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Views and Opinions.

The Fight for the Child.

The fight for the child is coeval with human society. It antedates recorded history, and it will continue as long as the human race. Long before the art of writing is in use among tribes it is part of the special duty of certain members, as well as of parents, to instruct the younger generation in tribal lore and custom. A great deal of this early teaching is magical or religious in character, but the fundamental fact is there. The child must be brought up on the lines of tribal custom if the tribe is to endure.* The religious quality of the education given is partly responsible for the static condition of most early communities. Fear of exciting the anger of the gods, and the reaction of that anger on the welfare of the tribe, makes the broaching of a new idea a potential danger. Education in primitive life consists in the child being taught to do what the parents have done. Greater skill in performance may be encouraged, but innovation is feared with all the timidity displayed by a modern Roman Catholic.

For a very long time this education, even when it loses part of its magical character, is performed, substantially, by the community as a whole. The whole force of the common life is with it, and there is little or nothing to disturb its influence. Even within the last couple of centuries, in spite of the development of the secular side of education, there was little direct teaching to contest the claims of religion. Religion was enforced by the social environment, and there was little interest taken by the priestly orders—Catholic or Protestant—in education as such. Religion still remained an almost unquestioned influence in life. It was not a matter of children growing up without religion, still less of their growing up opposed to religion. It was at most a question of what sort of a religion would they have. It was this essentially

economic question that led to the competition of the Church of England with Nonconformists in the matter of education in the early half of the nineteenth century, and it is the essential issue between the sects to-day. It is a fight for the control of the child in the interests of religious corporations. In this way we have a gradual change from the control of the child in what was believed to be the interests of the tribe, to a contest for the child in the interests of this or that religious body. And taking the struggle as a whole, and grouping the religious bodies as one, it is a fight between the secular forces of life and religious beliefs.

* * *

The Act of 1870.

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 contained two provisions, one of which was wholly bad, the other, one that has never been used by Freethinkers as it should have been. The first was the famous Compromise, which was an arrangement between Christians and wholly unjust to everyone else. It allowed religion to be taught in the schools, but only such as Christians generally could agree on. In effect this meant placing the parson in the school, making hypocrites of teachers, and obstructing educational progress generally. The other provision was that anyone who did not wish his children to be taught religion might withdraw them on notifying the head teacher to that effect. If that had been acted on generally the number of children withdrawn would have been large enough to have been a constant protest against religion in the schools, and by this time might have led to a completely secular system of education. But boldness where the rejection of religion is concerned has never been a marked characteristic of the British public, and only a very small percentage of Freethinkers have ever availed themselves of this provision. Only a small percentage of the children of non-Christians—excluding Jews—are withdrawn to-day.

Various reasons, or excuses, are given for not taking advantage of the Conscience Clause, the most general being that children are likely to undergo persecution if they are known to be without the religious instruction that other children are receiving. Other reasons are that Freethinkers, if they do not permit their children to be taught about Christianity, are behaving in as bigoted a manner as are Christians, that whatever harm is done at school can be undone by the parents at home, or that it is really well that children should be taught religion at school, as were the parents, so that when they grow up and reject it they will have a better understanding of what it is they have rejected. Finally, to ban a teaching is to make that teaching more attractive than it would otherwise be. Far better to let the child have the religious instruction and trust to home influences to supply the corrective.

* A very good outline of this subject may be found in *The Child in Primitive Society*, by N. Miller. (1928.) 12s. 6d.

The Question of the Child.

I will take these justifications in their order. First, persecution. Once upon a time there might have been considerable truth in this over a wide area of the country. To-day there are comparatively few areas to which this statement applies. After making enquiries wherever children are withdrawn from religious instruction I do not find in many cases that such persecution exists, and often where it is said to exist, it consists in no more than the wonder of the other children, a wonder to which they soon get accustomed, as in the case of Jewish children. In any case I am not sure that security from the petty annoyance that may exist in making a child "singular" among its playmates is not more than compensated by teaching a child, by sheer force of example, that it has a right to mental difference and independence. Sooner or later, unless the boy and the girl blossoms into the conventional type of hypocrite, he or she must awaken to the fact that some stand for mental independence has to be made, and it will be the better prepared for that if it makes an acquaintance with one of the permanent facts of life as soon as possible. And it is peculiar that while a certain amount of "hardening" is found absolutely necessary in the case of physical development, the need for it in mental development is not generally recognized.

Perhaps I ought to say not practised, rather than not recognized, or to be still more exact, not recognized in the case of religion, because the process of mental "hardening" is recognized in other directions. It is this that makes me so often question whether the parent is protecting the child in not withdrawing it from religious instruction, or whether the child is protecting the parent. For, as a matter of fact I find that those who do not withdraw their children are not in a hurry to let the world and their neighbours know that they are destitute of religion. It is true they do not attend Church, and they may express a certain discreet liberalism in religion, but these things are to-day not unusual enough to expose one to social boycott or to ruin one's social standing. For a man to refuse to have his child taught religion in a school is to nail his colours to the mast, so far as his neighbours are concerned. The child, I fancy, is too often a convenient method of hiding from the public the real opinion of the parent.

* * *

A Divided Household.

Take the other plea. No one can seriously maintain that preventing a child having religious instruction in a school is equal to placing a ban on the child knowing anything about religion. It is preventing a teacher forcing upon a child as unquestionable truth a one-sided view of religion and in the interests of a number of religious organizations, with the additional objection that the teaching of religion to children too often involves a distorted view of history and sociology. Personally, I should prefer to leave the child alone so far as religion is concerned. If this cannot be done, either because of the child's own questioning, or because of other influences, then the rule should be to impart the information so as to produce the minimum amount of bias. As to the benefit of believing in religion before giving it up, that is purely mythical. The results are in all cases the reverse of beneficial. Most one-time fervent believers in religion bear witness to the pain they have endured in getting rid of it, and as a psychological fact it may be questioned whether anyone who has ever believed in a religion such as Christianity ever gets quite free from its distorting influence.

As to home being able to destroy the influence of the religious teaching received in the school. In a very great many instances I know that the school-

given religion is largely counteracted. Whether it is completely counteracted is another question. But if it were, it is certain that it is not educationally beneficial that the influence of parents and teacher should be thus deliberately set in antagonism. Whatever may be the feelings of the child who finds its parents permitting it to be taught something which they say is not true, we may depend that the teacher's influence over the child will be very much weakened by finding that something which it is taught as true and valuable is untrue and ridiculous. School and home, parent and teacher should supplement not contradict each other. In such conditions the child will grow up with contempt for one or the other at the worst, and with, at best, a modified respect for both.

* * *

A Plea for Action.

I have written the above in response to a letter from a listener to a recent lecture of mine; and I hope I have made the position quite plain. There may be all sorts of reasons given why a parent does not withdraw his child from religious instruction, but I think that nowadays, with a few exceptions, the real cause is either a mistaken sense of kindness to the child, or a disinclination on the part of the parent to publish his own rejection of religion—mainly the latter. The first is, I think a mistaken kindness. The only form of mental discipline that is of lasting value is to teach a child to take the responsibilities of its own actions and of its own decisions, so far as it is capable of bearing them, and as early as possible. Strength of character is not a cloistered virtue growing apart from the world, but something that grows from strength to strength in its conflict with the world. And the function of the parent here is to see, so far as he can control events, that the conflict is never so great as completely to crush resistance. A child can never be too young to get the first simple lessons in self-respect; and if self-respect is not born of intellectual integrity, where else shall we look for its beginning?

And we adult Freethinkers have the fact before us that too often we have to fight the same fight over again with each new generation. Too often we find the children of Freethinkers less anxious concerning the value of their opinions than were their parents. Of course much of this is due to the sheer pressure of the general environment, but much is also due to the causes I have outlined. If religion is all that we Freethinkers believe it is, if it is something that works harm on whatever is brought under its influences, if it injures somewhat the best type of character and sanctifies the bad qualities of the worst, then, surely to protect the child against its influence is the first of our duties. The fight for the child is ultimately a fight for the direction of civilization.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

FANATICISM.

Fanaticism's flame arises,
Like a volcano's, by surprises,
Foretells its coming by a grumbling,
Or inward motion stir or rumbling,
Breaks out at length and roars hubbubish,
Throwing up endless loads of rubbish,
With gleams that only show the gloom,
And heat which serves but to consume;
And when its baleful sulphurous light
Has shed around a withering blight,
The fierce, but evanescent flashes
Subside again in smoke and ashes.

Horace Smith.

Free Will, Free-will and Freewill.

In an article entitled "Miracles and Miracles" (*Freethinker*, January 15, 1933), I tried to show that it is impossible to answer the question whether *miracles* can or cannot occur unless the parties to a discussion of this subject are agreed as to what they mean by the word *miracle*. I pointed out that it was as though we were to enquire "whether or no *soles* have fins" without first deciding whether we meant fish or the flats of our feet.

This example of a word which has two distinct meanings when written, and three when spoken (*soul* being the third), is well enough for the purposes of rough illustration. But many words in our language have several meanings which are not so obviously distinct; and although the context of other words often gives a clue to the particular meaning intended, it does not always do so. *Miracle* is one such word; *freewill* is another. In the article before-mentioned I discussed the two most commonly used meanings of the former word; in this article I purpose dealing with three aspects of the latter. By isolating and defining meanings in this way, the cause of much misunderstanding and confused reasoning is laid bare; while the problems which arise in connexion with the words themselves are automatically simplified. Either we agree that one of the meanings is not what we intended to discuss; or we apply our enquiry to each meaning in turn without confusing ourselves with any other. The point to note is that confusion can only arise when there is no adherence to an agreed definition, or when an agreed definition is itself ambiguous and capable of several interpretations which are not equivalent in fact.

Now while the first essential to a solution is agreement as to definitions, it does not follow that the definitions agreed to are necessarily unambiguous. The use of alternative definitions which are just as vague as the term they purport to define is a favourite ruse of philosophers, metaphysicians, the clergy and religious persons in general. Such people are either ignorant of the functions and limitations of language, and so cannot reason logically; or else they are well aware of the uses of equivocation, and make use of this weapon to confound their less alert opponents or to convince an uninstructed public. This is well illustrated by the paradoxes of Mr. Chesterton, as also by the terminology of Mr. Arnold Lunn. To argue, for instance, that a man cannot logically call himself a Freethinker unless he believes in freewill, is as childish as to assert that a man cannot logically call himself a Catholic because no religion in the world is catholic.

But those persons who are serious in their endeavours to arrive at the truth should eschew such childish arguments as these. The words *Catholic* and *Freethinker* have their well-known and unambiguous meanings. And to quibble about the logicity of those who use them, on the grounds that these words can be interpreted in another sense, is a form of dialectics which I regard as worse than a waste of time. So with the question of *freewill*, I am not concerned with the logicity of such persons as claim to possess it—whatever it may be; I am mainly interested to discover first what meaning or meanings the term can have in ordinary discourse, and secondly whether in any of its meanings it is consistent or inconsistent with facts to assert that man can have freewill.

By way of answering the first question, let me quote Mr. Chapman Cohen's own words. In the *Freethinker*

for October 20, 1929, he wrote: "To say that I choose, and to say that my choice selects one course out of several, is to say the same thing twice over. Freedom of choice is a fact, and it exists just so long as I am able to act in the direction my choice indicates. If I prefer a banana to an apple, and I am permitted to take one or the other, then my choice is free . . . But if I am forced to accept an apple while preferring a banana, then my choice is not free . . . The question at issue is the determination of choice . . . which is a question of scientific fact; it is determined by a multitude of circumstances . . . But freedom of choice is a question of social freedom. It is whether I am permitted to indulge my taste in this or that direction. It says nothing whatever as to how this particular choice comes into existence."

It is evident from the foregoing that Mr. Cohen is referring to three different aspects of what, in common usage, is loosely lumped into the one term *freewill*. First there are the external conditions which do or do not permit a man to act according to his will. Second, there is that function of the mind which, when alternatives present themselves, enables a man to decide upon one of them. And third, there are the influences, internal and external, which may or may not affect the decision arrived at.

The reader who refers to the title of this article will see that there are three ways of writing *freewill*. This visual method of distinction is often adopted by casuists in order to emphasize or conceal a difference of meaning which is not apparent when words are spoken. It is the method frequently employed to confuse the issues between the two meanings of the term *Freethinker*, written as one word, and *free thinker*, written as two (with or without hyphen). Were I of such a mind, it would be quite simple to write a thoroughly confusing article on *freewill* by adopting this method of concealment and emphasis. And I could arrive at almost any preconceived conclusion thereby with an outward semblance of logicity. But since my purpose is not to confuse, but to clarify, I shall avoid such tactics and shall be careful to make my meaning clear by discussing and adhering to one aspect of the term *freewill* at a time.

It will not be necessary, I imagine, to labour that aspect which refers to the external conditions influencing a man's ability to act according to his will or choice. A man who is forcibly fed is clearly unable to act as his will indicates. A man who stands in front of a twenty-foot high wall and says: "I wish to jump over it," is obviously prevented by the laws of nature. So if the question is asked: "Does man possess freewill (in this sense)?" the correct answer would be "Sometimes yes, and sometimes no." So much for the meaning of *freewill* implying the ability to act according to one's will.

We turn next to the second aspect of this word: that function of the mind which enables a man to decide which alternative he prefers. Note that the whole of our conscious lives involves the use of this function. For whatever we do or think necessitates either action or inaction, either thought in one direction or another. The question we have to answer here is whether a man is always in a position to exercise his will freely, whether he acts up to it or not. My use of the phrase "conscious lives," a few sentences back should have prepared the reader for one answer. Can it be said that a man has freewill when he is unconscious or asleep? Definitely no. The evidence shows that, under these circumstances, he has no will at all, much less freewill. Thus, again, the answer to the question, "Does man possess freewill

(in this second sense)?" must be "Sometimes yes, and sometimes no."

Lastly we come to consider the third aspect: those influences which may or may not bear upon any decision which the will makes. Note particularly that this *freewill* which people talk about so glibly, and which they so confidently declare man to be possessed of, has been shown to be possible only under certain limited conditions of existence. We will suppose, however, that people are always consistent in their use of the term and only use it in reference to a man who is sane, conscious and not interfered with by external conditions. Within these limits, can it be said that a man's thought, and therefore his will, is always in a condition of being free in the sense of being unaffected by any influences at all?

To begin with we are brought up short with the fact that no hard and fast lines exist between sanity and insanity, consciousness and unconsciousness, external and internal influences. At what precise point, if any, can it be said that freewill begins or ceases to exist? When a man says: "I w-w-wish I d-d-didn't st-t-tutter," are we to assume that he is mad or lying? What sort of freewill is it that, when no external compulsion exists, when consciousness and sanity are admitted, declares a preference for one course of action and yet adopts a precisely opposite course? Even if we grant that the mere expression of his wish is proof of his freedom of will, are we not forced to the conclusion that the contradiction between the wish and the expression of it points to an illusion somewhere? And is not the illusion precisely this: that because we can think in one way or another, we imagine that the particular way we have thought is free from any influences whatever.

To prove that any kind of will might be free from any kind of influence, we would have to prove the existence of thought apart from a body to do the thinking. But this is impossible. For, without a body, no thought can even be expressed. And without an expression of thought or will, how can we begin to investigate either? It follows, therefore, that every kind of will which is capable of investigation is the result of some body which has expressed it. In other words, every kind of will that can come under observation is partly (at least) the result of, and therefore influenced by, the body which expresses it. And this word "partly" is as effective a disproof of freedom from all influences as would be the word "wholly." To what degree or in what manner the will is influenced by the body is another question. Suffice it to note that a thought or will entirely free from all influences is an impossible conception, and therefore no thought or will which can be discussed is *freewill* in this last sense.

Lord Dawson declared last July that "it is a fundamental error of thought to believe that disturbances of your mind are under your control and are therefore your fault, whereas disturbances of your body are not under your control, and are therefore your misfortune." This has been the commonplace opinion amongst all Determinists and is the only one that fits the facts. For the purposes of ordinary discussion we admit the use of the term *freewill* as applicable to certain limited conditions of man. But in the sense that any will is possible which is free from the influence of prior and simultaneous determining factors, we declare that there is no jot of evidence to support such a view.

Furthermore, all the evidence hitherto available negates it. This is, of course, the humane view, and one that applies with equal force to every activity of the mind, including "disturbances." But the religious ideas of "responsibility," "innate sinfulness," and "punishment" are tough prejudices to

overcome. For it is these ideas which vitiate most discussions of *freewill*, and which provide religious persons with convenient excuses for the exercise of their sadistic and revengeful propensities, and which back up the mighty conceit they have of man's (and therefore their own) powers.

C. S. FRASER.

Caste and Christianity.

"Understand it, you at least
Who toil all day and writhe and groan all night
With roots of luxury, a cancer struck
In every muscle; out of you it is
Cathedrals rise and heaven blossoms fair."

John Davidson.

It is customary to regard this country as a Democratic one. There is a snag in the statement, however, for Democracy is tempered by the tyranny of the Mandarins of Whitehall. Politically, Britishers have erected a facade of Democracy, behind which rests a great deal of lumber from the Middle Ages which would be better swept away. Socially, this country is still largely Feudal, as may be seen by the first and second classes of our railways, the three classes of our ocean-liners, and the kow-tow still in use between employers and employees. The World War gave a severe jolt to all these conventions, but it has by no means made an end of them.

Ancestor worship, an Oriental weakness, is not unknown in this country. Veneration for age is applied not only to mouldy and crumbling ruins, but to moss-grown statesmen, judges, bishops, social leaders, and business men. Archbishops and archdeacons still ride on spavined camels where youth should be at the wheel of six-cylinder cars.

Indeed, the State Church and its 16,000 clergy are the principal offenders. They keep alive the worst traditions of Feudalism, and, by virtue of Government support, impose their ridiculous Medievalism upon the nation. Few people realize it, but the ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except where they conflict with the law of the land. The Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy. The first dozen of these canons are aimed at Nonconformists, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of vertebrate Christianity. If you deny that King George is the head of this particular Church of Christ you are cursed. If you deny that this Established Church teaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, you are cursed. If you say that the Book of Common Prayer is out of harmony with the Christian Bible you are cursed. More modern legislation overrides some of these canons. Everybody who refused to attend his parish church on Sundays used to be cursed, and his name read out before the congregations, if time permitted.

The Anglican Church divides mankind into saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers, sheep and goats. Even in their own ranks there are reverends and right-reverends and the lordship of the bishops. It is a grievous and bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people, should be taught such nonsense in language which leads them to believe it, and is artfully calculated to that end. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy.

No one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his own civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest. Parsons claim to be very sacrosanct persons, a sacred caste apart from their fellows. Unless a man accepts

them and their dogmas he must perish everlastingly. That is State Church teaching, and for its propaganda farmers pay tithes, and royalties are exacted from collieries. Church teaching sets citizen against citizen. What has it to do with Democracy?

The most salutary thing that could happen in politics would be the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church. It is no longer the Church of the nation, but of a minority, and a dwindling one at that. Unfortunately, the State connection gives it a strong position. It can hold the balance of power in education and politics. This anachronism is a great vested interest, and so long as millions of money are disbursed annually in preaching its abracadabra, so long will men sell themselves for an easy and comfortable living. This Church's Articles are out of date, its services are prehistoric, and its ministers are as hopeless as the dresses they pontificate in. The marriage service denies the equality of the sexes; and the burial service is almost unbearable to people who take the words seriously.

The clergy do their utmost to see that we take our pleasures sadly. On the weekly holiday they seek to force men and women into their churches. Owing to their dog-in-the-manger attitude, the poor Englishman is like a bird in a cage on Sundays. He is all dressed up, and nowhere to go. From Moscow to Madrid men and women can dance or sing, laugh or shout, attend operas or theatres, enjoy themselves as they please. Here in this country, if a man refuses to attend church and sing "Hallelujah," he can walk the streets or get drunk.

In effect, the Englishman is told when to laugh. He may do so all the week whilst he is hard at work, or when he is tired after work. But he must stop at ten o'clock at night. Stiggins tells us very loudly that we are all steeped in sin, and we are taught to respect him. But Stiggins himself, be it noted, has six days a week in which to amuse himself, so it is no hardship for him to behave like an undertaker on Sundays.

The Sunday Observance Acts by which our weekly holiday is "cribbed, cabin'd, and confin'd," are mainly the work of the bishops of this Church of England. They consist of two Acts of Charles the First, one of Charles the Second, and one of George the Third. There are also two modifying Acts of Queen Victoria, and the new Act of last year. Outside London, small tradesmen are constantly being fined for carrying on worldly labour on the Lord's Day. The Act of George III. makes the place where debates, or entertainments, or amusements are carried on "a disorderly house." It was a Bishop of London, Dr. Porteous, who drafted this precious statute. Someday a Labour Member of Parliament might make a reputation by devoting his attention to the drafting of a Sunday Observance (Amendment) Act. There is urgent need of it if the happiness of a nation is worth the serious attention of statesmen.

MIMNERMUS.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came slowly through the desert. From the right
A shape came slowly with a ruddy light,
A woman with a red lamp in her hand,
Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;
O desolation moving with such grace!
O anguish with such beauty in thy face!
I fell as on my bier,
Hope travailed with such a fear.

James Thomson (B.V.)

Ivan the Terrible.

THE recently published biography of *Ivan the Terrible* (Benn. 18s.) by Stephen Graham, the well-known writer on Russian subjects, is the first full-dress life of Ivan written in English. This is not surprising. The surprising thing is that any one could be found to tackle a subject steeped in such unnatural and hideous horrors, calculated to repel any but those with the strongest nerves and stomachs. The details given in the present volume are diabolical enough; but Mr. Graham does not profess to give the worst, and in fact, they are unprintable.

Unwilling to believe that anyone in his senses could be so monstrously and inhumanly cruel, says Mr. Graham; many will be apt to dismiss him as a madman. But actually, he never lost his reason: "He murdered people in anger, but he murdered more in an icy coldness of disposition. He seldom lost his head, but remained coolly rational and sometimes witty in the midst of his barbarities." (p. vi.) As when one of his victims hid himself in a monastery: "He is seeking God," said Ivan. "Let us help him to get to heaven more quickly," and he had him blown up in a cask of gunpowder.

Ivan enrolled a bodyguard of a thousand—it soon grew to six thousand—composed of the sons of the gentry, which he named the *Opritchina*. For preference, the wilder and younger of the children of the Boyars were chosen, and, "like a depraved Jesuitry," says Mr. Graham, they were "guaranteed in advance by the Church of God's pardon for all crimes committed in the Tsar's name." (p. 180.) For Ivan was equally distinguished for his piety and his cruelty. The great Cathedral of Vasily Blazhenny, in the Red Square at Moscow—an architectural wonder of the ages—was built by Ivan's orders "in remembrance of God's mercy at Kazan," a city of the Tartars, taken, with great slaughter by Ivan in 1552. It expresses, says Mr. Graham "the fantasy of Ivan, the first to take the title of Tsar and at the same time one of the most extraordinary religiosity." (p. 99.) And further, "In his religious exercises the Tsar showed the piety of an Edward the Confessor." (p. 145.) When he assumed the Tsardom "In a mistaken way he felt himself nearer to God. He was God's chosen vessel." (p. 49.)

In May, 1547, shortly after Ivan had been crowned, a deputation of seventy burghers from the City of Psokf presented a petition to Ivan. Instead of listening to them, says Mr. Graham, "the Tsar had them bound. That he made mock of them is too light a phrase. He poured hot spirits on their heads and went about with a taper, setting fire to their beards and their hair." He ordered them to be stripped naked and laid in rows on the ground, and was thinking out some frightful doom for them, when messengers rushed in with the news that Moscow was on fire and that the flames had swept across the Kremlin. Ivan forgot his victims and rode off to the scene.

On July 25, 1570, Ivan had a great day at Moscow, says Mr. Graham:—

Cruelty had fed on itself and developed a monstrous growth. In the Tsar's preoccupation there was no speck of human sympathy or mercy. In the various torture chambers and dungeons the three hundred were being twisted and lacerated and burned and mutilated, but kept alive. In the square among the booths of the Kitai-Gorod many infernal contrivances were put up. An enormous cauldron of water was suspended over a stack of faggots, huge frying pans, tight moving ropes for fraying bodies asunder, pens with angry bears, gallows. (pp. 216-217.)

The three hundred crippled prisoners were led out, barely able to walk. The chief prisoner, Prince Viskovaty, was hung head downward and sliced to death. "The orgy of torment and execution lasted four hours. The Tsar accompanied by his admiring son had a great day. He dispatched one of the prisoners with his steel-pointed staff." This staff, which Ivan always carried with him, was four feet long and ended with a steel spear-point, with which Ivan would attack anyone who displeased him, often killing them outright. After the orgy of torture came the sexual orgy. The wives of the victims, now widows, were visited, and Mr. Graham tells us: "Rape is a euphemism for what was done to many women. As a fitting end to the sexual debauch some eighty widows were drowned in the Moskva River. But whatever we may write of all this it should be remembered that the actual happenings were much worse." (p. 219.) And altogether unprintable.

On the strength of a cock-and-bull story and a forged letter, a similar orgy was held at Novgorod. So that none should escape from this battue, Ivan built a timber barricade round the doomed city. The mass tortures and executions in this organized massacre lasted five weeks! And it has been computed that 60,000 perished.

We have by no means exhausted the horrors contained in this book; several individual cases are worse than any we have given; but we imagine that we have given enough, and more than enough, to satisfy our readers. Neither have we given them with any desire to make our readers flesh creep. I detest cruelty, and regard it as by far the worst of all human vices. But the case of Ivan must give rise, in the mind of any thoughtful reader, to several problems; some of which Mr. Graham himself essays to answer.

No one who has read any of Mr. Stephen Graham's previous books, notably, *With Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* or *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary*; can doubt that Mr. Graham is a very sincere and earnest Christian himself, and therefore cannot be suspected of exaggerating the extent of Ivan's religious belief; how then does he reconcile it with his cruelty? As follows: "Ivan feared God more than man. How, then, if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, was he so strikingly unwise? The answer is that he had a superstitious, but not an enlightened fear of God. He was no cynic. His faith was blind." (p. 56.) No Christian would accept this excuse as an apology for the cruelty of a ruler of any other religion, either Mohammedan, Indian, or Chinese. He would say that the cruelty arose from false religious ideas.

Another excuse for Ivan is more valid, but it is a condemnation of Christianity itself, although Mr. Graham does not seem to recognize it as such. He says:—

But the age was itself cruel. It was the age of Catherine de Medici and the massacre of St. Bartholomew; the age of the Duke of Alva and his barbarities in the Low Countries; the age at first of Henry VIII. and later of Queen Mary's reign when hundreds were burned at the stake for their religion belong to that time. One reads of seventy-three Protestants of Colchester dragged through the streets of London tied to a single rope. That is quite in the spirit of Ivan's doings. In Sweden, France, and Spain, not to mention other countries, deeds of fantastic cruelty were done, though in truth, the narration of them would pale beside the life of Ivan the Terrible. (p. vi.)

Where, then, were the true Christians at this time, without superstition? Was the godly Latimer, so bepraised by Protestants, superstitious when he was

"preaching an eloquent sermon at the King's slowly roasting to death of Friar Forrest."¹ Fifteen hundred years after the advent of Christ, who, we are told, came to save the world, we find all the Christian nations steeped in cruelty, and thought little of it. As Mr. Belloc quite truly observes concerning the burnings and executions of Queen Mary:—

It is not historically true to say that this effort at repressing the religious and political revolt changed the mind of England through pity for the victims. There is no evidence of strong or universal feeling of that kind nor is it in the nature of things that there should have been such a feeling, for though the persecution was exceptional in degree, it was not exceptional in kind. Men were quite used to the idea and spectacle of burning and remained used to it for a good two hundred years.²

The fact is, the religion made men cruel. The heretic was regarded as an enemy of God, a destroyer of souls, for whom no punishment was too cruel. It was not until the bonds of religion had been loosened that people could begin to see the wickedness of it. That eminent modern Christian, Albert Schweitzer in his new book, *My Life and Thought* says: "Eighteen hundred years had passed before Voltaire and his like came to convince Christians of the hatefulness of cruelty and persecution."³ That is what the Good tidings of great Joy resulted in. Worse than anything known to Paganism.

W. MANN.

¹ Hilaire Belloc: *A History of England*. Vol. IV., p. 156.

² *Ibid.* Vol. IV., p. 30.

³ Basil de Selincourt: *The Observer*, February 26.

Acid Drops.

Canon Quick has recently been responsible for a "mission" at St. Paul's for "intellectuals," and judging from reports it certainly would be difficult to find anything "intellectual" either in the pulpit or among the audience. "We live," said the Canon, "in a world that is totally different from the world of our Lord's time." With this profound piece of philosophy the *Church Times* is in complete disagreement and points out that "the Jew riding on a camel from Jerusalem to Jericho," was affected by the same passions, temptations, hopes, fears and aspirations as "the Gentile motoring from London to Brighton in an Austin Seven." Yet the whole of Christian history shows that hardly a single Christian ever believed this, not even when Shakespeare pointed out, something like it, in never-to-be-forgotten language. We should dearly like to know what has made the *Church Times* agree, after almost 2,000 years of Christian teaching, that a Jew is a man like a Gentile?

Canon Quick has now discovered that it is better not to take Christ's marvellous teachings "in the letter" but to follow them "in the spirit." What this exactly means no two Christians would ever or could ever agree. In fact on the exact meaning of Christ's teachings, whether in the letter or in the spirit, thousands of books have been written, are being written and will continue to be written. When Canon Quick was asked, "In what sense is Christ our Saviour and from what does He save us?"—a theme which also has produced hundreds of thousands of books—his answer was delightfully clear: "There is nothing about Everlasting Pain in the New Testament except in Revelation and in the New Testament, salvation is from sin. God who is love and purity cannot accept the wicked and the selfish, though Christians hope no soul will finally reject the love of God." And this kind of drivel was for "intellectuals!"

It is quite in line with the mentality of the average *Morning Post* reader, for it to print a letter which has

dug up from that monumental purveyor of verbalistic nonsense the following "prophecy":—

Trade is like gaming. If a whole community are gamblers, play must cease, for there is nothing to be won. When all nations are traders, there is nothing to be gained by trade, and it will stop first where it is brought to the greatest perfection.

What a pity that Johnson had not enough common sense to recognize that genuine trading is exchange of goods and services, and that can only cease when one man or one nation sets out to produce himself or itself all that is needed. It is because our politicians and business geniuses are as blind to this as was Dr. Johnson, that the world is in its present state.

The St. Pancras Coroner has stated officially that "skidding" is not an act of God. We accept that as true. But will someone be good enough to tell us what is an Act of God? What does he do, anyhow, and where does he do it? We spend millions of money and any amount of time in thanking him for what he has done or is doing, but where is it? What is it?

Mr. Gilbert Frankau, the novelist, thinks that the present age is better than the so-called "good old days" of some thirty-seven years ago, when so many things were luxuries only for the few, and "free thought a crime." He declares that:—

And because education, health, rapid transport, and above all "free thought," once available to all men, must eventually civilize all men, the man or woman of to-day who is not something of an optimist is necessarily something of a fool.

He finishes on the following note:—

Say what you like about this present age, decry it as you like, grumble about it as you like, strive to ameliorate it as you like, but at least admit that it is the first age in which the average man, and more particularly the average woman, can breathe.

Mr. Frankau is right. The younger generation doesn't appreciate how things have altered since religious influence has decayed, and how former generations were (figuratively speaking), suffocated by the many taboos, repressions and restrictions which had their origin in Christian thinking. They also fail to appreciate that "this freedom" had to be fought for, and that it was won by Freethinking men and women—pioneers who deliberately opposed or ignored the "public opinion" (Christian) of their time.

Apropos of the coroner who told the jury at an inquest that a man suffering from an incurable and painful disease is right to put an end to his own life, the *Daily Mirror* remarks:—

If we cannot praise suicides, we can at least refrain from condemning them, as the law is compelled to do, when it is not interpreted and softened by humane coroners who have imagination and the sympathy that goes with it.

The world really is moving forward when a daily paper makes a gallant attempt to catch up with Freethought. There is no harm in pointing out that the law which our contemporary seems uneasy over is a thoroughly good Christian one. Therefore, if any coroner interprets and softens it by the help of imagination and sympathy, he must be a bad Christian although he is a humane man.

In the present anomalous relations of the State and the Established Church, as a result of the passing (in 1919) of the Enabling Act, measures sent to Parliament from the National Assembly set up under that Act are dealt with in a most perfunctory fashion. For example, on March 7, at 11.18 p.m., Lord Hugh Cecil rose in the House of Commons to move:—

That, in accordance with the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act, 1919, this House do direct that the Benefices (Purchase of Rights of Patronage) Measure 1933 be presented to His Majesty for Royal Assent.

At 12.32 the debate was over. Only 184 members voted, 103 for the Measure and 81 against it, majority 22. This measure seeks to give parishioners an effective voice in

the selection of parsons when livings become vacant. It has, however, other implications in view of the divided condition of the Church and the still potent powers of private Patrons and Party Patronage Trusts.

As Col. Wedgwood pointed out in this debate, "the last House which voted for the Protestant religion against the new-fangled Prayer Book was an overwhelmingly Conservative House." He believed, he added, that "there will still be enough men in this House to see that fair-play is given to that struggling minority of Protestants in the Church of England who wish to preserve a corner for their faith." He was disappointed of his expectation—by 22. But if this measure had come before a full House at a reasonable hour, the result might have been different. What a storm there would be if vital changes in any other part of the "glorious Constitution" were smuggled through in this manner. In just the same way, when the National Assembly sends up its prospective measure to disestablish the Church without disendowing it, it may slip through. It is monstrous that the wrangling minority which calls itself the National Church should, by the cowardice and apathy of politicians, be enabled to get practically anything it wants—without the loss of a penny of its tribute from the exchequer or of a single privilege with which it is invested.

It often happens that the most important items in a parliamentary debate are sacrificed to minor items of greater "news" value—as that quality is estimated in Fleet Street. The recent debate (February 22) on the B.B.C. was a case in point. Hardly a newspaper printed the terms of the Resolution which was carried by an overwhelming majority—203-27. This resolution states that the House is "satisfied" that controversial matter "is rightly not excluded from broadcast programmes." It is true that the resolution also affirms "that only by the exercise of the greatest care in the selection of speakers and subjects can the function of the corporation be fulfilled." This is a platitude which does not justify the exclusion of certain "controversial matter," and the abandonment by the corporation of its duty to "exercise the greatest care" in the selection of speakers thereon. What it does is to exercise the greatest possible care that certain words, like Freethinker, and certain subjects, like the errors and falsehoods of religion, are never mentioned at all.

In 1916, during the War, and on the ground that the Vatican was a hot-bed of pro-German intrigue, the Government of the day appointed, we think for the first time since the 17th Century, a Minister to the Vatican. He and his successors remained until three years ago, when the wanton assault of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Malta on the constitution of that island, led to the withdrawal of the then Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. Since then there has only been a Charge d'Affaires in Rome. Now, Lord Strickland's successor in Malta having made it up with the Ecclesiastical Authorities there, and the dispute of 1930 having been "settled," Sir Robert Henry Clive, who is not a Roman Catholic, has been appointed Minister.

When the appointment of 1916 was made, the Pope was in pious parlance "a prisoner" in the Vatican with no temporal power. To-day he is King of the Vatican City—with his own alien regulations, passports and postage stamps. The pittance of the unemployed must be cut down but the British Government can afford to send a Minister to Rome to do a job that has been done, apparently to the satisfaction of everyone but the Pope, for the last three years without one. We will add that, whatever the cost of the Vatican delegation may be, it is a drop in the ocean compared to the annual exactions from the State of our own Protestant Reformed Church Established by Law. British representation at the Vatican, like a good many other so-called war-time measures, has apparently come to stay. It is as much use as D.O.R.A.,

Weeks of correspondence between the Hampstead Society of Friends and Mr. George Balfour, M.P.—one of the most reactionary of politicians—has appeared in the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* on the urgency of action and organization to prevent war and abolish armaments. Mr. Balfour has now brought the correspondence to an end in a curt and characteristic letter to the Hon. Secretary of the above-mentioned Society. It is in these terms: "Dear Miss Smith. Many thanks for your letter. I quite understand your point of view. I don't agree with it, and I must leave you the last word." Miss Smith, commenting on this, says she is "sure Mr. Balfour would be the first to acknowledge the importance of Christianity in individual life, and regrets that he does not see the vital importance of applying it internationally. But how much good has ever come by the latter course is evidenced by the condition of the world to-day. It provided the Japanese representative at Geneva the other day with a jibe, the bitterness of which was only equalled by its justice."

The *Tablet*, which is more or less the organ of the Catholic Hierarchy in this country, provides in an issue before us (March 4) some enlightening examples of Catholic mentality. A pastor in a Durham village—one Wicke—actually described the Roman Church as "Godless" and "of the Devil." The *Tablet* drags this man out of his obscurity into the somewhat dim and religious limelight of its columns in order to say—"Mr. Wicke is beneath notice!"

Our pious contemporary cannot contain its fury at Professor Arnold Toynbee's recent broadcast talks on Russia. It says they "were discreetly calculated to excite and help the enemies of all that Christians hold most dear." That these lectures should be printed in the *Listener* is terrible! The B.B.C., according to the *Tablet*, "is protected (in Parliament) by the Whips at the bidding of that Sinister Influence in favour of Atheist Russia." If there is any influence, sinister or otherwise, in favour of Atheism in Russia or anywhere else, in the House of Commons it is destitute of identity and voice. The *Tablet* does not supply either by describing it in capital letters although capital letters, even when applied to the non-existent (as they often are), will doubtless make its readers feel creepy.

Not content with these denunciations of heretics, politicians, and wireless talkers, the *Tablet* keeps a watchful and critical eye on the faithful. Thus a Catholic novelist, Mr. Evelyn Waugh, recently earned its attention by the publication of a story entitled *Black Mischief*. It was described as "a disgrace to anyone professing the Catholic name." No sooner was this printed than a number of Catholics, including three Jesuits, sprang to the defence of Mr. Waugh and his maligned book. There followed a three-columned retort by the Editor in his most trenchant invective. Then, suddenly, the matter was dropped, "so suddenly as to suggest" (says the *New Statesman and Nation*, commenting on this matter), "the interference of the ecclesiastical authorities." All this commotion over a book which, if report be true, does not contain a line to justify the *Tablet's* original castigation of it. If this is the temper in which a clerically-minded journalist treats a writer of his creed we need not be surprised at anything that may come from his pen about infidels and heretics.

We emphasize elsewhere the urgent duty of Freethinkers to withdraw their children from religious instruction in schools. Information to hand seems to suggest that indirect pressure is often exerted to prevent this being done. It may be useful, therefore, to emphasize that the Education Act of 1870 contained the most explicit provisions against such interference. "It shall not be required, as a condition of any child being admitted into, or continuing in an elementary school that he shall attend or abstain from attending any Sunday School or any place of religious worship, or that he shall attend any religious observances or any instruction in religious subjects in the school or elsewhere, from which observance or instruc-

tion he may be withdrawn by his parent, or that he shall, if withdrawn by his parent, attend the school on days exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. . . . No religious catechism or religious formulary, which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in any school."

Commenting on this measure at the time of its passing, the *National Reformer* (August 28, 1870) observed: "The teachers in the elementary schools under this Act are required to teach superstition, but the parents can keep their children away from such lessons if they choose, and this is an advantage to Freethinkers. But in many places, notably villages and country districts, to avail themselves of this power lays the parents open to unpleasant consequences." This is, in essence, as true to-day as when it was written. There are still many "single school areas," and it is in these that the plight of the parent and of the child can be made most unenviable if the child is withdrawn. The old tyranny of the Squire and the parson is largely gone; but the very improvements which in recent times have been made in rural schools may often place a Freethinking parent in the invidious position of having to choose between the health and happiness of his child and the surrender of his right in this matter. But there is no excuse whatever for the Freethinker in a town, city or urban district, who, we fear, more for his own social convenience than for concern for his children, does not avail himself of the right to withdraw them from religious instruction. So far from those children who are withdrawn being looked down upon by their school-fellows it is the common experience of teachers that the other children envy them their lot.

The *New York Truthseeker*, of which the second issue of its sadly attenuated monthly series is just to hand, quotes from the *New York Evening Post* (which is over 100 years old), a quotation from a pious contemporary of 1833 as to the scepticism of Sir Walter Scott, whose centenary was celebrated last year without any mention of his unorthodox views. According to this writer Scott's works "did more than those of Voltaire and Paine to teach men to sneer at humble piety, profane the Sabbath, laugh at moral obligation, and admire bacchanalian revels." Most people have only read of Scott's unbelief in Borrow's denunciation of him. The *Truthseeker* quotes Sir Walter as explaining the cautious attitude of his contemporaries to religion as the result either of fear to "shock the universal prejudice of the age," or of being themselves "not altogether freed from the contagious influence of a prevailing superstition." How many educated, professional and literary people are still in that condition where Christianity is concerned?

Fifty Years Ago.

In a vigorous article on the Prosecution, the *Weekly Dispatch* concludes: "The shocking injustice of the sentence is all the more apparent because, unless the Crown had taken upon itself the business of prosecution, no Christian would have known anything of the offences perpetrated in the *Freethinker*. That paper certainly does not find its way into Christian households for Sunday family reading. It circulates only among those who have no Christian sensibilities to be shocked or aggrieved. Can it be that this prosecution was undertaken in order to reassure doubting Nonconformists that, in bringing in an Affirmation Bill, Ministers were not impelled by any secret leaning to the non-religious dogmas of the member for Northampton. Was it the price paid for the support of Mr. Samuel Morley, and those who have the misfortune to agree with that confused and illogical theologian? At any rate, whatever the motive was, the prosecution of the sentence are a heavy blow struck at freedom of thought and freedom of speech, and they ought to receive the prompt and emphatic condemnation of every liberty-loving Englishman, whatever may be his politics or his religion."

The "*Freethinker*," March 18, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. KAISER (N.S.W.).—We do not see that you meet our position with regard to gambling. We were not concerned with the mere desire to obtain money, which is not of the essence of gambling. That we hold to be a special illustration of the spirit of adventure. It is staking one's judgment, or one's "chance" in a situation where the odds are either incalculable or apparently against one. It is not really material that money should accompany this "gamble." It may or it may not. And we are convinced that most of the talk about gambling is sheer ethical or religious cant. And we dislike cant of any variety.

J. A. REID.—The distinction is simple. Education involves the training of one's mind in the direction of creating the power of exercise and selection. Instruction consists in telling men and women, or children, what they ought to believe or must believe. In very many cases, and not merely in religion, instruction is all that is received or that is aimed at.

H. SELBY.—The reference in John M. Robertson's *History of Freethought* to Richard Carlile's "Obscure services to human freedom," must refer to the obscurity which the neglect of writers of a later date secured. As a matter of fact, no name was better known in the England of his day than was that of Richard Carlile, and no single man did more to secure the ultimate freedom of the press. Carlile's work was no more obscure than was that of Charles Bradlaugh. The story of Carlile's struggle is a most interesting one, and we may retell it one of these days.

N. WATSON.—We have written many times on the needless confusion caused by the use of ambiguous terms. Timid heresy is the cause of much unnecessary trouble. If you wish to see to what a state of hopeless confusion a really able man can be reduced to by the use of ambiguous phrases, read carefully the first twenty pages of Mr. A. W. Benn's useful *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*. We may write again on the subject when occasion offers.

S.L.—Sorry your letter is too lengthy for insertion.

B. H. DERRY.—We have read your letter, and trust it has relieved your feelings. On that assumption we will not complain at the time spent in reading your communication.

H.T.—The publisher of Mrs. Chance's *Intellectual Crime* is Noel Douglas, 58.

G. BURGESS.—Keep the game going. We are pleased you find the work so "enjoyable." That is the right spirit for Freethought propaganda.

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.

The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Sugar Plums.

It will assist in the arrangements for the Social to be held in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Saturday evening, April 1, if those intending to be present will make an early application for tickets. There will be dancing and musical items, also a few words from the President. Tickets, 2s. 6d. each, which includes light refreshments, may be obtained from the General Secretary, N.S.S., 62 Farringdon Street, or the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The function is open to members and their friends.

The burst of summer weather on Sunday last was probably responsible for Mr. Cohen's meeting at Leicester being rather smaller than usual. But the hall was comfortably filled, nevertheless, and the lecture aroused strong interest. The chair was taken by Mr. Sydney Gimson, whose health has of late kept him away from many meetings. But it was good to see him back in his old place. The name of Gimson has been for so long associated with Freethought in Leicester that it is hard to think of them apart.

To-day (March 19) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester, at 3.0, on "Looking for God," and in the evening, at 6.30, on "The War on Opinion." On Sunday next (March 26) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, at 6.30, on "A Hundred Years of Freethought—Charles Bradlaugh 1833—1933." We hope our Glasgow friends will help in making this meeting as widely known as possible.

Freethinkers in the Burnley district are informed that Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak twice to-day (Sunday), on behalf of the East Lancashire Rationalist Association, in the Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley. At 2.45 p.m., the subject will be "The Churches and the Next War," and at 7 p.m., "Nature, Man, and God." The subjects are attractive, and Mr. Rosetti is already known in Burnley, so two good meetings should result.

One or two items of news were unavoidably left over from last issue. First, we were pleased to receive a good account of Mr. Brighton's first visit to Liverpool. His subject was "Parsons, Politics and the People," and he made a good impression on a packed meeting. Mr. Brighton is doing excellent work in the Newcastle district, so we are not surprised at the news.

The four-handed debate at Glasgow between Messrs. White and Buntin and the Revs. Warnes and McQueen, also appears to have passed off well. The contest was so satisfactory that it is expected that another discussion on the same lines will be arranged in the near future.

The Academy at Port Talbot was quite filled on the occasion of the debate between the Rev. Richards and Mr. Cohen on March 9. Mr. Richards is a pleasant speaker, and in deadly earnest, but as Mr. Cohen had to remind him his address, while presenting much with which everyone would agree, was chiefly remarkable for the quantity of Christianity that he left out or repudiated. The audience was all that could be desired, attentive, and deeply interested in both speakers. We hear that the discussion is likely to give Freethought a fillip in the district. It is on the carpet that Mr. Cohen may be debating in the district again in the course of three or four weeks.

We are glad to learn that Mr. G. H. Taylor had a good meeting at Manchester on Sunday last. Mr. Taylor, who is a welcome and frequent contributor to these columns is a man who would always have something to say, and something worth listening to. Unfortunately the lecture notice for this lecture reached this office a day too late for publication.

The Wembley Council having decided to apply for a draft order for the extension of the Sunday Entertainments Act to their area, the Wembley United Christian Council has stated through one of its officers that it will "fight against Sunday Cinemas to the last ditch." The Wembley and District Branch, N.S.S., lost no time in announcing a meeting to be devoted to discussing ways and means of foiling any attempt on the part of these busybodies to prevent an improvement to local amenities that has been found beneficial wherever else it has been introduced. It is important that the Branch should have the fullest support of all Wembleyites opposed to control by cranks and puritanical killjoys.

In the House of Commons on March 9, Col. Wedgwood asked the First Commissioner of Works whether he would consider favourably a proposal to erect within the precincts of the House a tablet or other memorial to Charles Bradlaugh, formerly member for Northampton, the centenary of whose birth was being celebrated this year. Mr. Ormsby-Gore:—

I could not entertain the idea of a memorial to Bradlaugh involving any charge upon public funds. If any person or persons are desirous of presenting such a memorial, it would be necessary to follow the recognized procedure as regards statues, busts, or other memorials in the House of Commons.

The Commemoration Committee is taking steps to comply with the usual formalities. There was, of course, never any question of public funds being involved.

To the excellent Thinker's Library have now been added *Our New Religion*, by the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, and *On Compromise*, by John (Lord) Morley. (Watts, 1s.) The first book, which deals with Christian Science, is a masterly performance both in style and matter. With polished satire and calm and devastating analysis Mrs. Eddy, "the most successful business boss whose brains have been employed in the exploitation of creed," as Dr. Fisher calls her, is displayed in her ignorance and in her ruthless pursuit of money and power. The documentation of the case against Mrs. Eddy has provided many bigger and more expensive works than this, but none which shows greater grip of the subject or is so easy and delightful to read. Of Morley's work *On Compromise*, it is only necessary to say that this edition—the text is that as last revised by the Author (1921)—brings Morley's most famous work within the reach of all. The Thinker's Library is a wonder of learning and cheapness.

The Spectre Scaring Bells.

GONGS and bells have from remote times exercised a potent influence in sacred ceremonies. Not only have pealing bells announced religious services, but most races, civilized and savage alike, have utilized bells to scare evil spirits from the abodes of men. In ancient Egypt the festival of Osiris was preceded by the ringing of bells, while in classic Athens the priests of Cybele used bells in their rites. The Jewish high priests wore golden bells suspended from their ornate vestments, and these tinkling bells were supposed essential for protection against malevolent spirits. For when the priest officiated in the sanctuary, *Exodus* informs us the bells were to be sounded when he entered the temple, as also when he emerged, lest he should die. Plainly, the jingling of the bells was deemed to disarm the mischievous sprites who haunted the sanctuary all prepared to pounce on Jahveh's minister.

In many times and lands, it has been the common belief that devils may be defeated by the noise of metal. Whether the sounds were musical or discordant was immaterial so long as they arose from metal instruments.

Both in early Greece and Rome goblins fled when they heard the clank of bronze or iron. And when

the ancestral ghosts had paid their seasonal visit to their earthly tenements during the merry month of May, when they were refreshed with a frugal repast, they were then bidden adieu with a clash of bronze. Such superstitions survived Paganism; were incorporated in the Christian tradition, and survive still in rural retreats.

Throughout the Middle Ages the sound of the church bell remained pre-eminently obnoxious to ghosts and ghouls. An early Catholic assembly, the first Council of Cologne, alleged "as an opinion of the fathers that at the sound of bells summoning Christians to prayer demons are terrified and depart, and the spirits of the storm, the powers of the air, are laid low." The service book termed the Roman Pontifical acknowledges the power of the ringing church bell in affrighting evil spectres, silencing the gibbering ghosts of the dead, and banishing the tempest fiends. A long celebrated thirteenth century Canon Durandus, informs us why bells are tinkled in procession where devils lurk in secret. "For," he states, "when they hear the trumpets of the church militant, that is, the bells, they are afraid, as any tyrant is afraid when he hears in his land the trumpets of the powerful king, his foe. And that, too, is the reason why, at the sight of a storm rising, the Church rings its bells, in order that the demons, hearing the trumpets of the eternal king, that is, the bells, may be terrified and flee away and abstain from stirring up the tempest."

The Passing Bell was long regarded as safeguarding the soul of an expiring sinner from the machinations of the waiting and watching goblins. It was thought that as bells served to overpower sinister spirits in every day happenings, so the solemn tolling of the Passing Bell would scare soul-snatching spectres. The antiquary, Captain Gore tells us that in the North: "The passing bell was anciently rung for two purposes: one, to bespeak the prayers of all good Christians for a soul just departing; the other to drive away the evil spirits who stood at the bed's foot, and about the house, ready to seize their prey, or at least to molest, and terrify the soul in its passage."

That the primary purpose of the Passing Bell was to scare away inimical spirits is suggested by the custom of ringing a hand-bell when a sick person is nearing the end. This observance still survives in several European countries.

Frazer in his *Folk Lore* recalls Dante's poetical application of the sentiments underlying the Passing Bell "to the sound of the Vesper Bell heard afar off by voyagers at sea, as if the bell were tolling for the death of day or of the sun when sinking in the crimson west."

Church bells were constantly in demand to frustrate witches and warlocks who sped through the air, bent on casting their evil spells on man and beast. When the witches celebrated their blasphemous Sabbaths or other shameful festivals the church bells were loudly sounded, at times right through the night, for during the hours of darkness the witches were most active in their malignant arts. The nocturnal pealing of bells was a common occurrence both in France and Spain during nights held sacred by the warlock fraternity.

But perhaps the most uncanny and grotesque celebrations were on Walpurgis Night, May Day eve, Midsummer eve and Twelfth Night. Whenever the witches held high festival, and comparatively recently among the peasantry of Eastern Europe, it was customary "to expel the baleful, though invisible crew by making a prodigious racket, to which

the ringing of the hand-bells and the cracking of whips contributed their share."

The ringing of sweet-toned bells is exceedingly pleasant to the ear, and many are the associations of bells with love and beauty in literature and art. In the *Bells*, that eerie melodrama immortalized by the magnificent performances of Henry Irving, in the part of Mathias, the tinkling of the musical but melancholy bells of the Polish Jew's sledge, haunt the play throughout. Some of the chimes to be heard in London are, indeed, sublime. But most bells, whether lay or religious, are unmelodious, and thousands have suffered agony while lying on a bed of sickness in the Metropolis, and in provincial cities, especially on Sunday, the Puritans' cherished day of gloom.

In days even more doleful than ours, Charles Dickens deplored the Sabbatarian despotism that shrouded the first day of the week in Victorian England. In *Little Dorrit*, the famous novelist thus wrote of the day of rest, "It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, make the brick and mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets in a penitential garb of soot, condemned the souls of the people, who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the Plague were in the City, and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred. . . . No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world—all *taboo* with that enlightened strictness that the ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves home again."

Even in recent times the bellman played his part in alarming witches in their midnight revels. Like enemy aircraft during the War, the witches might come at any moment. The night watchman was therefore provided with two weapons against the evil ones, for he rang his bell, and recited a blessing, and if sleepers were awakened they could comfort themselves with the reflection that they were being protected from supernatural harm.

For centuries in Germany and other lands the church bells were constantly set ringing during thunderstorms to drive away the malignant spirits. Special dues paid to the sexton for his services on these occasions were, it appears, continued in secluded districts down to the mid-nineteenth century. Although bells in general were thought efficacious against the storm demons, special sanctity gave them greater power. For instance, in Constance where the bells had been consecrated, many believed that the sound alone of the bells provided complete protection against death or damage by lightning.

Despite denials, there is little doubt that bells were solemnly consecrated and baptized by the priests. Bells were cleansed, given a blessing and a special name, and were solemnly anointed with sacred oil to ensure success in their conflicts with Satan's satellites. Indeed, the Jesuit priest Delrio, writing in the seventeenth century, asserted that the power of bells in allaying storms was a fact so constantly confirmed that denial was impossible. And, it is worthy of note that in old St. Paul's Cathedral in London, there was a special endowment that provided for "ringing the hallowed belle in great tempestes and lightnings."

T. F. PALMER.

Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

V.—A TRIBUTE BY A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORIAN.

IN his *Constitutional History of England* (Vol. III.) Sir Thomas Erskine May (Lord Farnborough) pays a fine tribute to Bradlaugh. "At the General Election of 1880 Mr. Charles Bradlaugh was returned to Parliament as the junior member for Northampton. His life had been a hard struggle. Self-educated, but well-educated, he had been a private soldier and solicitor's clerk, a training useful to him in after life when his extraordinary forensic ability was never hampered by any unwillingness to engage in a fight. Honest, combative and courageous, a most effective platform speaker, and sustained by a consciousness of his own good faith, he had spent his life in attacking received opinions in religion and politics. He had assailed Christianity with the zeal of a Christian martyr, and, if fortitude in the endurance of hardship and obloquy may be considered a proof of sincerity and disinterestedness he could produce, before the end of his career, a record seldom in modern times excelled. He was not only a militant Atheist, but a militant republican, who had published an *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*, and his attacks were rendered the more formidable by the fact that the man was no vulgar demagogue, but a master of clear and incisive English who, while indulging his joy in combat, believed that he was furthering the best interests of his countrymen. By accepting responsibility for the publication of an American pamphlet concerning the evils of over-population and their remedies, Mr. Bradlaugh exposed himself in 1877 to a criminal prosecution as a purveyor of obscene literature, and only escaped imprisonment by a flaw in the indictment. The incident gave his opponents an excuse for attacking his character and morals with which a minute scrutiny of his career would not otherwise have provided them. (pp. 222-3.)

"From that time (1885) until his death Mr. Bradlaugh continued to represent Northampton in the House of Commons, where he won general esteem by his industry, courtesy, moderation and straightforwardness. That his exclusion had been the result rather of personal prejudice than of any general principle was attested by the circumstance that when a closer acquaintance had gained him, not only respect but popularity on the Conservative side of the House, his former adversaries were ready to make a change in the law to which the highest eloquence of Mr. Gladstone had failed to persuade a Liberal House of Commons." (p. 227.)

Another notable history *The Political History of England* (Hunt and Poole, XII. Vols.) in the last volume by Sir Sydney Low and H. C. Sanders points out that the cause of the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's proposal to make affirmation lawful (April 30, 1883) "was a strong personal prejudice against Bradlaugh not entirely due to the theological animus."

These writers add (p. 374) that Bradlaugh's "speeches, unexpectedly moderate in tone were listened to with attention and even with respect by all parties in the House."

A.C.W.

The sense that every struggle brings defeat

Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;

That all the oracles are dumb or cheat

Because they have no secret to express;

That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain

Because there is no light beyond the curtain;

That all is vanity and nothingness.

James Thomson (B.V.)

Hints on Preparing a Speech.

(Concluded from p. 165.)

II.

Most professional men who have to speak in public, for instance lawyers and clergymen, have had general training for their work; but in addition they most of them prepare their speeches carefully for any important occasion. Their methods of preparation, however, differ according to their habits of thinking and the material handled. I can only give the results of my own experience in helping young Freethinkers to make what they have to say count for as much as possible.

The novice will find it well worth his while to go and hear good speakers as often as he can, and to attend meetings and take part in discussions. If he is asked to take the chair let him regard it not as a mere formality, but as an opportunity for saying something on the purpose of the meeting. The question I am most frequently asked by the beginner is, "Should I write out what I mean to say and learn it?" There is wide divergence of opinion on this question, but my own answer to it has always been "No," without any qualification. Memorized speeches are apt to lack emphasis on important points and do not aid readiness in dealing with opposition, which every Freethinker must welcome if he is to be an effective propagandist. It is quite another thing to urge the beginner to write out his material as a useful exercise for its own sake. It clarifies his ideas, which he will probably find less distinct than he thought at first, and it will almost certainly suggest points in the argument that require further consideration.

The aspirant who is really interested in his subject and studies it will soon find that his chief difficulty is to compress his material rather than to expand it. Before making any notes for use on the platform he should spend some time thinking over just what it is that he wishes to convey to the audience. When he feels quite clear about these central ideas, he will find it helpful to write them down as concisely as possible. In doing so it may occur to him that what he considered quite definite might not be so to his hearers. He may now make any other notes he likes, and his material ought to suggest illustrations and incidents drawn from his own experience. But however extensive his notes may be, he will be well advised to condense them to a few short headings if he intends to use them on the platform, recalling and memorizing the ideas which he most wishes to enforce. In this way he will come to depend less and less on written notes for the actual delivery of his speech.

Let me give a concrete illustration. Several times recently I have spoken on the subject, "Does Civilization need Religion?" Before writing any notes I thought out as concisely as I could the two or three central ideas that I wished to convey to the audience. Here is my summary:—

We speak of Greek, Roman, medieval civilization. What is common to them? The refinements of city life, science and art in varying degrees, and the needs which these bring in their train. Throughout we also find religion. What has been the good of it? At the lower levels of social evolution it acts as a unifying force to make the masses submissive to authority. But as humanity develops in culture religion is felt as a deadweight, and given free course would drag us back to those levels. At a certain stage there is always a revolt against it. The task of modern civilization has consisted partly in regaining the humanism which Christianity despised. Religion hinders moral progress by weakening the institutions which can perform the necessary func-

tions of society better without it—law, education, national expenditure.

Anything else I said was amplification of some item stated here.

How to conclude seems to be a source of trouble to some speakers. And it is of real importance not to end on a weak note. The best way to avoid such a conclusion is to see that all the material used is arranged in logical order. This is made easier by elaborating two or three essential points rather than dealing superficially with a large number that are unimportant, and the work involved in preparation is more profitable for the speaker's future career.

Writers on public speaking have a great deal to say about cultivating "the power to summon the right word at the right moment." This implies a command of language, and of its ready use in the successive stages of an argument, to which very few even of the greatest orators have attained without incessant study and practice. But average men and women, who never expect to become orators, can improve their powers of expression quite noticeably in a comparatively short period. For the discussion of any subject, and especially for platform purposes, the ability to state one's case in convincing language is indispensable. "A man's vocabulary," says Bain, "will show whom he has kept company with, what books he has studied, what departments he knows; it will reveal, further, his predominating tastes, emotions, or likings." (*Mental and Moral Science*, p. 177.) From a purely elocutionary point of view, reading aloud is universally recommended as a valuable practice; and it is of real service from another point of view. It accustoms the ear to the rhythm of the best English prose and stimulates the student's interest in style. There is a wide choice of suitable reading. Huxley's essays and addresses will serve the purpose very well: *Science and Culture*, for example, contains hardly anything that a man of average education would not understand, it is vigorous in expression, and the matter is worth study for its own sake. For cultivating fluency of utterance the speaker will get more benefit from reading reported speeches than from literature in the strict sense. The spoken language differs from the literary, its diction is simpler, its sentences generally shorter. But the same practice of reading aloud the great masterpieces of literature, prose and poetry, deserves more attention than is usually given to it. No words are expressive until they are woven into a fabric. In his reading the young speaker should not be satisfied with the general sense of a passage; if he does not know the meaning of a word or phrase he must take a note of it and inquire. Having said so much about words, however, I should seriously fail of my object if these articles led any reader to attach more weight to style than to matter. People that are pleased with eloquent twaddle are not likely, I hope, to find their way to a Freethought hall.

"Argument," "propaganda," and "logic" are words that I have used several times, because I hold that the first thing to influence is the intellect. But the intellect once fully reached, let us enlist all the emotion we can in our cause. We usually avoid an appeal to the feelings, or at any rate reduce it to a minimum. Do we think that our case is too strong to need it? We do think so, and on good grounds. There is, however, no necessary clash between an appeal to the feelings and an appeal to the intellect. Emotion, it is true, is the specific soil in which religious beliefs and practices grow; but it has also played an important part in disintegrating them. We might find it worth while to remember this.

I have left till the last, one of the principal problems of the young speaker, I mean the initial per-

vousness from which very few are free on their first appearance before an audience. Those of a certain temperament never shake it off completely, and yet often become powerful advocates. Concentration on the subject and thorough knowledge of one's own case as well as that of one's opponents, will go a long way towards overcoming the trouble. If the young Freethinker "means business" and realizes that honest criticism will only help him, he is not likely to anticipate a break-down. Above all, he must never hesitate to avail himself of the knowledge and experience of older practitioners.

These notes are meant to help beginners in preparing a speech, not in delivering it. I have said nothing about voice production, gesture, and the various rules and hints found in books on elocution. I should have little of practical value to contribute on this subject; but of course, other things being equal, a speaker with a good elocutionary equipment is more attractive than one without it.

A. D. McLAREN.

Corner Stones of Christianity.

How many books have been written about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus it is impossible to say; probably their number runs into thousands or even into hundreds of thousands. In addition, at least an equal number of articles have been written, and in all probability millions of sermons have been delivered on these subjects, and the supply is not likely to be exhausted for a long time to come.

The little volume* by Mr. Campbell is, however, an exceptionally fine addition to the literature of the questions at issue, and in its (nearly) 100 pages of closely packed argument will be found many points and details one is apt to overlook in larger and more copiously written works. Moreover the author is constantly referring the reader to relevant and orthodox authorities whose admissions in many cases played havoc with traditional belief.

Whatever may be said or thought of the Resurrection, and even very religious people would have preferred its truth to be demonstrated a little more forcibly than is the case in the Gospels, few people, Christian or Rationalist alike, doubt the historicity of the Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus. They are willing to give up the Virgin Birth and the Miracles, and admit that the Sermon on the Mount is patchwork, but nothing would induce them to part with the reality of the trial before Pilate and the subsequent execution on the cross. Be as sceptical as you like but to give these up, they cry, means the complete negation of credible history!

So long as the Jews were persecuted and had to hide in their ghettos, so long were they afraid to criticize—except among themselves—the whole question of Christian origins. Even now most of them shirk the verdict of modern investigation, that the whole story of Christianity from the Virgin Birth to the Resurrection is a tissue of absurd fables and myths. There have been a few, however, who have boldly faced the improbabilities of the Bible narrative and who have insisted that there is no evidence whatever that such a trial before Pilate as described in the Gospels could have taken place either in Jewish or Roman law. Naturally it has been defended vigorously by Christian apologists, but all the same, the defences have been gradually sapped,

and the attack so strongly pushed that he must be a very credulous person nowadays—or one completely wrapped up in the most impermeable garments of faith—who still believes that the trial of Jesus has a shred of historical support. Mr. Campbell goes over the ground pretty fully, and in particular gives many reasons why the Trial was an impossibility, but he seems to agree with Loisy that "Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate" though the Jews were quite innocent in the matter. He however records the admission of the Rev. Dr. Cheyne, the editor of the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, that "he feared the Crucifixion would have to be given up." Dr. Cheyne made many startling admissions in his lifetime, and it is quite probable with a slightly different upbringing he would have given up the rest of Christianity as well.

Mr. Campbell is equally interesting in his treatment of the Resurrection myth, and once again attention should be called to his authorities and interesting notes. One can only conclude from his investigation that it must be supremely difficult for most people brought up strictly as Christians to go the whole hog and deny any historicity to the hero of the Faith. Mr. Campbell knows the work of Drews, W. B. Smith and J. M. Robertson, but he hesitates to go as far as they do, though there is almost nothing left of either the Crucifixion or the Resurrection by the time he has done with them.

One point he does make, and it cannot be too strongly urged. The Gospels which are supposed to inculcate love have really sown hatred in its worst form. Nothing can exceed the subtle way in which hatred of the Jew permeates the New Testament, a hatred which still subsists side by side with the Cross and even with many so-called reformers who have shed the Christian superstition.

Mr. J. M. Robertson's preface is, as are all that great scholar's writings, masterly, and raises many interesting points. Mr. Campbell's work should be widely read.

H. CUTNER.

Correspondence.

"BITTER SWEET."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The two letters from "Playgoer" almost amplify the name of the play under discussion. I readily grant that there is *free thought* in the libretto of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas as also there is in the Bible, and in addition, in Sean O'Casey's play "The Shadow of a Gunman." "Playgoer" must accept my apology if I appear to have evaded the point which was not done consciously, and I give in full the bone of contention which is:—

"The principal character sums up the ramshackle machinery of to-day by describing it as 'Speed and Noise,' and the return at the end of the third act to the opening of the first is something to be remembered in stagecraft."

Without digging into mighty and heavy tomes on the stage, I can remember plays within plays as follows: "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Hamlet," "Taming of the Shrew," Halcott Glover's "Wat Tyler," and "Cyrano de Bergerac," but in none of these plays is the simple device used of returning to the first act. From a reading of the extract given above, it is possible that one *might* be under the impression that this device was original, but when it was written there was no such intention at the back of the writer's mind.

In the Greek drama with the chorus as interpreter of the progress of the tragedy there might be found the origin of what "Playgoer" terms the "envelope play." From a most ordinary acquaintance of the way the world wags it is easily seen that, in the words of Browning, the public will accept benefits with scarce a "thank you."

* *The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus.* W. A. Campbell. With a Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. 2s. net. (The Pioneer Press).

My diversions and excursions in theatreland, with always the objective of what the *Freethinker* stands for in view, have been used to underline the free thought which is there more often without than with acknowledgement to pioneers of free speech and free opinion.

C-DE-B.

ACHILLES AND THE TORTOISE.

SIR,—The Achilles-tortoise fallacy, as stated by Hyperbola, is due to the suppression of a condition. It is true that Achilles can never overtake the tortoise *within two miles*. And, similarly, if the times be taken, the fallacy is due to a similar suppression of a condition. If Achilles can do ten yards a second, and the tortoise one yard per second; and if the tortoise has 100 yards start; then while Achilles runs off the 100 yards start, the tortoise has gone 10 yards (*i.e.*, ten seconds have elapsed). While Achilles covers this ten yards start the tortoise has gone one yard (*i.e.*, one second more): while Achilles covers this yard the tortoise has gone one-tenth of a yard, and so on, and therefore (so runs the fallacy) Achilles can never overtake the tortoise. And this is true for any time less than $10 + 1 + 1/10 + 1/100 + \text{ad infinitum}$ seconds (*i.e.*, $10 + 1 + 1/10 + 1/100 + \dots$ seconds, *i.e.*, *inside of* $11 \frac{1}{9}$ seconds.) As soon as this condition is stated the fallacy disappears.

EUCLIDEAN.

SIR,—Hyperbola should have no trouble over the tricks of mathematics, if he reduces the question at any stage to reality. The race between Achilles and the tortoise is a picture in our mind whether real or imaginary.

It is at once something different, when we begin in imagination dividing things up.

For instance why always treat only the distance mathematically? The bodies of tortoises and men can equally well be divided up.

Thus to take the tortoise alone. If the tortoise covers the distance in a certain time, then half a tortoise will cover the distance in a different time. How soon then will Achilles catch up on half a tortoise? Fractions and decimal points of men are common in health statistics.

Why then do mathematicians always apply the reasoning to the distance, and not to the other conceptions of the race, the actual actors?

It is of course reasonable in thought, to abstract the distance and treat it mathematically, but it is a trick of the imagination to leave the actors real, when the distance part is abstracted, while this is being done, the race ceases. One can just as well abstract Achilles' legs, or the tortoise's tail, and calculate accordingly.

Incidentally I am the proud possessor of a one-hundred pound tortoise, which I will back to lose the race every time. Especially if anyone will divide an orange into x quarters at the starting-post and give him one at a time.

W. L. ENGLISH.

"THE FOOL HATH SAID."

SIR,—If your humorous correspondent, H.S.S., had got as far as the first lines of the book which he criticizes he would have seen that I have not the slightest desire to call my opponents "Fools" in the sense which he suggests.

C. A. ALINGTON.

Eton College.

Obituary.

MR. HARRY ROTHERA.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. Harry Rothera, aged seventy-one. Mr. Rothera was a life-long Freethinker, and personally acquainted with both Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote. He was a very ardent Freethinker, and engaged in quiet propaganda work right up to the end. The funeral took place on March 6. A Secular Burial Service was conducted by R. Buntin, Secretary of the Glasgow Branch.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, near Clapham North Station): 7.30, Mr. A. C. White—"Church and State; a Coming Crisis."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"Our Selves."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 20, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Oxford Movement."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.0, Tuesday, March 21, Dr. E. J. Dingwell—"Spiritualism: Science or Superstition?"

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.): 7.0, H. V. Carrington—"Urgent Reasons for Marriage Reform."

OUTDOOR.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, March 19, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ASHFORD AND DISTRICT BRANCH—Wednesday, March 22, Mr. T. Holliday—"Christian Science."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead near Hamilton Square): 7.0, E. Biddle (Chester)—"Morality—Divine and Human."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—No Meeting. Mr. H. C. Smith's lantern lecture on Charles Bradlaugh is postponed until Sunday, March 26.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Mr. A. Sells—"Mental Processes."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley): 2.45, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"The Churches and the Next War." 7.0, "Nature, Man and God."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 7.0, Mr. T. McDonald, M.A., B.Sc.—"This Simple Universe."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. A. H. M. Robertson—"Materialism Reconsidered."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, J. V. Shortt (Liverpool) President, Liverpool N.S.S.—"Christianity and Crime."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester): 3.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"Looking for God." 6.30, "The War on Opinion."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall No. 5, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. F. W. Llewellyn—A lecture.

RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, Glasgow District (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street): 3.0, Dr. Norman Haire, Ch.M., M.B.—"Religion and the Abortion Laws."

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"IN the study of the Bishop of London the other day," remarked the Rev. A. J. Waldron, "I took up a certain book, and the Bishop asked, 'What do you think of it?' I said, 'It has done more to damage Christianity during the past few years than all the rest of the sceptical books put together!' He said, 'That is my opinion too.'—*Sunday School Chronicle.*

This book, *The Churches and Modern Thought*, of such service to the Militant Freethinker, can be obtained from the PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, post free for one shilling and threepence.

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THE "Freethinker" Endowment Trust

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THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £8,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five Trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the Trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trustees set themselves the task of raising a minimum sum of £8,000. This was accomplished by the end of December, 1927. At the suggestion of some of the largest subscribers, it has since been resolved to increase the Trust to a round £10,000, and there is every hope of this being done within a reasonable short time.

The Trust may be benefited by donations of cash, or shares already held, or by bequests. All contributions will be acknowledged in the columns of this journal, and may be sent to either the Editor, or to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. H. Jessop, Hollyshaw, Whitkirk, Nr. Leeds. Any further information concerning the Trust will be supplied on application.

There is no need to say more about the *Freethinker* itself, than that its invaluable service to the Free-thought Cause is recognized and acknowledged by all. It is the mouthpiece of militant Free-thought in this country, and places its columns, without charge, at the service of the Movement.

The address of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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