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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Religion and Fear.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	49
<i>Where Britain Bows to Barbarism.—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	51
<i>A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.—E. Upasaka</i> . . . . .	52
<i>On Darwin and Evolution.—H. Cutner</i> . . . . .	53
<i>Upon Charles Bradlaugh and a Catholic Editor.—Victor B. Neuburg</i> . . . . .	58
<i>The N.S.S. Annual Dinner</i> . . . . .	58
<i>Breeding True to Type.—H.H.H.</i> . . . . .	60
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Religion and Fear.

MR. BERTRAND RUSSELL says that if he were about to be led to execution, and was allowed twenty minutes in which to make a farewell speech, he would spend the time in addressing the world on the importance of eliminating fear. That, we beg to say, is a very unchristian way to behave. Unless all Christian theology is false and misleading, a man when he is about to die has no right to busy himself about the welfare of others or giving good advice to the world. At least, the only instances in which classic literature admits the relevancy of such conduct, are when the dying man is an unbeliever, and he uses his last moments in warning the world never to forsake Christ, and begging his friends never to permit themselves to be brought to his own desperate condition. Apart from this, every good Christian is expected to die thinking about the salvation of his soul, and if he is specially good, in seeing the gates of paradise opening to receive him. The last thoughts of a genuine Christian should be about himself.

Apart from its anti-Christian character, Mr. Russell's selection seems a very good one. All sorts of meannesses and all sorts of evils flow from the workings of fear. It is fear that causes the nations of Europe to spend much of their thought and their wealth upon armaments, and the more boastful a nation is about its armed might, the more potent is the working of fear with it. It is fear that is responsible for nearly all the social hypocrisies of social life. People crawl round afraid of this opinion or of that opinion, afraid to act as their better nature would lead them to act, because they fear what other people may think about them. If men and women would act on their own judgment of what is right and wrong, and not permit what other people may think about them to decide their action, this world of ours would be a much better place than it is.

Life and the Parson.

Mr. Russell's article (it will be found in the *Daily Telegraph* for January 4) is really a plea for the freedom of the human spirit. He says:—

I regard with horror all those whose business it is to keep the human spirit and the human intellect in fetters. I include among these almost all ministers of religion, a large proportion of school teachers, 90 per cent. of magistrates and judges, and a large proportion of those who have earned the respect of the community by their insistence on what is called a rigid moral standard.

Now this passage has roused the ire of the *Christian World*, and in its issue for January 10, it selects the phrase, "almost all ministers of religion," and indignantly denies that they should be included among those whose business it is to keep the human intellect and the human spirit in fetters. It wants to know how many sermons Mr. Russell listened to last year. How many churches did he enter? And it asks, rather incautiously, "Where in modern England is Christianity presented to an intelligent audience as a religion of fetters and fear?" The language, it will be noted, is what is called "diplomatic"; and by diplomatic, applied to speech, is usually meant language which does not mean exactly what it says. It is always open for the *Christian World* to object to any congregation that is selected as not coming within the category of "intelligent," and for my own part I would cheerfully concede the difficulty of finding a congregation—however intelligent its members might be out of church—properly meriting, as a congregation, the term "intelligent." It looks as though there is a catch in it somewhere.

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Giving 'em Hell.

But assuming the *Christian World* to mean exactly what it says, and that there is no catch in it, I am wondering whether I could help that journal to an answer. One may commence with the Roman Catholic Church which numbers between 250,000,000 and 300,000,000 followers, or about half the Christian population of the world. (I may take it for granted that our very innocent contemporary will agree that the doctrine of an eternal hell does really come under the head of a doctrine of fear.) And I present the *Christian World* with the following excerpt from a Roman Catholic publication, issued by authority:—

Look into this room. What a dreadful place it is. The roof is red-hot; the walls are red-hot; the floor is like a thick sheet of red-hot iron. See, on the middle of that red-hot floor stands a girl. Her feet are bare, she has neither shoes nor stockings on her feet. Her bare feet stand on the red-hot floor. Now she sees that the door is opening. She rushes forward. She has gone down on her knees on the red-hot floor. Listen! she speaks. She says, "I have

been standing with my bare feet on this red-hot floor for years. Day and night my only standing place has been this red-hot floor. Sleep never comes to me for a moment, that I might forget this horrible burning floor." "Look," she says, "at my burnt and bleeding feet. Let me go off this burning floor for one moment, only for one single short moment. Oh, that in the endless eternity of years I might forget the pain only for one single moment." The devil answers her question: "Do you ask," he says, "for a moment, for one moment, to forget your pain? No, not for one moment during the never ending eternity of years shall you ever leave this red-hot floor."

Now that choice specimen of Christian love is not only an authorized production of the Roman Church, but is published for the edification of "children and young persons"—older ones, one may presume, would be given something still stronger. Then there is the Salvation Army, which still holds rigidly to the same doctrine; and there are the other Churches, the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Calvinistic; what of these? True, one might find in all, except the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army, some few preachers who would reject the doctrine of hell; but when did any sect officially repudiate this doctrine of fear? My age is not one that could fairly be called patriarchal, but I well remember the outcry there was when Canon Farrar ventured to declare that in his opinion there was a hope that torment might not be eternal, but might come to an end, say, at the close of a few thousand years. That was a little more than forty years ago. If, moreover, the *Christian World* cares to send a commissioner round North and South Wales, and the religiously very backward West of England, I think it will find this doctrine still preached with very little modification in many hundreds of churches.

Of course, the reply may be that none of these would represent intelligent congregations, and I should be the last one to contradict the statement. All the same, if the vast majority of Christian Churches are thus to be brushed on one side as non-intelligent, and they do preach a religion of fear, it does not seem that Mr. Russell was, after all, very wrong when he damned "almost all ministers of religion" for preaching a doctrine of terrorism.

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#### Essential Christianity.

Having asked Mr. Russell how many churches he attended last year—to which the answer, if forming part of a guessing competition, might not be hard to find—the *Christian World* appears to bethink itself that there has been some use of fear in the Christian Church, because it says:—

Fear was undoubtedly a weapon of the Christian moralist in past ages. Men were awed into good behaviour by the fear of hell, the threat of excommunication, and the dread of social ostracism by their fellow Christians.

I very much like that expression "past ages," because it is characteristically Christian in its method of suggesting a falsehood without telling a deliberate lie. The quotation given on hell evidently does not belong to past ages; nor do those who suggested that Dean Farrar should be turned out of the Church for his heresy with regard to eternal torment. Charles Haddon Spurgeon can surely be said to have lived in modern times, and here is a little bit of hell from him:—

When thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be hell enough for it; but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells, thy soul sweating drops of

blood, and thy body suffused with agony. In fire exactly like that which we have on earth thy body will lie, asbestos like, for ever unconscious, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable torment.

Of course, if I went to the really past ages of, say, one hundred and fifty years ago, I could fill a volume with descriptions as good, or as vile, as that of Spurgeon's; such as that of the great Thomas Boston, who explained that "God will hold sinners over the pit of hell with one hand, while he torments them with the other"; or that of Whittaker, who declared that "the bodies of the damned will all be salted with fire, so tempered and prepared as to burn the more fiercely, and yet never consumed." But probably I should be told that none of the congregations that were thus addressed could be called intelligent.

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#### Preaching and Practice.

The innocence of the *Christian World* is incomprehensible. It believes that the fear of hell, the threat of social ostracism, belongs to past ages. Apparently it has never heard of men being threatened in their livelihood because they denounced Christianity, of politicians who are afraid to confess their unbelief for fear they would lose their seats, of news-agents who dare not display the *Freethinker* because Christians threaten them with the boycott if they do. I speak under correction, but I should really like to have the names of the Christian ministers who have stood up in their pulpits and publicly denounced these things. The Editor of the *Christian World* should know more about the clergy than I do, and he would be doing me a favour if he would point out who these clergymen are and how numerous they are. I do, of course, know that a very large number of parsons will not to-day openly preach a gospel of boycott and social ostracism, but I would much like to know how many of the seventy or eighty thousand preachers in this country have practised it. I do not find them, as a body, denouncing instances where Freethinkers are boycotted and submitted to a petty persecution that is far more degrading than the legal persecution of a century or so ago. From time to time I have to draw attention to the proposals of Christian preachers that Freethought meetings shall not be permitted, or that Freethinking advertisements shall not be allowed, or that halls for the purpose of Freethought meetings shall be refused. I look in vain for any protest on the part of Christian ministers against this treatment. Times change, and manners must accommodate themselves to altered circumstances. But when allowance has been made for altered times, I find the clergy of the Christian Church to be much what they have always been—quite ready to maintain by force, openly or secretly applied, the dominance of opinions that cannot justify themselves before the bar of enlightened opinion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### PESSIMISM: OR THOUGHTFUL LOVE.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain,  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold: "Dover Beach."

## Where Britain Bows to Barbarism.

"We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions."—*G. W. Foote.*

"Instead of being made, make yourself."

*Herbert Spencer.*

"More life, and fuller, that we want."—*Tennyson.*

THE inimitable Bishop of London once described the godly professional workers in the Lord's vineyard as belonging to "a rotten profession." This blunt statement really upset some of the members of the respectable Church of England, and the Bishop was constrained to explain later that he was thinking only of the purely financial and material point of view, and was not at that moment concerned with intellectual and ethical issues.

As usual, the dear Bishop had put his foot in it, and Churchmen were wise in checking more loose talk on this matter. From a purely material and financial point of view the English State Church cannot fairly be described as "a rotten profession," however out-of-date it may be when judged by other standards. In the first place, it is the richest Church in the world, "wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice." It possesses property valued at many millions of money, constantly increasing in value. It draws over a quarter of a million yearly from the county of Durham in mining royalties. It takes tithes and gets relief from the rates. Its bishops sit in the House of Lords; live in palaces, and are treated as aristocrats.

Everyone knows that the average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable livelihood, and lives in a nice house. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading novels or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in the household expenses. The higher ecclesiastics do better still. Forty archbishops and bishops share £182,000 yearly, and the bachelor Bishop of London enjoys a salary of £300 weekly, a palace and a house in town, sufficient to keep fifty ordinary families in comparative comfort.

There are about 20,000 priests attached to this State Church, from the lordly Archbishop of Canterbury to the rector of Dunghill-on-the-Swizzle. They each bear the title of reverend, and form a caste apart from their-fellow citizens. In addition to the State Church priests there are another 25,000 belonging to a dozen Nonconformist denominations. So we have about 45,000 priests in this country, which should be sufficient to prevent Britons from singing "Rule Britannia" too loudly in public. It should also slightly lessen the swagger of British tourists when they visit "priest-ridden" countries in Europe by the help of Mr. Cook.

This matter of a clerical caste is so important to Democrats, that it is worth a little examination. Who are these priests? What do they do to entitle them to be revered? In what particular way are they superior to other men who are simple "misters"? These are questions which, with a General Election on the horizon, are worth the consideration of democratic minds.

It may be contended that this reverence is paid to these men because they have chosen as their business the supervision and direction of the religious habits of Britons. In reality they are medicine-men engaged in exactly similar work to their dusky prototypes in savage nations. They tell us of three-headed gods who get wild with us when the supply of threepenny bits gets short in the collection bags; of a sooty Devil who must be guarded against. They speak of beautiful angels who fly from heaven to

earth; of saints, not so beautiful, who can assist if supplicated. Nearly forty thousand "gentlemen" are engaged in this sorry business, to say nothing of their assistants and satellites. And this happens in this country alone. If we include European countries, America and Australasia, there are hundreds of thousands of them, maintained at the cost of hundreds of millions yearly.

Yet this clerical profession is no more honest than fortune-telling, which is considered entirely disreputable. Many a poor old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a foolish servant girl, after promising her a handsome husband and six fine children; but these priests are allowed to take large sums of money for promises of good fortune in the "beautiful land above."

This is not the only indictment of "a sorry trade." The Church of England parsons treat all Nonconformists as outcasts, and Dissenters, being Christians, return the compliment. Both Anglicans and Nonconformists alike deride the Church of Rome, which curses all outside its own communion. These bad manners are actually helped by our legal system. So far as the State Church is concerned, the ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except they conflict with the laws of the land. The Law Courts have even decided that they are binding on the State clergy. The first dozen canons curses Nonconformists up hill and down dale, in the true spirit of the Ages of Faith and Ignorance. But that the law of the land overrides these canons, everybody who refused to attend the services of the State Church of England should be cursed, and the names read out in the churches.

It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people, should be taught such pestiferous nonsense in language which leads them to believe, and is most carefully calculated to that end, that millions of their fellow-countrymen are outcast and accursed. Yet this affront to the spirit of Democracy is fostered by all the Churches. The priests of all the gospel shops hate their trade rivals, and their claim to be sacred persons does not lessen their malevolence. Unless a man, woman, or child, accepts them and their out-of-date dogmas, without doubt they shall be punished everlastingly. That, in the last analysis, is the real Gospel Message for the citizens of a country supposed to be in the van of Light and Liberty. That this teaching is camouflaged with polite reservations in their intercourse with Freethinkers is only a further proof that the clergy belong to "a rotten profession."

It is high time that Britons realized that this clerical caste is an anomaly in a civilized country. That a body of men, over forty thousand in number, with doctrines derived from savagery, should usurp a place in our social life as though they were of real importance is a disgrace. That half of that body should be most heavily endowed, and enjoy State and Parliamentary patronage is an outrage. Democrats, no less than Freethinkers, should wish to see an end to these injustices that are perpetrated in the name of superstition. The word "reverend" in this association is pure humbug. To apply it to the common clergyman, or to the purse-proud prelate, is as absurd as to apply the terms "All Highest" or "Imperial Majesty" to the pious decadent who once controlled the destinies of the German people.

MIMNERMUS.

All hail to those bold and fearless natures—the heretics and the innovators of the day—who, arousing men out of their lazy sleep, sound in their ears the tocsin and the clarion.—*Buckle.*

## A. Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 42.)

### THE LOURDES MIRACLES.

THE Virgin cult soon assumed a strange form. Mary became a sort of protean goddess, like some of those in the Tibetan mythology. She appeared in many shapes and guises in many places, as "Our Lady" of this, that, or the other. Just at this moment of writing (July, 1928) there are accounts in the newspapers of parties of pious pilgrims setting out for the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, in South-West France, where they hope to be miraculously cured of various ailments and deformities.

Long ago, before Lourdes was heard of, there was Our Lady of Betharram, a place about ten miles from Lourdes, where she (some accounts say her statue) appeared to some children. A healing spring there-upon miraculously began to flow. As late as 1905, no less than 40,000 pilgrims visited it, and thousands of cures were reported. Then there was Our Lady of Salette, in Southern France. Near the village of La Salette-Fallavaux, a vision of the lady was seen by two children, a girl named Melanie Mathieu, aged fifteen, and a boy four years younger. Here also a miraculous spring appeared. This was in 1846. A church, shrine, priests, nuns, etc., were established there, and the usual "cures" took place. Why have these two places fallen into disrepute and neglect?

Our Lady of Lourdes appeared to a girl named Bernadette Sourbious, aged fourteen, on February 11, 1858, and opened another spring. It is known that Bernadette was at Bartres in 1857, where she attended classes held by the priests. One of these, Father Ader, said that she reminded him of Melanie of La Salette. Bernadette returned to Lourdes at the end of 1857, and almost immediately she proceeded to imitate Melanie! Lourdes has now completely overshadowed the other two places. It is a strange story, and the priests probably know more about it than is communicated to the outer world. Bernadette became a nun, but remained as she had always been, ailing and delicate. She had a long and painful illness, and died after great suffering at the age of thirty-six years. Were the curative properties of the Lourdes water tried on her? If so, should they not have been effective in her case above all others?

Half a million pilgrims are said to resort to Lourdes annually, to the great profit of the Church and the neighbourhood. How many of these millions have been cured? What is the percentage of *known* cures? Is there a single cure in which the following particulars of the case have been fully recorded and authenticated: (1) previous medical history; (2) medical certificate dated immediately before departure; (3) ditto, upon return, (4) subsequent medical history? I think not. Pictures are published of the invalid pilgrims setting out, complete with crutches and bandages, but never of their return! On one occasion a pilgrim train met with a disastrous collision. How could that happen? It has been remarked that "In an overwhelming proportion of cases the patients are young women of morbid physique and temperament, or precisely those patients to whom we should look for an abnormally rapid change." But the significant fact is that, whilst a record of sorts is kept of supposed cures, nothing is said about the failures; these last are thrust out of sight and conveniently forgotten, as with that other faith-healing imposture which

humorously describes itself as "Christian Science."

There is nothing new, or particularly Christian, in all this. It is merely another survival of pagan superstition. There were any number of healing shrines, springs and wells in the ancient world. We read of the adjacent temples, particularly that dedicated to Æsculapius, being adorned with the crutches, splints, and even wooden legs, of persons miraculously cured there. In India, and elsewhere in the East, there are tanks or pools, streams, shrines and temples of various gods and goddesses, where exactly the same kind of cures are alleged to be performed on evidence quite as good (?) as that of Lourdes. I have seen some of these. The curious thing about both is that all impartial, sceptical investigation is discouraged and kept at a distance. A healthy, scientific spirit of critical inquiry is as fatal to these miracles as it is to the phenomena of "spiritualism."

### MORALS, ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL.

We are led to believe that the whole of the ancient world was in darkness, and "under the shadow of death" until the year One of the Christian Era. We are told that such is the case with the Heathen world to-day, though we, poor Heathen, cannot see it. As a matter of fact, we do not think we are.

There was an English bishop who referred to Ceylon as a place "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile." The story goes that the bishop bought some jewellery from the dusky Heathen (more likely to be native Christians) who infest the streets of Colombo and board the ships in the harbour, and when he found that the stones were "duds," he immediately sat down and wrote his famous hymn. Whether this story is true, I do not know, but it is quite as credible as most of the stories I have read in the Bible.

What we are able to learn from Christian sources concerning ancient Chaldea, Egypt, Greece and Rome, inclines us to think that they were in a very terrible state of moral depravity. But excavations and the deciphering of cuneiform and hieroglyphic records and inscriptions so discovered, lead us to very different conclusions concerning the first two. They would seem to have been quite as good, or ever better, in this respect, than we are to-day. Certainly, there can be no comparison between them and the state of Christendom in the Middle Ages.

The Greek historian, Herodotus, has one single passage about women frequenting the temple of Mylitta for a certain purpose, and it has been made the most of, though discredited by later research. Another reference, the story of Baruch, contained in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, was not written until the first Christian century, the earliest date to which it can be pushed back. It relates to events said to have happened 600 years previously. Suppose the only record of London 600 years hence were *The Maiden Tribute*?—though nothing so bad as this is related in Herodotus or Jeremiah.

The moral condition of ancient Egypt seems to have been on a most remarkably high level. Ethical aphorisms, which have been discovered in the form of inscriptions some 4,000 or 5,000 years old, would lead us almost to suppose that the Sermon on the Mount was among the ordinary commonplaces of that period. We begin to discover that we have been misled in what we read in earlier books on the subject.

E. UPASAKA.

(To be continued.)

Bigotry is a kind of rheumatism which twists a man's soul into all sorts of deformities.—Harry Simon.

## On Darwin and Evolution.

It is a rather curious fact that three of the greatest Englishmen of the nineteenth century were all called Charles. Each in his own way became world famous, and their figures loom larger as the days pass on. Of Charles Bradlaugh, it is sufficient to say he has long since been recognized as one of the great Freethinkers of all time. His forty years' fight against mid-Victorian bigotry, intolerance, superstition, and even cruelty, can never be forgotten by all lovers of freedom. Even now we can hardly do justice to his great services for mankind, but the fact that a sketch by Mr. Walter Sickert of Bradlaugh has at last been admitted to the National Portrait Gallery is sufficient indication which way the wind is blowing. The growing tide of public opinion is often too strong for official authority and even Christians are beginning to admit Bradlaugh was a great man.

There is also little need to say much at this time of day of Charles Dickens. My own opinion, given here for what it is worth, is simply that Dickens is one of the greatest novelists, and one of the greatest creative writers who ever lived. I doubt whether any other writer has given to the world such a galaxy of men and women whose names have become household words, incorporated in the very texture of our language. Moreover, Dickens fought sham and hypocrisy with dreadful sarcasm, and he was a moral force, perhaps even more powerful than Voltaire. Dickens called himself a Christian, but we can search his works in vain for any proof of a belief other than that we call Secularism. Only by our own efforts can we produce a heaven upon *this* earth, was his gospel.

Whether Charles Darwin was the greatest of the three, I simply will not discuss. But it is a fact that never was his greatness as a scientist less questioned than at the present time. The mark he has left on contemporary thought cannot be measured in words. Whether the doctrine of evolution can be carried back to Aristotle or Lucretius is a matter of small moment. To Darwin belongs almost the sole credit of formulating the theory in the teeth of fierce opposition in such a scientific way that to say you do not believe in evolution stamps you at once as an ignorant crank of the deepest dye. It may take years or even centuries before we can decide *how* evolution took and is taking place. Darwinism, the theory associated with Darwin, may be all wrong, but evolution is proven beyond all possible doubt.

The great clash, of course, is between the Fundamentalist and the Evolutionist. If Genesis is true, evolution is false. If God did not create man as narrated in the only sacred book, then there is no revelation. If there is no revelation, the Church, any Church, is utterly without authority. If evolution is true, no amount of jugglery with words can do away with the very inconvenient fact that Christianity is false. The American Fundamentalist knows this, the English Papist knows it as well as the Plymouth Brother, and the dear, beautiful Salvation Army lassie, that mainstay of a bloody creed at its lowest. If man has not been specially created to adore God and Jesus and the Virgin (and for that matter all the other Gods), if cows were not specially made to give us milk; or hens, eggs; or flowers made beautiful for us to pluck and put on our tables as decorations; we can ask with millions of religious believers, what truth can there be in Revelation? Or to put it in another way, what is the use of God?

Religious leaders always bless themselves (in private) that the greater part of their flock is of such low intelligence that almost any gibberish can keep them quiet. But when newspapers take Evolution

to be a fact in much the same way as they take racing to be a fact, what can the Roman Catholic, or his equally as well informed brother in Christ, the Calvinist, say? That delightful little trick of our Bellocs and Chestertons, of confusing Darwinism as such, with evolution as such, can only be played a certain number of times. In the end they must find themselves up against it—they must say right out, either evolution is true or it is not true, which is difficult for a fervent and believing convert.

In the meantime, the far-seeing and all-embracing eye of the Church—the Church—has been surveying the position. Never mind about Professor Mivart or what happened last century. Never mind what has been said in innumerable books and pronouncements. The question is what did the *Church* say? What did the Church as the mouthpiece of Jesus or God or both or all three say? Is the Church for or against Evolution?

Let me confess, I have been in the past one of those innocents that believed the Church *opposed* Evolution. I thought all religion was opposed to Evolution. I actually thought, never could religion and Evolution be reconciled. I am quite wrong—I admit it with shame and contrition. Far from their being opposed, they are almost the same. Roman Catholicism supports Evolution, Evolution supports Roman Catholicism. You can be a perfect Romanist and believe Mendel, Lamarck, Weismann and Darwin all rolled into one. Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton are not the Church. What they say about Darwin or what they say about Hardy or anybody else is merely their private opinion, and as the Roman Catholic Church is a Freethought Church they have a perfect right to say what they like. Why, you will eventually find it is merely a question of time before the Holy Roman Catholic Church will prove just as effectively she is thoroughly Atheistic, indeed the only Christian Atheistic Church in the world.

It is Father Philip de Ternant who has discovered that Evolution and Roman Catholicism are in perfect harmony—at least, the proper kind of Evolution. The Evolution of blatant Agnostics like Darwin is one thing, but the Evolution of the Roman Catholic Church is far more beautiful and true. You see, whatever Materialistic or Agnostic Evolutionists may prove, it is only in regard to the *body*. Roman Catholic Evolutionists believe that God created the *soul*, and put it in when the body was sufficiently advanced. At least if that isn't how it happened, it should have happened like that. Besides, as Evolution is true it must have happened like that or else where does God come in? Then, again, Evolution is "ancient Catholic doctrine," like Social Reform. You tell me any genuine social reform and I'll prove it is, says Fr. de Ternant, "ancient Catholic doctrine." In fact, your difficulty will be to prove that whatever is good in the world is not "ancient Catholic doctrine." I hope I am not misrepresenting the blessed modern Father, when I quote him as an authority for the statement that almost all you find in Darwin and other Evolutionists can be found in the blessed ancient Fathers. How sadly we have all been deceived!

Incidentally, Fr. de Ternant tells us "If four-fifths of the money and time wasted on stupid drinking were spent on something else, we should go a long way towards solving the slum problem. And we should begin to remedy the distressingly low level of intelligence and information among several large classes of the community which makes the propagation of religion so hard in this country."

Exhaustive comment on this gem would spoil it, but fancy putting low intelligence as a bar to religion! How the intelligence of anybody who sin-

cerely believed that a priest could turn a wafer into a genuine Jesus on an altar by mumbling Latin words over it can be described as anything else but low and damnably low at that, I don't know. But I'm always learning something.

But, there, we shouldn't grumble. Evolution has become or always was Catholic doctrine, and who says now we haven't won?

In the meantime, I want to call attention to the new book by George A. Dorsey, *The Evolution of Charles Darwin*. It is an enthusiastic account of the great scientist, and contains a splendid chapter on his religious opinions. I am sorry to inform Fr. de Ternant, Mr. Dorsey has not discovered Darwin to be an Agnostic Papist, and by a singular omission has not even discovered Darwin had pinched Evolution from the Church Fathers. Mr. Dorsey thinks Darwin was a Christian gentleman, but hastens to boil down that phrase by admitting he means Darwin was a gentleman and nothing else. "Science," he says, "was Darwin's religion, but it was not to be worshipped, nor was any dogma of science to be venerated . . . It was through science that the truth was to be discovered which would set us free: that was Darwin's religion . . . He left questions of creators, causes, and designs to theologians and metaphysicians."

Here is another passage: "Never did Darwin's character shine more clearly than during the long and cruel controversy that followed the publication of his great work. His views were hooted, his character was assailed. Through it all he went the even tenour of his way, kind, tranquil and serene. Nothing seemed to warp or embitter him. He was literally powerful in his humility and mighty in his gentleness."

That was Darwin, the Agnostic. All his followers were not quite as humble, of course, but somebody had to fight the bigots.

Seventy years ago when the *Origin of Species* appeared, it roused the greatest cry Christianity ever uttered. It was religion's death-knell, and those who shouted most knew it. That shout is still echoing and re-echoing throughout the world. But not all the forces of evil surrounding religion at its best or worst can arrest truth, the mightiest of the mighty.

And, after all, that is the side we are on, isn't it?

H. CUTNER.

## Acid Drops.

An arrangement has been arrived at between Mussolini and the Pope. The latter is to be given control of a strip of territory near to the Vatican, and this is to have the rank and dignity of an "Independent" State. The Pope will have the right to refuse as subjects any of the people at present dwelling therein, which means, we take it, that he will have the right to "deport" them. Italy will appoint an Ambassador to the Vatican, and the Pope will send a representative to Italy. Presumably there will be a move to get a similar state of things established between the Pope and other countries in Europe. We do not see why Saffron Hill should be left out of consideration.

Now we do not suppose that Mussolini has any very strong opinions about religion, but he is not the first man desirous of keeping the people "in order," who has found it advisable to enlist the help of the Christian Church, above all the Church with the most docile, the least educated, and the most superstitious of followings. We see this exemplified over and over again, and in all sorts of situations, including the manoeuvres of our own politicians to capture the votes of Church or Chapel as the case may be. And, on the other hand, it would be unfair to assume, because of what has taken place be-

tween the Pope and Mussolini, that the Roman Church is committed to the politics of Italy's dictator. The Church has no politics, and it would be just as ready to make arrangements with Russia as with Italy if it could get its *quid pro quo*. Chameleon-like, Christianity is always ready to take its political colour from its surroundings, provided the surroundings will not obstruct the progress of the Church. In the vocabulary of the Churches, national welfare means sectarian aggrandizement, and human well-being equals regular attendance at church and chapel. So long as the interests of the Church is conserved or promoted, the Catholic Church is willing to agree to anything. It is that which makes it such a dangerous enemy. It knows how to wait, and it knows how to adapt itself to circumstances. We ought to see some rather interesting developments from this re-establishment of the most dangerous, the most unscrupulous, and the most retrogressive Church in Christendom as a temporal power.

The *Methodist Times* is very gravely concerned over what it calls "the widening gulf between the Church and the World." Everything seems to be going the wrong way—for the Churches—cinemas, newspapers, novels, and theatres. It thinks that public opinion is slowly and surely setting itself against the lofty austerity of the Christian morality which existed during the first Christian centuries. We have heard about this lofty Christian morality of the first Christian centuries before, but we have never managed to discover it. It is not depicted in the pages of ecclesiastical histories, and it is not very clear in even the New Testament itself. What we find is Christian sects quarrelling together, lying like modern evangelists on behalf of their creed, forging documents whenever they had the scholarship to do so, with sects adopting all sorts of strange and obscene doctrines. This pure, primitive Christianity is one of the many impostures which has been foisted on the Christian world. We challenge the *Methodist Times* to prove that any such thing ever existed save in some individual here and there, and that may be seen in any age, Christian or non-Christian.

In our own day, we have the religious press and the pulpit lamenting the small moral influence Christianity exerts. During the nineteenth century there was the same thing going on—there was a wide rift between the Church and the world. In the eighteenth century, the state of things was admittedly worse. The seventeenth century was admittedly a gross age. The sixteenth found religious corruption so great that, so say Protestant writers, it brought about a break with Rome. Of the Roman Catholic ages, Protestants agree as to their impurity, and the bad influence of the established religion. And when we get back to the Christianity of Pagan times, the days before it became the established religion, we see all the bitterness and lack of decency that made Christianity, whenever it was noticed, a by-word among the better class pagans. So we repeat, will the *Methodist Times* be good enough to tell us just when this "austere morality" was common among Christians? As political speakers say, we pause for an answer. And we are not likely to be answered in a hurry.

The Southport Coroner, Mr. Brighthouse, had, the other day, two inquests; one on the body of a Christian Scientist, the other on an old lady who had simply trusted to the Lord to make her well. In both cases the legal representatives were read a lecture as to the criminality of trusting to the Lord instead of calling in a doctor. On the fly-leaf of a Bible belonging to the old lady, she had written: "Took the Lord for my physician, May, 1923." But the Coroner was almost inclined to commit someone for manslaughter for trusting an unqualified practitioner. He said it was not his desire to show any disrespect for people who prayed to the Lord. Perhaps not; he merely hinted that he might send them to prison for being fools enough to believe the Lord would do anything. We suggest that some of this very virtuous indignation might well be spent on the

clergy who bring people up to believe that the Lord actually can help those who believe in him. And what about "Jimmy" Douglas with his yarns of the way in which the Lord has cured him him after time? What would Mr. Brighthouse say to him if he were called as a witness? The cream of the joke is that this report is actually taken from the *Daily Express* itself, and Mr. Douglas said "nuffin"!

Miss Maude Royden has toured the world and has brought back a platitude. The way to ensure world peace, says she, is for the people of the different countries to get to know one another better by mutual visits and every possible kind of exchange. It's wonderful how preaching sharpens the faculties of observation and reflection! There's one thing we can tell Miss Royden. People on mutual visits to one another's country had better beware of arguing about their particular sectarian beliefs. The practice doesn't encourage world peace nor any other kind of peace. We don't need to tour the world to find out that.

A wireless listener hopes that broadcasting religion will rouse people to worship. If it does that, he thinks it is a "handmaid of Christianity." It doesn't seem to have occurred to him that it is not the job of an entertainment corporation to be a handmaid of Christianity. Especially as the Corporation's funds are drawn from Jews and Freethinkers as well as from persons professing all kinds of religions other than Protestant Christianity. The B.B.C.'s duty is to favour no religion nor section of that religion, and to permit a hearing to all opinions.

To the *Radio Times* an apprehensive Christian writes:—

I beseech you to protect us from a Continental Sunday. To give us jazz in any shape or form on Sunday, would rob us of a national heritage. Let other countries call us old-fashioned, they are only jealous; narrow-minded Englishmen clamour for jazz, and still more jazz, they only want to appear "big" and "manly." Remember that upon the B.B.C. rests in part responsibility of bringing up the boyhood and womanhood of England in a wholesome and manly way. To desecrate Sunday with cheap jazz would be to encourage England's youth to disregard the higher ideals of life, and to lower their national status.

Yes, by all means avoid jazz, if it prevents our womanhood from being brought up in a manly way. We wish the B.B.C. every success in its work of "educating" the public. To judge by this letter, some of the Corporation's clients are badly in need of education. The poor devils have never learnt to be anything but Christians.

Imagine the *Nineteenth Century*, or the *London Mercury* daring to publish an article with such a title as "Putting Jehovah Across." The *American Mercury*, December issue, does this in a frank and courageous attack on the Church "Babbits" in the article referred to. Its fiction section includes a story by Leonard Hall called "The Bishop is Tired," which would be denounced as outrageously blasphemous if printed in the *Freethinker* or the *Truthseeker*. The *Mercury* is five years old. May it live to be 500.

Here is one of its current specimens of what it calls "Americana":—

PEP stuff sent to inmates of the Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A., by the Hon. A. D. Sallee, the gifted leader of the Corner Y's Club at the celebrated Smithfield Street M.E. Church, the Brimstone Corner fane of Pittsburgh:—

'FRAID TO DIE? No! Wanna die? Omyno! How come? Not afraid, but still hangin' on? Hear a live bunch settle this "Fear of Death" Sun. A.M.

DO SINNERS DIE horribly? And saints slip away peacefully? Tell us what you have seen and heard. One who has died twice (may still be a "dead one") will tell the truth Sunday. Come out, live ones! Don't be afrrrrraid!!!!!!

"IT IS APPOINTED unto man once to die." Heb. ix. 27. "O death where is thy sting?" 1 Cor. xv. 55.

"If a man keep my word he shall never taste death." John viii. 52. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Matt. x. 39. "What should a man give in exchange for his life?" Mark viii. 37.

The Bishop of St. Albans will have no half measures with the unbaptized. He has given instructions that no one is to be married in a church in his diocese unless he, or she, has been baptized. That is a matter with which we, as an outsider, have no great concern. Much greater Christians than the Bishop of St. Albans have made eternal damnation the consequence of not being baptized, or of omitting some of the ridiculous ceremonies of Christian theology. So far as we are concerned, the Bishop has the fullest freedom to damn or save, bury or marry, anyone he pleases.

All the same, it is a pity the Bishop cannot carry out his theological convictions without playing the part of a blackguard. He says:—

I am not going to be a party, if I can help it, to anyone being married by Church service who has been divorced . . . No man has the right to ask a bishop to be a party to any such disgusting and gross act of blasphemy. If you don't like it, go to a Registry Office and say, "I will take you until you make life absolutely impossible, and then I will be off with you."

The implication that marriage before a Registrar is less binding than marriage before a priest, or that it results in greater misery, or is in any degree "lower," comes about as near blackguardism as one can get. One might say some very nasty things about the disgusting marriage service of the Church, and also pile up an account of marriages which reflect anything but creditably upon the moralizing consequences of a religious marriage. But it is apparently news to this very ignorant Bishop that the civil marriage is the only marriage recognized in this country by the English law. The Bishop himself is merely an official licensed by the civil government to perform marriages. In this respect, the registrar and the parson are upon exactly the same level. They are each civil servants, so far as the power to register a marriage is concerned. If the Bishop wishes to be really and truly logical and honest, he should throw up his job in the State Church, decline to recognize the secular government as being any authority in the matter of marriage, and then see what legal status he would have. But he will not do that. He will continue to draw the salary of a State official, defying the State only up to the point that it is not thought worth while to deprive him of his job. It is a cheap kind of heroism, a safe sort of courage that is being exhibited, and one that is characteristic of the poorer type of Christian cleric.

Mr. Hillaire Belloc and Mr. G. K. Chesterton appear to have laid themselves out to try and convince the British public that the Golden Age of the world was the period during which the Roman Catholic Church ruled the roost. We do not think that any one nowadays is likely to take Mr. Chesterton very seriously. There was a time when he was—not profound, but clever; and now he has ceased to be either. Mr. Belloc has, however, gained a reputation with a certain class as a dabbler in history, and the acquaintances of both on the press, in these days of log-rolling, assures them of a certain publicity.

A particularly obnoxious person to both Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc is Mr. G. G. Coulton. This is because Mr. Coulton seems to have set himself the task of showing the world exactly what this idyllic Catholic period of the world was. And he has done it in the most objectionable manner. He has gone direct to facts—in this instance, the original records—and has published extracts showing the filth, the ignorance, the cruelty, the savage superstition and insatiable greed of this idyllic period. This is very wrong, and Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton, being defenders of a Church never very remarkable for the truthfulness of its statements, are very, very wroth.

So when Mr. Coulton, in the *Daily Telegraph*, referred to St. Thomas Aquinas as having written that "part of the bliss of the saved would consist in looking down upon those damned writhing in eternal torments," Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton retorted by saying that Mr. Coulton had misrepresented and mistranslated St. Thomas. Well, says Mr. Coulton, if Mr. Belloc can secure from any Roman Catholic Bishop, or Professor of History in England, Scotland or Wales, a statement that he looks upon Mr. Belloc as a competent exponent of Christian truth, he "will spend £5 on reprinting the passages of St. Thomas, and leave it to the world to say which is right." We do not think the matter will go any further. Mr. Belloc's history is Catholic history, written for Catholic consumption. That does not, of course, make the history any worse than Protestant history, but a Roman Catholic lie is not a Protestant lie. To the moralist they may be the same, but they are written for different readers.

Curiously, another of Mr. Coulton's Roman Catholic antagonists, P. Valentin, admits the correctness of the translation, but says Mr. Coulton has misrepresented the meaning. He says that what St. Thomas means is, not that the saints in heaven are gloating over the tortures of the people in hell, but their happiness is "enhanced" by the knowledge that in hell the moral order is being vindicated. We do not know that this really better the position. The saint in heaven is not glad that some one sinner is being tortured in hell, but he is glad that the moral order is being vindicated there—by the sinner being tortured. It takes a Roman Catholic to see the difference in the two positions.

The exact words of St. Thomas are :—

That the saints may enjoy their beatitude more thoroughly, and give more abundant thanks to God for it, a perfect sight of the punishment of the damned is granted to them.

Peter Lombard is not quite so great a man in the Roman Church as is St. Thomas, but his words are worth citing :—

Therefore the elect shall go forth . . . to see the torments of the impious, seeing which they will not be grieved, but will be satiated with joy at the sight of the unutterable calamity of the impious.

Protestant writers were quite as brutal as were Roman Catholics on this matter, as, for instance, Jonathan Edwards, who said :—

The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

There is very little to choose when it comes to downright brutality, where religion is concerned, between Catholic and Protestant theologians.

After all, both Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc, as Catholics, must believe in hell, and they must believe that the saints in heaven know there is a hell, and when one bears in mind such teachings about hell as we quote on another page, that the saints in heaven know all about it, and are in a state of complete happiness, does not seem so very far away from the citation from St. Thomas to which Mr. Belloc objects. When a man believes in the reality of eternal damnation there are only two steps lower, the first is to try to justify its existence, the second is to fall down and worship the being who is assumed to have created it. One can't get lower.

Nothing like religion! We see that Judge Hardy, one of the judges who was concerned with the dismissal of the charge against Aimee McPherson, the well known evangelist, has just been struck off the rolls of the American Law Society for having received from her the sum of £500. The charge was "misdemeanour in office." The discharge is said to have cost Mrs. McPherson a very large sum of money, but it does not appear to have damaged her in the eyes of Christians. At least, none of them have said anything about it. When she was in

England, all the religious papers said that her methods were crude. That meant they did not go down very well with the British public. But if she had managed to draw huge crowds, and to have produced the usual number of fictitious converts, we doubt if they would have said even that.

The Bishop of London says the clergy are dying faster than they are being ordained. That is only another side of the truth that religions are dying faster than they can be renewed, and gods are petering out more rapidly than they are being created. But we wonder that it never struck the Bishop of London that as the tendency in other trades is to pension men off or discharge them at an earlier age, the experiment might be tried of taking them on as clergymen when they are too old for anything else. We offer the suggestion, for anything it may be worth.

More signs of the revival of religion! The vicar of St. Peter's, Edmonton, laments that "Wherever you go you find the same thing—Church congregations depleted, less earnestness and less religion . . . Fathers and mothers are getting more and more indifferent to the claims of God and his Church." All the same, religion is indestructible. The proof is that there is less of it every year. And that is evidence of quite a good kind—theologically.

The best way to read the Bible, says the Vicar of St. Paul's, Kingston Hill, is to read the Old Testament "when you have divested yourself of the clothes of civilized knowledge and modern progress." Now isn't that exactly what we have been saying all along? To believe in the Bible you must de-civilize yourself. Get back to the savage, and the Bible appears quite reasonable.

Canon Whitehouse (Nottingham) says that sitting in an easy chair and "being able to switch off the wireless when you don't like any part of a service is not going to help the cause of religion." Hear! Hear! If people are to be encouraged to study their tastes in matters of religion, there will soon be ninety-nine per cent of the people out of Church instead of ninety per cent.

The British and Foreign Bible Society tells the world that the general committee which administers the funds of the Society consists entirely of laymen. What, are the Society's patrons afraid to trust parsons with money? We hope the parsons appreciate the implied compliment.

The Duke of Westminster is preparing to clear four acres of slums on his property. He might try to persuade the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to follow his example.

The Bishop of Leicester has entertained at his palace thirty-four Dissenting parsons. A very broad-minded Christian man is the Bishop. We shouldn't be surprised if, in his next spasm of broad-mindedness, he invited thirty-four leading Freethinkers to dine with him. It would be an excellent advertisement.

It is given to few men to be in the confidence of God. The Rev. W. I. Waights (Wesleyan) is one of the favoured. He knows why God created the world. He says: "The Christ ideal in humanity was the inspiration that moved God to create the universe, and the purpose of creation is to bring this forth." One would hardly call that a testimonial to the intelligence of God. If God desired to have all men like Christ, the sensible way of doing things would be to have created them like Christ. That would have prevented all "sin," misery, and bloodshed, and would have made unnecessary a horde of priests with a silly tale of "salvation."



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THOSE SUBSCRIBERS WHO RECEIVE THEIR COPY OF THE "FREETHINKER" IN A GREEN WRAPPER WILL PLEASE TAKE IT THAT A RENEWAL OF THEIR SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE. THEY WILL ALSO OBLIGE, IF THEY DO NOT WANT US TO CONTINUE SENDING THE PAPER, BY NOTIFYING US TO THAT EFFECT.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—S. Olsen, £1; Mr. J. F. Williams, 10s.

D. A. McLEAN.—Your lecture notice did not reach this office until Wednesday morning—a day too late for insertion.

A. L. BRAINE.—Freedom can never mean the abolition of all restrictions until we get a race so nearly automata that it may be counted on doing all that ought to be done at all times. Our only aim was to see that what was ostensibly a letter dealing with one question did not deal with an altogether different one. That is part of an editor's duty towards his readers, not to throw at their heads anything that someone thinks he ought to tell them. Your letter in its present form meets the case.

VICTOR NEUBURG.—Sorry to have missed you at the Dinner. Better luck next year.

A. MILLAR.—The matter is of too local interest for reprinting.

W.P.B.—Quite a useful batch of cuttings, also the quotation. Thanks.

H. BLACK.—Should have liked to have met you at the Dinner. We are not specially interested in the Salvation Army. There was bound to come a scramble for place and power sooner or later. It is a pretty sordid affair, with all the usual cant about "waiting on God," etc. We may deal with the general subject later.

H. BARBER.—Received. We had better wait till we receive the other "Letters," then they can appear with some regard to continuity.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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

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

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

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

## Sugar Plums.

There is little that one need add to the report of the Annual Dinner, which appears on another page. For once in a while the diners took our advice seriously and wrote in good time for their tickets, with the result that everything went with exceptional smoothness, and there was none of that last minute rush which is so disconcerting. The number present was in excess of last year's excellent muster, which was accounted for by the number of "first nighters." The speeches were all on a high level of excellence, and the musical part of the evening, thanks to the management of our friend, Mr. Royle, was enjoyable from first to last. So far as

the dinner itself went, the only fault we had to find with it was that there was rather too much of it.

We were glad to have a chance of welcoming so many of our old friends, including Mr. Alward, who, at the age of eighty-six, had made the pilgrimage from Grimsby to be at the dinner, and who looks as though he will be with us for many years yet. Time has taken so many old friends to distances from London, that it is only at such functions that one has an opportunity of a little friendly intercourse; and as one gets older one learns to value the more the friendships that have endured through the years. The meeting broke up just on 11.30, and it did not appear as though anyone found it a moment too long.

Early in February there will appear a first issue of a new monthly magazine which will be of considerable interest to Freethinkers in particular, and to all interested in advanced questions in general. The idea animating the magazine is to provide a perfectly open platform for the presentation of subjects of interest and of importance. Articles *pro* and *con* will appear in the same issue, written by those whose position gives them the right to speak with some authority. Thus, Dr. Marie Stopes will write on Birth Control, while Dr. Charles Pilley will present an opposing view. There will be similarly contrasted articles on Gambling, Prohibition, Social Theory, and, of some interest to most readers of this journal, Mr. Cohen has undertaken to provide an 8,000 word article each month, and is dealing with the belief in God and kindred subjects. Readers hardly need the assurance that Mr. Cohen would not have undertaken this had he not been given an absolutely free hand. The opposite side of the case will be given by Dr. Graham, a very eminent Roman Catholic. Each contributor will have the right to offer comments upon his opponent's article in the subsequent issue. No journal of quite this kind has appeared before, certainly none that has supplied a free platform in fact as well as in words. The price of the magazine is 1s., and we advise all our readers to secure a copy. The publishing office is the Kelvin Press, 36-8 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2. On the last page of this issue will be found a special offer to would-be readers of the first issue.

A correspondent draws our attention to the fact that in the new *Picture Encyclopedia* edited by Arthur Mee, the old legend about Bradlaugh refusing to take the oath is repeated. Bradlaugh did no such thing. He asked to affirm, as on legal advice he had been assured he had the right of affirmation. When that was refused, he offered, pending an alteration in the law, to take the oath, stating that while religious words were meaningless to him he would take them as embodying an affirmation. It was the Tories who refused this, and so led to the constitutional struggle.

To-day (January 27) Mr. Mann will lecture, at 11.30 and 6.30, in the No. 2 Room, City Hall, Glasgow. His subjects are "Religion—the Enemy," and "Religion and Life." We hope to hear of good meetings.

Dr. Carmichael, of Liverpool, will pay his first visit to Manchester to-day (January 27), and will speak in the Engineers Hall, Rusholme Road, at 3 o'clock, on "Life and Mind," and at 6.30 p.m. on, "The Tree of Knowledge." We strongly advise all Manchester friends to make it a point to be present at both meetings, Dr. Carmichael usually has something to say that is well worth listening to.

Ah, love, could you and I conspire  
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire;  
Would we not shatter it to bits and then  
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire?

Omar.

## Upon Charles Bradlaugh and a Catholic Editor.

IN the brave days of old, subsequently to the bridge-keeping exploit of the admirable Horatius, but before the war that was supposed to end war, Mr. Gilbert Keith Chesterton got the polemic pasting of his life in the *Clarion*, when that once-famous rag was a clarion, at the hands of Mr. Robert Blatchford, in the era before that persevering and persistent publicist had become sunken in Spiritualism and sentimentality.

But, as the Latin poet long ago remarked: All things are subject to change, and we are changed with them. And now our erstwhile friends have overlaid (no difficult task, in the case of the editor of *G.K.'s Weekly*) the heresies of their journalistic heyday, and they find repose in varying forms of spiritual narcotics. Mr. Blatchford consoles himself in age with the elusive and mysterious denizens of the Summerland; and Mr. Chesterton has developed a more than platonic affection for the lady who is popularly supposed, by the less-educated Irish and others, to be God's mother.

The cerebral vagaries of spiritually-minded and materially-prosperous journalists are of no special interest to us; our popular newspapers are fulfilled of gloriously-gorgeous gush, descriptive of the religious raptures of Fleet Street hacks; and God knows, or perhaps he doesn't know, that it is beyond the wit of any one scribbler to attempt to record all the weary wanderings of those holy and untroubled tripe-merchants who pen their pure piety at so much a column. But now and then one of the denizens of the Monastery of Fleet Street calls our kibe badly, and then we simply have to kick out, and damn the expense.

If ever there were a perfectly and undeniably immortal system of thought it is that of Atheism. This is a paradox that should, but, we fear, will not, delight that superstitious, super-witty, superlatively-fecund mind owned by that supernumerary of Christian apologists, Mr. G. K. Chesterton. For the three hundred and forty two thousand, eight hundred and second time—our calculation is only approximate, and we write under correction—that divine Distributist announces to an expectant and sceptical world that Atheism is dead. "That dead age of Atheism" is our poet's gentle and original and—we suppose—witty way of describing the epoch dominated by the colossal figure of Charles Bradlaugh. Yet, in spite of its having been repeatedly buried, we seem to recall one or two papers and one or two writers who remain devoted to the cause of Atheism; immortal in that it seems to survive an unlimited number of funerals.

If we seem to labour an obvious point, be it remembered that we are attempting to disprove, once for all, the pious fallacy that religion survives, unchanged and eternal, the assaults made upon it by the nobler and braver and wiser of mankind. The change in the popular outlook regarding "God," "Heaven," "Hell," and the rest of the Christian rag-bag, has been brought about by the efforts of militant Atheists, one of the most dominant of whom was the heroic Charles Bradlaugh, the noblest figure of the later nineteenth century.

All his life this superlative warrior and philanthropist was calumniated and reviled by "good" Christians; now that he is dead, slain by religious enemies who objected to his efforts to free mankind from various forms of theological and social superstition, he is patronizingly sneered at, and his life-work derided, by the ponderous arm-chair critic and superstitionist who has never run any sort of

social risk in his life. (Yes. We know all about the Marconi ramp; but that was mainly an anti-Semitic stunt. Mr. Chesterton, as a good medievalist, cannot bear the idea of Jews having part in the public life of this country. No true Catholic ever forgives the Jews for rejecting the preposterous claim of the late Jesus Christ to be regarded as God's little boy.)

That "dead age of Atheism" has now, it is well known, given place to a living age of Catholicism, though nobody, excepting Mr. Chesterton and his religious friends, seems to have noticed it yet.

In spite of the radiant inaccuracies and dreary optimism exuded by our popular paradoxist, we do not think that the Roman Catholic Church, with all its foul and filthy accompaniments, will ever again rule in Europe; its foundations have been sapped beyond restoration by various branches of that poor, dead Atheism, whose death sacred scribblers have been celebrating for so many centuries.

Like many another pious egotist, Mr. Chesterton enjoys the delusion that, since he, G.K.C., has found Jesus, Atheism has ceased to exist; this kind of ducking-ostrichism is, however, common to those afflicted with super-religiosity; and it is with great pleasure that we inform our Christian journalist of the fact.

Our remarks are unquestionably in very bad taste; but they are not in such execrable taste as those of our holy editor patronizing Charles Bradlaugh from his arm-chair, and decrying the hero's life-work in the interests of his mythical Saviour.

Upon reflection, our clerical clownist may realize that it is because of the self-sacrificing heroism of Charles Bradlaugh, and his predecessors and successors in heresy—in the teeth of Christian opposition and terrorism—that we are enabled to answer the Chestertonian jibe at Atheism by fleers at the decaying and dragged deities of Catholicism.

For the first time in the history of theological controversy Freethinkers and Pictists may debate without dire consequences to the former; thanks, as I say, to Charles Bradlaugh and such as he. The ultimate result will not be favourable to any form of superstition.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

## The N.S.S. Annual Dinner.

WHETHER it is a fact that each succeeding Dinner is better than the last, I cannot say, but I am quite sure that the function held last Saturday at the Midland Grand Hotel was a very great success. The company was gay and animated; the ladies, beautifully dressed and thoroughly happy; the speeches and entertainments, of the best; and the dinner itself excellent in every way. While there were notable absentees among old members (like Miss E. M. Vance, who was too ill to come), quite a number of new—and young—faces were seen. And this in particular roused a great deal of the enthusiasm which permeated the whole evening: the young 'uns are not always as fervent in their advocacy as the old 'uns, and it makes the hearts of some of the veterans glow when they see the younger people anxious and ready to be soldiers in the Cause they hold so dearly at heart.

Of the speeches it would be difficult to single any one out as the best. Each reflected the individuality of the speaker, and each admirably summed up the situation. Humour was mostly in evidence—the jokes were not just got up for the occasion, but were nearly always actual experiences.

The President's opening speech, was, as usual, characterized by a thorough grasp of his subject, but

with an impromptu effect. Grave and gay he alternated as his thoughts demanded, but there was no doubt that, taking everything into consideration, he had few qualms about the future of Freethought. He referred first to the absence of Miss Vance and other friends, and then welcomed newcomers, expressing the hope that they would develop into old friends. They were newcomers to a great Movement, and its upholders could not be too numerous or too few. Many of the most striking triumphs of Freethought in the past were won by a determined few in the face of a numerous and well placed army.

Leaving this side of the question, Mr. Cohen then drew attention to the contract Mussolini, who had no religion, has just made with the Pope, who had no politics, and analysed the situation. The Christian Church was ready to play any political move or scheme for its own advancement, and he looked upon this as one of the most significant things of recent years.

The Roman Catholic Church's only obstacle was Freethought, which at no time was so essential to civilization as at present, and which had such powerful weapons in science, ethics and psychology. With these we could march with confidence to the attack. Our guarantee of freedom was to see a public free from prejudice and ready to criticize every established institution in terms of social utility. Finally, we must live and move under the inspiration of hope and reason, while human brotherhood would be realized only if society were governed by justice and decency.

Mr. Cohen concluded his speech amid loud applause.

Mr. Saphin was called upon to propose the toast to the National Secular Society, and he commenced with a reference to the pleasure he felt when he saw so many young people around him. This inspiring sight was most encouraging for the N.S.S., and showed the great progress the Society was making. He gave many examples of the Church's desperate efforts to capture the people, and showed how in every case they were quite wrong, and again and again pointed out how little the average Freethinker had to fear from the clergy. Mr. Saphin knew both sides, as he had been a Baptist minister. The toast was drunk with acclamation.

It was then the turn of Mr. Arthur B. Moss, who must have been very pleased with the fine reception accorded him. He was perhaps, he said, the only man in the room who had sat under three Presidents. First, the illustrious Charles Bradlaugh, one of the greatest personalities of the nineteenth century, a great orator and lawyer, a philosopher, thinker and debater, who had passed, in 1888, the Oaths Bill, allowing everybody who wished to affirm instead of swearing. Mr. Moss was the first Public Officer who had taken advantage of the Bill.

Then there was George William Foote, a man of brilliant power as writer, speaker, debater and wit. Under Charles Bradlaugh, Mr. Moss had been merely a common soldier. But under Foote, a lieutenant and Vice-President of the N.S.S.

Lastly, he had served under Mr. Chapman Cohen—who had proved himself to be a thinker and philosopher in his writings and speeches, and in whose hands the leadership of the Party was secure.

With that fine delivery which was always one of Mr. Moss's qualities, he concluded by pointing out that as Freethought was founded on justice and truth, we should go from victory to victory through the ages.

For the toast of Freethought at Home and Abroad, we had three speakers. Mr. Rosetti gave an excellent resumé of the situation in many

countries, putting the essential points in a few crisp and clear phrases. Everywhere we could see how religion was struggling for its existence. Even in America, the boasted land of Fundamentalism, the anti-evolution laws were only passed in two States, and even there they were almost dead letters. As for England, in spite of all the boosting religion got through the B.B.C., the Press, the gramophone, the Salvation Army stunt, we were making real progress, and could be proud of the way in which we had brought religion down.

Mr. R. B. Kerr followed with a diverting account of his personal experiences in Ireland recently. His conclusions were that while the mass of the people were still struggling on with the Church, the more cultivated Catholics were by no means so enslaved and were indeed making strong efforts against its thralldom. Attacks on Sunday papers—the priests looked upon the *Sunday Express* as Atheistic!—and short skirts were the principal themes of the average sermons, while the introduction of the Evil Literature Bill was causing a tremendous controversy. Mr. Kerr knew few people who loved to engage in discussion more than the Irish, and pointed out that Ireland must eventually come in line with other civilized countries on all questions of Freethought.

The last speaker of the evening, Mr. Hornibrook, had a fund of good stories culled from his own travels and experiences, and they formed a remarkable combination of humour and what may be called "blasphemy." He gave, in addition, some interesting accounts of happenings in New Zealand and elsewhere, and paid tribute to the work of Sir Robert Stout in fighting the clerics. Needless to say, he, as well as the other speakers, received a great ovation.

The musical part of the evening was more than excellent. Mr. Romney, at the piano, was in his happiest mood, Miss Marion Ord sang with great distinction, and Mr. Will Kings gave us three marvellous parodies of Kipling, Shakespeare and Longfellow. Mr. Gordon Freeman introduced a new note with his "Domestic gadgets and novelties"—a side-splitting show, which caused everybody to roar with laughter. Mr. Burch's baritone voice was a joy to lovers of good songs, while the Misses Elsie and Doris Waters repeated last year's success, only more so. Their last song was a perfect gem. The thanks of everyone is owing to Mr. George Royle, who, as in recent years, was responsible for the musical programme.

The singing by all the company present of "Auld Lang Syne" concluded a most brilliant evening, and one which must linger long in our memories.

A word should be said for the organizers, those obscure persons who must work in the background, and to whom credit is as a rule only given when everything is a failure. A Dinner for a large number of people takes some getting up, and there is a tremendous lot of trivial work attached to it, but somebody has to do it. On this occasion everything went off splendidly, and all those responsible deserve a generous meed of praise.

H. CUTNER.

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The causes of good and evil are so various and uncertain, so often entangled with each other, so diversified by various relations, and so much subject to accidents that cannot be foreseen; that he who would fix his condition on incontestable reasons of preference must live and die inquiring and deliberating.—*Johnson*.

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A sound mind in a sound body, is a short but full description of a happy state in this world. He that has these two has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them will be but little the better for anything else.—*John Locke*.

## Breeding True to Type.

THE fair city of Plymouth has always been associated with the followers of the lowly Nazarene. It was from Plymouth that Sir John Hawkins sailed in the good ship "Jesus" to capture his cargo of African negroes, and transport them to Spanish America, where they became the property of other good Christians and were treated in the orthodox Christian way, both in their transportation and on their arrival. That is, they were herded like cattle on the ship, and were beaten and tortured in America, and both are quite orthodox, for we have the authority of the Almighty God of the Christian Bible to say that they can be so treated "for they are his property."

Then from Plymouth sailed the Pilgrim Fathers to found the States where tolerance was unknown and freedom of belief impossible, impregnated with the doctrine of original sin and the evils of pleasure. Fundamentalists, then, every one of them, and the true ancestors of their followers in the Southern States to-day.

A few weeks ago, the Anglican Bishop of Plymouth (we are fortunately blessed with a Roman one as well) made a stir by requesting that the Devonport Board of Guardians removed the children under their charge from his church. It transpired at the Guardians meeting that these poor children had actually been seven weeks without Christian instruction to their great moral disadvantage. It would have been better to place them within a Christian prison, where at least their "religious instincts" would have developed in a suitable environment. The good Bishop, Dr. Masterman, one of the "hintellectuals" of the Church which pays lip service to the Jesus who told his followers to become as little children—and they have been doing their best to follow that teaching ever since, particularly on the mental plane—is a great believer in education, of the Christian kind. He does not believe the Bible from cover to cover, the dare devil, but he is continually bleating for money to restore the Church schools, where little children can be brought up in a Christian atmosphere with Christian geology, Christian mathematics and Christian ethics as their mental food, and where they ought to be taught by that group of Christian teachers whose mentality is of such a high degree that they are members of the "Guild of the Good Shepherd," and are therefore well sheared by the gentlemen in petticoats, who are God's chosen representatives on earth, and a fair representation of the high degree of intelligence of the Christian God generally.

Now we have a real live curate in Plymouth who is certain to finish as another bishop. He answers to the name of Vodden, and his conscience has been stirred by the awful Atheists who are in the neighbourhood. They have been holding meetings, and so far Almighty God has not interfered. The police tried to on one occasion, but without success—thanks to Mr. Chapman Cohen, who was the speaker. But the usual Christian combination of Jesus and the police have so far been ineffective in suppressing these fearful people, so Vodden steps in. Oh, no, not by going on a platform to point out the strength of the Christian case, but by appealing to the prejudice of the public generally to stop the advertisement of the meetings in the publicly owned trams and buses. Some of the conductors follow his Church, and they do not like these advertisements. We have to ride in the buses and do not like the advertisements which are there by the score, advertising Church bazaars and bun feasts, but that's different. He also protests that the Plymouth Co-operative

Society lets its hall for Atheist meetings. This reverend gentleman has never heard of Robert Owen or George Jacob Holyoake, the Freethinkers who did more than any other two men in the development of Co-operation. A reporter on the local paper was sent to interview the local baker who is the Tramways Committee's Chairman. He follows the local Bethel, and he does not like the advertisements either, but "Business is business," and the revenue derived is wanted, whether from Atheist or Christian. It is quite understandable that this gentleman does not like the advertisements. If everybody in Plymouth stopped eating Jesus on Sunday mornings (in the Churches) or on Sunday evenings (in the Chapels) there would be less business for him. Verily, "Business is business." Not that they eat Jesus where Vodden presides. Of course not. He belongs to the Evangelicals, the same branch of the Church as that stalwart Sir William Jix, and they only eat Jesus symbolically. They do not believe in that nightmare of the civilized savage, the Real Presence, nor do they keep Jesus stored up in the Reserved Sacrament, but like children at play they imagine they symbolically eat the dear Lord. He tastes better that way. Not that they are unreasonable. If I were a priest of the Church I would be an evangelical too. They consume the surplus wine, not bottle it. 'Tis true its poor stuff, but the starving clergy cannot afford to be choosers.

After all, isn't it what should be expected? One does not expect figs from thistles, to paraphrase the Lord, nor does one expect tolerance and decency from the Christian clergyman. The adventurers of Elizabeth's time were at least ready to risk their lives; the Pilgrim Fathers did brave the rigours of a pioneer life in a far country; but the Rev. Harry Vodden is simply typical of his class, the most despicable class that our civilization possesses. They murdered when they could, they imprisoned and tortured, but at one time every individual that did his collar up at the back thought himself capable of defending the Holy Trinity from the attacks of the ignorant, benighted Atheist. They have learnt their lesson well. To-day they shelter behind the women's skirts and appeal to popular ignorance, and leave the defending of their livelihood to some working man who has been duped by them from his infancy. They flaunt around as if November 5 was every day of the year, they attend the ladies' sewing classes, they are capable of taking afternoon tea, but they are not capable of making an adequate defence of the most colossal superstition that ever befogged the brain of humanity. Consequently, they are forced to adopt the tactics of the Rev. Harry Vodden of St. Catherine's Church, Plymouth—an example true to type of the results of a Christian environment and saintly practice—but even then they are fighting a losing battle. In the summer, Jesus cannot compete with Devon's beautiful moors, rivers and sea-coast, and in the winter time the rapidly emptying churches are helping to fill the concert halls, for gradually the truth is beginning to permeate one of the most backward areas. H.H.H.

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When men respect human life for the sake of man, tranquility, order, and progress go hand in hand; but those who only respected human life because God had forbidden murder, have set their mark upon Europe in fifteen centuries of blood and fire.—*Professor W. K. Clifford.*

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Doctors of theology deal, or rather they think they deal, with the future, and that is where they have an immensity of advantage. Their patients can never return to tell whether their practice was legitimate or quack.—*Joe Howard.*

Correspondence.

THE TARDY RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to Mr. Kerr's letter in your issue of the 13th inst., in which he refers to the utilitarian theory of ethics, I beg to say that, in my view, vivisection is cruel, immoral, and useless.

Therefore, obviously it does not tend to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Cicero, the great Roman, said, "No cruelty is useful," and this, I think, agrees with the old school of secularists who took utility as their moral guide.

My criterion of moral values is that the end does not justify the means if cruelty is involved.

A. L. BRAINE.

SIR,—With reference to the very interesting correspondence concerning "The Tardy Recognition of the Rights of Animals," may I say that in common with the vast majority of Freethinkers, utility is to me, man's sole moral guide?

Mr. Braine has raised the highly controversial question of vivisection, which formed no part of my article. I would like to intimate, therefore, that a debate will take place at the "Winchester Hotel," Archway Road, Highgate, N., on Wednesday, January 30, at 8 p.m. The debaters will be Mr. G. H. Bowker of the *National Anti-Vivisection Society* and myself, and the subject for discussion, "Is Vivisection Unscientific and Immoral?"

T. F. PALMER.

THE "BON SENS" OF THE CURE MESLIER.

SIR,—It may interest Mr. W. Mann and others to know that the author of the "small anonymous pamphlet," on the Baron D'Holbach was Julian Hibbert (1801-1834), one of the most romantic and delightful figures in the history of Freethought. Atheist, scholar and philanthropist, this forgotten hero is unknown to the present generation of Freethinkers, though a good deal is known about him. He is mentioned with the highest praise—fully deserved—by Holyoake, Wheeler, Mrs. Carlisle-Campbell, and James Watson.

Hibbert's pamphlet is prefixed *in extenso* to Watson's two-volume, duodecimo edition of *The System of Nature* (1834). The fact of his authorship is mentioned by Watson in the book itself, and by Wheeler, on page 171 of his *Dictionary of Freethinkers*.

Isn't it about time that certain of the old Freethought classics were reprinted? Some of them have not been "done" for half a century or more. I would gladly give my aid, such as it is, to a re-printing scheme.

VICTOR B. NEUBERG.

BUDDHA, THE ATHEIST.

SIR,—I'll plead guilty to being prejudiced; we all are, seeing that we are human, and possessed of those desires, the limitation of which is the aim of the Buddhist. And if it be dogmatic to object when the Gospel of Buddha is presented under what I consider a fraudulent label, then dogmatic I'll be. I'll chance being guilty of gross and gratuitous libels.

Mr. Upasaka says that the Buddhist is not required to believe in the gods—belief is evidently an accommodating thing in the East—but, as far as the records go, Buddha not only discussed them, he recognized their existence. His great adherent, the Buddhist King Asoka, habitually referred to himself as "the darling of the gods," as did the contemporary King of Ceylon, another Buddhist. Mrs. Rhys Davids, in her little book on *Buddhism*, says the gods were taken for granted, and Mr. Rhys Davids supports her statement. Why, then, speak of Buddha, the Atheist? There are many terms to describe Gotama, but Atheist is certainly not one of them.

If the Buddha elevated women, pointing out that Mohammedan and Hindu degraded them won't add or take away from his achievement. Gotama lifted women up in the same way that Jesus did. He put before men the idea of celibacy, and the outcome of that is written across both Buddhist and Christian history in terms of degradation. The monastic ideal is, and has always been, in effect, a denial of life, and detrimental to womanhood.

Mr. Upasaka's comprehensive knowledge of Hindu religion and philosophy enables him to say definitely that "Buddhism" did not exist before Buddha. The tradition has it that Gotama taught that he was only one of a long line of Buddhas, all teaching the same system. The *Buddhavasanas*, or *History of the Buddhas* gives details of the lives of the twenty-four Buddhas that had preceded him. Apart from the mythological side of the matter, many Oriental scholars have admitted, in part, what Mr. Upasaka has definitely denied. Professor Rhys Davids, enumerating the long list of advantages claimed by the Buddha in one of the Dialogues for the life of a recluse, concedes that "it is perfectly true that of these thirteen consecutive propositions, it is only the last of them which is exclusively Buddhistic." A good half of the *Freethinker* could be filled with evidence of a like nature.

That which, in Mr. Upasaka's opinion, is a gross and gratuitous libel was simply a comparison of symbols. We know what Atheism means; it cannot be applied to Gotama, who acknowledged the gods; or to a system, three parts of which is superstition. On the other hand, there is hardly a book of travel in Buddhistic lands that does not mention dirty and verminous monks. They were a common phenomenon, everywhere Buddha ordained that they should beg for a living—one of the points of the eightfold faith was "Right means of Livelihood"—and I repeat that a monk, with the usual accompaniment, is more in harmony with Buddhism than Atheism.

H. B. DODDS.

"A HISTORY OF FREETHOUGHT."

SIR,—As an old Freethinker, attracted to the National Secular Society nearly forty years ago, I am sorry to see that Mr. Foote's name is not included among those whose portraits are appearing in *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*. Such a history would be incomplete if it did not include a full account of the trial and imprisonment of our late leader, also a history of the National Secular Society.

I should have preferred to see Bradlaugh's portrait in the first advertisement appearing of Mr. Robertson's book. Bradlaugh did more, on the public platform, to promote freedom of thought than any of the other eminent persons referred to, and he was, as Mr. Robertson says elsewhere, "one of the greatest orators of his age." If there were any special reason for not giving Bradlaugh the premier position, then Thomas Paine might have been chosen, as he was one of the greatest *writers* who promoted Freethought in the nineteenth century.

H. R. CLIFTON.

[We do not know whether a portrait of Mr. Foote will appear in Mr. Robertson's *History of Freethought*, but we believe an account will be given of the Coleridge trial, which was certainly one of the most important in the history of Freethought, as Foote's Defence was one of the best ever made by a man charged with blasphemy. We, of course, quite agree as to the importance of the names of Foote and Bradlaugh in the history of Freethought. But I do not think we ought to assume, before seeing the completed work, that justice will not be done to both. The work will be reviewed in these columns when it is completed.—EDITOR.]

WHY I AM NOT AN ATHEIST.

SIR,—I will concede a point in the first paragraph: my objections to Atheism do not appeal to reason. Further, I will admit, Atheism does appeal to reason. Hard, cold, unrelenting reason. And it is just this frightful frigidity of the Atheistic outlook that prevents so many waverers from bursting out: "To His own Hell with God!"

Atheism, I readily admit, does appeal to reason. For all that it can never prevail against Religion because Religion appeals to the warmth of human emotions, and however much they may exasperate the cold intellectualism of the Atheist, emotions will always go further than the most profound logic.

Men will always prefer the phantasy of a Barrie to the paralysing mathematics of an Einstein.

Regrettable, perhaps, but true. The Atheist may derive what chilly comfort he can from the fact of his intellectual superiority. He may be on the side of Truth, but he will ever be a voice crying in the wilderness.

Religion is not to be side tracked. It is instilled in the hearts of men. It is inescapable. It is ineradicable. It will last as long as man lasts. While man is capable of kissing a woman or writing a poem so he will have his God.

Cynical laughs from the Atheist! "Look at your churches!" his age-old voice goes up. "The empty pews . . . the indifference . . . the disregard . . ."

And so on.

Now when the Atheist points these things out as conclusive proof that religion is moribund, I feel genuinely sorry for him. Where has his intellectual and intelligent discrimination wandered? These things no more prove that religion is dying than the poor show of a British heavyweight boxer would prove that sport is dying. When the B.B.C. switch over from Beethoven to dance music, one can almost hear the sigh of relief that goes up from countless listeners-in. Is then good music dead or dying?

Yet this is precisely the attitude the Atheist takes towards religion. He is confusing one particular religion with the whole idea of religion. Christianity may be dying but Christianity is not religion. Individual cults and creeds, beliefs and faiths, sects and denominations always have been flourishing and wilting, but religion, the vast incorporate idea which is the nucleus and yet the embodiment of all these gropings—they are nothing more—of all men from the dark ages to the present, presumably enlightened one—this will never die.

Pray do not be so foolish as to imagine that the death of Christianity would entail the death of religion. Literature did not die with Shakespeare.

The desire to exalt and to be exalted, to find the land where the rainbow ends—this inexplicable thing that for lack of a better word I call religion is the root of all faiths. It is a silent force unrecognized and unpreached. Love or desire to join the sexes. This other emotion, desire, call it what you will, has given man his religions and will go on giving man his religions.

I pride myself upon a certain amount of mental alertness. Therefore I will bring no blank finality into my life by becoming an Atheist. The Atheist sees nothing before his stern eyes except a colourless void—vapid, dull, uninteresting. I prefer the land of half-lights and mauve shadows. Dreamy delusions and unseen song. Mirages may be an optical illusion, but they sometimes inspire a ray of hope even though there be disillusion at the end.

But as to the disillusion—only the Atheist can be sure of that.

A. J. LA BERN.

### Society News.

#### NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

It was a matter of great regret that there were not many more present to hear Mr. W. R. Lester's interesting lecture last Sunday. Mr. Lester is a member of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values, and the lecture followed on the lines advocated by Henry George. There was a brisk and lively discussion, which carried us well beyond the usual time limit. To-day, Mrs. Clinton Chance addresses us for the first time, and we hope our North London friends will help to give her a good and appreciative audience. The title of her lecture, "That the Conventional Standards of Sex-Morality are Contemptible," should evoke plenty of discussion.—K.B.K.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8) : 11.15, Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman—"The Bill for Establishing Courts of Domestic Relations (Private Family Courts). Presented to Parliament by Mr. H. Snell, M.P."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.1) : 7.30, Mrs. Clinton F. Chance—"That the Conventional Standards of Sex-Morality are Contemptible."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station) : 7.15, Mr. David Capper—"Is the Secular Movement a Failure?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.) : Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m. John Katz, B.A.—"What is the Religion of Dean Inge?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2) : 11.0, Dr. Bernard Hollander—"The Psychology of Matrimony."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1), 11.0, Mr. Bonar Thompson—"The Well of Loneliness."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1) : 7.30, Mr. A. H. Hyatt—"The Pickwick Trial and Other Dickens' Recitations."

#### OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, Walham Green) : Every Saturday at 8 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Bryant, Math'e and others.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12 noon, Mr. James Hart. 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden. Every Friday at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* is on sale outside the Park at all our meetings.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith) : 3.0, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Still's Restaurant, Bristol Street, opposite Council Schools) : 7.0, Mr. H. F. Wilkins—A Paper.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—7.15, Mr. W. Raine : "Is Religion Instructive?" Chairman : Mr. F. Brown.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street) : 11.30 and 6.30, Mr. F. Mann. Subjects : "Religion—the Enemy," and "Religion and Life."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mr. F. Toone—"The Artist-Dramatist."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street) : 7.15, Mr. Sidney Wollan—"Woman and the Bible." Admission free. Questions and Discussion.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers Hall, 120 Rusholme Road) : 3.0 and 6.30, Dr. C. H. Ross Carmichael (Liverpool). Subjects : "Life and Mind," and "The Tree of Knowledge."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street) : 3.0, Members' Meeting.

#### OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Meetings held in the Bull Ring on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 7 p.m.

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