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

Views and Opinions.

Mrs. Eddy and her Dupes.

I WONDER what it would have been like if the life of any of the alleged founders of a religion—Jesus or Mohammed, for example—had been written by an informed and impartial onlooker? It is hard to say, but it is quite certain that it would not have been anything like the life of either that we have. The historic character would have been presented as more or less of a military fanatic obsessed with the idea of being an instrument of God. The mythical Jesus, assuming his historic reality, would have been deputed as an ignorant religious fanatic of the kind very common in all Eastern countries. Neither would have been the characters that are given to us in the Koran or in the New Testament. But the life of the man and the story of the myth were written by those who held particular beliefs concerning them, and they had the fortune to be in a position to see that counter lives were not permitted, or if they existed, were doctored or destroyed. As with men so with gods. Both are fortunate if they happen to be born at the right moment. Men often suffer because they are born too soon, gods suffer just as often if they are born too late. Since the time of Mohammed and of Jesus scores of potential deities have trod the earth. Some have died neglected. Some have been summarily suppressed. Some have ended their careers in an asylum. To-day the daily paper, the reporter on the look out for "news," may give the worker of miracles a certain notoriety, but his reign is a short one at best, and he gives place to the latest sensation in the divorce court or to the hero of the newest financial scandal. The man who is sent by God to-day may be seen parading the streets bearing a big placard calling upon people to repent their sins and be saved, but the crowd hurrying by to catch their trains in the morning or to get their dinner in the evening pass him by almost unnoticed. Prophets and messengers from God are with us to-day as they were with those of

olden times, but they have made the mistake of being born too late. A dozen centuries ago they might have ended as founders of new religions.

* * *

Exposure Complete.

But there are exceptions, and I recently read the life of one. It is written of one who died but a few years ago, and who founded one of the most colossal impostures of modern times. Christian Science has a large number of followers in England and America, with a great number of Churches, and in *Mary Baker Eddy*, by E. S. Bates and J. V. Dittmore (Routledge, 16s.), there is a very complete exposure of the founder of this new religion. The biography, which extends to nearly 500 pages, is fully documented, and would be enough to blow sky high anything but a religious sect. Dr. Bates is responsible for the literary portion of the work, but Mr. Dittmore is mainly responsible for the material facts. And Mr. Dittmore is in a position to know the facts. He was head of the publication Committee work of the Church and a director of the Mother Church in Boston. For ten years he was trustee of Mrs. Eddy's estate. Thousands of letters passed through his hands and he received permission to take carbon copies of these. He had some fifteen hundred letters of Mrs. Eddy's alone. He had for long had in view a life of Mrs. Eddy, but it was not until he discovered the extent of Mrs. Eddy's plagiarisms, and the attempt of the Church to suppress any biography that told the truth concerning her that he was "energised into action." His work is a complete destruction of the legendary Mrs. Eddy. She appears in her true character, and it is one that should disgust anyone but a Christian Scientist and he will neither read nor listen to anything against his creed. But this biography is indispensable to anyone who desires to know Mrs. Eddy, and, therefore, to understand Christian Science.

* * *

Ignorance and Rapacity.

The character which emerges from this life of Mrs. Eddy is that of an egotistical, lying, rapacious woman, greedy for both money and power, a confirmed neurotic, often a drug-taker and one whose statements, whether about herself or about others, need to be very carefully checked, and, usually, discarded or seriously amended. Every one of these characteristics appear in Messrs. Bates and Dittmore's book and in every case it is supported by citations from unquestionable documents. Nothing but a creed such as Christian Science could withstand such a complete exposure, and with the prescience of almost a genius Mrs. Eddy built her creed so as to guard against this exposure becoming common among her followers. For it is part of their training as Christian Scientists that they shall encourage no wrong beliefs, and in practice this means that they will not read anything

against their belief, or listen to anything against it, but will go on repeating the same things like the quoted Hindu repeating the mystical, powerful, but non-understood "Om." There could be nothing better designed than Christian Science to reduce a human being's brains to pap and to lower his intelligence to zero. Fortunately for Christian Scientists they are always in contact with the wicked world around them, and that to some extent acts as a saving force.

Mrs. Baker Eddy (Eddy was the name of her third husband) was born in 1821, the youngest of six children. Her parents were poor, struggling farm people, and a photograph published in *McClure's Magazine* shows her birthplace as a very humble barn-like structure. In the official life of Mrs. Eddy she took care to provide another picture enlarging the size of the building and doubling the number of its windows. The same liberties were taken with her ancestors. She adopted anyone with a reputation that suited her. One of these adopted ancestors was promptly dropped when it was discovered that the lady had never been married. Of her early years she wrote that at ten "I was as familiar with Lindsey Murray's Grammar as with the Westminster Catechism; and the latter I had to repeat every Sunday. My favourite studies were natural philosophy, logic and moral science. From my brother Albert I received lessons in the ancient tongues, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." Her biographer points out that all this is sheer romancing. She knew nothing of any foreign language, ancient or modern; of the other subjects she knew next to nothing, and the scraps she picked up she misunderstood. Grammar she never mastered, and punctuation she ignored. In fact in the end she engaged a professional "ghost" to rewrite *Science and Health*, and there Mr. Dittmore gives some most amusing instances of very commonplace matters. Mrs. Eddy's own explanation of her ignorance was "After my discovery of Christian Science most of the knowledge I had gained from school books vanished like a dream." So apparently did her knowledge of the books she had stolen from to compile "Science and Health." Her forgetfulness was providential.

* * *

A Rare First Edition.

A turning point in her life was her acquaintance with P. P. Quimby, the real originator of Christian Science. Quimby was one of those quacks who flourished in the small towns of the United States and who dabbled in cures by "animal magnetism" and, later, by faith-healing. He died from a neglected abdominal ulcer, but left behind him a mass of manuscripts which came into the at least temporary possession of Mrs. Eddy. The publication of the Quimby manuscripts in 1921 placed beyond doubt the fact of Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health* being nothing more than Quimbyism redressed. The first edition of Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health* was almost naked Quimbyism. Subsequent editions underwent numerous alterations and the Christian Science leaders did what they could by buying up copies of the first edition for destruction. Almost any price may be obtained to-day for the 1875 edition. In 1885 a professional "ghost," James Henry Wiggins, was employed to rewrite *Science and Health*. His account, given in chapter vi. of Bates and Dittmore's book makes very interesting reading. The book had already been edited fifteen times, and the existing state of the work staggered even Mr. Wiggins. Mr. Wiggins rewrote the whole book. It was the only way he could introduce order into chaos. He gives many illustrations of Mrs. Eddy's ignorance and lack of education, and of her readiness to adopt his re-

marks as her own. Thus she came to him one day with the enquiry, "Is there any difference between Agnostic and Gnostic?" Mr. Wiggins explained the difference and had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Eddy reproduce the explanation in the *Christian Science Journal* as her own. Mr. Wiggins's opinion of Mrs. Eddy may be expressed in two passages. "No, Swedenborg and all other such writers are sealed books to her. She cannot understand such utterances; and never could, but dollars and cents she understands thoroughly." "Mrs. Eddy is nobody's fool."

* * *

Murdering Intelligence.

I must leave those who wish for detailed and documented evidence of the character of this woman to read the book itself. As I have said, no one but a leader of a religious sect could survive such an exposure. I know of no other occupation in which any person could pursue so barefaced a career of duplicity from Spiritualistic medium to so stupid a creed as Christian Science, and could yet be held in honour by so large a number of people.

Consider the quality of the Christian Science methods and the discipline to which it subjects its dupes. First, it adopts the lowest of tactics to prevent its followers finding out the truth. Some years ago by organizing a boycott against newspapers—through advertisers—it managed to bring one large publishing house to its knees. It also exercises, through its local organizations, a boycott of all booksellers who display books for sale which attack Christian Science. The last public instance of an attack on a publisher was that organized against Scribners for publishing Dakin's *Life of Mrs. Eddy*. It buys up things to which it objects, whenever that is possible and so suppresses them. There is not a more serious threat to freedom of publication than that organized by Christian Science. The evil is only limited by the opportunities it has for exercising it.

Second, it secures both cash and unintelligent obedience by insisting that its Churches must always use the latest edition of *Science and Health* and forbids students taking even written copies for the purpose of preaching. Independent preaching is not encouraged in the Church, even within the four corners of its "sacred" book.

The type of intelligence it fosters by its principles is deplorable in the highest degree. "Malignant belief" plays a great part in its philosophy, and this means that every true Christian Scientist will avoid reading anything against his belief for fear of inviting disease or disaster. They will not only not read, so far as is possible they will not even think out of the set tracks. A right belief is everything, a wrong belief leads to inevitable disaster. The only reason why Mrs. Eddy died is, so it is said, was because of the malignant beliefs that attacked her from the outside. We are brought back to the crudest and most primitive form of magic. And it must be remembered that this form of discipline is exercised by the individual himself. He is the custodian of his own dope, and administers it to himself. Nothing that exists is so beautifully calculated to rob a man of whatever intelligence he possesses as is Christian Science. It is the philosophy of the savage, plus the cupidity of the shady American financier. Nothing more contemptible exists, even in the field of religion. If it does not reduce all its honest followers to a state of imbecility the credit must be traced to the sanative influences of ordinary life.

The Bradlaugh of America.

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."—Ingersoll.

"We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning-star."—Emerson.

CENTENARY celebrations are sometimes weird affairs, and not infrequently serve to advertise the organizers instead of the object of veneration. At the Shelley Centenary at Horsham, some years ago, far greater emphasis was laid on the poet's association with the unknown Sussex County families than on his literary pre-eminence. Indeed, at a meeting of the Shelley Society, when a member pointed out that the author of *Queen Mab* and *Prometheus Unbound* was a militant Atheist, the frank avowal nearly broke up the society on the spot. Hence, it is so necessary that centenary celebrations should not be in the hands of busy nobodies.

Charles Bradlaugh's reputation, for instance, will be adequately safeguarded by the leading British Freethinkers, and it is to be hoped that Ingersoll, the centenary of whose birth falls this year, will be as jealously guarded by Intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic.

There is no American Freethinker more worthy of remembrance than Ingersoll. He was of the race of the Sun-Trader, whom Robert Browning once worshipped this side of idolatry. For a whole generation he was the mouthpiece of liberty and fraternity, believing, as he did, that freedom was the very breath of brotherhood. He was, first and foremost, the orator of Freethought, and flamed the evangel of Liberty over a continent badly in need of such inspiration.

Ingersoll occupied the position in the United States of a militant Freethought orator and writer similar to that which Charles Bradlaugh filled here in Britain. Both were giants, physically and intellectually, both could sway large popular audiences, but here the resemblance ends. Bradlaugh sought to beat down Christianity by sheer force of logic and law. His speeches read like judicial utterances by the side of the brilliant, sparkling orations of Colonel Ingersoll. America dearly loves rhetoric, and Pagan Bob as an orator had no superior in the United States. In full flood he was as resistless as the Falls of Niagara, and his success on the public platforms was phenomenal. Being taunted once that he feared to meet certain clergymen, he replied cheerfully that he was willing to meet them all together in mass formation. It was no vain boast, for he triumphed over such antagonists as Cardinal Manning and Gladstone as easily as over hard-shell, small-town evangelists who had the hardihood to attack him.

Ingersoll wrote too, in a style quite as brilliant and delightful as his spoken words. Gladstone complimented him on his writing "with a rare and enviable brilliancy." It was true, for he was as doughty an antagonist as Voltaire. For example, Gladstone taunted Ingersoll that in quitting Orthodoxy he was riding a wild horse without a bridle. Ingersoll retorted crushingly that this was far better than riding a dead horse and dreaming of progress. Bon-mots, indeed, may be found on every page of his voluminous writings. How good is his jest that "with soap, baptism is a good thing." How incisive his remark: "Had the Presbytery of Chicago been present at the burning of Servetus, they would have quietly turned their backs, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves."

Ingersoll's masterpiece, *Some Mistakes of Moses* is a Freethought classic, second only to Paine's *Age of Reason* in point of popularity. It still commands a sale wherever the English language is spoken. A generation after his death his lectures and orations are as lively and as readable as when they were issued fresh from the press. Such literary vitality is the surest test of his power, for it is very rare that controversial matter is so richly endowed as to survive the ephemeral purposes of the moment. Shelley had this gift of so brightening the coarse web of controversy with the golden thread of his genius, until it became a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. At heart a poet, Ingersoll shared this gift, and he was no less exalted when he spoke of the radiant hopes of humanity as when he described the exquisite beauty of a little child's laugh. His lectures are full of prose-poetry, and his oration on the grave of Napoleon is almost lyrical in its sonorous periods. Uttered by a vivid and powerful personality, graced by the arts of the born orator, no wonder the impassioned phrases thrilled the brains and flushed the cheeks of thousands. If in his attacks upon religious Orthodoxy Ingersoll appears to be full of fun and levity, it must be remembered that it is ridicule that kills. Gravity is what the priests want, for they know full well that opponents who treat their abracadabra too seriously play their sorry game for them.

Imagination and humour were the qualities in which Ingersoll surpassed the orators of his time, but his humour was his most unassailable work. When he had a law-office at Washington, lightning struck the church next door. Ingersoll said: "An offended deity may have meant that bolt for me, but what markmanship?" Once, during a law case, he had to quote from a legal work, *Moses "On the Law of Mandamus."* The judge asked facetiously if this was the same gentleman referred to in the *Mistakes of Moses*. "No!" responded Ingersoll. "I am quoting, your honour, from *Moses 'on Mandamus'*; my own book refers to *Moses on God damn us.*"

A thorough humanitarian, Ingersoll's work is full of a fine and noble indignation against all that is cruel and despicable in theology. Reproached with being a mere iconoclast, he could reply that from tens of thousands of minds he had helped to lift the awful belief in a personal devil and eternal torment, and banished some very degrading and uncivilized theological conceptions which oppressed his fellow countrymen. It was not to the credit of the Americans that he was so much alone in his championship of Liberty. "Why are you here?" asked Emerson of Thoreau when he visited him in prison for liberty of conscience. "Why are you not here?" rejoined Thoreau. It was a shrewd thrust from the militant to the passive intellectual.

Ingersoll's enormous influence and personal qualities are undisputed. His books still circulate throughout the English-speaking world. To Mark Twain he was a hero; Huxley, Gladstone, and Foote recognized his real worth. To tens of thousands of Britons and Americans he was an inspiration. The Ingersoll treasured in our memories was a keen-eyed warrior, as well as a very noble man, who fought in the Army of Human Liberation, and who never wavered in holding aloft the standard of Freethought against all the gods in the Pantheon and whole armies of priests and their satellites. He paid a heavy price for his championship of Liberty. Had he been Orthodox he might easily have become President of the Great Republic of the West. As it is he is one of the sweetest memories of his country and generation, and an inspiration to posterity. He chose the better part, for he found his fellow-men chained within the prison of Superstition. It was his constant purpose to break

those fetters and set Humanity free. When the United States of America escapes from the fog of Puritanism into the clear and glorious sunshine of Freedom it will be owing largely to the unselfish devotion of men like Robert Ingersoll, whose life-work proves the indispensability of Freethinkers in a world governed by superstition and commercialism. There is profound truth in Ingersoll's jesting remark that it would have been far better for America if, instead of the Pilgrim Fathers landing at Plymouth Rock, the same rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers.

MIMNERMUS.

The Malaise of Civilization.

TROUBLES that beset our post-war world are so menacing as to excite dire forebodings. Articles and arguments appear on such questions as "Is Civilization doomed?" or "Can Civilization be saved?" Others, less despondent, proffer all manner of counsel as to ways of improving the material side of things. We possess, indeed, a multitude rather than a paucity of councillors and prescriptions. Among them is the suggestion that though we continue to get a measure of sustenance and shelter in our present, if faulty tenement, the surest way of securing a sounder habitation would be to begin by destroying the existing one altogether.

A more tenuous line of thought is concerned with the spiritual or cultural aspects of the situation. It approaches the promotion of European unity by an appeal to the sanctity of its cultural tradition. Historic associations that distinguish a peculiar contribution to civilization and human development from those that pertain to such other systems as the Orient. This is but an appeal for certain limitations. It has special reference to aspects of ancient literature and philosophy which have become accepted as belonging to European temper. Blended, that is, with the Judaic-Roman cultus embodied in the later synthesis of Christianity, which until a recent period made up so largely Western religious and social ideals.

Active to this end is the Neo-Catholic school of historic interpretation. It has its leading exponent in the person of one, Christopher Dawson, with various books in this metier to his credit. In another vein follow the resilient, voluble brethren, Chesterton-Belloc, whose onslaught upon modern trends is heralded by the slogan "the counter-attack through history." Their effusions are received with curious respect in our contemporary Press, for their aim is to show that our present failure is due to falling away from medieval ideals, and our only hope of recovery is through returning to them. Still the issue raised by these sophists is a vital one. For revolutionary contentions of a quite opposite character are also in the field, equally confident of their absolute validity. Let us then consider it from an independent regard.

Diverse elements commingle in the chequered course of intellectual and cultural progress in Europe or the West. It arises after long effort and follows no ordered sequence. Valuable gains to thought and nascent science accruing in one age are lost or ignored in another. Institutions are created that provide for the first time in history for true political life—the participation of free citizens in the public affairs of the State—as in the *Ecclēsia* or assembly of the antique Greek City-State, or in a more organized form in the Senate of the Roman Republic of its great days. They failed to root themselves as a leading factor in Western political advance. The Greek world, after a brief intellectual efflorescence, fell under Roman

dominion; the Republic dissolved into a despotic Empire—which ended in collapse. But the Imperial office emerged in a fresh guise, from the chaos that followed. The Christian Church, growing to be the leading cult of the declining Empire, resumed at Rome its supremacy as a seat of supernatural authority, based on an alleged divine revelation.

European development therefore has continued under the ægis of theocratic monarchy. The King, consecrated by a sacred priesthood, in an ordained order, is the theory of the medieval system. When something in the way of free institutions re-appears, it is in the form of a Parliament or conference between the King and representatives of his subjects. It has fallen to our own country to play a decisive part in the gradual establishment of Parliamentary Government, the foundations of political freedom, and to educe a comprehensive doctrine of its related associations. Coincident with this movement and the weakening of the old authority since the Reformation, scientific inquiry has been furthered, resulting in the gains to knowledge we possess, happily, to-day. All which has helped to disintegrate medieval beliefs at large. Together with the growth of a body of humanist literature, philosophy and art, it opens up the means to a wide modern synthesis along quite other lines.

Though some progress had been made in all these things abroad by the dawn of the present century, the forces of medievalism were strongly entrenched in Europe. The two most powerful empires on the Continent were citadels of absolutism. Had they triumphed when the storm broke in 1914, elements of reaction would have been strengthened in a manner gravely to jeopardise such freedom as then obtained. That peril was averted, but the sequence of the struggle remains to be worked out. The strains and dislocations set up by the catastrophe have unloosed subversive and egoistic factors with singular effects. In place of general liberty ensuing, types of dictatorship and neo-autocracy have arisen in lieu of the old. Apart from minor shows, the two most pronounced examples come from Italy and Russia. One has subverted a liberal system under a peculiar State tenet dubbed "Fascismo." The other is a seizure of power by a Communist Party under the pretext of declaring a "dictatorship of the proletariat" as the prelude to a world-revolution similar in kind.

Both have had wide repercussions; Fascism in the German sphere, Bolshevism, the world over through its organized propaganda. Even here, apart from avowed disciples, it appears to be regarded by certain intellectualists as the latest theory in advanced idealism, partly, perhaps, from its Anti-Christian attitude. On the other hand protagonists of medievalism boldly assert the efficacy of its claims to-day; echoed in a minor key by other Communions. This confusion of outlook, contradiction of rival theories of guidance, lack of comprehensive driving principle and purpose to stir the mind and heart of humanity, is the spiritual malady afflicting civilization.

A pertinent reference to the position comes from a recent address to the French Academy of Political and Moral Science by Dr. Benesh, the Foreign Minister of Czecho-Slovakia. After referring to European perturbation he said: "The post-war struggle was between intellectual rationalism and the dictates of passion, instinct, and sentimental revolt. There was a new vacancy for the intellectual leadership of mankind." He further indicated his faith in the part that France and Great Britain would take in this work. What then does intellectual rationalism properly embrace? The prejudice or misunderstanding which obstructs appreciation of this noble term is instanced in the re-

mark of a leading Liberal journal, the *Manchester Guardian*, on the death of J. M. Robertson, respecting his labours for "that somewhat arid creed . . ." Arid creed! This of a body of doctrine and conclusions in the field of religious, cosmic, and psychic inquiry derive from all knowledge and experience, set against the proved fantasies of supernaturalism and superstition. Then as free inquiry is only secure in an atmosphere of political liberty it is committed to the steady maintenance of those institutions best calculated to serve this purpose. As philosophic culture links with all other phases of illumination, æsthetic and social, it draws on the total heritage of light and achievement for modes of enrichment of mind and heart and well-being.

This implies in action an access of vivified intelligence and power directed towards securing fuller and finer life through *ordered* endeavour. It carries with it a bracing psychic tonic and ministration that nerves to renewed confidence and courage in the task of recovery; for in this spirit we are already half-way to success. It consists with the great school of English Freethought, extending its method and genius into wider fields, where its exponents may well take a leading part in the next onward movement of enlightenment and amelioration.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

Persecution of Freethought Societies in Germany and Austria.

Such is the title of the Nineteenth Bulletin of the Executive Committee of the International Union of Freethinkers. The Executive Committee is of the opinion that it cannot hide the truth from Freethinkers under pain of incurring the quite inadmissible moral responsibility for the attacks on liberty of thought and freedom of expression, not to mention those on personal liberty, perpetrated by the present German Government. We would no longer be men, we would be doormats with our servility, if we allowed the extraordinary persecution of German citizens to pass without protestation whatever their political opinions or religious views. Here is the bulletin of the International:—

"The Freethinkers' building in Berlin, *Freidenkerhaus*, the headquarters of the German Freethinkers has been shut by the State authorities, only the receiving office connected with the carrying out of cremations being allowed to function. The branch offices are occupied by troops. The Viennese *Freidenker*, the monthly journal of the Austrian Freethinkers has been banned by the police. The Executive Committee of the International Union of Freethinkers, on behalf of one of its members imprisoned in Germany for no other reason than for his opinions, raises an indignant protest against the systematic persecutions organized by the German Government. It calls upon all sections of the International to see to it that all civilized countries manifest their indignation at these barbarous practices which carry us back to the most terrible times in the history of the world."

DR. TERWAGNE, *President*.

PR. HARTWIG, *Secretary*.

DR. MILDE, *A member of the Committee*.

A FRIEND from one of the big German towns has arrived to give us the following details extorting us to communicate them to his comrades of the International and to all sympathisers.

The evolution of Hitlerism has brought about the dispersal of the Freethought Movement. It has not

yet been banned but, in effect, all its activities are at a standstill. The *Freidenkerhaus* in Berlin, Gneisenaustrasse, was shut down on March 18, and only the assurance section has been left undisturbed. The Freethought journals continue to appear, but they contain neither substantial matter nor criticism. Many officials are out of action (arrested or in hiding). In certain towns the filing cabinets containing the lists of members, and all the office equipment and libraries of the organizations have been destroyed. It must also be mentioned that private libraries have been destroyed or burnt in the same way. There are some offices of the Freethought Movement where all the furniture, typewriters, etc., have been totally destroyed. Many local groups which have no premises of their own in which to meet, find it impossible to bring their members together. All public servants who do not wish to lose their jobs are obliged to profess Christianity, and the national, racial, and Christian principles of education. They are forbidden from working in left-wing parties or for the Freethought Movement. It is forbidden even to put rooms, public or municipal buildings at the disposal of these organizations.

Henceforth all children undergoing compulsory schooling are forced to participate in religious and Christian teaching (except the Jews). It seems, however, that in Prussia those children who have not already had religious instruction will be exempt in the future; but all children who enter the schools this year will be obliged to take it. At Easter the youthful celebrations, which among Freethinkers' children replace the confirmation and communion celebrations of the Christian Churches, were with very few exceptions forbidden. *There has been practically no resistance.*

All public officials are re-entering the Church, some to deceive the enemy who is quite willing to be deceived, others in abandoning their conviction.

All the Freethinkers of the world must organize moral resistance and for the resurrection of the German Freethought Movement.

No doubt all the Freethinkers in the world will carry out this duty. But what is of highest importance is to throw light on all the attacks upon liberty made by the reactionaries in Germany. Failure to do so would be weakness and a danger. It should be brought about by external action which, in default of the internal action that had been counted upon, ought to play a great part in restoring to Germany a regime of liberty.

T.

(From *La Pensée*, April 16, 1933.)

MATTER.

What force is it that can transform dull clay
Into a sentient body, which has power
To multiply, to make fruit from the flower,
And when its work is done, to pass away?

Yet not dissolve—for deep within the earth
Is stored the lives of generations past,
All nature's organisms come at last
To dust, yet still retain their native worth.

Matter has always use, though death has shorn
Its life away, and stayed its vital growth.
Our Mother Earth has, reincarnate, borne
Bodies returned to her through death. So both
With and without life matter has endured.
Ageless and indestructible, tis thus immured.

Anon.

Acid Drops.

We have had to call attention many times to some of those who by "an inscrutable dispensation of providence" are permitted to occupy semi-judicial positions. The latest example is offered by Mr. R. Stuart Rodger, the Manchester County Coroner. At an inquest this person is reported as saying, after swearing-in a jury:—

I have just administered the oath to you. We have been reading about a trial where there appears to have been no oath administered or taken. All I can say is that there can be no justice in any court or community in which the Almighty is not acknowledged and revered.

Mr. Rodger is evidently a very ignorant and a very bigoted person. He must be aware that if the twelve men before him had all decided to affirm instead of taking the oath he would have been compelled to accept their service. The man does not appear to know that in an English Court God is only there so long as some people desire his presence. Those who do not are legally entitled to dismiss him as an irrelevancy. Such men as Mr. Rodger are doing their best to divest an English Court of the respect it should arouse. Mr. Rodger should restrict his activities to a mission and leave the judicial field open to better men.

In the *Daily Dispatch* (April 11) is a pretty story from Barmouth. Just as evening service began at St. John's Church a sheep walked up the aisle, and after a short inspection of the altar, returned and entered a pew. Now if this was a lost sheep there is good authority for saying that its return should have been welcomed by the others. The "Good Shepherd" left the ninety and nine, sought the lost one, and brought him home rejoicing. Not so the Churchwardens of St. John's, Barmouth. The lost sheep had no sooner settled in his pew, and, we expect, assumed an attitude of reverent devotion, when these ruffians "chased him out of the church." The poor sheep, plainly a pious one at heart, must have reflected that these men were not very faithful followers of one who said, "I know my sheep and am known of mine."

The Rev. F. Edwards writes to the *Daily Telegraph* a doleful screed about the plight of Church Schools and Training Colleges. He says the "Secularist" Society "is more aggressive than ever," and "the Church has surrendered schools at an alarming rate." What are the facts? Only 26 per cent of the children in elementary schools are now in Church Schools. Many of these schools were redundant, many more were insanitary and unsuitable for further use. The Hadow Report faced the fact that the parochial system has broken down, and in the interests of the health and education of the children, arrangements have been made for their transfer, and, where necessary, their transport, to suitable (Council) premises. The, later, Ray Report will mean, as Mr. Edwards says, closing more Church Schools, especially in rural districts. As to the teachers, only one third of them are now trained in Church colleges. These are facts to make every reasonable man rejoice. If the Church wants to stem the tide of child welfare and educational progress it must do so at its own charges. The Church schools, says this gentleman, will "pass away." We hope they will.

The *London Letter* of the *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* (April 12) contains a paragraph on Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's visit to America, in which the writer says that it is reported that "when the President invited the Prime Minister," he used words "which may become historic." Roosevelt is supposed to have said, "Do come and spend a week-end with me. In that week-end we shall do more for God than has been done for a very long time." This may well have appealed to the maudlin piety which Mr. Macdonald finds useful in times of difficulty, but the more these conversations do "for God" the less they will do for mankind. When we think of the sort of machinery that functions in politics of the United

States and of the "influences" and "interests" which operate in our own politics, we are bound to say we find them much more worthy of organized sanctity than of honourable and competent statesmanship. "A week-end with God" is a favourite function with the Salvation Army. We doubt, however, if the President and the Premier will go to the penitent form, and, if they do, whether the results will be profitable to this troubled world.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool (Dr. Downey) addressing a meeting at Widnes on behalf of the Liverpool Cathedral Building Fund announced that he had received a contribution of £25 from "a Nonconformist minister, who desired to remain anonymous." It is such a rare thing for a Christian of one denomination to give money to another, and such a shameful thing in the eyes of his own denomination, that he dare not give his name. Perhaps the gift was really intended as a test of the scrupulosity of Catholics as to the origin of money given to the Church. If so this Nonconformist minister must be as innocent as he is unusual, for the Church has never hesitated to take money for her own purpose no matter from whom it came or by what means it was acquired. Even a "rake off" on a shady or criminal transaction can be elevated into an act of repentance, "restitution" or reparation. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners with their revenues from slums—and in some known cases from even less reputable sources—may be mentioned here lest we might be thought to suggest that the carelessness above-mentioned is peculiar to the Roman communion. Dissenters, of course, are supposed to be more careful, but if they would not take the proceeds of a raffle, strict evangelicals have always been known as more generous to religion than to the workmen and servants in their employ.

A correspondence in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (kindly forwarded by a resident Freethinker) deals with "Science and Religion." It arose out of a very sensible complaint by a local educationalist that "the spectacle of a girls' school appealing for funds to build a chapel when its laboratories are primitive or non-existent excites my resentment." To this a pious writer from the Australian Club, who appends to his signature "M.A. Trinity College, Cambridge," replies, "Where, if not in the school chapel, shall a boy or girl learn to lay deep in their character the foundations of the Christian faith," and, with seeming liberality adds, "by all means let the science laboratories follow and be well used—when the chapel day by day has led the child's mind to the knowledge of what is eternal." Here we have the blunt admission that if they cannot "lead the child's mind"—that is, poison it—before it begins the real pursuit of education, they have little chance of holding its allegiance thereafter.

The *Los Angeles Examiner* (March 16) has a picture of a crowd kneeling in the open air at Long Beach, at a Mass of thanksgiving—that the recent earthquake was no worse! "Even while they prayed and gave thanks occasional tremors shook the earth beneath them." Long Beach "is now so used to recurring shocks that so long as one is in the open, safely removed from threatening walls, it takes an unusually severe tremor to cause alarm." Instead of praising the human prevision and stoical courage that puts panic to flight, Dr. Mel Trotter, who preached the sermon to a congregation some of whom wore handages as "a mute testimony to their injuries," drew "lessons of sacrifice and courage from the disaster." The Church will draw "lessons" from disaster of any kind, and, instead of blaming God for them—as according to its view of His powers it should—praise Him that he has killed or maimed so few. Meanwhile all the work of prevention and cure and relief is done by man.

From the *Stamford and Rutland News* comes a fine sample of clerical manners. The Rev. F. Davenport, Vicar of St. Martin's, Stamford, at the Annual Parochial Meeting, denounced "three-quarters" of his parish-

ioners as "pagans." Their crime is that they do not go to Church. Says the irate Vicar, "It is true the nearer you are to Church the further you are from God. A good part of our congregation comes from Wothorpe"—an outlying district—"The only interest shown by many nearer the Church is to say that the bells give them a headache." Nor is this the worst of it. It "always annoys" Mr. Devonport "to see people chucking away pounds on frivolities, and then saying, when it comes to the Church, it must be 2s. 6d. instead of 5s." He complains that he "is no longer a minister or pastor, but a parish official to come and go at the call of all and sundry." He even suggests that "there is no reason why those who listen-in to a wireless service instead of coming to Church should not give something to the Church just as if they were present." The upshot of all this violent language was a proposal to get men and women collectors to go from house to house and "remind the residents of their responsibilities." We do not envy the collectors their job, for who is too generous after being called a "pagan?"

The Rome Correspondents of several journals "put over" an obviously inspired tale about a visit of Herr von Papen to the Pope. The sting is in the tail of this tale. It reads, "It may be taken for granted that the Vatican will not do anything which might be regarded as encouraging the exaggerated forms of nationalism now being displayed in Germany." But, since Hitler is a Roman Catholic, and since Catholicism is, and has been for centuries the most fruitful breeding ground for anti-semitism, it may also be taken for granted that when His Holiness counselled the German Bishops to work for "moderate" courses he very deliberately refrained from any explicit condemnation of the immoderation which he and they knew was then operative. "Moderation" is a lovely word, but what in the name of God is moderate anti-semitism?

Following on his speech at the recent Free Church Council meeting at Sheffield, in which he called on the Churches to engage in an anti-war campaign, Mr. Lloyd George is now in negotiation with the Council, which has set up a Committee of ways and means, as to the proposed campaign. Any propaganda for peace, by Churches or any body or anyone is all to the good, but we fear that, if it is to preach Christianity as the cure for war—and that is what Mr. Lloyd George suggested in his speech—the new campaign will be just so much wind and fury signifying nothing.

If the Free Church Council wants to make a useful contribution to world peace let it cease to provide chaplains for the armed forces; let it urge upon its members, clerical and lay, to abandon their associations with every form of war-like organizations from Boys Brigades to the Brigade of Guards; let them, since they are supposed to believe that "God has made of one blood every nation under heaven," put an end to the impudent and mischievous operations of their foreign missionaries, let them, in short, practice what they preach, and example may do more than much campaigning. So long as every Non-conformist boy is taught in the Sunday School to be "a Christian soldier" it will be difficult to believe in the good faith of the bulk of Christian pacifism.

The Duchess of Hamilton, whose son, Lord Clydesdale, led the successful expedition to Mount Everest, opening a missionary exhibition in Glasgow, said that her son's success was due "because these very Christian principles which this exhibition stands for have been followed." She added that there are "many Mount Everests to conquer in the spiritual world." Not Lady Houston's money, nor the scientific equipment and personal intrepidity of Lord Clydesdale and his colleagues, but the fact that the "little party out in Purnew were filled with brotherly love for each other and the good-fellowship that we should like to see over the world today," was responsible, according to Her Grace, for this fine achievement. There is, however, no region in which

loyalty to purpose and to colleagues is so common or so productive as the realm of scientific exploration and adventure. It is man's conquests in the actual and not the "spiritual world" which break down divisions that religion created and fostered, and the zeal for knowledge and humanity inspires heroism and devotion compared with which "missionary enterprise" is contemptible in its arrogant futility.

There is no novelty about a proposal, boosted in the *Leeds Mercury*, that ministers of religion should have a course of "practical psychology" in order that they may "minister to the mind diseased" or agonized. The Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead, of the Brunswick Methodist Church, who thus proposes says that "the doctors are on one side and we are on the other of that great central terrain where the real battle is," i.e., in the mind and body of the sufferer. This is true, although not in the sense suggested, and if he will take a leaf out of the cautious book of the Anglican Convocation, Mr. Weatherhead will find reason to doubt whether parsons can properly or usefully dabble in "healing"—whether of mind or body.

He says, "do not let us leave such momentous issues to charlatans and quacks," and proposes "joint action" by doctors and ministers. The clear object of this proposal is to secure for the minister the credit of what the doctor does for the patient. When the doctor can do no more, then people call on God, or the parson. Mr. Weatherhead, recognizing this, wants to get professional sanction for what he calls "psycho-therapy," which, in point of fact, is only "Christian Science" (in well-to-do-circles) or Peculiarism or Pastor Jeffreyism among the poor and ignorant. The priest as healer is probably the most ancient and dangerous of all "quacks" or "charlatans."

A report of the Methodist Standing Committee on Sunday Questions says that, "Serious attention was given to the action of the cinema interests in intervening in local decisions relating to the opening of cinemas on Sundays, and certain steps were indicated whereby the attention of responsible authorities might be directed against such activity." We gather that it is quite in order for Sabbatarian bigots to use whatever means they fancy to prevent Sunday opening, but it is quite all wrong for the cinemas to do likewise to achieve Sunday opening. Looking at these noisy, canting and despicable Sabbatarians, we can only say that their God is worthy of them.

Says Sir Norman Angell: "We English have the belief that if our hearts are stout it does not matter how thick our heads are." For our part, we are not so sure that this belief is a monopoly of the English. Any race that had had the misfortune to be reared under the influence of the Christian religion might arrive at the same belief.

Preaching at the Central Hall, Manchester, the Rev. A. E. Witham said:—

The Twelfth Century was an age of faith. There were no questions, no dubieties. Popular thought and philosophy and science were all Christian. How easy it must have been to believe in God when the whole environment of the age leaned towards it. At the time of the Deists, however, with their chill bias against enthusiasm, at the time of the French Revolution, or in our own period, how much more difficult it is—much harder to nourish the soul when we are told that we have not got a soul.

The report from which this is taken was headed "Faith in a Dark Age." This should serve as a warning. The period when the whole environment leaned toward faith was an age when popular thought, and philosophic and scientific thought were all in fetters—an age of filth, of grossest superstition, and of brutal customs. It was the renaissance of pagan thought and learning that began the redemption of the Christian world from the blight of Christian faith upon the human mind.

One can always expect a certain amount of religious slush at Christmas and at Easter. This year we seem to have got a bigger dose than usual. Since the Pope announced a "Holy Year," crowds of journalists have been talking about the anniversary of the death and resurrection of "Our Lord and Saviour" as if these mythical events really happened; and as the death of God Almighty is invariably put down to the "Jews," a number of very religious writers do not hesitate to explain the outbreak of anti-semitism in Germany—in guarded terms, of course—as some sort of punishment for the horrible crime of their forefathers.

For example, Mr. Sidney Dark is allowed a double-page spread in *John Bull* (which surely ought to know better) in which the "beautiful" Gospel story is actually taken as thoroughly historical. Although it has been riddled through and through, and although there is no evidence whatever for any details about Jesus except the anonymous writings in the New Testament which were inspired by hatred of the Jews, after writing as if he deplored the anti-semitism for which the Christian Church is entirely responsible, Mr. Dark coolly adds:—

The Nazis are moved by the same insensate fury as the Jews were some nineteen hundred years ago, when they stood in a packed crowd before Pilate's palace and yelled the demand that Barabbas should be released and that Christ should be crucified.

This artful way of pretending that the "packed crowd" of Jews yelling for the "crucifixion of Christ" is exactly similar to the Nazi sadists who outraged every scrap of human decency in an attack on a defenceless people living in their midst as decent citizens, is just the insidious anti-semitic propaganda which keeps alive the hatred of the Jew; which fosters it by pretending to deplore it; just as every anti-semitic always pretends that his best and truest pals are Jews. The work of Free-thought is plain: destroy the vindictive myths and legends wrought in a superstitious age, which foster hate and malevolence. That is the way of Humanism.

We never thought there was a buying public for printed sermons, but presumably there is, and anyone now can buy a volume of twenty-five prize sermons picked out from the work of 690 competitors for 10s. 6d. A recent religious reviewer of this twaddle (for that is all they can be) is very sad. He complains that "an Easter sermon which mentions immortality but not the Resurrection is particularly depressing. Sensational language prevails, but singularly little teaching." Comment would be superfluous.

The Rev. Dr. W. R. Maltby declares that spiritual deliverance is the gift of God—not something we can earn. It is God who takes the initiative; we are the receivers. Now that is a very comforting thought for Freethinkers. It suggests that the Christian God is considerate enough to leave them alone—reserving his gift for the child-like, the sheep-like, and the superlatively credulous. For such are of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us all be grateful for his loving mercy.

Canon Peter Green declares that three or four hundred millions a year is wasted on gambling. One is inclined to suspect that the "moral indignation," which some of our parsons conjure up in regard to gambling, arises from the thought that, if only the gamblers could be made properly religious, the millions now wasted on gambling might be diverted into the coffers of the churches. Needless to say such a diversion would be merely another form of wasted millions by gambling—the gambling in this case being on the chances of dodging Hell and winning a seat in Heaven.

The outbreak of fresh controversy between Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics over the proceedings in commemoration of the Oxford Movement may be, as a Nonconformist journal says, "a family affair," but it is

of interest to outsiders for the moral to be learned from it. It reveals the kind of "family life" which the Christian religion engenders while claiming to have the monopoly of the gift to unite all men as brothers and to usher in a reign of Peace and Goodwill. For dis-uniting mankind, nothing so potent as the Christian religion has been invented since the "confusion of tongues" at the Tower of Babel.

Skipping is good for the nerves, says a writer. Perhaps this explains why our nervous Modernist theologians skip from one "progressive revelation" to another, in order to ward off the Christian enemy of the moment—Secularism.

In regard to Church Union and South India, the Bishops and Standing Committee of the General Council of India, Burma, and Ceylon by unanimous vote declared, concerning inter-communion, that it had "never intended to convey the impression that in its opinion ministries of other Christian bodies at present in separation from us are of equally certain validity or identical with those of Churches which have retained the succession of Bishops." The Bishops may profess to believe, that "all men are equal in the sight of God," but they are not prepared to admit that all parsons are! This incident is a genuine piece of the only Christianity the world has ever known.

Dr. Lyttleton is reported as saying that without the teaching of religion all secular teaching is meaningless. Most secular knowledge has some relation to the facts of life, and the life which a child has to live after leaving school. And while such is the case it cannot be meaningless. For our part, we should prefer to affirm that all secular teaching is enhanced by the addition of the teaching of a rational philosophy incorporating the best ethical ideas and ideals which mankind has so far accumulated. The addition of the Christian religion to secular teaching merely gives the child a false perspective. It gives him a false notion of the world, of mankind, and of the origin of ethical ideas. It certainly gives secular teaching a meaning, but that meaning, being based on the speculations and superstitious fancies of a half-civilized people 2,000 years ago, is an erroneous one and cannot help but be harmful and misleading to the child.

Fifty Years Ago.

SUPPOSING no one enters heaven until the last great day, there are one or two questions which necessarily arise—we intend no pun). The maddest Christian does not pretend that we grow older while in the grave, therefore we should like to submit the following. If a young couple get married, and the husband dies at the age of twenty-two, the wife lives to seventy, and they both manage to squeeze into heaven after Judgment Day, what a strange couple they will be—with a difference of about fifty years. Or *vice versa* imagine a young female angel with a good old Christian of eighty winters for a husband. We think the Christian couples after reading this will try and leave this earth as nearly as possible at the same time, so as to be more suited to each other in their new home.

Another peculiarity about this Christian heaven. Sons and daughters will be older than their own fathers and mothers. If a married man dies at the age of thirty and leaves children behind him, it is possible they will reach the age of sixty or seventy, and if the children get to heaven they will have quite a youthful father, and perhaps a grandfather younger than themselves; or if a mother dies at the age of twenty-three, she would, under the same circumstances, have a white-haired old gentleman for a son, perhaps about fifty years her senior.

There are hundreds of other questions arising out of this resurrection and heavenly absurdity, but we will conclude for the present by asking if all the street barrel-organs will be utilized so as to have all the music by *Handel*, and also whether each nation will sing in its own language. If so we may exclaim, O what must it be to be there!

SPECIAL.

The Bradlaugh Centenary.

ABOUT three months ago the Bradlaugh Centenary Executive Committee issued a programme with an appeal to all admirers of the great Freethinker for £1,500. The plans included the preparation of a volume of about 600 pages giving Bradlaugh's views on all sorts of subjects, and to be sold at a very low price; plans for a banquet on September 26, a public demonstration in one of London's largest halls, a memorial—if possible—in the House of Commons, an annual Bradlaugh Lecture, lectures in many parts of the country right through 1933, and a general publicity campaign which should place Bradlaugh "on the map" as one of the great reformers of the nineteenth century. Up to date the sum of £514 5s. 6d. has been subscribed. The result is not impressive. I believe it can be bettered, I am quite sure it ought to be bettered, and the whole of the required sum subscribed in a very short period. I know that times are hard, I know also that many who will subscribe have merely put off the sending. September 26, they think, is a long way off; but the chief part of the expenditure will be incurred before that date, and what the Committee is able to do will be determined by the extent of its resources.

When I suggested the formation of an independent Committee I did so with the appreciation of the fact that Bradlaugh's activities covered a wide field, and that his Centenary would appeal to many outside the ranks of the Freethought Party. Many would respond who, while scarcely agreeing with any of his opinions, would yet not be backward in paying their tribute to his *character*, which is often so much greater than a man's actions. The lengthy list of names on the General Committee, names eminent in politics, science, literature, and art justifies this expectation. But all the same I knew that the bulk of the work would have to be done, and the bulk of the money found by Freethinkers. And it is to Freethinkers, to readers of this journal, and to the members of the National Secular Society, Bradlaugh's own Society, that I am now appealing.

The varied activities of Charles Bradlaugh gave him full claim to the title of Reformer. But he was above all and through all a Freethinker. It was as the great fighting Freethinker that he became famous; it was his uncompromising Freethought that gave him the love of thousands and the hatred of many more thousands, and which provided him with a platform from which to demand the attention of the whole of the country. I hope therefore to see this Centenary year used as Bradlaugh himself would have wished to have his name and influence used—for the advancement of Freethought. We have a chance to see that this great Freethinker is placed prominently before the present generation, and in this way we may direct attention to the principles for which he stood and for which he put up so heroic a fight. Something in this direction has already been done. A great many lectures on Bradlaugh have already been delivered and a considerable press publicity has been achieved. The

full benefits of the publicity campaign will not be seen till after the date of the anniversary.

The sum for which the Committee budgeted was not extravagant. A great deal of research has to be undertaken, considerable advertising must be done and the publicity campaign alone is an expensive item. Very much more than the £1,500 *could* be spent, but the Committee acted with modesty. It would be little short of a scandal if it had to curtail its present programme for financial reasons.

We must make this a Bradlaugh Year, and do it in a fashion that will reflect credit on the Freethought Cause. We have a chance to do honour to one of the greatest of English Freethinkers; we have also a chance to make thousands realize what Freethought stands for. I confidently invite all who have not already done so to place their names on the roll of honour.

CHAPMAN COHEN,

President National Secular Society.

The Bradlaugh Centenary Commemoration Fund.

FIFTH LIST OF DONATIONS.

AMOUNT previously acknowledged £471 13s.; A. Hanson, £5; Baron Horder, £3 3s.; Vivian Phelps, £2 2s.; G. L. Alward, £2 2s.; A. J. Bywaters, £2 2s.; N. J. Franklin, £2; F. H. Thomas, £2; The Ethical Union, £1 1s.; Dr. Edith Summerskill, £1 1s.; Mrs. C. D. Rackham, £1 1s.; H. W. Shawcross, £1 1s.; D. Kerr, £1 1s.; Denis Phelps, £1 1s.; C. J. Patten, £1 1s.; A Friend per A. E. Withy, £1; Mrs. Conway Sawyer, £1; H. W. Stanton, £1; E. B. Greedy, £1; W. Milroy, £1; Col. S. Graham, £1; A. H. Patrick, £1; A. A. Fielding, £1; Mrs. M. J. Wadman, £1; W. H. T. Porter, 10s. 6d.; G. Roberts, 10s.; Lord Listowel, 10s.; Dr. Watters, 10s.; Mrs. Janet Chance, 10s.; G. Royle, 10s.; J. Whittaker, 10s.; H.C., 5s.; A. O. Hounsell, 5s.; Mrs. A. B. Murray, 5s.; J. Brodie, 5s.; J. R. Lickfold, 5s.; J. Brereton, 5s.; W. C. Johnson, 5s.; H. J. Adams, 5s.; R. Bell (Pelton), 5s.; Isa Atallah, 5s.; Dr. D. A. Crow, 5s.; W. Finlayson, 5s.; R. M. Doig, 5s.; W. Gillies, 5s.; H. Gillman, 3s.; Miss M. Ray, 2s. 6d.; L. McLachlan, 2s. 6d.; R. Scott, 2s. 6d.; W. Wright, 2s. 6d.; In Memoriam J. H. Kalthoerber, 2s.; L.M.S., 1s.

Total of Subscriptions to April 24, 1933 £514 5s. 6d.

All subscriptions to be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer, Bradlaugh Centenary Fund, Mr. F. C. C. Watts, 38 Cursitor Street, London, E.C.4.

REVERIE.

WHEN days are dark and friends are few a pipe, a glass
And Life will, with a brighter hue serenely pass
If you would worldly success make then with the stream
Must glide in phases small or great in every theme.
Take Orthodoxy to your breast the three in one,
Conform to what the Crowd thinks best and with them
run

Your Nonsense must their Nonsense suit as was well said
In times, when to be less astute might lose your head.
But thanks to Freethought Pioneers the battle's won
To them we call across the sphere, your Kingdom's come
The " Torch " they passed to us must still be kept aflame
To future Ages we must will a larger gain.

J. MACKINNON.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—II. Jessop £1.

F. SHALLER.—We do repeat the opinion very often, although not always in the same words. But there is certainly a greater need now than there has been for many years for those who believe in genuine freedom of thought to be on their guard. Freedom is being assaulted to-day from both the top and the bottom.

W. MAURICE.—Your claim that not a single Jew in all Germany has been assaulted by the Hitler gunman is really too extravagant. Intemperate advocacy of anything overreaches itself, and it is clearly so in your case.

B. R. FINK.—Thanks for your interesting letter, but you have overlooked the fact that whether "natural law" is expressed in physical or psychological terms depends entirely upon the nature of the subject matter. You will find the matter worked out in Mr. Cohen's *Materialism Re-stated*. The only reason why there are laws of psychology is precisely because laws of chemistry and of biology do not suffice.

J. D. MACDONALD.—Papers are being sent.

S. MARSHALL.—We do not think Christianity less contemptible or less ridiculous because we regard it as a great danger. Things are good or bad in proportion to their ability to help or injure humanity, not with reference to their reasonableness or unreasonableness.

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. Roselli, 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, 3/0.

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.

An effort is being made to form a Branch of the N.S.S. at Oxford, and will local saints who are willing to help please communicate with Mr. N. O'Leary-Curtis, 56 Western Road, Oxford. We congratulate those behind the effort at Oxford, and wonder how long Freethinkers in many towns and cities where Branches of the N.S.S. do not exist at present will remain in the backward areas.

The Annual General Meeting of the Glasgow Secular Society will be held in No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street, at 6.30 prompt to-day (Sunday). Energy and enthusiasm are behind an attempt to restore the Society to full activity in Glasgow, and all members are asked to attend and become acquainted with the proposals for the future.

We regret that a blunder was made in quoting from Mr. Maxton's speech in the House of Commons on the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching of Children Bill.

The passage should have read "The Marxian teaching, which includes within it the destruction of the idea of a supernatural God." In error the words "the destruction of" were omitted.

We have received *Church Reform: A National Obligation*, by G. F. Stutchbury. With a Foreword by Dr. Stanton Coit (Watts, 3s. 6d.). The "reform" here proposed is to divest the English Church of all its fundamental supernatural dogmas, make it "a non-supernaturalistic religion," and, if Dr. Coit has his way, invest it with the wealth and social and political prestige which now belongs to it in consequence of its connexion with the State. We do not know on what grounds the author bases his assertion that the Church of England still has "the kindly allegiance of the greater part of the population." This is in direct conflict with the figures published by the Church itself. Of course if "kindly allegiance" means getting married or buried by a parson, or being put down as "Church of England" in hospital or prison or in the Services (in the absence of any other profession) there are thousands to its credit who only use the Church on what Arnold Bennett called "quasi-legal" occasions. But judged by the test of communicating membership it is the Church of 3,000,000 at the most of a population (in England, excluding Wales and Monmouth) of 37,000,000. Disestablishment would, according to Mr. Stutchbury be "a change for the worse," and so it would if not accompanied by a radical measure of disendowment.

The "reform" of the Church of England, like the "reform" of the House of Lords, can only interest those who fear the collapse of established institutions and wish to break their fall. It is certainly not "a national obligation" to revise the theology of the Church of England. It is a proper and urgent implication of democratic principles, and of the existing facts with regard to the Anglican Church—which are set out in this book with admirable clarity—that the Church should be put in the same position as all other religious denominations, and that its revenues (other than post-reformation voluntary contributions), over large portions of which, as Mr. Stutchbury admits, Parliament has always had and still has final control, should be devoted not to sectarian but to national purposes. We regret to say we do not think the filleted religion of the ethical movement any more suitable for national endowment than its more substantial predecessor. One does not have to look beyond a certain educational conference held last week to find how desperate is the need, and how many are the worthy opportunities, for the productive use of vast revenues now wasted on the worship of God, or—to quote Mr. Stutchbury who has given up all dogmas—on "a rational hypothesis, not yet susceptible of definition." Surely a vague entity to need what Dr. Coit calls "the dynamic which capital and income generates."

The Brighton Branch N.S.S. will begin open-air lectures to-day (Sunday) at the Level, when Mr. C. J. Keast will speak at 3 p.m. The meetings will be held at the same time every Sunday. The Branch asks for the support of all Freethinkers within reasonable distance.

A lecture on "The Life and Work of Charles Bradlaugh," illustrated with lantern slides, will be given by Mr. Ernest Thurtell in the Shorditch Town Hall, on Tuesday, May 2, at 8 o'clock. The chair will be taken by the Mayor of Shoreditch, and admission will be free. Freethinkers should make a special note of the date.

We are asked to announce that the Metropolitan Secular Society will be holding a Dinner at Reggiori's Restaurant, opposite King's Cross Station, on Sunday, May 7. The tickets will be 5s. each. Application should be made to Mr. C. Hubbard, 143 New Bond Street, W.

The South London Branch N.S.S. begins its open-air campaign in Brockwell Park to-day (Sunday). At 6 p.m., Mr. Corrigan will speak, and the local saints can make the meetings a real success by supporting their own platform. The meetings will be held each Sunday evening.

Holy Year and Indulgences.

It is difficult for the Freethinker to understand why, if the religious interpretation of the universe is true, one year should be more holy than another, and especially that selected years have to be declared "holy" by the Pope.

The very fact of certain years, at the end of certain periods, not always of the same length, being selected and pronounced holy, should cause the intelligent Roman Catholic, at least, to think and get on the track of the truth. The latter being that the rites and ceremonies of his Church constitute a business.

During Holy Year, business is on the grand scale with the advertising department in full swing.

That the origin of the Roman Catholic Holy Year should be somewhat uncertain is not surprising to the student of ritual and ceremonial origins. After claiming the name of the Holy Year to be derived from the Old Testament "Jubilee," one Catholic writer says:

"Why were the first Christian jubilees kept every hundred years, whereas the Mosaic Law, prescribed one to every fifty? There is no answer except, perhaps, that there may have been an intermingling of ideas not unconnected with the Roman *ludi seculares* which were kept every hundredth year with great rejoicings." (*The Holy Year*, Rev. T. A. Adkins, p. 4.)

No student of history expects to be able to trace every human institution to its exact origin. The carelessness of man ensures the impossibility of our being able to do that; but surely a divinely inspired Church should know when she instituted ceremonies of untold value to the salvation of her children. Not only so, there should not be any supposed intermingling of Christian ideas with those concerning pagan festivals. This provokes the suggestion that the origin of the Christian Holy Year was, after all, entirely human. If so, may it not turn out that all the rites, ceremonies, and other institutions of the Roman Catholic Church were of human origin?

It appears that there is no justification for the belief that the *ludi seculares* of the Romans were celebrated every one hundred years. (Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, Art. *Ludi*; and William Ramsay's, *Manual of Roman Antiquities*, pp. 375-376.) More than one original of these games is ascribed, with due testimony to the kindness of the gods.

The following account of the institution of the old Roman games may be taken as indicating that we are dealing with the same mentality as that which was at work trying to account for the origin of the Christian jubilees.

Of the Roman *ludi seculares* we are told that Valerius Maximus, "attributes their institution to the miraculous recovery of three children of one Valerius, who had been attacked by a plague raging at that time in Rome, and were restored to health by drinking some water warmed at a place in the Campus Martius, called Tarentum." Valerius, in thankfulness offered sacrifices and held festive games, which became public affairs at the end of long periods in Roman history.

Even a Roman Catholic would laugh at the idea of there being anything of a divine nature attaching to the origin of these games. Yet the origin of his own Holy Year is no more satisfactory.

The Rev. T. A. Adkins says, "there are no precise records concerning the dates of the first Christian jubilees." (p. 5.) Then he proceeds to say that a certain treatise seems to indicate that the Holy Year goes back to a time prior to 1300. However, near the end of 1299 rumour had it that an extraordinary indulgence could be obtained by all who paid a visit to St. Peter's during the following year. In 1300, Romans and strangers made their way to the Holy Fathers'

church. Then the divine work of making a real Roman Catholic institution of the Holy Year was made possible. It required some thinking to be done by the Holy Father, but even that did not prevent God being triumphant in the long run.

Among the pilgrims of 1300, "was an old man, aged one hundred and seven, who came from Savoy. He was presented to Pope Boniface VIII., and told him how one hundred years previously his father had brought him to Rome to participate in the special Indulgence which could be gained there every hundred years, and had recommended him, if God spared his life, to return to Rome in the year 1300 to visit St. Peter's and gain the same Indulgence as before." (*The Holy Year*, p. 5.)

This was confirmed by other Italians and two men from Beauvais, in France, and, proceeds the Rev. T. A. Adkins, "be that as it may, there can be no doubt that the Holy Father discussed the question carefully with his cardinals and, in spite of the fact that written documents had been vainly searched for, declared, in his Bull of February 22, 1300, *Antiquorum habet fide relatio*, that, according to credible reports, his predecessors had granted great indulgences to all who would visit the Basilica of St. Peter." (*Holy Year*, p. 5.)

In this way the Holy Year was put upon a recognized footing, and Indulgence was granted to all those who repented and confessed, and visited the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Later, owing to the success of the Holy Year of 1300, the period for the recurrence of this institution was reduced from one hundred years to fifty years, with an added condition. That a visit to the Lateran Basilica should be made in addition to those paid to St. Peter and St. Paul. The alteration resulted in the jubilee, or Holy Year, of 1350 being a still greater success and, ultimately, the period was reduced to thirty-three years, with the stipulation that a visit should be made to a fourth church, St. Mary Major's.

Under Pope Nicholas, a return to the fifty years period was made, in 1450, but Pope Paul II. decided that twenty-five years should be the permanently fixed period and proclaimed 1475 as a Holy Year. Since then, in order to shorten the period, Extraordinary Jubilees have been introduced; and although 1925 was a Jubilee Year, this year (1933) has also been proclaimed to be one.

The ceremonial and ritualistic displays of the Holy Year need not detain us here. Two important facts stand out as indicating that the Holy Year is an economic year, and that the Roman Catholic Church is more concerned about cash than about "souls."

One is the attempt to induce Catholics to wend their way to Rome, if not already there, and the insistence upon frequent visits being paid to four specially-named churches. The other is the use made of Indulgences.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be concluded.)

EMPTY THRONE.

Let men rise up and shake from off their feet
The dust of penitential impotence,
Lift high their heads, and so go forth to meet
Their destined way, delivered of pretence—
Pretence that other powers than those we know
Can clear the path or lighten the dark way;
Can give the winter summer's golden glow
Or turn the black night into shining day.
Let men erase God's image from their breasts;
He is not greater than the sum of things;
What virtue is in making Him behests—
This spectral Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

A.C.W.

Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

XII.—PARLIAMENT, LABOUR, AND SOCIALISM.

SINCE the Centenary campaign began there has been some attempt to revive the notion that Bradlaugh was opposed to Labour. It is regrettable that in so responsible a quarter as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the article on Bradlaugh suggests that, towards the end of his Parliamentary career, "it was beginning to be said of him that he was in a fair way to become a conservative." There was no justification for this view. It is true, however, that Bradlaugh was consistently opposed to what has since been called "direct action" in the political sphere. Writing in the *National Reformer* (September 21, 1884), Bradlaugh said: "I am for reform if I may be, and against revolution if I can be." Again (February 10, 1889) he said: "All progressive legislation in this country is necessarily compromise. It is not possible to legislate on hard and fast lines of principle. A state of things has grown up through generations that can only be gradually changed. The expedient has to be considered in all law-making. Legal interpretations of right have become so much a part of our political and general system that sudden reversal would be attended often with the gravest mischief. Temporary concessions have usually to be made on the one side to win consent on the other to a sure step in advance; but no compromise is final. Parliament does not bind its successor, and the new step serves as a foothold for reaching further concession at a later date."

There could be no more responsible or convincing witness to Bradlaugh's true attitude towards Labour than Thomas Burt, one of the earliest of Labour Members—he only died a few years ago and was in Parliament almost to the last as representative of the Northumberland miners. Writing—on some difference of view between them on the question of Employers Liability (*National Reformer*, January, 1889) Mr. Burt says in an "open letter" to its Editor: "I hold that a member's highest duty is, after thoroughly informing himself on a subject, to act according to his judgment and conscience. If this should bring him into conflict with his constituents they have the remedy in their own hands. But they cripple the power and destroy the usefulness of their representative if they ask him to support opinions and principles which are not his own, and to which he may be utterly opposed. *Your sincerity and conscientiousness are not in dispute. I have never heard them questioned, nor do I believe they can be. Neither will anyone who knows you doubt your earnest desire to benefit the workmen in any action you may take.*"

Bradlaugh was not a Socialist, but he was not an individualist in the orthodox political sense of that word. Such proposals as he made (in 1887) for national ownership of the land and for its compulsory cultivation anticipated those made by both Liberal and Labour policies only a few years ago, the Liberal proposals, in particular. The latter were even then announced as "Socialism." There are some Socialists who denounce every reform as "capitalistic," and some Conservatives who denounce the same reforms as "Socialistic." Bradlaugh, as Mr. J. M. Robertson pointed out, stood "in a midway position." So far as the right of the State to secure public interest against private exploitation was concerned he was in advance of most Liberals of his time. His intense belief in and zeal for liberty is no justification for the suggestion that he was opposed to what has since been called "social" legislation.

A.C.W.

The Book Shop.

FOR good English that illuminates the subject, Ruskin's book, *The Queen of the Air*, may be taken as an excellent model. It is a pity, however, that such a master of prose, in his reference to Persephone, should have allowed himself to be entangled with the word *sin*. This word belongs to the voluminous vocabulary of theology, of endless talk on unprovable assertions, of emanations from fearful suppositions whose bad effects may be seen in cases of religious mania and social unhappiness. Pascal writes, "Man is so framed that by dint of telling him he is a fool he believes it, and by dint of telling it to himself he makes himself believe it." Transpose "is a fool" for sinful and the Christian vile valuation of man is complete. The Greeks had no taboo on any subject, and the word *sin*, or its equivalent, might have been a coin of currency for the sophists only. Ruskin mats the following otherwise exquisite passage by the word *sin*—

The rule of the first spirit, Demeter, the earth mother, is over the earth, first, as the origin of all life—the dust from whence we were taken: secondly, as the receiver of all things back at last into silence—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And, therefore, as the most tender image of this appearing and fading life, in the birth and fall of flowers, her daughter Proserpine plays in the fields of Sicily, and thence is torn away into darkness, and becomes the Queen of Fate—not merely of death, but of the gloom which closes over and ends, not beauty only, but sin; and of sins, chiefly the sin against the life she gave: so that she is, in her highest power, Persephone, the avenger and purifier of blood—"The voice of thy brother's blood cries to me out of the ground."

I find that I am late in dealing with *Persephone in Hades*, by Ruth Pitter (A. Sauriac, Auch, Gers, France, 1931), but to be up-to-date with everything published—even of significance, would give no time for food, sleep or relaxation. Fortunately, the good is never out of date. This work is a long, disciplinary poem—every line is like a cut from a scimitar, and the authoress has cast into it, by its very vitality, much of actual experience—it could not be photographic for that reason alone. I give one extract only to show its quality; it is a complete and compact indictment of well-meaning or otherwise myth-makers who had no kind compassionate Gods:—

"... A sighing whisper went: Consider Pain!
Now through her bones was thrust a dolorous pang
Made of all agony: whoever lies
Distempered, and would buy with the world's wealth
One moment's ease from torment; whoso goes
Lost in the sands athirst, choked with his tongue;
Whom priests or princes tear with instruments,
Or the more innocent, more implacable
Barbarian sports with: he whom lions devour
Or serpents slay, women with all their pains,
The beaten fatherless, the broken slave,
The overdriven beast, yea and the bird
That wounded runs into the brake, the hare
Fast in the gin, all that can suffer pain,
Even all who find no mercy, groaned in her.
Burning and freezing, starving and athirst,
Spent as from forty years of fiercest toil,
And the whole empire of fell agony
Having surveyed, hopeless in hell she lay."

Miss Ruth Ritter brings Persephone out of Hades again; the Christian hell is a very thorough affair, and neither could it be invested by grown-up human beings—scourges in history with the grandeur of the Greeks, in spite and malignancy had choked any attempt at a different virtue—justice even to one's enemies.

Season's Interlude. Galleons more numerous than those in the Spanish Armada were majestically sailing across the blue sky, and the wind through the pine trees, birch trees, and gorse bushes, was making a spring symphony. In the distance, purple haze clothed the woods in the robe of magic, and the rise and fall of the wind's symphony carried a message to the listener. A black-bird was fluting in the distance and a hundred yards in front a lark rose with his song to greet the message.

For three minutes there was a free and joyous gift to those who value quality instead of quantity, and this moment in eternity made the mind clairvoyant. This moment in this season has been in the past two million years a message of earthly hope rather than heavenly despair. This moment and message have been experienced 500 B.C. in Greece, and in every past year and country where the simple has always received preference to the complex. Like an arrow from a bow the lark descended about twenty yards in front of the listener, pecked casually at the seedless heads of last year's chimney sweeps, and walked with an air of inspection around a grassy mound. He expected no applause for his performance; he desired no other audience than that of his absent mate, and he was unaware of the listener who remembered that thousands in the East were fighting over a soya bean or timber, and that thousands of so-called civilized people in the West were clutching and clawing for seats in buses. I should like to call this paragraph a salutation to the Spring, knowing at the same time that in this very modern world in which we live the subject is extremely passé. As Sean O'Casey in his play, "The Shadow of a Gunman," states, "A man should always be drunk when he is talking politics," so one should be half-witted in order to take newspapers seriously. There will be the usual donkey's melodious call from them at all and any attempts to receive with gratitude and joy the return of the sun's warmth to a sick world, but Carlyle's advice to do three days' thinking in bed can be supplemented by three minutes' enjoyment of a song, the meaning of which we may never know. It is not necessary to know all truths in the world nor all stupidities, but one who knows what he knows, and knows what he does not know will never willingly part with the simple things that cost nothing and yet are priceless.

C-DE-B.

A Freethought Classic.

GREAT books of Freethought are not many—usually the persecution of the world has been sufficient to stop orthodox works of genius from wide appreciation. This renders all the more noteworthy a book which appeared some years ago, and has not been sufficiently appreciated by Freethinkers—Sir Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*. Possibly the great difference in temperament of the puritan and the artist accounts for the book's peculiar attractions—its author's complete break with tradition and with religious ideas accounts for the attention it has had from many and its special interest to Freethinkers since its appearance in 1907.

All Freethinkers will find here a book after their very hearts. Who could deny the truth of this statement? "I have surely the right to protest against the untruth that evangelical religion, or any religion in a violent form is a wholesome or valuable or desirable adjunct to human life. It divides heart from heart. It sets up a vain, chimerical ideal, in the barren pursuit of which all the tender, indulgent affections, all the genial play of life, all the exquisite pleasures and soft resignations of the body, all that enlarges and calms the soul are exchanged for what is harsh and void and negative."

Bold words, indeed, from one who was brought up in an atmosphere steeped in religion. But they contain, at any rate, the answer to those who say that atheism, agnosticism, infidelity, heresy, freethought (let them call it what they will) is a negative creed.

"There is," says Gosse, "something horrible, if we can bring ourselves to face it, in the fanaticism that can do nothing with this pathetic and fugitive existence of ours but treat it as if it were the uncomfortable antechamber to a palace which no one has explored and of which we know absolutely nothing."

Bold words again, and yet who could deny their truth? Our friends the enemy have never attempted to answer these questions, and they never will. They know that at once they will be involved in such a mass of inconsistencies and contradictions that no one could extract them.

This book places before the reader in glowing language the very real difficulty which surrounds the adolescent in

a home where religion has the first place. That Sir Edmund Gosse outgrew the pitiful darkness and superstition of his youth is a testimony to his genius. But who can say how many there are who are not outgrowing these things? Who can say how many there are who stifle this desire to enquire into things, who think doubt the most dreadful sin of all?

Freethinkers would do well to read the book, and ponder the problems which it raises. They will be all the more ready afterwards to battle for their beliefs, all the more delighted to be able to do a little to dispel that cloud of superstition which still hangs over the masses of the people.*

JOHN ROWLAND.

* This work was reviewed at some length by the present Editor of the *Freethinker* on its first publication.

Correspondence.

RE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS IN THE N.S.S. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If clericalism were the only source of danger to freedom of thought, action and speech, then Miss Moore's and Mr. Green's proposed alterations to the N.S.S. principles and objects might be of value, but Freethought has many enemies outside religion and the churches, enemies who are wielding colossal power. With such men as Mussolini and Hitler dominating nations, with such systems as Fascism, proletarian dictatorships and Nazi regimes masquerading as progressive movements, some of Freethought's deadliest enemies are to be found in the political camps.

No Freethinker worthy of the name can be content at the present time with opposition to clericalism only: admittedly that is still vitally necessary, but with this rabid lust for dictatorship running almost wild in the world, the Freethinker's activities must be extended enormously, not reduced. And yet there is this proposal to limit the N.S.S. to a mere anti-religious organization. Surely it is anti—all forms of interference with free expression: its originators clearly understood that in times when clericalism was a more conspicuous foe than it is to-day.

The proposers of the new scheme show little or no interest in liberty or happiness or peace or self-government, they jettison all these points with a nonchalant reference to outworn political theory. Does that mean that they are in favour of our modern forms of tyranny, and in opposition to religious tyranny only?

While it is possible that our principles and objects could be more clearly expressed, and that their re-wording might result in increased membership, it must be borne in mind that it is not necessary to wreck the society to do it. And that in my opinion would result from the adoption of the proposals in question. We should lose our value as an uncompromising opponent of all forms of repression, and become a mere god-killing organization. In other words we should be emasculated. While that might be considered advisable by would-be demagogues and dictators, it might easily be suicidal for the N.S.S.

S. R. A. READY.

SUNDAY CINEMAS.

SIR,—"Croaker's" comments on the recent Town's Meeting at Wembley regarding Sunday Cinemas reveal such a complete misunderstanding of the necessary procedure to obtain Sunday opening that I must correct his errors lest they mislead others among your readers. He says he went to the meeting "to register a vote for or against the opening of cinemas on Sunday," but that he found that he was present at a meeting held "to discuss and decide the question of whether or not the electors of

Wembley should have an opportunity of polling on the matter." He accordingly criticized the tactics of the two speakers (the writer and Mr. A. Downing, also a member of this Branch) who put forward the Secularist point of view, for attacking the "arguments" used against Sunday opening instead of appealing to the meeting to allow the electorate to decide the matter.

All that it is necessary to say to answer his contention is that he was right in his first idea about the nature of the meeting and wrong in the one he got after attending it. It was held to decide whether or not local cinemas should be allowed to open on Sundays, and had nothing to do with the question of a poll, the latter being a safeguard against "packed" meetings (such as Wembley's undoubtedly was); a poll can, however, be demanded by a requisition of voters, whichever way the Town's Meeting decides; and such a requisition signed by over 400 was promptly available to show that the meeting of about 300 people was in no way representative. When the poll was held on April 12, the decision of the meeting was reversed by a majority of only 800 out of some 7,000 votes cast, was evidence of how parson-ridden this district is compared to others, where overwhelming majorities are the almost unbroken rule.

"Croaker" made his comments as a lesson for Free-thinkers. May I suggest that the real lesson is that they should unite in the one organization that is concerned with carrying on a permanent fight with obscurantism and intolerance? He really ought to join the handful of fellow-Freethinkers who are doing their best in the face of local narrow-mindedness on the one hand and apathy on the other to see that the Secular viewpoint is not overlooked. He can count on a warm welcome as a fighting member of the Branch.

P. VICTOR MORRIS,

Hon. Sec., Wembley and District Branch, N.S.S.

[Owing to pressure on space a number of letters are unavoidably held over.—ED.]

Society News.

LIVERPOOL, BRANCH N.S.S.

The Sixth Annual General Meeting of members was held on Sunday, April 9, over fifty per cent of the Branch being present. The reports gave a record of a particularly active year; regular and well-attended outdoor meetings during the Summer, greatly increased audiences throughout the Winter, several speakers supplied to outside organizations (Co-op. Guilds, Labour Party meetings, etc.), and a more extensive development of the social side (rambles, social evenings, and, in particular, a very successful Annual Dinner).

As is usual, the financial details presented a less attractive aspect, although the Branch had done much on a small income, and, while there was a debt not yet cleared, it was relatively small.

The following were elected for the forthcoming year: President, Mr. J. V. Shortt; Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Stafford, Messrs. C. J. Harrison, A. Jackson and W. McKelvie; Committee: Mrs. McKelvie, Mrs. Ready, Mrs. Shortt, Messrs. H. Little, C. McKelvie, W. Parry and C. Thompson; Auditors, Messrs. C. J. Harrison and H. Murphy. Mr. S. R. A. Ready, 29 Sycamore Road, Waterloo, Liverpool 22, was elected Secretary.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to general business—motions for the Annual Conference and preliminary arrangements for the new session's activities. Finally, it was decided to revert to the original name, Liverpool Branch, and to drop the (Merseyside), this being no longer necessary since the formation of a Branch in Birkenhead.

S. R. A. READY,

Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

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

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, May 1 (last meeting of the Session)—"Spiritualism and Psychology."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.): 7.0, R. S. W. Pollard—"Repeal of the Blasphemy Acts."

WOOLWICH ("The Ship," Plumstead Common): 8.0, Friday, May 5, Messrs S. Burke and F. Smith.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, April 30, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, May 1, Mr. C. Tuson. Regents Park (Albert Street): 8.0, Thursday, May 4, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Sunday, April 30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Wednesday, May 3, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, May 5, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, April 30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square): 8.0, Sunday, April 30, S. Burke. Thursday, May 4, 8.0, Messrs. S. Burke and F. Smith.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Religion and Sex."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, A General Meeting. All members requested to attend.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members' meeting. Business: Propaganda. Recent Photos ready.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level): 3.0, Mr. C. J. Keast. A Lecture.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 7.30, Saturday, April 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND (Lambton Street): 7.0, Sunday, April 30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

WEST STANLEY, 7-15, National Psychological Research Society. "Spirits and Mediums."—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.

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