressions of hostility to and contempt for religion. Those letters may deserve the praise of Matthew Arnold or the censure of Mr. Swinburne; but, in either case, they may be taken as honest documents, written to all sorts of private friends, and never intended for publication. Byron's letters were passed about freely, and largely written for effect; Shelley's were written under ordinary conditions, and he unbosomed himself with freedom and sincerity.

From one of his early letters we find that he contemplated a translation of the *System of Nature*, which is frequently quoted in the notes to *Queen Mab*. He couples Jehovah and Mammon together as fit for the worship of "those who delight in wickedness and slavery." In a letter to Henry Reveley he pictures God as delighted with his creation of the earth, and seeing it spin round the sun; and imagines him taking out "patents to supply all the suns in space with the same manufacture." When the poet was informed by Ollier that a certain gentleman (it was Archdeacon Hare) hoped he would humble his soul

and "receive the spirit into him," Shelley replied: "if you know him personally, pray ask him from me what he means by receiving the *spirit into me*; and (if really it is any good) how one is to get at it." He goes on to say: "I was immeasurably amused by the quotation from Schlegel about the way in which the popular faith is destroyed—first the Devil, then the Holy Ghost, then God the Father. I had written a Lucianic essay to prove the same thing." In the very year of his death, writing to John Gisborne, he girds at the popular faith in God, and with reference to one of its most abhorrent doctrines he exclaims—"As if, after sixty years' suffering here, we were to be roasted alive for sixty million more in hell, or charitably annihilated by a *coup de grâce* of the bungler who brought us into existence at first."—A dozen other quotations from Shelley's letters might be given, all to pretty much the same effect, but the foregoing must suffice.

A thorough analysis of Shelley's poetry, showing the essential Atheism which runs through it from beginning to end, would require more space than we have at our command. We shall therefore simply point out, by means of instances, how indignantly or contemptuously he always refers to religion as the great despot and impostor of mankind.

The *Revolt of Islam* stigmatizes "Faith" as "an obscene worm." The sonnet on the Fall of Bonaparte concludes with a reference to "Bloody Faith, the foulest birth of time." Shelley frequently conceives Faith as serpentine and disgusting. In *Rosalind and Helen* he writes—

Grev Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train.

In the great and splendid *Ode to Liberty* the image undergoes a Miltonic sublimation.

Like one cloud over a waste of waves
Hung tyranny! beneath, sat deified
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves.

Invariably does the poet class religion and oppression together—"Religion veils her eyes: Oppression shrinks aghast"—"Destruction's sceptical slaves, and Folly's mitred brood."—"And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne."

Mr. Herbert Spencer writes with learning and eloquence about the Power of the Universe and the Unknowable. Shelley pricked this bubble of speculation in the following passage:—

What is that Power? Some moonstruck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown.

In one verse of the *Ode to Liberty* the poet exclaims:—

O that the free would stamp the impious name
Of . . . into the dust or write it there.

What is the omitted word? Mr. Swinburne says the only possible word is—God. We agree with him. Anything else would be a ridiculous anti-climax, and quite inconsistent with the powerful description of—

this foul gordian word,
Which, weak itself as stubble, yet can bind
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
The axes and the rods that awe mankind.

"Pope" and "Christ" are alike impossible. With respect to "mankind" they are but local designations. The word must be universal. It is *God*.

The glorious speech of the Spirit of the Hour,

which terminates the third Act of *Prometheus Unbound*—that superb drama of emancipate Humanity—lumps together "Thrones, altars, judgment seats, and prisons," as parts of one gigantic system of spiritual and temporal misrule. Man, when redeemed from falsehood and evil, rejects his books "of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance"; and the veil is torn aside from all he "believed and hoped." And what is the result? Let the Spirit of the Hour answer.

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
Passionless? no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability.
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacles dim in the intense inane.

What a triumphant flight! The poet springs from earth and is speedily away beyond sight—almost beyond conception—like an elemental thing. But his starting-point is definite enough. Man is exempt from awe and worship; from spiritual as well as political and social slavery; king over himself, ruling the anarchy of his own passions. And the same idea is sung by Demogorgon at the close of the fifth Act. The "Earth-born's spell yawns for heaven's despotism," and "Conquest is dragged captive through the deep."

Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length,
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan! is to be
God, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

This is the Atheism of Shelley. Man is to conquer, by love and hope and thought and endurance, his birthright of happiness and dignity. Humanity is to take the place of God.

It has been argued that if Shelley had lived he would have repented the "indiscretions of his youth," and gravitated towards a more "respectable" philosophy. Well, it is easy to prophesy; and just as easy, and no less effectual, to meet the prophet with a flat contradiction. "Might have been" is no better than "might not have been." Was it not declared that Charles Bradlaugh would have become a Christian if he had lived long enough? Was not the same asserted of John Stuart Mill? One was nearly sixty, the other nearly seventy; and we have to wonder what is the real age of intellectual maturity. Only a few weeks before his death, Shelley wrote of Christianity that "no man of sense could think it true." That was his deliberate and final judgment. Had he lived long enough to lose his sense; had he fallen a victim to some nervous malady, or softening of the brain; had he lingered on to a more than ripe (a rotten) old age, in which senility may unsay the virile words

of manhood; it is conceivable that Shelley might have become a devotee of the faith he had despised. But none of these things did happen. What Shelley *was* is the only object of sane discussion. And what he was we know—an Atheist, a lover of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE

Acid Drops

The Finns are reported to be dropping Bibles on Lenin-grad. We do not know that there is any bar to anyone having a Bible in Russia if they wish it, and we have our doubts as to whether the Finns are simple enough to believe that it will stop Russia invading their country. No country has scattered more Bibles among people than Britain has done, but so far as we have noted it has never yet prevented native people being taken over and "cared for." Perhaps we were careful to see that the natives read the verse, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," then we showed the Zulus, the Maoris, and others that we were mentioned in the Bible, and therefore because of our meekness were clearly marked out to "own" a good share of the earth. We are indebted to Mark Twain for the hint.

At any rate let us hope that the Russian leaders do not get enraptured with the following Bible counsel and put it into practice:—

And when the Lord thy God hath delivered [a city] into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, thou shalt take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies. . . . Of the cities of these people which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.

We like to see fair play to all, and that all includes even so vile a thing as Adolf Hitler. But we protest against the charge brought against him in some British and American papers, that he is bent on attacking religion. He is no more doing that than is the Pope. What he is doing is attacking religions in which he does not believe, and curtailing the activities of all religions that do not agree with his policy. Both of these are features that one will find in fervent religionists right through the history of the world.

Those who are not led away by mere words, and who have a scientific understanding will recognize readily enough that these are features of intensely religious characters at all times and in all places. We could give scores of illustrations of this from those who stand forth century after century as great religious characters. There is an intense conviction of one's own rightness and righteousness. An equally intense hatred of anything that runs counter to one's own religious views, and a certainty of finding justification, as doing the work of God, for whatever steps are taken. The history of our own country furnishes numerous illustrations of this and if they are not examples of so brutal actions as have characterized the actions of Hitler, that makes no difference to the essential facts. Finally, Hitler was a Roman Catholic. He has never renounced his religion, and his constant assertion that he is carrying out God's will and that God "called him to be where he is" may be taken as representing his firm belief.

Miss Rosita Forbes writes in the *Weekly Dispatch* that Hitler insists on his bodyguard being composed entirely of Atheists. We should require some real evidence be-

fore we accepted that, particularly as Hitler's invocation to God is becoming very common. The man who can talk of God as he does is not likely to insist on his gang—without which he is afraid to move—as being of quite opposite religious opinions to himself. Probably Miss Forbes has the common religious fault of calling Atheism anything she dislikes, and emotional storms to which she may be subject, religion. We should not, by the way, be at all disturbed if it were proven that Hitler was an Atheist. As we have so often said there is no reason whatever, why all the bad characters should belong to the religious world.

That despite a terrible loss of life Turkey's military power has survived the earthquakes is the "happy issue out of affliction" blessed by a special correspondent of the *News of the World*. "No considerable military garrison was stationed in any of the devastated towns," he reports with satisfaction. Evidently the Turkish soldier is under better protection than those in God's hands, for "a high official in Ankara" (says the correspondent) said: "The Hand of God has fallen heavy on his children, but God will preserve his children." (Our italics.) Don't ask us what the man *means*. We only know that if man's hand had fallen as heavily as God's, the only "preservation" possible would have been cold storage or embalment.

"Business as usual" is the motto of the clergy. The Bishop of Ely has been trying to find out what is the present chief need of the world. After profound thinking he discovers it is "The need of a general repentance"—that is: Come to Church. But it must, we presume, be the *right* Church, and the task of settling that question is quite as knotty as settling the general world problem. Christians have been trying to decide the *right* religion for ages. In order to settle it they have lied and tortured and fought wars, and generally kept the cult of battle alive. And we are quite sure that if St. Paul's was thrown open for a general discussion as to which was the Church Christians ought to attend, and provided members of every Christian congregation could be gathered therein, it would need a small army to restore peace, and casualty stations would have to be constructed reaching from the Cathedral to Charing Cross.

If readers want to know which is the finest propaganda now flooding the world, we unhesitatingly give the palm to the Roman Catholic Church. It has Goebbels beaten to a frazzle. What the Pope says, or thinks, or writes, or broadcasts, is "big news" for all papers these days, and the way the "Holy Father" is referred to in the press or by wireless, makes one wonder whether he wouldn't prove better news value than Jehovah himself if that august personage were to visit the earth again either in his own person or that of his "son." We hope readers will never forget that the Catholic Church is a *dictatorship* and that it is trying to get back some of its lost glory. The way the newspapers are playing up to it must be heart-breaking for all those who know its power for evil.

Mr. Gerald Bullett is described in the current number of the "Modern Churchman" as "an able representative of modern thought." This is said in an article on "The Spirit of Man," which quotes Mr. Bullett as saying:—

When I hear the Apostles' Creed recited in an English Church I find myself in a state either of clear dissent or of an assent so elaborately qualified as to be not worth giving. But in one sentence among these noble cadences I discover—in Boehme's phrase—"the hammer that can strike my bell." I believe in the Holy Ghost. No other form of words can express with equal perfection something that is, first a dynamic fact of experience, and second, a conception common to all the great religious philosophies.

Mr. Bullett need not be diffident about his "dissent." So long as he is willing to swallow so exemplary a phrase

as "I believe in the Holy Ghost," he will continue to qualify for religious honours everywhere. But when did he qualify for the title "representative of modern thought"?

"The People and Freedom Group" is a Roman Catholic association which is chiefly concerned to see that the "people" don't get the wrong kind of "freedom." The P. & F. Group's new volume "For Democracy" (Burns Oates, 8/6) contains Essays written by "twelve able and eminent Catholic writers." It is said to aim at making a type of society "in which the spiritual authority of the Church effectually limits the political authority of the State." And this aim is said to be "in the interests of personal freedom." We see nothing in these fine phrases to differentiate the "P. & F. Group" from the ideology of Hitlerism (or its predecessors in the Vatican). No group or party ever started with the slogan "Down With Mankind." There would be no democracy if the Church (or a group of gangsters) forced their way between the people and its popularly elected executive. Unless we are mistaken, the new "Group" merely reiterates the Church's demand to be allowed to return to the place it occupied in the properly named "Dark Ages."

To illustrate the longevity of lies in general and of religious lies in particular, one of our readers sends the following from Mr. Hesketh Pearson's *Life of Labouche* published in 1936:—

His fellow-member for ten years was Charles Bradlaugh, the famous Atheist, who had dared God (if there were a God) to strike him dead inside five minutes at a political meeting. Either there was no God or the Almighty did not favour direct action; at any rate, after a period of suspense, it was agreed that Bradlaugh had scored a point, and no one pressed him to extend the time limit.

We imagined that this tale had died out with all except the lowest type of Christian evangelist, but we probably misjudged the vitality of a Christian lie. That comes as near achieving immortality as anything of which we know. We are quite ready to believe that, if there be a heaven, the welcoming hymn will be one that opens with

Come all ye lusty liars and gather round the throne
All those who lie for Jesus are gladly welcomed home.

Perhaps some of our readers will be able to complete the verse.

Of course, the lie in one form or another is very much older than Bradlaugh. When we first came across the story in the Bradlaugh form we just smiled. Later we did two smiles. One at the crudeness of the lie, the other at the serious manner in which so many freethinkers took it. We usually met the story by explaining that giving God three minutes to strike a man dead, a feat which any human could accomplish in as many seconds with a cheap and chippy chopper, seemed a very long time. Second, the challenge was evidently the business of challenger and challenged; as God did nothing we failed to see any ground for either excitement or indignation. As I refused to take the matter seriously my Christian opponents soon got tired of reciting the challenge. And I am quite certain that if we had argued about it we could never have driven into a truly Christian head that no man to whom God was just a myth could ever bring himself to challenge nothing to do something and give the said nothing three minutes in which to do it.

G. W. Foote once wrote a pamphlet exposing the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes under the title *A Lie in Five Chapters*, but we are certain that a complete list of Christian lies would take as many volumes. The latest is concerned with the Lord's Day Observation Society, of which Sir Thomas Inskip is, or was, President. The Secretary says that it was the result of a letter from the

Society to Gracie Fields, that she did not sing any jazz songs at her recent concert on a Sunday. Miss Fields writes indignantly denying any such concession or promise, and we do not think there is anyone in the country who would not rather take her word than that of the Secretary of the L.D.O.S. Neither do we believe that there are many Christians in the country who will blame the Society for saying that it did, although there may be many who will regret the lie being unmasked. One of the earliest complaints against Christian writers and preachers was that they told lies about their opponents, and we expect it will be among the last.

The Dean of St. Paul's is shocked at the overwhelming of Finland by "that Atheistical tyrant, Stalin." He says he agrees with some writer who says, "May he burn in Hell." But we fancy it is not the mere tyrant, but the *Atheistical* tyrant that Dean Matthews is enraged at. There have been (and are) plenty of tyrants in the world during the past twenty years, but the Dean never wished them in hell. In fact, in accordance with his creed, while believing they would go to hell, he was bound to mix hypocrisy with his belief to the extent of suggesting that Christ could save them. No, we feel certain that it is not the tyrant, but the atheistical tyrant that is the trouble. Why? Does Dean Matthews believe that all tyrants ought to have a god of some sort? That is not fair. As we have often said, there is no reason in the nature of things why Christians should monopolise all the bad characters.

We offer the Dean of St. Paul's a fair challenge. We offer to name at least a couple of theistical tyrants for every Atheistical one that Dr. Matthews can produce. But we are quite certain the Dean will not accept the challenge. It is so easy to make statements where no reply can be made in return. The pulpit was always a coward's castle.

One of the oldest speakers of the Catholic Evidence Guild, Mr. E. Ashbey, gave the show away with a vengeance the other day, and incidentally proved how effective Freethought propaganda has been in the ultimate. He said that when the C.E.G. speakers began their campaign about thirty years ago, most of the non-Catholic crowds to whom they spoke believed in the main in God, heaven, and hell. Nowadays all that is changed. "With certain few exceptions," added Mr. Ashbey, "the main body of the crowds are either completely indifferent to God or actively hostile to all religious ideas and practice." Mr. Ashbey and his friends are at last beginning to see that however much some people can be fooled all the time, and all the people part of the time, you can't fool all the people all the time.

An advertisement in the *Church Times* proclaims that the "Masque of Empire" Society is boasting a play by Mr. Hugh Mytton, called "Christ Love." In offering this work for sale, the Society describes it as "Simple, Beautiful, Effective." Its advertisement concludes:—

Properties scissored out from Brown Paper!
A lamp, a sheet, and your own shadows.

We cannot imagine a better setting—especially "your own Shadows"—for the fabulous pretensiveness of this re-hash of ancient comedy.

Mr. Chamberlain in a speech the other day said we were fighting for "a Christian peace." We hope not. We have had a Christian peace many a time, and they have usually paved the way for more wars. A reasonable peace should be good enough, and Mr. Chamberlain is not likely to enhance his reputation among thoughtful people by canting phrases and empty words. But perhaps it was not thoughtful people that Mr. Chamberlain had in mind.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JUBILEE FREETHINKER FUND.—H. Ormerod, £5 5s.; A. Harvey, £1 10s.; M. Cooper, £1; R.S.H. (Johannesburg, S.A.), 5s. Correction: Mr. F. Marschal of Ficksburg, S. A., writes that his contribution to this Fund acknowledged on December 3, as £1 should have been £5. The correction has been noted and total corrected. We hope others who detect an error will not hesitate to write.

T. L. SMITH.—It is quite a mistake to speak of Russia as a nation of Atheists. Atheism is not reached at a jump, and in any case the vast majority of Russians do not even claim to be Atheists. Formal religion is still very strong in Russia, in spite of its disestablishment and disendowment, and the religious outlook—almost as troublesome as professed religion—is very common indeed.

H. ORMEROD.—We hope we deserve at least some of the good things said about us. We have always done our best for the Cause.

G. TAYLOR.—There is no question that the Moses of the Old Testament is at least in part a mythical figure. Freud, in his *Moses and Monotheism*, very plausibly argues that he was an Egyptian priest who tried to perpetuate the Monotheism of the Egyptian Aknaton. The Mosaic Commandments were in existence long before the Israelites were heard of. You will find much matter bearing on the origins of the ethical teachings of the Bible in Wallis Budge's *The Teaching of Amen-em-Apt*. Pleased to learn that what you did had a good effect.

W. MARKFIELD.—There was, as we said, nothing material to Mr. Brunel's argument that was omitted.

H. MILLER.—The essential thing in the controversy is neither the goodness of the Finns, the intrigues of the Allies, or the superiority, or inferiority of the Russian system over others. The essential point is the invasion of one country by another. To argue that if Stalin had not invaded Finland, some other would have done so is, in this matter placing them on the same level. And one might well be in considerable agreement on that point, and still deplore the present invasion.

C. I. THOMAS.—You are mistaken. There are animals in heaven, according to Mohammedan authorities at least, and they know as much about it as anyone. One of the animals admitted is—Balam's Ass. Some Mohammedan authorities say it is the Ass belonging to the Queen of Sheba, but they both agree that there are asses in heaven.

G. PRESCOTT.—Thanks for address. We note what you say, but we cannot expect readers to agree with all that is published. Often we ourselves do not agree with an article that appears in these columns. But if it is a reasonable point of view we must all be content.

A. YATES.—Received and shall appear.

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Blasphemy in Jersey

WHAT I have no hesitation in describing as the most ridiculous trial for blasphemy that has ever occurred in the British Empire was brought to an end in Jersey on January 9th. Mr. Arthur Reynolds Woodhall, hotel proprietor, was charged with having on November 3rd published a criminal libel. The circumstances of the case (about which there appears to be no dispute) are these. (The London papers, by the way, seem to have got a little mixed in their brief report of the case.) While sunbathing on the beach at Jersey, clad only in bathing trunks, and while fast asleep, Mr. Woodhall was "snapped" by a beach photographer. The position of Mr. Woodhall was that of lying on his back with arms outstretched and feet crossed. Some time after this, a visitor to the hotel gave Mr. Woodhall a copy of the portrait, on which he had drawn in red ink an outline of the figure, with the heads of nails showing, and what was intended to be drops of blood. He gave the portrait to Mr. Woodhall with the comment, "that's what you look like." This was the first knowledge Mr. Woodhall had of being "snapped." Mr. Woodhall put the portrait in his pocket, and thought no more of the matter.

At a later date, wishing to get his passport endorsed for a visit to England, he paid a visit to the Aliens Office, and when asked for his passport, took it from his breast pocket, in which there were several papers. Unfortunately, the portrait had got inside the passport and, when opened by the official, was examined. The official was "shocked," and showed it to others, including the Attorney-General of the Island. The result was a charge of blasphemy.

It is to be noted that there was no evidence that Mr. Woodhall had ever shown the portrait to anyone since it came into his possession; and there was no assertion that he had done so. The photographer swore that he had taken but the one strip, only one copy of it was sold, after being exhibited in the window, and Mr. Woodhall did not know that the portrait was in existence. There was no rebuttal of these statements, and no dispute. The charge was, indeed, that the portrait was "published" by placing it, even accidentally, in the possession of the Aliens Officer, whose virginal nature was shocked by such an act of blasphemy. It was his delicate feelings that were outraged by Mr. Woodhall, for the other acts of publication were committed by the Aliens Officer, and, so far as these exhibitions were gratuitous, I think that under English law he might also have been charged with "publication."

The case was twice adjourned; there were no precedents to go on, and the most recent case the prosecution could cite was in 1617. Finally, with the account of how the portrait came into existence, and the truth of the statement for the defence substantially admitted, Mr. Woodhall was at the Jersey Sessions on January 9th sentenced to one month's imprisonment. I am quite sure that in England the case would have been laughed out in the police court stage. In so small a place as Jersey, where one suspects all the officials are more or less of a family party, the foolish business was carried on with all the gravity of a charge of high treason.

It is, I repeat, the most ridiculous blasphemy trial that has ever taken place in the British Isles. I am uncertain whether the English government has any control over Jersey in a case of this description, but if it has, there should certainly be an enquiry. Mr. Woodhall asked at once, when the presence of the portrait was discovered, for it to be handed back

to him. That was refused. The official was shocked, and he evidently wanted others to be shocked also. A few weeks ago, I said that the only way to prevent the operation of such a ridiculous and unjust law as one against blasphemy is complete repeal of the blasphemy laws. So long as these exist, so long they may be made an instrument for malice or bigotry—or both.

All we have to add to the above is that Mr. Ernest Thurtle, M.P., has approached Sir John Anderson on the matter, and he has promised to look into it.

C.C.

Sugar Plums

In another part of this issue there will be found a letter from Mr. W. Gallacher, M.P., calling us to task for what we have said concerning the Russian invasion of Finland. We think that most critical readers will find in a re-reading of what we said in the *Freethinker* for January 7—which forms the subject of Mr. Gallacher's complaint—a sufficient answer. But to make the argument quite clear we will restate our position. (1) We did not associate Lenin with the White Guard, or any other guard. We merely separated him from the present policy of Stalin in demanding substantial control of an independent country and invading it when that control was refused. We do not see that not agreeing that Lenin would have acted as Stalin has done is equal to asserting that Lenin was on the side of the White, or any other coloured guards. There are more than two policies possible in most things, and I have not much faith in the religious "he who is not with Christ is against him" attitude. (2) We did not sneer at Otto Kusinen because he was a political exile. Very many worthy men, of all shades of political opinion, have been exiles, and their exile has reflected credit upon them. What we commented on was the assumption that because Kusinen agreed with the plans of Stalin that Stalin was therefore justified in treating him as representative of the Finnish people, and setting up a Government which Stalin calls the Finnish Government. That remark reflects discredit on none but Stalin—which we do not admit is an unforgivable offence, so far as we are concerned. We have every respect for Mr. Gallacher's sincerity, honesty, and ability, but what was said of Kusinen would apply equally if Lenin selected Mr. Gallacher as the representative of the British people, labelled his followers as the British people, nominated our M.P. as the head of the British Government, and then invaded Britain on the grounds that he was helping the British people to achieve their freedom. Mr. Gallacher might still remain the trusted leader of a revolutionary movement in this country, but we should still question his right to be called the leader of the British people, and his followers the Government of the country.

Let it be noted also that we are not concerned with the trickery, or the dishonesty, or the hidden aims of the British and French Governments. That is another question altogether. The question here is the right of Russia to invade Finland. To reply that if Russia had not tried to use Finland against England and France, France and England would have used Finland against Russia, is to cloud the issue, besides suggesting that when it comes to international politics Russia is no better than other countries. We might go some distance with Mr. Gallacher on that matter. But we should still reserve the right to criticize all of them. Good intentions have never yet been a guarantee for right action.

In the Picton Hall, Liverpool, to-day (January 21), Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture for the local N.S.S. Branch, on "The World, Religion and Unbelief." The lecture begins at 7 p.m., but as the moon will be nearly at full travelling should be quite comfortable as far as light is concerned. The necessity for Freethought propaganda is increased by the present situation and Freethinkers

within the area can help by bringing orthodox friends to the meeting. Admission is free with some reserved seats at one shilling each.

Mr. H. Cutner is due once again to lecture for the Leicester Secular Society this afternoon (January 21), at 3.0 p.m. His subject is "An Afternoon with Mediums," and it should prove an interesting exposé of some spiritualistic phenomena. We hope the lecture will attract a good audience—including spiritualists.

We are pleased to report that we are having a number of new readers who are taking advantage of our offer to send to those who are not already subscribers, a copy of the *Freethinker* for one year post free, for 15s. This permits every such new subscriber the privilege of selecting five-shillingsworth of Pioneer Press publications free. The offer holds good until the end of March, and we hope that many of our present subscribers will call the attention of our friends to the offer.

Birmingham Freethinkers are invited to a discussion which will take place this evening (January 21), at 1 Great Colmore Street, Horse Fair, at 7 o'clock. Orthodox friends will also be welcomed and may, of course, take part in the discussion. The meeting is possible through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Cottingham, and thanks and appreciation can be shown best by a crowded assembly.

Picture Post writes us that the *Post* does not claim a six million circulation, but a million and a half. But on the basis of an investigation made some time ago it claims to have six million readers.

Freethinkers and the Fascist War

I TAKE sole responsibility for christening this war the Fascist War. It has, I know, been given many different names already, but they are not usually put into print.

The terms Fascism and War go aptly together. The first, in fact, might be said to entail the second.

By such a title the present conflict is immediately stamped as an "ideological" war. And we have frequently been told it is no business of ours to suppress other peoples' ideologies. In any case, it is said, force should not be used to fight ideas.

This notion, that you should not fight ideas with force, is yet too bald a statement to demand acceptance. It pictures ideas as cooped-up things, private matters which buzz in the cerebrum for a little while and then pass away with no one any the worse or better for them. The truth is surely that ideas can stir to action, and action can infringe the well-being of others, and such aggressiveness can, if the forces against it be strong enough, be curtailed or defeated.

No; force cannot fight ideas, but it can prevent their realization.

And the system of ideas we call an ideology can be a matter of first importance. Even the conquering Vandals succumbed to the Christian ideology of decaying Rome. And the Roman Catholic ideology held man in subjection throughout the Dark and Middle Ages. The Crusaders went to war for an ideology. The Marxian ideology conditioned the October Revolution. Ideologies are important and effective. They "bake bread."

And so what becomes of such statements as these?

(1) No ideology, no world outlook, can be destroyed by fire and sword. One can respect or hate Hitlerism like any other system or political views. This is a matter of taste. And to start war because of the "Destruction of Hitlerism" means com-

mitting criminal stupidity in politics. (*Isvestia*, October 9).

(2) Chamberlain . . . calls upon the people to sacrifice themselves in an ideological war. (*Daily Worker*, October 13).

(3) It amounts to this, that the British . . . have declared something in the nature of ideological war on Germany, reminiscent of the religious wars of olden times. . . . And there is absolutely no justification for a war of this kind. One may accept or reject the ideology of Hitlerism . . . that is a matter of political views. And . . . ideology cannot be destroyed by force; it cannot be eliminated by war. It is, therefore, not only senseless, but criminal to wage such a war. (Molotov, November 1).

In other words, the Allies' fight against German Fascism is damnable, but Russia's fight against Finnish semi-Fascism is up another street altogether. And the term "semi-Fascism" is taken from recent Communist literature on Finland. Fully-fledged Fascism over a population now about 100 millions must not be interfered with, Semi-Fascism confined to three millions is quite a different proposition, we are to believe.

It would certainly be "criminal stupidity" to try to compel German citizens to change their attitude to Nazism: it would nevertheless be equally stupid to watch idly while the *outcome* of their attitude permitted the frittering away of the liberties of more and more comparatively free peoples. It is not an ideology *per se* which is to be fought, but its practical effects. And Hitler's "philosopher," Rosenberg, has made it quite clear that Nazism entails such attempts at domination.

A peace at this stage (a "Socialist peace" as the I.L.P. charmingly put it), would leave at the disposal of the aggressors the liberties of millions of Europeans. Furthermore, resting on the signature of Hitler, it would constitute no guarantee whatever against future aggression. The danger of free movements being wiped out over the whole of Europe would be immeasurably increased. It would be a piece of criminal bargaining with the robbers; in short, a Nazi peace, or rather, no peace at all, but a breathing space for Hitler. It were as though we should say, "Here, Adolf, you're panting a bit already. Have a breather, old chap."

* * *

The issue is conceivably complicated by suspicions as to the real motives behind the British Government. We are thus told it is, at bottom, an Imperialist war. (e.g., *Daily Worker*, October 12). Communists in particular have suddenly discovered powerful arguments against the war to which they were apparently oblivious before the *rapprochement*.

Prior to the Stalin somersault, that is, we were justified in going to war to stop aggression. After that event (probably prepared for by certain political executions) our motives suddenly become Imperialistic. But if so, they must have been Imperialistic when the decision was taken (with the guarantee to Poland), and so should then have received the condemnation of Communists.

Now as to Imperialist motives. None of us is greenhorn enough to imagine that the Chamberlain Government would take such a step out of purely ethical motives. A milk-of-human kindness policy will hardly suggest itself to the future historian who seeks causes and effects. But at the same time an *offensive* Imperialist policy is out of the question. Have we so much to gain from the defeat of Germany, in the matter of colonies, or even of markets, that it would readily compensate for the cost of a major war? Surely not. If, then, we care to attribute *defensive* Imperialist motives to the Allied Governments we

have to ask, which constitutes the greater danger, (a) that the Allies should conserve their possessions against a Nazi threat to them, or (b) that Nazism should continue to spread and violate the liberties of millions more.

Who is the greater evil—Chamberlain, held in check by such democratic control as we have, and probably forced to listen to the voice of the Left when the peace is made—or the Nazis, going headlong into a fulfilment of their ideology, winning their *Lebensraum* (living-room) and turning it into a *Tödensraum* (death-chamber) for the oppressed?

And, if you suspect questionable motives behind the first of these alternatives, why not react as a student of history, recognizing that motives serve as a spur to action?

But do not become deluded with the idea that the *only* issue at stake is the distribution of imperialist plunder. Imagine a Government which had abandoned Imperialism. Let it be a Government after your own heart's desire. (In that case it would probably not have allowed matters to get to their present state, but it is no good crying over spilt milk.) Faced with the present situation, it would clearly have to save itself and others from Nazi dominion.

* * *

Finally, there is the argument, "Fight your own exploiters at home!"

And this I am inclined to dismiss almost curtly as mere deviated jingoism. "Set England to rights! Let the rest go to pot! Offer the Czechs and the others some encouraging advice, if you like, but leave them to their fate."

Such is actually a form of national Socialism. Its supporters, willy-nilly, would appoint themselves Hitler's Fifth Column, and could partake in a mutual interchange of ammunition with Lord Hawhaw.

No Left Freethinker should hesitate to ally himself for a specific purpose with a Tory Government should he find cogent reasons for doing so. And it should be possible for the Left politician to oppose the Government on one front while supporting them on another. The theory that you can't fight on two fronts at the same time has no basis either in history or logic. To oppose the Tory in everything he does simply *because* he is a Tory, is to exhibit the same superstition as makes a person go out of his way to walk under a ladder, to show he is not superstitious. It is being Tory ruled from another angle. It is as though one should say, "Go and see what the Tories are doing and tell them not to."

G. H. TAYLOR

"The Common People"

At a recent New Zealand clerical Conference, one of the reverend gentlemen was full of forebodings as to the future of the Christian Churches.

"The Common People" were deserting the churches, which were getting emptier every day, so different to the "good old days" of his grandfather, "when 90 per cent of the people attended Public Worship and family prayers were said daily in almost every home."

Yes! the good old days when the churches were full, grace was said before meals, and family prayers were a common custom.

Looking through an old volume, I found a speech delivered in *my* grandfather's days by Sir William Meredith, M.P., in the House of Commons at the end of the eighteenth century. It was a debate on the Penal Code of those "good old days."

Hanging Children for Stealing 5s.

Sir William said: "There are 243 offences punishable by death—and week by week at Old Bailey, London, there was an average of 30 to 40 people waiting to be hanged, some of them boys and girls of tender years, for petty crimes.

"There lies at this moment in Newgate, under sentence to be burnt alive, a girl just turned fourteen. At her master's bidding, she hid some whitewashed farthings behind her stays, on which the jury found her guilty as an accomplice; the master, a coiner, was hanged last Wednesday, and the faggots all lay ready; no reprieve came until the cart was setting out, and the girl would have been burnt alive had it not been for the humane interference of Lord Weighmoritt."

Sir William continued: "An attempt was made some years ago by this House to repeal some of these cruel capital laws; the measure passed the Commons, but was rejected by the Lords; it was an innovation," they said, "and subversive of law."

Bishops Vote for Hanging Laws

Yes! and when this reform was rejected by the House of Lords, which was to do away with hanging for stealing 5s., the Bishops voted against the reform, and it was only when the "Common People" on the Common Juries refused to bring in verdicts of guilty that the law was brought into contempt, and was abolished.

Mr. John Bright, speaking afterwards in the House of Commons, stated that "at the time this infamous Penal Code was law, there were over ten thousand churches in England, and there is no record that in a single pulpit, one voice was ever raised against these terrible laws."

Yes! these were the "good old days"—so pathetically regretted by the parsons at the clerical conference—when the churches were full, private family prayers were general, and when "children of tender years were hanged weekly for stealing five shillings"—when boys and girls of seven years upwards were sent down to work in the coal pits.

Church-going Lessons—but Kinder Laws

As education has progressed, church attendance has lessened, and as the "common people" have gradually ceased to attend public worship, so the laws have been refined, and kindness towards criminals has increased.

Whilst the Bishops have moaned their creeds and the Priests have droned their rituals, our common mothers and fathers have struggled forward to build a better and a kinder world—despite the intimidation of Hell-fire and the cajolements of a hypothetical Heaven.

"The Common People" and Social Reform

In the swan-song speech made by the greatest Parliamentarian of the nineteenth century, W. E. Gladstone, who was four times British Prime Minister, he said: "I painfully reflect that in almost every social and political controversy of the nineteenth century the titled classes, the educated classes, the wealthy classes and the churches have been in the wrong. The Common People, the Toilers, these have been responsible for nearly all of the Social Reforms the world accepts to-day."

Make Way for Brotherhood

'Tis the same in this twentieth century. The hope for world peace, the hope for a fairer distribution of the prodigal wealth which Mechanism and Nature

offers—lies not with Politicians or Priests—it is the Common People of all nations in their kinship of suffering and brotherhood that will build the happier and better world Humanity hungers for.

The crest and crowning of all good,
Life's final star, is Brotherhood.
Come clear the way then, clear the way,
Blind creeds and kings have had their day.
Break the dead branches from the path;
Our hope is in the aftermath,
Our hope is in heroic men,
Star-led to build the world again.
To this event, the ages ran,
Make way for Brotherhood, make way for Man.

HENRY J. HAYWARD

Loneliness

NONE but those who have had the experience can possibly appreciate what it means to have to live a life of loneliness—not the solitude complained of by the light-hearted and frivolous when they are not surrounded by their kind, when they are momentarily deserted by their "friends," but that loneliness which is the lot of those who are, by nature and education, constituted rather differently from the rest of us.

There are, of course, lonely folk—lonely men and women—in all walks of life and, by the very nature of things, they must remain lonely and—often enough—either not understood or misunderstood. By some they are written down as "aloof" or "unsociable," by others as "queer" or "cranky," and so on—each according to the critic's light and understanding—when the truth is that the person thus criticized has not the slightest desire to be unsociable or uncommunicative. Quite the reverse in fact. But he—or she, as the case may be—happens to be cast in a different mould, with different aims and aspirations, different standards of value.

Some of us—probably the majority of us—are quite content to go through life in a free and easy way, concerning ourselves only with the affairs of the moment and our immediate surroundings; others—the small minority—take a deep and abiding interest in those matters which are, in their view at any rate, of far more importance—e.g., the release of the human mind from its bondage, and the promotion of a sane and sensible outlook on life as a whole—and if two or three of that small minority devote themselves exclusively and wholeheartedly to their task they will most certainly be very little understood—they will, equally certainly, be deliberately and frequently misrepresented by a good many for some ulterior motive, and they must, of a necessity, live very lonely—sometimes terribly lonely—lives.

That is a part of the price which the pioneer has to pay. But, being what he is, he does not complain; he knows the penalty upon opinion—unorthodox opinion—and is aware of the fact that, sooner or later, he will meet with the most violent opposition, and possibly be regarded as a public nuisance, if not actually a positive danger to the community at large.

The extent of this opposition will depend, of course, upon the time and place where the unorthodox man makes his presence felt: if it is in the market place, so to speak, and the times are normal, he will expect—and receive—little more than jeers, and ridicule; but if the times are abnormal, and there is more necessity than ever to speak the truth and so try to correct some popular misconception, the chances are that he will be shouted down.

It was always thus, and most likely always will be so. Christ, so it is said, was crucified for his unortho-

dox opinions, while Socrates and dozens of others were put to death for the same reason; many more were imprisoned and tortured because they pleaded an unpopular cause.

It can hardly be otherwise. Left to ourselves we are all inclined to take the line of least resistance and follow the crowd, not knowing whence or whither, and caring for little else than our own well-being and personal comforts; and if, during our meanderings, we encounter someone who disturbs our peace and contentment, we are apt to tread him underfoot . . . Laughingly . . .

That is a measure of the difference between us: we know—or think we do—and we look upon the man with a message as a bit of a fool—or something worse: a real menace—and we stone him to death if he gets in our way. . . .

He has very few friends, this man whom we have treated with scorn and derision, whom we finally removed from our path; but did we but know it he has, by virtue of his character, helped us immeasurably on our way.

Maybe, when we grow old and he has passed away, we shall have the time and inclination to sit down and think of him—of his loneliness—and try to appreciate how much we are indebted to him for what we have, and the real and lasting help that he gave us without our knowing it. Maybe!

In any case, there is no need for us to feel at all pitiful—except for ourselves and our lack of understanding—because so far as he is concerned in spite of his loneliness—or rather, because of it and all that that implies—he possessed a depth and breadth and serenity of mind which can never be ours; and whereas he enriched the world by what he said and did, we, if we are not careful, shall leave it none the better for our having been born.

The pioneer does not look for applause—the crowd, because of its outlook, will obviously never cheer the unpopular—and he knows that he must plough a lonely furrow. But at all times he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has at least tried to serve the best interests of humanity—notwithstanding the opposition of “friend” and foe alike.

GEO B. LISSENDEN

Correspondence

RUSSIA AND FINLAND

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER”

SIR,—In the *Freethinker* of January 7, there is a reprint of the first part of an article, written about fifty years ago by G. W. Foote.

In that article he severely castigated Edmund Gosse for the unscrupulous distortion of Shelley's life and work. The Atheist poet was presented as a bulwark of the religion he had constantly, and consistently attacked while he was alive.

But such dubious practices are not confined to the champions of religion. They have been the stock in trade of all enemies of progress whatever their labels might happen to be.

But I must admit it was a shock to me to find you in such sorry company. “Lenin's Russia,” you say, “is not Stalin's Russia.” Don't you realize that you are committing a far greater crime than ever Edmund Gosse, or any of his kind, were responsible for? You are trying to associate Lenin with all the Imperialist White Guard and counter revolutionary enemies of the Soviet Union. Maybe you forget that what is being said about Stalin to-day is as nothing to the vile abuse that was levelled against Lenin while he was alive.

When the Red Army marched into Georgia to assist the workers and peasants to overthrow the Menshevik

Government, which was being propped up by the outside Imperialists, we had all the artificial rage and fury about Red Imperialism and all the high “moral” indignation that is now being repeated to-day.

Stalin has embodied in his life and leadership of the Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union, the full teachings of the great leader Lenin. That is why the great achievements, of which you yourself speak, were made possible. Read *The Foundations of Leninism*, by Joseph Stalin, if you desire to understand and appreciate what that means.

As for your sneer at Otto Kusinen because he was a political exile—please don't forget that Lenin was a political exile. Stalin was in Russia all the time, carrying out Lenin's directions regarding the organization and leadership of the party. But though Lenin was an exile, while Stalin, Verishilov, Molotov and others carried on inside Russia, no one of them or any party member, inside or outside Russia, questioned Lenin's leadership. In the same way Otto Kusinen, while an exile from Finland, has always remained, as he deserved to be, the trusted leader of the revolutionary movement of Finland.

WM. GALLACHER

“MAN A MACHINE”

SIR,—Having recently read with intense interest La Mettrie's *L'Homme machine* in an English (second) edition, 1750, and since having obtained a French edition of that and some other of his works, I am trying my hand at writing a pamphlet about him. In his day he had a European reputation. Although he has been so aptly styled the “Aristippus of Modern Materialism,” his works seem to be but little known in the Freethought movement to-day. I have already made extensive enquiries for *La Mettrie, sa vie, et ses œuvres* by “Néree Quysat,” i.e., René Paquet, Paris, 1873; and for a copy of the *Open Court*, July, 1913, without any result. Can any of your readers assist me in this matter? I shall be pleased to purchase or accept the loan of either of the above or any other out-of-the-way items.

ELLA TWYNAM

LEAGUE OR FEDERATION?

SIR,—Your otherwise admirable leader in your last issue is marred by the common mistake of confusing a League of Nations with a Federation. They are based on entirely different principles. In a league the unit is a nation, in a federation the unit is a man. The governing authority of a league is dependent entirely on the Governments of the member nations to get anything done; it has no executive power itself. In a federation, on the other hand, the federal government is quite independent of the national governments; it enacts its own federal laws and enforces them upon individuals with its own police courts. In a league, the national governments retain supreme power over their citizens in all fields; in a federation, they divide that power with the federal government, each being supreme in its own field. The federal field always covers the subjects of defence, foreign policy, currency and international trade; in some cases, such as Switzerland, it includes rather more. Sovereign power in all other matters is retained by the Governments of the separate States.

A league equipped with an international force would be an improvement on the present League, but could only enforce its will upon an unruly member by war, for it would have to be enforced on the nation, not on individuals. The will of a federal government would be enforced, not on a nation, but on individuals by ordinary police action. A member nation could not resist the federal government by force, for the only army, navy, and air force within the federation would be under the federal government's control.

Leagues have always failed. But every true federation has succeeded in abolishing war between its member States.

The issue is not, I submit, “law or war,” for the rule of law between nations is a myth. Nations are not men and bear no analogy to them. The issue is union, preferably federal union, or war. Co-operation is not enough.

The idea of federation is making rapid strides. The British society "Federal Union" is making new members at the rate of 400 a week. Its address is: 44 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. Every believer in federation should join.

MAJOR W. L. ROSEVEARE

TO KILL, OR WHEN TO KILL.

SIR,—“To kill or not to kill.” If that is the question, as Mr. Du Cann says it is, then he must find another opponent, probably in a Criminal Lunatic Asylum. For me the question was, *when* to kill. Consequently I never advised “killing burglars” (par. 1), nor do I thoroughly believe in killing (par. 2). I justified killing, not for its own sake, but under specific conditions, such as the prevention of *more* killing.

Mr. Du Cann knows the history of Nazism. The lives and liberties of fellow-beings are still at stake. But Mr. Du Cann knows better: he knows Nazism is only an “Aggression Bogey” to “testify” the Taylors into arguing about killing. (Terror, by the way, is a psychological state in which it is impossible to argue). And so my parallel of a homicidal burglar with declared intentions is all a “fable”!

He says, further, that whether a law is worth following is a question for moralists, not jurists. But if Mr. Du Cann was not writing from the moralist standpoint there was no point in his article.

If he would allow his logic and exactitude to keep pace with his flow of words he would perhaps have fulfilled the promise of a polemic contained in his opening par., instead of which we get rather, an essay, in which he dumps on us such statements as that it is a logical step from the forbidding of private, to the forbidding of State, killing. Replace “courts of law” for “killing” (they both imply judgment) and see what becomes of the argument. And the information that he was in the last war can easily be discounted. Many who were in the last war agree with me; many who weren't agree with Mr. Du Cann.

Having been in the last war, he has probably more scalps to his credit than I. Like him, I am only prepared to kill when I “can't help it” (par. 2—he would do well to ponder how far this admission might extend), and my own poor efforts to date have been to twist the necks of one or two wild birds mauled or maimed beyond hope of recovery. Mr. Du Cann would have left them to their miserable death (“Thou shalt not kill”—no “modifications,” please), as he is also prepared to leave those of his wretched fellow-beings who crave release from hopeless illnesses. In other words he prefers to see death by slow torture than by painless despatch.

Perhaps, after all, Mr. Du Cann is only a *theoretical* non-killer, like many pacifists. Moses breaks his own law, and Mr. Du Cann travels the Holy Land with a sword which he draws on a couple of Arab guides.

If our legal friend cannot put up a better case against killing I shall hope he represents the prosecution when I commit my next murder.

G. H. TAYLOR

SIR,—Mr. Du Cann thinks the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” is a perfect example of what a law should be “brief, plain, beyond doubt; easily understood by the most elementary intelligence and absolutely incapable of being falsified by commentary.” How he arrives at such a conclusion when the most important part of the commandment is missing, I don't know. Unless a law states to whom and/or what it applies, it is subject to personal interpretation and then the fun starts. Mr. Du Cann gives his personal interpretation by inferring the addition of the words “... your own kind,” but there is no guarantee that everybody is going to think similarly, and under such conditions how can he say the commandment is easily understood?

“Thou shalt not kill,” as it stands, without qualification, applies to all things which live, in which case, those subject to the law must refrain from killing harmful germs, insects, etc., which creatures I am afraid would not return the compliment.

I think Mr. Du Cann is well aware that qualification is necessary, and it is the effort to put into words exactly when, how and to whom a law applies that involves much verbiage. This is necessary if all positions relating to the law are to be met with the greatest possible measure of justice.

If all laws were as short as the commandment under review, the abuses would be greater than they are under our complex legal system, because everybody would become his own legislator in that he would have to insert the most vital part of the law. What a mix-up that would be.

J. PRICE

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES. Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon until 6 p.m. Various Speakers.

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station): 7.30, Ivor C. Lewis (N.S.P.V.D.)—“Menace of Venereal Disease in War-Time.”

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandria Hotel, opposite Clapham Common Underground Station): 7.30 Mr. E. Buschinsky—“The Jew in Great Britain.”

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BERKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Mr. McKelvie (Liverpool)—A Lecture.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (1 Great Colmore Street, Horse Fair): 7.0. Discussion. General invitation.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.40, Mr. N. Charlton—“Jesus Christ.”

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street): 7.0, Dr. Sutherland Shaw—“Inside Europe Today.” Questions and discussion.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Hummerstone gate): 3.0, Mr. H. Cutner—“An Afternoon with Mediums.”

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall): 7.0, R. H. Rosetti—“The World, Religion and Unbelief.”

STOCKTON (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street): 6.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

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