

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

War and the Churches.

MR LLOYD GEORGE has issued what the newspapers term "A call to the Churches." Addressing the Council of Free Churches at Sheffield he dwelt upon the obvious truth that the world is again rushing towards war, and offered as a means of averting war—what? United action among the Churches to the end of saying there shall be no more war! Not merely the Churches of this country, but the Christian Churches of the world. Naturally the sentiment was received with "round after round of applause." It meant to the ministers present that the world could be saved only by the Churches, which meant that it could be saved only by those who believed in Christianity, which meant that all others save Christians could stand on one side, and in the present condition of Christian belief that might mean—if the advice was accepted by the rest of the world—a new lease of life for Christianity. No wonder the parsons present were pleased, and we expect that the old manipulator of mass opinion winked inwardly at the way they rose to the bait. No one stopped to think that the people who were "thrilled" by the advice belonged to the very order under whose control the world had achieved greater skill in the art of mutual slaughter than any other peoples in the world's history, and that international hatred had flourished to a greater extent under Christian auspices than ever before. The Churches alone can save the world! In one way or another that has been said at every Church gathering since the Church was established. It has been the text for millions of sermons. It is in the New Testament. And the result of all these centuries of teaching is—the present world. If the world is to be fooled with phrases the Church is the fitting instrument for the job, and no one can do the phrase-making better than Mr. Lloyd George.

Christian Opinion.

Unfortunately there are all sorts of Christian Churches, and there is all sorts of Christian opinion. Christian opinion means in ultimate analysis the

opinions of Christians, and that means all kinds of opinion peaceful and war-like. There is no such thing as a unified Christian opinion, any more than there is a unified British opinion, or a unified French or German opinion. On war as on peace there are all sorts of opinions, both in and out of the Churches, and, unfortunately there is no opinion in the country on which one can count less, save where clear self-interest is concerned, than on that of the Christian Churches.

I quite agree that if the Churches, in this and in other countries, could be counted on as opposed to war, even if they could be counted on as standing apart from war, war would be very difficult to arrange, if not impossible of occurrence. But there is simply no prospect whatever of this ever taking place even to the extent of a single country. But suppose that the Free Church Assembly was indulging in more than one of those orgies of emotionalism which are so common in such gatherings. It is only one branch of the Church. What of the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England? Are these likely to adopt any drastic action, as Churches, against war? Anything that the appeal could achieve would be dependent upon Christian preachers in this and other countries agreeing upon two things. First, to do all they could to kill the militaristic spirit; second to take no part in encouraging the conduct of war once it had commenced. But does anyone imagine that the clergy would agree to do anything of the kind? Or if they did agree to it, would they keep their promise? Always in times of peace the clergy have talked against war, and always in times of war they have, as a body, done their best to fan the passions that keep war in being. As Brigadier-General Crozier said "The Christian Churches are the finest blood-lust creators we have," and the army always make the most of them.

What the Churches could do, if they were in earnest, would be to incite men in Church and out of Church against militarism. But to be successful this would have to be done without the sectarian appeal which to-day falls flat upon the ears of large masses of the population. But if it is devoid of sectarian profit, are the clergy likely to take any special interest in it? Do they, as a body, take an active interest in any social topic that does not promise sectarian advertisement. In the distribution of charity they are active because they get profit from its administration. It attracts the poor, and it serves as an advertisement among the general public. In education they are interested so far as they can get children brought up believers in some sort of religion, and thus make it easier for them to affix their particular brand on them later. In the question of Sunday amusements they are keenly interested because this threatens the security of their favourite taboo. But in the larger

questions of life they show but small interest, and these problems have to be worked out apart from the Churches. There is no professionalism narrower than that of the parson's.

* * *

Buddhism and Christianity.

In that most charming of books *The Soul of a People*, Mr. Fielding Hall, an ex-British official in Burma, tells what happened when England undertook its piratical expedition in that country. The Burmese soldiers fought to prevent invasion and annexation, but their faith, Buddhism, gave them no help. Why? Let Mr. Fielding Hall explain:—

The teachings of the Buddha forbid war. All killing is wrong, all war is hateful; nothing is more terribly than this destroying of your fellow-man. There is absolutely no getting free of this commandment . . . The whole spectacle of Burma in those days, with the country seething with strife, and the monks going about their business calmly as ever . . . preaching of peace, not war; of kindness, not hatred; of pity, not revenge, was to most foreigners most inexplicable. (And the Burmese peasant soldier) . . . If he died . . . there was no hope for him of the glory of heaven . . . For he was sinning against the laws of righteousness. "Thou shalt take no life." There is no exception for that at all, not even for a patriot fighting for his country . . . If he went to his monks, they could but say: "See the law, the unchangeable law that man is subject to. There is no good thing but peace, no sin like strife and war." . . .

Truly this is not a creed for a fighting-man of any kind, for what the soldier wants is a personal God who will always be on his side . . . But a law that points out unalterably that right is always right, and wrong always wrong, that nothing can ever alter one into the other, nothing can ever make killing righteous and violence honourable, that is no creed for a soldier. And Buddhism has ever done this. It never bent to popular opinion, never made itself a tool in the hands of worldly passion . . . You might as well say to gravity: "I want to lift this stone; please don't act on it for a time," as expect Buddhism to assist you to make war.

Compare this with our religion that has been the creed of pirates and buccaners, of swashbucklers and brigands for well over a thousand years. Contrast it with our parsonry which blesses cannon and sanctifies battleships, decorates its temples with battle flags and stands ready to bless any war waged by the country in which it happens to be domiciled, and which when war breaks out dresses itself in military uniforms, preaches the nobility of killing, blesses the art of ordered slaughter, dwells upon the elevating character of the military life, and parades its god of war for all to admire. I have often said that it is not without significance to find Christianity dear to the hearts of so many plunderers, so many heroic pirates, and attracting to it the type of man that it boasts it has attracted. When psychologists are both competent and honest in their dealings with Christianity they will have something more to say about it than the childish discourses delivered by the pets of the B.B.C.

* * *

What the Clergy might do.

Mr. Lloyd George appeals to the Churches. It is quite safe because he knows well that he will get full credit for his efforts—while peace endures—and what he says now will not prevent his saying something else if and when war comes. But I also appeal to the clergy, not as parsons but as men. They cannot alter their creed. They cannot abolish its capacity for "rationalizing" all the evil side of man's nature and so provide a moral covering for essentially

evil actions and passions. That quality is deeply imbedded in Christianity and it is that which makes it so contemptible a religion. Parsons cannot alter their creed but they can change their conduct. And it is within their power to strike a great blow against militarism. Let every Christian parson set their conduct by the Buddhist monk. Let them at once resign their posts as chaplains in army and navy; let them clear out of their churches the battle flags and military monuments, and decline to pray for victory in war. Let them give formal notice that whenever war breaks out they will not alter their teaching of peace and of the wickedness and futility of war, but will emphasize this the more strongly because war is on. Let them urge their congregations to refuse to permit their children to join cadet corps, and to decline to sanction by their presence and the presence of their children such gigantic recruiting exhibitions as military tattoos and the like. We are nearing another Armistice day celebration when the monuments to the dead will again be used to encourage recruiting for the forces. Let them serve formal notice on the Government that this year not a sermon will be preached on the beauty of the self-sacrifice of the men who died in the war, of the heroism and the comradeship developed in the war, but that they will preach on the beastliness of war, of the futility of war, and that those who died did so without accomplishing anything in the shape of bringing war nearer to an end. And let them insist with the Buddhist monk that nothing can make war other than it is; that men are not made saints by war, but that it brutalizes and degrades whatever be the motives of those who partake in it.

Nothing short of making war stink in the nostrils of decent men and women in all countries will ever make war impossible. It is useless to think of ending war by making it cheaper or less dangerous, or by disarmament conferences which never even talk about disarmament, but in which each member is trying to take advantage of the other. There is not a Government in the world that to-day wishes for disarmament, nor will it be inclined to submit to it until it is convinced that the people simply will not have war. And this will not be until war and the military life is painted as it is. Certainly the clergy can help in this, and they can make a beginning by withdrawing themselves from all military service and cease to encourage the intrusion of military service displays in civil life. Will they really help in this way? I fear they are more likely, when the next war arrives, to play the game they have so often played. The war whenever it comes will be "inevitable," our enemy, whoever he is, will be barbaric, brutal, savage, and will break all rules of "civilized warfare." On the other hand "we" shall be fighting on behalf of Justice, Truth, and above all we shall have God on our side.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

GOD IN THE CITY.

("The City of London is incurably and fundamentally religious."—*The Bishop of Ely*.)

In Threadneedle Street and on 'Change,
At Lloyds and in Lombard Street too,
All brokers and bankers and jobbers arrange
To consult God about what they do;
The City of London is His,
All company meetings He sways;
Incurably pious they transact their "biz"
To redound to His honour and praise.

A.H.

"The Great Achilles Whom We Know."

"Hail to the courage which gave
Voice to its creed, ere the creed
Won consecration from time."

Matthew Arnold.

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

The Freethought Movement has always attracted men and women of outstanding ability, and even of genius. It can point with justifiable pride to a scholar such as John M. Robertson, to orators like Foote and Ingersoll, and to a poet, James Thomson, who enriched literature with his *City of Dreadful Night*. But the most dynamic personality ever associated with the movement was Charles Bradlaugh, the centenary of whose birth is celebrated this year.

Although not by any means a centenarian, I well remember Bradlaugh. Indeed, he was not a man one could forget easily. Six feet in height, massively built, radiating personality, and with a leonine head, he commanded attention. As an orator he had rivals but few superiors, and he was the deadliest of debaters, a perfect master of dialectics. His power over popular audiences was enormous, and he was equally at home in the big St. James's Hall, London, as in the old Hall of Science. He relied on the sheer force of logic and law, and many of his lectures and speeches read like judicial utterances. In his earlier years he used more rhetoric, and he enjoyed the fame of being an apostle of liberty and expressing the simple feelings of men. "Give me liberty, or give me death." That was the kind of thing, a sonorous and impassioned phrase flung out to thrill the brains and flush the cheeks of thousands. Like Castelar and Gambetta he used rhetoric with the air of a master. You saw the outstretched arm, you heard the thrilling, resonant voice. There was music in it, and the trumpets of battle.

"Thorough" was his motto and throughout life he acted up to it. He was no dreamer, letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would," but he translated his ideas into deeds. His paper, the *National Reformer*, published through an entire generation, boldly announced in every issue that it was Republican, Atheistic, and Malthusian, and its readers were to be found all over the English-speaking world.

A born leader of men, Bradlaugh soon came into prominence. In his earlier days the Freethinkers were feebly led and fitfully inspired. Charles Southwell had left England for the Antipodes, and Holyoake, although clever, had no gifts for leadership. Without Bradlaugh the Freethinkers' stay in the desert might have been prolonged for many years. It was he, most ably seconded by men and women of real talent, who made the Freethought Party as we know it to-day, a national organization with branches all over the country. When Bradlaugh first encountered the Freethinkers, they were no more formidable than a corporal's guard; at his death the movement was an army. The list of lecturers alone at that period included the names of fifty men and women, and the Movement boasted of no less than four periodicals, in addition to a large annual output of Freethought literature.

It is strange that people are only now beginning to see that Bradlaugh's antagonistic attitude to religion was actually forced upon him. He had no wish to fight the clergy and their catspaws; he did not want to waste his time arraigning the mistakes of Moses, the puerilities of the Pentateuch, and the money-grubbing of the priests. But he saw, that Priestcraft

was the chief bulwark of Feudalism and tyranny. It was precisely because Christian priests were the body-guard of injustice that he challenged them, and if he seemed to those outside of his influence a mere iconoclast, he has in this only shared the fate of the world's greatest reformers. He died early because of the strain of his battles and the ill-treatment he received, and the same fate awaited his successor, G. W. Foote.

The story of Bradlaugh's life is like a leaf torn from the stately pages of Plutarch; the story of his untimely death is as moving and as poignant as a tragedy of Sophocles. He will live with Cromwell, Cobbett, and Paine as a vivid and forceful personality, always impressive and interesting. The years since he died have quieted the shouting and the tumult of those days, but they have left the brave figure of Charles Bradlaugh clear-cut for our regard and admiration. Not only was he a great man; he was a man of real distinction in aspect and carriage. The thirteen years' fight he made in Parliament and outside against an overwhelming majority of opponents was one of the bravest ever fought, and his triumph in the hour of death was as complete as that of Giordano Bruno. Those who think of him as an uncultured iconoclast would do well to read his speech at the Bar of the House of Commons, pleading for the rights of liberty of conscience. It is one of the brightest gems of Parliamentary oratory, forceful and flawless. Thanks to Bradlaugh's rare courage and devotion, heterodoxy is no longer a serious bar to the citizen and priestly authority has been shorn of the worst of its dangers.

What a price he paid for his leadership! The last time I heard him lecture was the occasion of a presentation to Robert Forder at the Hall of Science, London. He was then a broken man with silver hair and pallid features. For a whole generation he had led the force of Freethought, but the Philistines were too much for even his iron constitution. Brave as a lion to the last, he kept a bold front to the enemy, but he was bleeding to death beneath his armour. Some of his cheering audience nearly broke down, thinking of the fierce, old fighting days, when there was no thought of anything but the fight itself. Who would stand, like him, as a stone wall against the hordes of Priestcraft? A few months later G. W. Foote was leading the Freethought Army to fresh victories and added laurels.

Bradlaugh grows larger to one's mental and moral vision the more distant he becomes. The best views of the Alps are to be gained from a distance, and we get the better view of Charles Bradlaugh as he recedes from us. A hero in action, he was chivalry incarnate. He was never the man to say to others: "Go on," but he always said, "Come on." Now he is no longer a presence, but a memory, we are free to look at him, free from controversy, and to estimate him at his true worth. He fell, prematurely, alas, worn out by hard work and harder usage in that great battlefield of humanity, whose soldiers fight not to shed blood, but to dry up tears, not to kill their fellow-men but to raise them up. Labouring not for himself, but for others, he made an imperishable name, and gave the world "assurance of a man." Let us salute the memory of one of the truest that ever drew breath:—

"Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet."

MIMNERMUS.

Matters of learned debate are extraneous to faith; they are no ingredients in the bread of life!—Isaac Taylor.

The Cat With Nine Lives.

EVERY new religion is the modification of some already existent religion. Superstition broadens or narrows down from precedent to precedent; and despite claims to divine origin, there is not a single religious belief to-day which is not the offspring of some one or more human beliefs that went before.

As everyone knows, the mother of Christianity was Judaism. Her claim to be a virgin casts inevitable doubt upon the true paternity of her child. And the probability is that, as in so many similar cases of reputed virgin birth, the claim was made to conceal the awkward fact that its real father was unknown. He may have been Mithra, or one of a dozen other gods living at the time, whose features bear certain noticeable resemblances to those of the infant. The birth, however, occurred too long ago for it to be possible now to establish an indisputable claim to parenthood on more than the one side.

The fact remains that the child was born, or rather was evolved, about nineteen hundred years ago, and has managed so far to resist complete extinction in much the same way as the proverbial cat is reputed to do. Whether, like that animal, it will expire after the appearance of its ninth reincarnation remains to be seen. If so, then there is every reason to believe that the beast is on its last legs.

Christianity is always talked of as though it were a single religion. It is, in fact, at least a couple of hundred different religions going by the same name. And not one of them is the same religion as that which was practised by those people who, according to historical and archæological evidence, were first called Christians. Resemblances there may be; but these are outbalanced in every case by the differences. For, from the time Christianity began to be regarded as a distinct religion up till the present day, it has suffered enough "deaths" and "reincarnations" to satisfy the most exacting cat. But, unlike the latter, each "death" or split in its personality has not seen the rebirth of the same cat. It has resulted in the appearance of a number of new kittens, with more pronounced differences—and weaknesses—at each rebirth. Some of these were too frail to survive long; a few managed to flourish for a further period before undergoing the next split. It is the more important of these survivors that I intend to consider, merely by way of analogy, as one of the different "lives" of our Christian cat.

Apart from a couple of dozen early heretical kittens, the first serious split in the main body of Christianity occurred when the Western (or Latin) Church separated from the Eastern (or Greek) Church. This began about 500 A.D., and was completed, with the help of forgeries, about four hundred years later. The Greek cat, after suffering a number of accidents, including the spread of Mohammedanism (700 A.D.), has grown into a hoary and hairy decrepitude, still clinging to its claim to be the one and only Orthodox specimen. To-day it is in a pretty bad plight since it has been deprived of its largest remaining saucer of milk, namely Russia. It never did look like the sort of cat to develop another reincarnation, and now its chances of doing so seem pretty hopeless. The Latin (or Roman) cat, on the other hand, dug itself into Western Europe by the simple expedient of eating its own offspring. For, from about 1200-1600 A.D., it proceeded to "muscle in" (as the U.S. gangster would say) by means of that delightfully persuasive weapon, "red in tooth and claw," known as the Inquisition. But although its belly swelled visibly as a result of this cannibalistic diet, there were too many kittens for it to be able to swallow them all.

So in spite of these measures the Christian cat failed to prevent the second serious split in its life, called the Reformation (1500 A.D. onwards), when it disintegrated into the two cats known as Roman Catholic and Protestant. The fur which went flying during the squabbles between these two, developed into an assortment of sects, Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, Huguenots, Socinians and half a dozen more, some of which still maintain a half-hearted existence in different parts of the world to this day. The only one to flourish and grow was the cat now called the Church of England, which owed its survival mainly to its remote and isolated habitat in these isles.

But the process of schizogenesis had already begun to gain impetus. The Anglican Church, which did not reach maturity till about 1650 A.D. was in the throes of a split which gave rise to the Nonconformist kitten which grew up about 1750. The latter, like its Protestant forbear, was really a conglomeration of pieces of varying size, most of which are of relative impotence to-day when taken as separate entities. But some of it had the wisdom to fly from the land of its birth to America, where its life-blood was continually augmented by fresh infusions from this country and the rest of Europe. There it has maintained its heterogeneous existence free from molestation, and has given birth in its turn to numerous other kittens of weird and wonderful shape. The most important of these are Mormonism and Christian Science. The first avoided extinction by the same expedient as its mother, in that it fled further west to Utah, in 1830. The success of the latter was probably due to its being the only out-and-out female of its kind. It began life about sixty years ago, and although it has made a considerable amount of noise in its short existence, it seems now to have lost most of its breath.

In this brief summary of the Christian cat's existence we have seen the birth of eight more or less important "lives"—the original Christian, the Greek, the Roman, the Protestant, the Anglican, the Nonconformist, the Mormon and the Christian Scientist. Whether Spiritualism is to be recognized as the ninth and last reincarnation, it is difficult to say. Each new life manifests a loss of family likeness as well as a weakening of vitality, but all seem to show their feline origin by possessing a fair measure of those predatory, carnivorous, and quarrelsome instincts common to the species. From the point of view of those who do not like the beast in any shape, this latest superstition has enough Christianity in its blood to make us suspect its parentage. But nearly all the fight seems to have gone out of the wretched animal, and if any more reincarnations are due, it is probable that they will be unrecognizable as such.

There are one or two points in the summary which are worth noting. Assuming that the years 900, 1550, 1750, and 1850 A.D. mark the dates when the most important splits were completed which gave rise to one or more of the larger kittens, then we are presented with a progressively diminishing series of intervals, lasting respectively 850, 650, 200 and 100 years. If we add another period of 50 years for the maturing of Spiritualism, we arrive at the year 1900. Those with a flair for numerical computations may infer from this that we are living in an age when the last important "reincarnation" has already taken place, and when the Christian cat's ninth life merely awaits a slow but certain extinction, together with all its previous and surviving lives.

Speculation apart, there are other more definite signs of the times which indicate the approaching demise of this obnoxious superstition. The most noticeable of these is the gradual whittling away of the temporal power acquired by the larger and older cats. The dispersal of the religious orders in France,

the disestablishment of all religions in Russia and Spain, the curtailment (under a cloak of concessions) of the Papal claims in Italy. Less noticeable than the foregoing, yet far more potent as a cause of disruption, is the steady progress of education and increase of positive knowledge. And with this growing common-sense we have a proportionate dislike and distrust of all forms of religion and superstition, and a corresponding decrease in the number of those who supply the wealth and man-power without which no religion can survive.

Lastly we have that remarkable sign of dissolution which is manifested in the anxiety of a number of different sects to combine forces. Witness the union of the various Methodist kittens. Witness also that odd arrangement between the Anglican and Greek communions. Then, again, the efforts that have been made for a *rapprochement* between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. And, yet again, the pow-wows in progress between the Congregationalists and Baptists, between the Methodists and Presbyterians. All these things are definite proof that the Christian cat family is aware of its impending doom, and that it is rapidly approaching the time when it will be catalogued as an extinct species. For when cats and kittens of this variety begin to patch up the differences which brought them into existence, they are doing no less than re-entering the womb that gave them all birth—namely, the Realm of Fantasy.

C. S. FRASER.

A Working Library.

I CONFESS to a great liking for books about books. It interests me to learn how much books which have impressed me have impressed others, especially great minds or famous critics. The world of books is a vast one, life is short, and one despairs ever to read all one would like. There are hundreds of masterpieces I know only by name, and I gaze at their titles regretfully hoping against hope for that marvellous Utopia wherein I need do nothing but read and read and read. I love French literature, but I have to be content with Prof. Saintsbury's *Short History* or Lanson's, and I marvel at the extent of their reading or at their tremendous luck in being able to read so much. What a fascinating work is Saintsbury's *History of the French Novel*! He seems to have read them all or all that are worth reading, and though I do not agree with some of his judgments, how often is the old man right, and with what unerring precision does he hit the bull's eye!

Then there are those captivating booksellers' catalogues with prizes at prices unheard of—books you have been waiting for for years, scarce items never to be found in one's own peregrinations round the bookshops. How easy it is to do without one's dinners for a week to secure the beloved volume so that one can dip into it at any time. Does it not grace your bookshelf far more beautifully than even the best of presents?

The true bookworm must be a bibliomaniac, and I often wonder how many have been manufactured by old Thomas Dibden. You have not read his *Library Companion or the Young Man's Guide and the Old Man's Comfort in the Choice of a Library*? I am—in my heart—sorry for you, but perhaps it is for the best. Books stacked in every corner of the room or rooms you live in, piled up on shelves, crowding out bookcases or even the landing and stairs—that is bibliomania. It means a heavy weight round your neck, a comfortless home, if you like, but it can be Paradise. How the Reverend and Learned Samuel Parr, L.L.D.

(died 1825) must have loved *his* library. The catalogue issued after his death consists of 658 pages, packed with treasures in every branch of learning and literature. Did he read all these books? I do not know, but he certainly annotated thousands of them.

All this brings me to the catalogue of the books in the library of Charles Bradlaugh, issued by his daughter after his death. Bradlaugh was perhaps the greatest controversialist of his day, he must have lectured on thousands of occasions, he took part in a large number of debates, he was one of the most useful private members Parliament has ever known, he wrote innumerable pamphlets and books and articles. Was he a lover of great literature? Could one fancy his turning aside from "facts"—"What I want is," said Mr. Gradgrind, "Facts—nothing but Facts"—and lingering over Herrick or Burns? Did he see beauty in the prose of Newman or stately Landor?

For G. W. Foote, you will remember, literature meant life. How he revelled in Swift and Thomas Brown and Hooker and Jeremy Taylor. A fig for theology—why, this man could write! Foote was never so happy as when in the company of his beloved peers—he could write but so could they. The praise of Meredith was, for Foote, something greater even than all his Freethought victories. And if you got him to speak on Shakespeare . . .

Bradlaugh rarely quoted the great masters of literature as literature, though it is hard to believe he never read them. There is in his catalogue an edition in *Diamond* type of Shakespeare published by a cheap mid-Victorian publisher called Diprose. A useful book for reference perhaps, but fancy enjoying the great passages in all literature in *Diamond* type! You simply must have a finely printed Shakespeare. The marvellous language and thought of the supreme master absolutely demands it. Burns is in the catalogue and so is Byron. Herrick is absent, but Heine is there in a French version. I hope Bradlaugh devoured Heine even in translation.

There is *David Copperfield* only, of all the works of Dickens, nothing of Scott, and *Pendennis* and *The Virginians* of Thackeray. Charles Reade and Lytton are both absent, but *Les Miserables* is there in French, and so is Edgar Allen Poe—in what I presume is Baudelaire's famous French translation. I like to think that Bradlaugh did read some fiction, but it was evidently not his strong point. He preferred fact to romance.

But when you come to think of it, we really ought to be thankful his mind ran in some other way. Fiction is all right, but it is a good thing some man every now and then shuts his eyes to such frivolities and gets on with the serious business of life. And Bradlaugh's books offer a rare example of a working library, splendidly got together for its especial purpose.

Every book that would help him in his work as a Freethinker, as a philosopher or as a politician which he could find, he placed on his shelves. And he loved them as dearly as Parr or Dibden or Foote loved theirs. It was his one fear that his increasing debts might force him to part with them, but fortune favoured him there at least. They remained with him till he died.

First there were his copies of the "Book of Books." He knew the Bible from cover to cover, and there is a story of how he gave Robert Roberts the exact text the Christadelphian wanted but could not find in their famous debate. He must have made good use of *The Holy Bible; with 20,000 Emendations*. 1843, and the fact that he had studied Hebrew accounts for the Hebrew Bible in the list. Of the great Introductions to the Bible and Bible History so necessary to the Biblical critic, there is Horne's (still one of the best) and Lardner's as well as many smaller ones.

Bradlaugh's grasp of Christian origins is well shown in many debates, and there were few orthodox Christians who could hope to be his equal in this regard.

On the Freethought side, he was well represented. Most of the important books up to his day are there, Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses and other Lectures* he had, Inman's scarce works on Christian Symbolism as well, Giles' *Hebrew and Christian Records*, Feuerbach and Strauss and Renan and Robert Taylor and Diderot and Voltaire—one could hardly expect otherwise. Of course he had Dupuis and Sir W. Drummond and Jacolliot's *La Bible dans L'Inde* as well as half orthodox works like those of Kalisch.

Bradlaugh worked out a philosophy of Atheism early in his day and during his forty years of advocacy he made only very slight alterations in it. He based himself on Spinoza, but was most careful to show wherein he differed from that notable thinker. That he studied Berkeley is evinced from the fact that in his copy of this great philosopher's work he had made many notes. I am certain he was profoundly influenced by Berkeley's Idealism though I cannot recollect any mention of him in Bradlaugh's numerous debates. Hume, the antidote to Berkeley (if Berkeley could have an antidote) is in the catalogue with Fichte, Schopenhauer and Gillespie.

With this last Bradlaugh had a famous debate on *Atheism or Theism*, which, for those who were interested, Gillespie reprinted in one big volume in 1872. It contained not only all Bradlaugh wrote in the discussion and all Gillespie wrote, but also a great deal more which other people wrote or contributed in some way or other, and is most entertaining as a sample of Victorian and especially Scottish complacency in metaphysics. Gillespie was invincibly convinced that Bradlaugh retired hopelessly beaten in the encounter.

One has only to turn over the pages of the catalogue to see how thorough Bradlaugh was in most things he took up. You will find Madame Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy* there, as well as Allen Kardec's *Spirit's Book* and *The Medium's Book*, and there are many other books on Spiritualism. It was not for nothing Bradlaugh said in his debate with Burns, the Spiritualist, that he had made a twenty years' study of the subject. There is even a book on Palmistry. On the political and social side, the library had a remarkable working collection. Bradlaugh had to have facts and statistics and exact statements, and he seems to have spared no pains to get together just what he wanted in blue books and periodicals and such-like works of reference. French books abound and there are a number in German. A collection like *The Story of the Nations* series was inevitable, and there were also a number of standard works on the sciences such as biology, ethnology and so on.

Part II of the catalogue consists of books on Law and Legal questions, and they run into hundreds. Bradlaugh had a keenly analytical brain, and his law training made him a terror in the courts. I doubt whether he would ever have lost a case but for the religious bigotry of many of the judges before whom he came. But he based his cases on hard facts and precedent and was rarely caught napping. He had an iron nerve, and neither judges nor parsons—no, not even the whole might of Parliament—could awe him.

Tell me what a man reads and I will tell you what kind of a man he is. Charles Bradlaugh was a remarkable man, unique in his generation; and his library was typical of him; a working library of a practical, far-seeing reformer, with a passionate and loyal devotion to truth and freedom of thought.

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops.

Someone really ought to take Mr. C. E. M. Joad in hand and give him a course in philosophical reading. At present his capacity for misunderstanding and getting mixed is quite phenomenal. In a recent article in the *Week-End Review* he lets loose the following extraordinary summary as representing Mr. Cohen's position. Mr. Cohen, he says, has "certain knowledge" concerning the ultimate constitution of things, he knows also:—

That this universe was neither purposed nor planned; that life was an incidental by-product of physical forces, that the material and the alien conditioned and determined the vital and the spiritual. Mr. Cohen has reached certainty in regard to the ultimate nature, constitution and meaning of the universe.

This is a very hopeless mixture, a misunderstanding of the philosophical implication of the words used, and indicates a fundamental inability to understand Mr. Cohen's position.

First, Mr. Cohen is entirely without knowledge, or even conception, of what is the ultimate nature of the universe, or the ultimate nature of anything else. Ultimate things only exist to theologians and philosophical mendicants whose opinions are without visible means of support. And we must gently explain to Mr. Joad that if a man believes the universe has any meaning, apart from what man himself reads into it, he should call himself a Theist. Next, no one who really understood what he was talking about would to-day talk of life as "an incidental by-product of physical forces." Nor would anyone who understood the course of philosophical development put the material and the alien as the logical or actual opposites of vital and spiritual. Actually, it is the spiritual hypothesis which makes the "spiritual" alien to the universe, and with regard to the material and vital, there is no more opposition here than there is opposition between physics and chemistry. As has been explained in *Materialism Re-stated*, it is a question of understanding the functions of categories in science. But that is really an alien subject to Mr. Joad, nor is such comprehension essential to newspaper writing. Still, Mr. Joad would find it very interesting if he settled down to a mastery of these points.

The Vicar of St. Andrews, Leicester, writing in his Parish Magazine, tells parents that it is no good telling their children to go to Church if they do not go themselves. "If you, Mr. What-you-may-call-it, think that an extra hour in bed is more important than your child's soul I can only say you haven't the mentality of a normally intelligent earthworm." He adds that what this man needs is "not St. Andrews, but Narborough Institution." Example is, indeed better than precept, and the knowing children of to-day are doubtless well aware that only too often they are dispatched to Church or Sunday school only to "be out of the way." It is not their souls, but mother's freedom to get on with the Sunday cooking, and father's desire to sleep, or read the *News of the World*, that accounts for the fact that the declining attendances at Sunday schools are even as many as they are. And as soon as the children are old enough to follow mother and father's shining example, being dutiful children, they will.

Referring, in an article in the *Evening Standard* to the great output of cheap biographies, Mr. R. H. Bruce Lockhart, says: "There is in certain countries a danger to which biography is exposed," namely censorship in the interests of propaganda. "The modern treatment of biography can only flourish in a country which tolerates free speech. Here in Britain freedom of expression still enables authors to make human interest the keynote of biography." This may be true of biographical writing, but "free speech," whether on biography or any other subject, is not tolerated by the B.B.C. In a recent lecture a reference to the persecution of science by the Christian Church was altered to "orthodox persecution"; and suppression, which can be worse than altera-

tion—as in the recent broadcast description of the late J. M. Robertson's work—is as great a scandal. The marvel is that authors—and statesmen and scientists—will tamely submit their utterances in advance to the self-appointed censors at Broadcasting House, and allow them to tamper with them in a manner they would not tolerate from any Editor for whom they might write.

We are often moved to sympathize with the most scrupulous Catholics who, in the enquiry columns of Catholic newspapers, seek light on their scruples. Why they do not discuss them with their confessors is a mystery unless they find, as may well be the case, that priests have little sympathy or patience with what theologians call "wilful scrupulosity," not being bothered with it themselves to any extent worth mentioning. However this may be there are enough Catholics who are in this sort of trouble to keep a whole tribe of pious scribblers answering their questions in the Catholic press. T.D. (7355) in the *Universe* asks whether "dreams come from God?" The answer is as astonishing as it is unsatisfactory. "God can enlighten or guide us in a dream, but, if and when He does so, the Divine origin of the dream will be quite certain."

This can never have occurred to T.D. or he (or she) would not have asked this question. Later, in the same answer, the *Universe* scribe says, "a person who is ill and wants to get well may and should pray for a cure, but at the same time he must take the ordinary means of obtaining a cure, namely medical treatment." No doubt good Catholics may and do pray for cures, but few of them we imagine are so pious as to neglect the "ordinary means of seeking cures" and (sometimes) obtaining them. So that prayers and dreams would seem to be things that do not bother, and need not bother, healthy people.

A correspondent of the *Church Times* laments that "not a single representative of the Anglican Church, man or woman, had the will or the courage to protest against the opening of a Birth Control Clinic at Winchester." He adds, "all honour to the Church of Rome for her gallant efforts to check the incoming flood." Her gallant efforts will, we hope, have as much effect as those of Canute; but what are we to think of the description by this Christian gentleman of a civic institution in a Cathedral City as being provided to encourage "sexual indulgence?" That definition might surely be more suitably applied to the Church's monition to married couples, regardless of their poverty or health, to be fruitful and multiply.

Mr. Lloyd George's appeal to the Churches to rally for Peace, at the Free Church Council meetings at Sheffield, leaves us wondering what has become of the Rt. Hon. Gentleman's sense of realism. It is not so long since he was reminding some Christians at a Welsh chapel of the fact that Christian civilization is often brought to so-called "heathens" to the accompaniment of machine guns. The day after his Sheffield speech, suggesting that the Churches are the only resource against war, Dr. Downey, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool said that the Pope had given a lead, but nobody representing Protestant Christendom had invited him into his counsels. The President of the Free Church Council, interviewed by the *Siar* the next day says he cannot imagine the Pope joining in with the other Churches, even to prevent war, and therefore there is not much chance of anything being done. The President insists, however, that the Churches all stand "against all compromise" in this matter, and are always passing resolutions to that effect! Last of all Dr. Dearmer lets out the "story" (at which Fleet Street jumps), that some secret conclave of clergy, including an Archbishop or two, is going to meet and promulgate some ultimatum against war! If Mr. Lloyd George is, as he is said to be, a vigilant reader of the newspapers, he should find these products of his speech anything but reassuring.

Mr. Harry Price, the psychic expert, has just reported an extraordinary conversation with the late Sir A. Conan Doyle through an unimpeachable medium. If ever

there was proof of "survival" here it is. Yet Mr. Price believes neither in Spiritualism nor in the possibility of communicating with the dead—that is, if they are dead. Mr. Price believes Mrs. Duncan was a fraud and that Rudi Schneider, the greatest medium the world has ever seen, is another. Spiritualists everywhere are deploring the fact that so many genuine mediums resort to fraud when real phenomena fail to happen. Altogether it's a sad, sad world for Spiritualists and, apparently, for Roman Catholics.

For here is Father Woodlock, a celibate Roman Catholic priest, nearly beside himself with anger that Mr. Justice McCardie is to receive the guests at a ball organized by the International Birth Control Movement, and that such a ball is going to take place in spite of the fulminations of God's own Church. We suggest that the Church should organize a week of solemn prayer to the Almighty to stop the ball. Or if she could arrange for the second coming of the Lord on the eve of the ball He might carry off all the criminals to Hell in the twinkling of an eye? Something far more drastic than sermons should be the order of the day, and here is a real chance for a genuine miracle.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge is, in spite of its connexion with the Deity, feeling the pinch of our hard times. Why God does not look after his elect is one of the many mysteries connected with true religion. The Society has had to close down one of its large depôts and sack part of the unlucky staff. Another true opening for a miracle has been missed! In the publishing department, the Society has lost £3,000 in one year, which makes one wonder whether Christianity pays after all. At a meeting of the Society the other day, the Rev. I. Prestige frankly admitted that "on the whole, religious propaganda fails to reach the unconverted!"—and this after 235 years of the Society's constant efforts to rope in the infidels.

Mr. Prestige wants two books to be written which he thinks will do all that is necessary to reclaim the unbelievers. One should be "a superlatively small book about the Christian religion written with a special appeal to people outside the Faith," and the other "an outline of science and history from the Christian point of view." The rev. gentleman actually imagines such works will convert a convinced Freethinker. What optimism! and what nonsense! We predict that one day the poor old S.P.C.K. will be completely snuffed out no matter how "superlative" their literature will be.

Dr. Bicknell, at a recent meeting in connexion with the Oxford Movement Centenary, tells us that the "Oxford Movement was initiated to rouse the Church from its lethargy and to revive religion by making it deeper and more real." We venture to suggest it was the Freethought attack which roused the Church from its "lethargy" and that the same attack is responsible for the present Roman and Anglo-Catholic activities and the "Union" of various Protestant bodies. The fact is that the Church (that is, all the Churches) is fighting for its life against the most relentless frontal attack it has ever faced. On our banner is the word "truth," and a thousand Oxford or other movements will never prevail against us, for, as Milton put it, "Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

Bishop Chandler in an article in the *Church Times* reviews most of the anti-Christian movements in critical if rather vague terms. Evolution, he says, pointed to a golden age, which has not so far been fulfilled. Our "cheerful, cocksure optimism" has given way to "disillusionment, pessimism and despair," and while there is still a "temper of materialism" it is a "materialism on its death-bed." So after all Materialism is not utterly dead as it has been reported to be every year during the last fifty years. Then our "humanism" has degenerated into "animalism" expressed in "Freudian psychology and Russian Communism," and Secularism,

which used to profess "adherence to Christian ethics," has now developed "a fierce and uncompromising opposition to Christianity in every shape." The dear Bishop really should study the Freethought movement of to-day. He would not then exhibit such a fuddled mind. The truth is that the enemy is becoming a little too much for Christianity and Anglo-Catholicism will never stem the tide. It is too silly.

An interesting side-light on the influence of the one and only true religion in Ireland may be found in a book published by Jarrold's, and written by Mr. Denis Gwynn. Mr. de Valera once escaped from gaol and the author, on the authority of the *Evening Standard*, states that he (de Valera) frequently assisted the prison chaplain in serving Mass. He was thus able to make an impression of the Chaplain's key in the wax of an altar candle, and a drawing of this facsimile was incorporated in a humorous Christmas cartoon drawn by one of the prisoners and sent to Ireland under the nose of the prison authorities. Ingenuity of this kind in earth affairs should make it a romp-over in the Abraham's Bosom stakes.

Mr. E. Short, K. C., as Film Censor, has published his annual report, and under one of the headings for the rejection of films is the following reason, "Comic and irreverent treatment of religious subjects." This reason appears to be very pathetic considering the resources of Omnipotence, and the Film Censor at least is coming to its aid.

Dr. A. E. Garvie thinks that the primary "world problem" for the Churches is the effective presentation of the Christian Faith to non-Christian peoples. A report of his speech at Sheffield says:—

From a survey of the history of religion and comparative religions, he came to the double conclusion that all men were religious, and that Christianity alone fulfilled the deepest human need.

This is the sort of survey a professional Christian would make, and always arrive at the same conclusion. A less biassed survey would conclude not that all men are religious, but that large multitudes of them are vastly credulous and dominated by primitive fears.

The Rev. Dr. T. H. Ritson has been arguing that world evangelisation is needful because of God—because God is Father, whose heart yearns over lost sons. This was no doubt very inspiring to the kind of mentality that would listen to him. But it sounds to a modern intelligence as just so much babble in a First Century lingo. The picture of an Almighty God yearning for human beings to say they believe in him, and to flatter and cringe before him—which is what "worship" means is pathetic—and humorous.

A little periodical called *Values*—published by a well known firm of printing valuers—contains the following: "After King Solomon had built his temple he thought he would compile an inventory. We read that he began to make him a list of all the things in the house that he had builded, 'vessels of gold,' 'the vessels of silver, the candlesticks,' and the rest. But he got tired. So we read that 'Solomon left the vessels unweighed for they were so exceeding many the weight of the brass could not be found out.' The reputed wisest man who ever lived, and he couldn't put up a better excuse than that! And as it happened, the Temple was afterwards burnt to the ground. And it was not properly insured." Even if it had been insured, the fact remains that insurance does not cover an "Act of God."

Someone declares that "if we had a really Christian world, then the world would recover, for it would be based upon the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God." There's much virtue in an "if." It is strange how long delayed is this really Christian world. The brotherhood of man, etc., has been preached by hordes of priests and parsons for nineteen centuries, and there

have been millions upon millions of money to enable it to be established. But it hasn't arrived yet, despite the presumed divine help to assist its arrival. A possible explanation is that the Holy Book in which this "intriguing" ideal is enunciated was so badly written that Christians have inevitably been squabbling for centuries among themselves as to how exactly the Book is to be interpreted, and as to who are legitimate members of the Brotherhood. And as there is no hope of these questions being settled satisfactorily to all Christians in the next two thousand years, the world had better seek for common-sense solutions towards recovery.

The Rev. James Lockhart, the new President of the National Free Church Council, said that during forty years, leaving behind the dogmatic and sectarian attitude Nonconformity has reached open-mindedness and flexibility. What he ought to have said is that Nonconformity is a little less dogmatic and sure of itself, and a little less narrow-minded—thanks to forty years of Freethought criticism and ridicule. But it still believes in interfering with the right of the ordinary citizen to enjoy Sunday as he thinks fit. In other words, Nonconformity is still a public nuisance. The only way to still further improve Nonconformity is to reform it out of existence.

In the opinion of a Newport reader of the *Daily Express*, the Churches seem not to realize that a Christian "revival" depends upon them almost entirely. He adds that "Christianity properly presented is irresistible, but there seems to be an amazing lack of technique in the preaching of it." For our part, we should say that, thanks to the training colleges, there is no lack of preaching ability. It is the ideas which the preachers have to manipulate that are uninteresting to modern people. The modern mind is doubtful whether there is a God, whether there was ever a supernatural Being on earth called Jesus, whether there is a Heaven, whether Christianity is the "only true religion," whether the Bible does really contain a "message" from a supernatural Being, whether prayer is of any real use, whether professing Christians are any better than any other persons, and whether priests and parsons really have been divinely appointed to rule, guide and lecture ordinary mortals. The most fervent preaching fails to allay such doubts as these; for, after all, it is only assertion and assumption, and "the Bible tells us so and so." The modern sceptical mind is deuced difficult material to manipulate for a religious revival. The only hope of the clerical gentry is a widespread epidemic of credulity, or a large-scale reversion to the mentality common in *Anno Domini* One. For such is of the kingdom of Heaven.

Fifty Years Ago.

MEMORIAL.

A MEMORIAL has been drawn up for presentation to the Home Secretary on behalf of a mitigation of the sentences on Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp. It runs as follows:—

To the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Humble Memorial of the undersigned, Sheweth.

That George William Foote, William James Ramsey, and Henry Kemp were on Monday, March 5th, found guilty of blasphemy at common law and sentenced to imprisonment, respectively, G. W. Foote, 12 months; W. J. Ramsey, 9 months; and H. Kemp, 3 months.

Your memorialists respectfully submit that such an enforcement of laws against Blasphemy is out of accord with the spirit of the age, and humbly pray the mercy of the Crown in remission of the sentences imposed.

Friends will do good work by copying this out and obtaining as many signatures as possible to each copy. The Memorial and the signatures should be sent to the Home Secretary as speedily as possible. It is particularly requested that no other form may be used than the one given above.

The "Freethinker," March 25, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. BRODIE.—Many thanks for cutting, it will be very useful. Anything bearing on Bradlaugh will be valued.

R. R. HILL (N.S.W.).—Hope to publish soon.

A. READER (Birkenhead).—The gentleman in question appears to be a first-class bigot. May have more to say about him later.

C.M.—Sorry that the length of your letter quite prevents publication. Correspondents must bear in mind that letters must be brief if they are to be inserted.

W. F. ENGLISH.—However much the authorities may dislike an attempt to change the form of Government of the country, there is nothing to prevent, under the existing laws, such a change being made. There would certainly be an attempt to twist existing laws in such a way as to prevent such changes being made, but that kind of policy may be beaten, as it has often been beaten before.

J. HOUSRON.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops."

H.G. (Norwich) asks if the Prayer Book contains any prayer against drunkenness? The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany certainly says that "as by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright," we may be "supported in all dangers." This seems to be appropriate for the purpose you mention whether designed for it or not.

T.Y. (Hove).—There is nothing "allegorical" about the actual text. (Jonah xi. 10). "And the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah on dry land."

F.E. (Dulwich).—Strictly speaking Forster's Act violated all the principles for which the Nonconformists of that time said they stood, namely that the State should "forbid no religion, impose no religion, teach no religion and pay for no religion."

C. BOLTON.—Sorry, but we have been so snowed under by letters on the Achilles and the Tortoise that we have been compelled to reject the lot. The question has been debated for about 2,000 years, and we cannot devote the whole of our pages to its discussion to-day.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. Mason, 58.

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.

To-day (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." This is the first shot in the Bradlaugh Centenary Campaign in Glasgow, and we hope

that local Freethinkers will see that the meeting is well advertised among their Christian friends. Freethinkers should make the most of the occasion. Admission will be free, but there will be a number of reserved seats at one-shilling.

On the day before the meeting in the McLellan Galleries the Glasgow Branch is holding a "Social" in the D. & F. Tearooms at 7.0. Mr. Cohen hopes to be with the members and friends for a little while during the evening.

This is the last opportunity we shall have of reminding London Freethinkers and other friends of the "Social" to be held at the Caxton Hall, on Saturday, April 1. The gathering is held under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive, and there will be the usual enjoyable time with music, dancing and song, including one or two brief speeches. Tickets are 2s. 6d. each, which include refreshments, may be obtained from either the *Freethinker* offices, or from the N.S.S. General Secretary, at 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

The Manchester Branch brought its season to a close on Sunday last with two lectures from Mr. Cohen. The Chorlton Town Hall was well filled in the afternoon, and crowded in the evening, in spite of a perfect deluge for about half an hour before the time announced for the lecture. There were a number of questions, generally much above the usual level, that led to a useful discussion. Mr. Monks occupied the chair on both occasions.

On Thursday, April 13, Mr. Cohen will engage in a debate in Swansea with the Rev. H. J. Flowers. The subject for discussion will be "Is the Christian Conception of God Reasonable?" Further details will be announced later.

The new Chester Branch held its first public meeting in the "People's Hall." Mr. C. McKelvie, of Liverpool, gave an address on "The Essence of Secularism." We are pleased to learn that the lecture gave great satisfaction to those present, and that it gave a good send-off to the new Branch. We understand that the Branch received support from the Liverpool friends, and we trust this friendly co-operation will continue.

Mr. J. Clayton will lecture on behalf of the East Lancashire Rationalist Association to-day (Sunday) at 28 Bridge Street, Burnley, at 2.30 p.m., on "The Life of Charles Bradlaugh." The lecture will be illustrated with lantern slides. Judging from Mr. R. H. Rosetti's excellent audiences in the Phoenix Theatre last week, there should be a very full house to-day. At 7 p.m. Mr. J. Clayton will lecture on the same subject for the Blackburn Branch N.S.S., at 36 Oswald Street, Blackburn. We can promise an interesting lecture on both occasions.

The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. announces a lantern lecture on the life of Charles Bradlaugh, to be held in the Bristol Street Schools to-day (Sunday) at 7 p.m. Mr. C. H. Smith will be the speaker. The philosophy of the average citizen may be summed up as Football and Film Stars, but fortunately there are others who take a serious interest in life, and Birmingham possesses more than sufficient of the latter to make the meeting a great success.

The last, but not the least interesting indoor lecture for this season was given to the South London Branch on Sunday last by Mr. Albert C. White, on "The Coming Crisis Between the Church and the State." There were many questions, especially about church finance. The Branch will start its open air meetings at Brockwell Park and Clapham Common this week.

Apropos of what we said last week on the subject of withdrawing children from religious instruction, a friend sends us the following copy of an essay written by a

school girl aged fourteen. The essay is reproduced with the original spelling and punctuation:—

My idea of heaven is quite a simple idea and I am going to write it.

The floor is a soft white cloud just like silk with ruffles all round the edge. By the wall is a temdous throne with a man having a handsome face and a beautiful long white robe. Around him are many delicate looking angels and in front of him is a ring of maidens and youths dancing. All of a sudden two large golden gates open and a person comes in (he is also dressed in white) and kneels at the man's feet and asks for forgiveness. When it has been granted all the angels start singing "Praise him. Praise Him. Praise the everlasting king."

Comment is surely unnecessary.

Our suggestion that *Freethinker* readers might celebrate the Bradlaugh Centenary year by joining the National Secular Society—the Society founded by Bradlaugh, and to which he belonged all his life, and also securing a new subscriber to this paper, has borne fruit, but not so much as it might have done. After all the only way worth honouring Bradlaugh is by doing something to promote the principles for which Bradlaugh stood. And whatever Bradlaugh was he was first and always a Freethinker. Had he been anything else the fierce opposition he encountered would never have existed.

We should be pleased if our readers would oblige by sending us with as little delay as possible any reference to Charles Bradlaugh that may occur in the newspapers that come under their notice. Even Press Cutting Agencies cannot ensure that everything we ought to see comes to hand, and in any case it is better that we should have duplicates than miss seeing what may be an important item.

Sunday Cinemas is the question of the moment in Wembley. The Wembley United Christian Council has announced that it will fight them to the last ditch. Fortunately for Wembley residents of broader outlook there is a branch of the N.S.S. in the district that is making it its business to see that the bigots on the one hand and the compliant "agree-to-anything" merchants on the other do not succeed in robbing the district of a worth-while local improvement in amenities. A town meeting has been called for 8 p.m., on Monday, March 27, and local Freethinkers not attached to the branch should attend and vote.

Mr. C. H. Drewry of 19 Market Place, Beverley, Yorks, would be glad if friends willing to co-operate in a Bradlaugh Centenary Celebration in Hull, East Riding, and North Lincolnshire, would communicate with him with a view to the setting up of a Committee for this purpose.

RELEASE.

There is no hell that burns below
To which the unbelieving go;
There is no fire that doth not die
For those who do not live a lie.

There is no doom that men need fear,
There is no Devil, ever near;
There is no God who day and night
Can fill mens' lives with awe and fright.

There is no curse upon our birth,
There is no heaven but the earth;
There is no law but is man-made,
No pious faith that doth not fade.

Let us seek wisdom and the truth
For peace in age and joy in youth;
And face life's peril and surprise
With fearless minds and open eyes.

A.C.W.

"Powder and Shot."

IN these days of war, whether it be war in China, India or Peru, we are again sharply reminded that the official attitude of the Catholic Church is one of toleration of and incitement to war. According to the French Hierarchy:—

Every citizen must be ready, if necessary, to sacrifice his life to defend the essential rights of his country. (*The Universe*, February 10, 1932.)

The Chinese people are resisting the violation of the rights of their country. But where in the Catholic Press in France or Britain has there appeared an out-and-out condemnation of Japanese aggression or an unequivocal demand that the League of Nations should carry out the economic sanctions against Japan for which Article 15 of the Covenant provides? We have seen no indication that the Catholic Church, which has a recorded Catholic population in China of 2,563,426 (an increase of 32,582 on last year) is taking the stand which such a powerful organization could on this violation of the rights of its members.

On the contrary, we are given to understand that a strong and vigorous Catholic mission movement is prospering in Japan. In effect that means that the Japanese Imperialist Government welcomes and encourages a religious movement which will inculcate the minds of the Japanese that "enlightened and sacred patriotism" preached by the Catholics, which is so useful to war-mongering Governments and to armament firms.

"The Church has always taught that patriotism is a duty proceeding from the prescriptions of the Fourth Commandment of God," say the French Bishops:—

But the Church also demands that in order to exclude, as far as possible, the dangers of a war which would involve the whole world in a frightful cataclysm, and might well be the suicide of Christian Civilization, all men should unite to create an atmosphere of peace throughout the world.

We do not think that there is a pin's point of difference between small wars in which people are murdered, and war on a grand scale which involves the suicide of a civilization, from a moral as distinct from the Catholic point of view. In both cases the right of innocent victims to live is violated.

But the good Bishops apparently see no absurdity in creating on the one hand conditions for the perpetuation of war, and, on the other, attempting to create an "atmosphere of peace." In fact, they go further and provide an ecclesiastical sanction for the arguments of imperial governments for preventing any decrease in armaments. They say:—

The Church approves and favours a just nationalism, and recognizes the legitimacy of the belief that every country must possess a military force capable of assuring its interior and exterior security.

When we put the questions: Who decides what are the essential rights of a country for which the patriot should sacrifice his life; and who decides what is the necessary complement to safeguard these essential rights, what do we find? We find that it is not the Catholic Church, wide as its influence may extend. Still less is it the foolish patriots who are induced to lay down their lives through sheer delusion about the cause for which they fight.

Undoubtedly the responsible persons are those who monopolize the power to decide the destiny of the world of men. Persons who, having the economic and political power in their hands, use war to decimate the populations which their monopolies have deprived of employment, who use war to profit from the rich resources of the countries which belonged to the annihilated and

the dispossessed. The Catholic Church supports these people and upholds their power by its specious arguments about patriotism and its mockery of the necessary conditions for peace. Of what use to the community, says a plain man quite rightly, are wise laws for the preservation of peace when the greater part of the population of each country from the school-children to the justices engage in a national pastime of cracking each other's heads?

* * *

Mr. George Lansbury, M.P., Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, writes in the *Bow Citizen* :—

Here across the road I see a wondrous sight. As surely as the sun rises the brave, hard-working Reverend Mother and her Sisters waken to find outside their doors hard-pressed men of all ages—some from casual wards, others from the streets where they have spent the night—all waiting for food and drink, and a kindly thought and a blessing from these women, who ask no questions, apply no tests, but simply relieve need. They do not ask who is deserving or undeserving, because they know that God the Father knows all, and therefore forgives all. (*The Universe*, February 24, 1933.)

Whilst we do not doubt that Mr. Lansbury's heart is full of gratitude to the Reverend Mother, we would point out the danger of a party which calls itself Socialist having a leader who has so much spiritually in common with the Catholics and a membership which contains so many Catholics. We need not be surprised at the degeneration of the Labour Party in recent years when we know how it has allowed and encouraged Catholics within its ranks, and when we know that the reason for their being in the party was an anti-Socialist one.

A glance at the *Catholic Federationist* of some six years ago (November, 1926) may be enlightening. The *Catholic Federationist* laid down the points on which Catholics should concentrate inside the Labour Party, stressed the point that the Labour Party was no more sacred than the Conservative or Liberal Parties, and that it was little use Catholics joining the Labour Party, unless they were prepared to keep flying the Catholic banner there, and concluded by declaring that the way was now clear for a concerted attack inside the Labour Party on all those points to which Catholics were opposed. These points included the abandonment of Socialism as the aim of the Labour Party, the breaking away of the Labour Party from the Socialist International, opposition to birth control, opposition to secular education and the support of the claims of the provided schools, and the abandonment of the General Strike.

We know how effectively the Catholics have operated with regard to some of these points, and that in practically all of them the Labour Party has adopted a spineless policy if not one actively in favour of the Catholic demands.

The strength of the Catholic faction inside the Labour Party and the success of its policy are reflected in the weakness and failure of that Party.

It has been truly said that "he who eats priest dies of his dinner."

G.F.G.

Anyone who reads and feels and understands with enjoyment a Shakespeare sonnet is, while he is reading it, a poet, too, according to his own degree of imagination. A great poem is, after all, nothing but a poet's record of his own experience at the full stretch of his imagination.

Frank Keridon (in "The Adventure of Poetry.")

There is no subject worthy of the serious study of mankind upon which the last word has yet been said.

Lord Oxford and Asquith.

Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

VI.—MAINLY JOHN STUART MILL.

JOHN STUART MILL supported Bradlaugh at Northampton by his pen and by a donation. One of Mill's own supporters in Westminster at least thought these actions likely to prejudice his electoral chances there; but Mill was one of the few politicians who would not allow such a consideration to weigh with him. In his *Letters* (Edited by Hugh Elliott 1910) his high esteem of Bradlaugh is plainly recorded. Writing to Mr. Gilpin (Bradlaugh's Liberal fellow-candidate in Northampton), Mill said: "I think Mr. Bradlaugh would also be a very valuable Member of Parliament. He holds opinions not cut after the pattern of some three hundred Liberal Members of Parliament, and I think him able to sustain them with ability which would give them effect." (Vol. II., p. 121.) Never was prediction more justified in the event. Writing to the gentleman in Westminster above mentioned—one Beggs, a member of the Radical Committee—Mill said: "With regard to Mr. Bradlaugh's political opinions and conduct all that I know is greatly in his favour. No one who is active in politics on the Radical side seems to me less open than he is to the much-launched accusations of being a demagogue or a panderer to popular prejudices. He seems to me to be a thinking man, who forms his opinions for himself, and defends them with equal ardour whether they attract or alienate those whom he seeks to influence. I may mention as one example that he is a strenuous supporter of representation of minorities which, whether right or wrong (a thing I do not now discuss), at least proves him to be no friend to the despotism of the greater number; and, as a second example, his earnest Malthusianism, which places him in opposition to a vast mass of popular prejudice, supposed to be particularly rife among the Radicals of the working class. If the capability of taking, and the courage of maintaining such views as these is not a recommendation, to impartial persons, of an extreme Radical politician, what is?" (p. 124.)

In a very different quarter, namely *Memoirs: Personal and Political* by Lord Selborne (Roundell Palmer), a former Lord Chancellor, a Churchman and a Tory, we find the author deploring the line taken with regard to Bradlaugh on his first return to Parliament. Sir Kenneth Muir Mackenzie, in a note to Lord Selborne's reference to Mr. Bradlaugh, says: "Mr. Bradlaugh was before Lord Selborne both in the Court of Appeal and in the House of Lords, and Lord Selborne had a high opinion of Mr. Bradlaugh's ability and manner in conducting his case." (Vol. II., p. 491.) We will close this note with an extract from one of Mr. Gladstone's "duty" letters to Queen Victoria, written on the day when Bradlaugh had appeared at the Bar of the House. (*Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd Series. Vol. III., p. 115.) It concludes: "Thus the affair terminated for the moment. Mr. Gladstone however fears that it will soon again be heard of, and that, if the constituency of Northampton think fit to enter into conflict with the House of Commons, the constituency will be the winner." This was also a true prediction albeit little likely to please Her Majesty.

A.C.W.

I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human effort scope;
But since life teems with ill
Nurse no extravagant hope.
Because thou must not dream,
Thou needst not then despair.

Empedocles.

Rome, Canterbury or Edinburgh?

PROBABLY the most grotesque and baseless of clerical pretensions is that one which assumes that a parson, being appointed to his job by God and not by man, has the right to dictate his creed to you and to me individually—nay to impose it upon you and upon me for our individual unquestioning acceptance; and to demand that each one of us shall observe the commands implicit in it under the pain and penalty of damnation here and hereafter. Some of us who have rejected this particular pretension with a decisive negative have of course had the experience of damnation *here*—at least to the extent of losing our job or being boycotted or ostracised in our particular trade or profession—though what the cleric means by damnation is separation from supernatural and heavenly joy and spiritual communion with his particular god and his fellow-believers who with him kow-tow to that Deity.

Let us, brethren, in a spirit of love for the truth ponder upon this for a brief space. Who are these arrayed in black robes, and whence came they? That is to say, how are their credentials attested? In one case—the least illogical—the priest refers us to the Pope at Rome—the Head of the universal undivided and indivisible Church of an alleged God Almighty ruled with an unchanging and unchangeable creed which has controlled its policy and propaganda during the whole of its existence. In another case a priest refers us to his Bishop, who holds his place in a line of descent connecting him in the order of apostolic succession with the original disciples of Jesus Christ—or rather the Lord Jesus Christ—for the oriental aristocratic title always gives a more mouth-filling and impressive description—the actual commission from a high being deposited at Canterbury. And yet another lad o' pairts in black tells us he is invested with supernatural authority by the laying on of the hands of a Presbytery-*Scottice*, a governing board of male believers, the majority of which is composed of fellow-clerics, who *ipso facto* individually get their seats on the board through being "called" to a particular congregation (the Presbyterians abhorring Bishops), which board has above it other governing or appellate bodies—first, the Synod; and second the General Assembly of the Church, which meets once a year at Edinburgh under Divine authority, the chaimanship of a Moderator; and the supervision of the King's representative who is called Lord High Commissioner. One is rather stumped in trying to explain how the more "democratic" Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists explain the derivation of *their* respective Divine commissions. But they all affect to claim the same source of authority, though Rome rejects the claims of all those others as being without any supernatural sanction, and therefore invalid. Rome we had supposed has ever been the one and only; and has repudiated and rejected all persons outside her pale presuming to have a share in any Divine Commission. So that most Freethinkers were amazed to read the Pope's appeal to all those who claimed to be Supernaturalists—and *not to professed Roman Catholics only*—to engage their energies and prayers in combating Freethought propaganda. By the way, it should be noted that the name "Presbytery," used by Presbyterians to describe a governing board over congregations in a particular area, is used by Roman Catholics to describe the dwelling-place of a priest or priests.

The particular pretension mentioned is not only grotesque—it is without basis, it is bigoted, egotistical, stupid and arrogant. But it is the Presbyterians in particular who illustrate its sinister features in their daily walk and conversation. Socially

the Presbyterian minister is a bad mixer. That is to say his poorer members only get official visits at long intervals of five minutes at a time. His well-to-do bourgeois constituents he will spend hours with. Now the Roman Catholic and Episcopal ministers are better up to their jobs than that. Not that they cannot enjoy a chat with intellectual equals or appreciate a good lunch or dinner but most of them do not retire to a stately villa in an elegant suburb and cut themselves off from social intercourse with the poorer members of their flocks. Many a Roman Catholic priest living under ascetic conditions has been known to leave his bed in the middle of the night in the vilest weather to answer the call of a very poor parishioner who had become seriously sick. The writer has seen a judge of the Supreme Court, as an office-bearer in the Episcopal Church, climbing stair after stair of slum tenements on a periodical visitation to poor members of his Church. The Presbyterian clergy of the city are smothered by Presbytery meetings and Committee meetings; by conferences on social customs; by Bible Society meetings; by deputations to local authorities; by philanthropic meetings; Home and Foreign mission meetings; even political meetings—insomuch that one wonders when any of them find time for parochial work. But mark their stately stride and their particular pose! They are the goods! Even the "laird" must hide his diminished head. Edinburgh is ecclesiastically equalling herself with Rome and Canterbury as a rival office of the Most High. At least, that section of Edinburgh which flaunts the standard of Calvinism. But visit any ordinary kirk of the Scottish Metropolis, the parson of which is not a fashionable orator, and you will get a whole pew to yourself!

IGNOTUS.

The Causes of the Crucifixion.

"I repeat that it is no more than a fact that the larger portion of all truth has sprung from the collateral; and it is but in accordance with the spirit of the principle involved in this fact, that I would divert inquiry, in the present case, from the trodden and unfruitful ground of the event itself to the contemporary circumstances which surround it." (Edgar Allen Poe, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt.")

THE four Evangelists agree that the Jewish authorities brought Jesus up before Pilate, the Roman Governor, for judgment. Matthew and Mark report Pilate as saying that Jesus was accused of "many things"; but neither they, nor John specify any accusation; and the above reference may have applied to the inculpatory evidence, and not to the nature of the indictment. Luke, however, is explicit, for he says that the accusers declared: "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a King"; and confirmed this by adding, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judæa, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place." (Luke xxii. 2-5.)

In harmony herewith we find, Matthew, Mark, and John, affirming that Pilate demanded of Jesus "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Thus from the assertion which Luke attributes to the Jewish authorities, and from the question which all the Evangelists attribute to Pilate, it is perfectly clear that political agitation was the charge preferred against Jesus at the Roman tribunal. None of the Evangelists states how the accusation was supported. But in other parts of their works they all credit Jesus with teaching and conduct that might well have been produced against him on this occasion. Jesus was perpetually fore-

telling the birth of a social order termed "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God," about to be established by a reformer called "the Messiah," who was popularly supposed to trace his descent from King David, the national hero of the Jews. This, of course, implied a revolution, and one that must have had little attraction for the Romans. "The kingdom of heaven" should be reckoned among the catch words that have a different meaning for different men. Jesus doubtless explained how he took it, but his explanations have not survived, obviously because at a later period the majority of his followers considered them detrimental to their interests.

As regards the Messiahship, Jesus at first assigned it to some other person, and rebuked madmen for attributing it to himself. Then he began to entertain the suggestion; and finally drew from Simon Peter the frank avowal "Thou art the Christ." (Mark vii. 29.) After this he openly assumed the rôle, even going so far as to make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem just before the Passover in the style traditionally ascribed to the Messianic King. The reports show uncertainty on his part whether he would be able to establish "the kingdom" by human means, or whether, after perishing in the attempt, he would subsequently accomplish it by divine aid. From his incidental communications and his occasional methods, the nature of his system may be clearly inferred. He pronounced the poor, blessed and the rich, accursed. (Luke vi. 20, 24.) He bid his hearers sell their goods and distribute the money. (Luke xii. 23.) Telling of a rich man and a beggar, he said that after death the former was tormented, and the latter comforted to make up for the inequality of their earthly lives. (Luke xvi. 19.) He forbade treasuring (Matt. vi. 19) and gave the instance of a farmer who died suddenly when he proposed to build larger barns. (Luke xii. 16.) The Law of his land was accounted of divine institution, yet he treated it as defective (Matt. v. 21-27), and even condemnable (Matt. v. 33, 38, 43; xix. 17). He committed and approved breaches of the Sabbath, which God was said to have appointed for absolute rest; and he invalidated this commandment by saying that the day was made for man and not man for the day (Mark ii. 27), although the purpose assigned in the statute itself was to commemorate the divine repose after creation. (Ex. xx. 8-10.) The scribes who were the accredited expounders of the aforesaid law, and the Pharisees, who spent their whole lives in meticulously obeying its ordinance, were the favourite objects of his vituperation. He called them "vipers" (Matt. xii. 34), "fools and blind" (Matt. xxiii. 17), "serpents and offspring of vipers" (Matt. xxii. 33), and "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matt. xvi. 4), and did not scruple to accuse them of teaching children to cheat their parents (Matt. xv. 5; Mark vii. 11), or rob widows (Matt. xxii. 14; Mark xii. 40), or murder the prophets (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xi. 50.) He drew provoking contrasts between riches and poverty, and promised his indigent followers "a hundredfold house and lands" for any they had left on his account. (Mark x. 20.) He expected to cause violence. "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34), "I came to cast fire upon the earth" (Luke xii. 40), was his bold assertion. The zealots were a sect of theoretic anarchists, who refused to call any man "lord," opposed the Romans, and numbered among their adherent persons named Sicarii, or daggersmen, from short swords concealed beneath their clothes. (Jos. B.J. iii. 8; Ant. 18.) One of the twelve Apostles whom Jesus chose is called Simon the Zealot in Luke vi. 15, and in Acts i. 13, whilst in Matt. x. 4 and in Mark ii. 10, he receives what is said to be an equivalent designation. On the night of his arrest, Jesus

told his disciples to sell their clothes for swords (Luke xxii. 36), and one of them drew his sword in defence of him a few hours later, when the act was quite useless. (Matt. xxvi. 51.) Moreover, he had set the example of violence by driving the traders from the Temple precincts on the occasion of his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. (Matt. xxi. 12; Luke xix. 45.)

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded.)

Muckrakers and Morals.

"It is no easy job to take the moral law out of an Englishman's mouth. He loves to mumble it . . . 'Excellent morality!' But on what does it all rest? Upon these words, *if it is proved*. That is the worst of morality; it can only operate on facts, and facts must be proved, and in order to prove them they must be enquired into."—Augustine Birrell.

In the last analysis moral law, like the British Constitution, is unwritten. It would be well if the censorious puritans of all denominations recognized this fact. Not only is morality, in general, a matter of geography; morality, in particular, is a matter of heredity, environment, education, and, in result, certain mental and physical states. In short, morality is something which cannot be prescribed by one person for another. How often do we read that a judge or a magistrate, giving judgment according to law, or facts, or both, observes, "this is not a Court of morals." Now what Mr. Birrell says in reference to certain new enactments has a large application. "It is only because we have lived so long under the bondage of moral ideas . . . that we find it hard to be shunted suddenly on to another line of thought altogether." Because this "bondage of moral ideas" is so widespread, the harsh and inquisitorial judgments of the clergy on persons and institutions are, to a large extent, safe against reversal or appeal. The clergy, the ministers, are a class apart. It is assumed (of course fallaciously) that "they are not as other men." If that were the case it would only add to the audacity of their claim to be specialists in morals. As R.L.S. says: "It is easy to be virtuous when one's own convenience is not affected . . . We can all be angry with our neighbour; what we want is to be shown, not his defects of which we are too conscious, but his merits to which we are blind."

Morality, as the Christian religion sees it, consists in the practise of certain "virtues," and immorality in the commission of certain "vices" or sins. Of the total Christians who have lived in the world since its foundation only a microscopic proportion have, according to its own standards, reached "Christian perfection." The duly canonized or beatified saints and holy persons, numerous as they are, only serve to bring out that the Christian standard is, by most Christians, more honoured in the breach than in the observance of it. If we take the so-called Golden Rule—the Sermon on the Mount—how many of its precepts are preached in their plain meaning, not to mention practised? Christian morality fails by the utilitarian test and by the test of comparison. "Sex," which is what the clergy mostly mean when they talk of morals, is a sphere in which Christian morals are notoriously bankrupt. Last year the Trinidad Parliament passed a measure to facilitate Divorce. When it came to England for the Royal Assent a deputation of Anglicans went to the Colonial Secretary praying him to advise His Majesty not to give his assent to this "unchristian" measure. The Secretary of State declined, for as the *Church Times* bitterly put it (April, 1932), "the Government is determined that indissoluble marriage shall no longer exist under the British Flag!"

An eminent Chancery practitioner, according to Mr. Birrell, on being informed on one occasion that the actual suitor in a litigation wished to attend consultation, said roughly, "I will have no flesh and blood in my chambers." Truly does Mr. Birrell comment: "Flesh and blood are very apt to disturb the mental repose of a positive opinion."

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Clear Thinking.

To live a happy, useful life which is, I think, the ambition of most, the first essential is clear thinking. For clearness of thought is just as important morally as it is intellectually, since conduct consists very largely of thoughts and ideas put into action, or given an objective existence. He, therefore, who assists men to think fearlessly and independently renders a valuable service not only to intellectual but also to moral progress.

On the other hand, the person who would have us focus our attention on things which are outside the realm of experience, or attempts to confuse our minds and obscure the vital issues of life with problems which are at best trivial, or would lull our critical and reasoning faculties to sleep with eloquent lectures or scholarly essays replete with undefined terms, misplaced sentiment, shallow thought, and fanciful flights of the imagination, is an enemy of such progress. He is just as dangerous an enemy as the man who distorts or invents facts, or suppresses knowledge. Certainly he may be most sincere, but his sincerity in no way can diminish the effect of his views on the minds of the ignorant and the credulous. Sincerity is no excuse for error in thinking, nor can it prevent, much less remedy its evil consequences to conduct.

If we aspire to clarity in thinking we must ever be on our guard against those who endeavour to divorce thought from reality and against those who are skilled in the art of word-juggling. Also we must be courageous. It is our duty to follow the pathway of thought to its logical end, irrespective of the obstacles placed by tradition and the cherished beliefs. These must be cast to one side in the course of the journey. Science owes its very existence to those who have broken the shackles binding man to past notions, and who with unprejudiced, attentive minds sought new explanations for the old ones which were so patently inadequate. Others, however, faltered on the way. Emotion to them was stronger than reason; they felt somehow that, even though facts did not support them, certain opinions which they held could not possibly be wrong, because if they were life would be more serious, more complex, more terrible to contemplate. Bigotry is frequently the outcome of this attitude, for that is the way in which the people who adopt it express their disapproval at the facts of life not being as they desire. Here also do we discover why many still cling to the belief in a supreme being, the belief in immortality, the belief that the just will reap a reward, and the unjust will be punished hereafter, and other similar beliefs founded on man's exaggerated sense of his own importance. These beliefs would not be countenanced if man swept away the debris of tradition and superstition that encumbers his mind. But there is a sort of comfort in holding to long-established theories, and man is afraid to undertake the task of clearing his thoughts. He likens it to a voyage into an unknown territory where danger and terrors of all kinds may await his coming.

Such fears are groundless. Life, even if it does fall far short of our ideals, has to be faced; that it should be faced bravely, cheerfully, and with determination is all that clear thought demands.

Clear thought is destructive and revolutionary; it sees man a transient speck in a vast, unheeding ocean, yet it is undaunted; it is uncompromising, broad in outlook, and rational; moreover it is free. This is a vital point. Clear thinking necessarily involves free-thinking. By which we mean thinking that is free from fear, free from coercion, free from the grim embrace of the spectre of the past, and free from the subtle tyranny of the emotions. When all mental fogs have been dissipated, man's intellectual and moral advance will be swift and confident. His happiness will then be assured.

TOM BLAKE.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
Tis yours to judge, how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.

Goldsmith.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, John Katz, B.A.—“The Advance to New Loyalties.”

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 7.0, Tuesday, March 28, Dr. F. A. P. Aveing—“New Views in Psychology.”

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.) : 7.0, Debate—L. Ebury (N.S.S.) and C. Kohn (S.P.G.B.)—“Has Freethought a Constructive Policy.”

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4) : 8.0, Monday, March 27, Mr. P. Goldman—“Freethought and Socialism.”

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S.—Usual meeting uncertain owing to local Sunday Cinema Campaign. Members will be informed of arrangements by post.

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 26, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tison 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.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead, near Hamilton Square) : 7.0, Wm. P. Spann (Birkenhead) President Birkenhead (Wirral) Branch N.S.S.—A Lecture.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools) : 7.0, A lantern lecture on the life of Charles Bradlaugh by Mr. C. H. Smith.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (36 Oswald Street, Blackburn) : 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—“The Life of Charles Bradlaugh.”

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street) : 7.0, Members' meeting (Business important).

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Institute, London Road, Brighton) : 7.30, Public Meeting, Mr. J. Turner—“The Origin of Morality.”

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—“The Life of Charles Bradlaugh.” Illustrated with lantern slides.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen (President of the National Secular Society and Editor the *Freethinker*)—“The War of Opinion: Charles Bradlaugh, 1833-1933.”

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Freethought addresses by several members of the Branch.

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

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street) : 7.15, Mr. F. Davis—A Lecture.

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