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Views and Opinions.

The Christian Conscience.

WE are all acquainted with the quality of the Christian conscience. It is so well known that a descriptive analysis of it is quite unnecessary. If adaptation is one of the prime laws of life, then the Christian conscience is a standing proof of the truth of this evolutionary precept. For the Christian conscience is adaptive to a degree that hardly falls short of being miraculous. There is nothing to which the Christian conscience cannot adapt itself, or conversely, as Spencer would say, there is nothing to which it may not be found in violent antagonism; and if these fluctuations are often seen to be in harmony with the interests of the person or persons whom we are studying, that is but a proof that the Lord rewards those who follow his commands. But at the side of the Christian conscience a tribal conscience is as rigid as iron, for in the latter case one has but to know the customs of the tribe to judge how the conscience of the individual will function. Even a political conscience is safely predictable in comparison, for one has only to discover in which direction the self-interest of the politician points to say in what way it is likely to operate. It is his conscience that makes the true Christian incapable of wrong. Labouchere said of W. E. Gladstone that while he might be found playing cards with a fifth ace up his sleeve, he would be dead certain that God Almighty put it there—and the Lord of all the earth can do no wrong.

Consider the workings of the Christian conscience. At one moment the Christian conscience of the Roman Catholic authorizes him to butcher Protestants, and the latter shrieks out against so unchristian a practice. Then the Protestant butchers Roman Catholics with the full approval of his Christian conscience. The white Christian for hundreds of years buys and sells his black brethren and his conscience finds its authority in the curse that God placed on the children of Ham. Eventually the slaves are liberated and the

Christian slave-owner, after receiving compensation from the Government, finds his conscience declaring that slave-owning is an unchristian practice. One body of Christians in this country, acting up to their conscience, taxes other Christians for the maintenance of a Christianity they do not believe in, and the taxed ones shriek their conscientious objections. But when the Christians tax all non-Christians for the upkeep of the Christian religion the Christian conscience thoroughly approves. Before the "Great War" the Christian conscience by appealing to God was able to endorse war or peace as occasion demanded. When war broke out, with few exceptions, the Christian conscience preached that it was our duty to kill as many Germans as possible, anticipated the crazy nationalism of Hitler by joining in the ban on German music, and applauded the King when he changed his good old German family name in favour of that of Windsor. There is no need to lengthen the list. One can never tell which way the Christian conscience will jump. If there is anything of which the Christian conscience will not approve, perhaps some of our readers will be good enough to place our feet on the path of enlightenment.

* * *

The Sanctity of Cash.

Where money is concerned the Christian conscience is peculiarly sensitive. There is, for instance, the slum question. There are to-day fewer slums, and if the expression is permissible, better slums in this country than there has been for a century. The Christian tolerated the slums of a century ago with perfect equanimity. But in the course of the present-day agitation for the removal of slums attention has been called to the fact that a deal of the revenues of the Church of England is derived from slum areas of the most distressing kind. (Up to the moment of writing no one has enquired how much slum property is owned by Christians who are not members of the Church of England). This income is partly derived from house rents in slum areas, but mainly from ground rents. When attention is called to the fact, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners reply that their function is that of trustees, and they have no legal right to sacrifice the interests of those for whom they so act, and have no power of compelling better building. But we have not seen that representatives of the Church are agitating for some reform of the law which will permit pressure to be brought upon all—ground landlords and others concerned—to compel rebuilding, or to have full power of action in the direction of demanding better buildings. The Church is ready enough to ask for parliamentary action when it thinks it will be to its profit, but not in this direction. And, at any rate, there is the plain fact that part of the income of parsons is derived from areas that are a disgrace to anything but the Christian

Church. It is quite clear that the Christian conscience cannot tolerate sweepstakes, but the toleration of slum areas is quite another question.

Still, to be quite fair, it should be mentioned that there are large numbers of Christian agents whose zeal for saving the poor slum-dwellers from the evils of drink and gambling is so great that they derive their whole incomes from this godly work. In this matter the Churches have never overlooked their duty to the spiritual welfare of the people. When Christian owners were buying batches of children and working them in factories for twelve and fourteen hours a day, the parsonry insisted that these children should be taught the Bible. In the days of Anti-Combination Laws parsons were insistent that the religious education of the people should be looked after, and none were more ardent in this work than the Methodists who would not permit wicked men who were aiming at Trades Unionism to belong to their connexion. And in the worst days of slavery in America the spiritual welfare of the slave always received attention. We ought to be fair, even to the Christian Church.

* * *

Conscience in Operation.

I am indebted to the *New Statesman* for the latest example of the delicate texture of the Christian conscience. It is taken from the *Gospel Minister*, which is the weekly organ of a Church in Westfield, Indiana, U.S.A. Ever since October, 1932, the following notice has appeared in the columns of this pious journal:—

On and after October 1, 1932, subscriptions will be received only on the following condition. Should the Lord return to take his Church out of the world before the time for which subscription is paid, and the paper therefore suspends publication, all obligations will be considered fulfilled.

Now one simply cannot imagine any mere worldly paper which thought the world might come to an end at a certain date warning its subscribers that they might never live long enough to get their money's worth. I expect that most would try and defer payment of accounts until after the date given, and in the meantime have a "good time" with the subscriptions. But not so the Christian conscience. It works with a scrupulous care, not unmingled with caution. Though the editor of the *Gospel Minister* is, as all Christian editors should be, as innocent as a dove, yet is he not lacking in the wisdom of the serpent. He does not advise subscribers to remit up to the time of the given date only, or to buy their paper week by week, he merely warns them that as a Christian he cannot take their money under false pretences. "The Lord" may return, he may look in at Westfield, he may, after looking over his Church at Westfield decide to take it out of the world, or he may decide that it had better be left where it is, or he may receive an invitation from Mr. Ramsay Macdonald to attend a Conference (and to be photographed with Mr. Macdonald) and so not have time to visit Westfield. Against all these eventualities the editor of the *Gospel Minister* guards himself. He asks subscribers to pay in advance, but he warns them that they do so at their own risk. No money is to be returned, but he will not lay himself open to the charge of obtaining it under false pretences. What but a Christian conscience working under full pressure would act in such a way? Not even the late Mr. Horatio Bottomley, described in a funeral oration by a London minister as a man after God's own heart, could act with a greater sense of rectitude.

Everything is arranged with a regard to a sense of justice of which only a Christian conscience is cap-

able. But there is also caution manifested. It does not say that even when the Lord does arrive in Westfield the paper will cease publication. The notice merely says it may *suspend* publication. That is its publication may be resumed, in which case, one imagines the old subscriptions will be worked out and new ones received. Perhaps the editor thinks the Lord may like Westfield—even a small American town might be a welcome change after heaven—and settle down for a spell and edit the *Gospel Minister* himself. Or he might after taking his Church out of the world resume publication from another sphere. I expect Spiritualists will see the possibility of this being done. Indeed, seeing on what intimate terms Spiritualist mediums are with the next world, and how very much like this world the next one is (I saw the other day a spirit picture of the next world with an up-to-date suspension bridge in the background), I am astonished that this has not been done before. There are immense possibilities in the situation, and I trust that some of my American readers will keep me informed as to what happens in Westfield, Indiana, in the near future.

* * *

"Christianity and the Crisis."

I commenced these notes really intending to write about a book just issued on *Christianity and the Crisis*, but now that must wait to be dealt with at any length. *Christianity and the Crisis* is written by a number of eminent Christians, and it follows a plan which has been followed often before, and will often be followed again. There is a stern denunciation of evils that are plain to all, and a safe silence about others that might be troublesome if stressed. And, naturally, the Christian conscience is all over the book. But somehow the Christian conscience is as slippery as ever and as convenient as ever. It is slippery because the Christianity put forward is not the Christianity of any of the Churches to-day, it is not the Christianity of history, it is not the Christianity of the New Testament. It does not note the fact, which the New Testament stressed, and upon which the Church has always acted, that the Brotherhood of man, talked of in both instances, is the Brotherhood of a body of believers, and that the Christian Church admitted no obligations to unbelievers, save that of converting them, and did not always acknowledge that duty. To present the smaller, and by far the least important part of a teaching, as the whole would be rank dishonesty to any but the Christian conscience. Early Christianity had no concern whatever with what we call the social problem, and the vast majority of Christians—so far as their Christianity is concerned—have no concern with it all. Taking the Christian world as a whole it is a mere handful of Christian leaders that are professing interest in social questions, and their profession is motivated, not by a recognition that the solution of the social problem is urgent, but by the fact that the Churches are losing their hold on the people and are becoming increasingly alive to the fact that social reform depends upon an understanding and a capable handling of purely social forces. It is man's immortal destiny elsewhere with which the Christian Church is primarily concerned, not in better education, better housing, or better conditions of labour. Faced with the divorce of modern thought from religion the more astute among Christian leaders offer the world a handful of ethical maxims and vague social formulae as genuine Christianity. Their excuse for this radically dishonest course is that which the thief offered to the Judge—"A man must live." And one may reply to the Church in the words of the Judge, "I do not see the necessity."

The Bible on the Down-Grade.

"There is nothing in the world more salutary than that our sanctities should, at least, be tested."

De Selincourt.

"The man that fights Priestcraft is striking deeper for Freedom than can be struck anywhere."

George Meredith.

At the funeral of Horatio Bottomley at Golders Green, the Rev. Basil Bourchier, in his address, referred to the deceased "as the counterpart of one of the greatest characters in the Bible, whose name was David," and also said that Bottomley "is assured of a place in heaven at the end of his race."

Such robustious Orthodoxy is very rare outside the Romish Church, the Salvation Army, and the ranks of the Howling Dervishes who infest our parks and open spaces. The more educated clergy no longer talk in this way in their pulpits. They have no wish to lose members, revenue, and reputations, nor to incur the displeasure of their ecclesiastical masters.

For the Convocation of Canterbury some time ago decided by forty-three votes against thirteen, that "King David" was a very over-rated individual, and decided to treat him as cavalierly as our forefathers treated King James the Second. Now, what is amiss with this particular Oriental royalty? The ecclesiastics say that he is "Un-Christian in character," which is a very polite admission that generations of Freethinkers were right when they pointed out that David was a bandit, and behaved accordingly. Some of the "Psalms," so long attributed to this Eastern despot, the same acute critics urged, were also in harmony with this King's shady character. The House of Convocation has at long last decided to abandon altogether Psalm 58, and to eliminate from the official Prayer Book of the State Church the worst features of other sacred lyrics attributed to David.

This is a signal victory for the Freethinkers, for the Army of the Lord never retreats except under the direst necessity. The "Psalms" are an integral part of the Christian Bible, and King David is too closely allied with the legendary figure of Christ to be thrown thus rudely on the rubbish-heap without the most disastrous results to Orthodoxy. It is not only a desperate policy in the particular instance, but a precedent which will exert, in the long run, anything but a happy effect on the whole Christian position.

These Psalms were written many centuries ago, and have been regarded by staunch believers as the inspired utterances of their god ever since. Now, Psalm 58, and parts of other sacred lyrics, are found to be entirely out of harmony with modern civilized ideas. This is how Psalm 58 runs:—

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked so that a man shall say, verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

It will be seen that the House of Convocation has real reason to be ashamed. Other parts of their Bible are open to the same grave ethical objections, as, for instance, the inspired cursings in Psalm 109:—

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

And again, in Psalm 137:—

Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

Observe, the House of Convocation of the English State Church have themselves started to pull their own fetish-book to pieces, and have begun with the Old Testament. King David, the forerunner of Christ, "the man after God's own heart," thus comes in for tardy, but none the less deserved, criticism. For this David is now seen quite clearly as a barbarian, and the champions of the Christian Bible are obliged to disown the old Oriental savage in order to absolve their deity from the crimes and vices of his favourite. Let there be no mistake about this. The brigand of Adullam and Ziklag is no longer regarded as a saint. The reputed author of the Psalms is outcast. Jesus is recognized as the descendant of David who is no better than Dick Turpin. Oh, the divine comedy! It will be seen that it is not theology which purifies humanity, but humanity which purifies theology. Man civilizes himself first, and then humanizes his gods; all that the priests do is to take the credit and the cash.

This decision to excise a portion of "God's Word" from the official Prayer Book of the State Church is not a paltry matter. For this particular Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament; is used as a fetish for swearing upon in Courts of Law and Houses of Legislation.

In the Ages of Ignorance and Faith, priests resented all criticism fiercely. In the eighteenth century Peter Annet ventured to criticize David in "The History of the Man after God's Own Heart," and he found Biblical criticism a very difficult and unprofitable proceeding. For publishing the *Free Inquirer* he was brought before the King's Bench and sentenced to one month's imprisonment in Newgate, to stand twice in the pillory with a label "For Blasphemy," then to have a year's hard labour at Bridewell, and to find substantial sureties for good behaviour during the rest of his life. It is related that a woman, seeing Annet in the pillory, said: "Gracious! pilloried for blasphemy. Why, don't we all blaspheme every day?" Since the brave old schoolmaster was so cruelly punished the Christian Churches have lost much of their power, and to-day the ecclesiastics have to admit that the once-despised Freethinkers were right after all. It is only a question of time before the bishops and clergy will have to consider more closely the question of the barbarous Oriental ethics of both the Old and New Testament in relation to modern humanism. For the Christian Bible is forced into the hands of children, and Democratic parents will not for ever consent to have their little ones' intellects clouded and their characters degraded by such uncivilized ideas and teaching.

It is strange how the Christian Bible so often libels humanity. David is styled "the man after God's own heart," and this trumpety Oriental bandit is so bad that even the priests have at last thrown him over. Adam and Eve, "our first parents," are described as thieves; and the original baby, Cain, as a murderer. Later, the entire human race is said to be so wicked that, with the exception of eight persons, the whole lot is drowned like kittens in a pail. Indeed, the earlier chapters of the Christian Bible resemble nothing so much as the Newgate Calendar, so shady are the characters of the Patriarchs. Far too many pages of the Old Testament are crowded with the scuffles of savages, when the arrows are "drunk with blood," to adapt its own charming phrase. As for the New Testament, the highly evolved moral perceptions of to-day are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrines of original sin and damnation, which means that countless millions of mankind will suffer eternal torment.

The great river of thought rolls on, and bears us further and further away from the ignorance and superstition of the past, further and further from the grim shadow of the Cross, which, at one time, threatened to make "a goblin of the sun" for the entire Christian World. In these days of declining superstition and dissolving dogma, let us remember gratefully the brave pioneers who first, at the cost of their liberty, and often of their lives, challenged this faith-inspired folly.

MIMNERMUS.

Indian Magic.

(Concluded from page 326.)

"There is a deliberate attempt to create an atmosphere of expectation and mystery; in this the Indian conjurer is a past master . . . as each trick progresses his face registers anxiety and expectation; then amazement, and lastly, intense satisfaction. The great experiment has been made before this most distinguished and critical audience; by the help of the stars all has gone well; success beyond human hopes has crowned the efforts of the magician; the great task is finished." (Lieut.-Col. R. H. Elliot, "Indian Conjuring," *Blackwood's Magazine*, April, 1933.)

SOME of the Indian conjurer's tricks are unsuited for performance on a European platform; they require an Eastern environment, and Eastern customs. Hence the Mango Trick, and the Salaaming Duck, which are never performed in this country, come with all the prestige of surprise and novelty, and never fail to arouse astonishment and perplexity when first seen by Europeans.

Take, for instance, the Salaaming Duck, of which Col. Elliot gives an explanation. The conjurer presents a pith figure of a small duck, produces a battered pail, which he fills with water nearly to the top. He sits down at some distance from the pail, and addressing the duck, assures him that the Sahib is very great and very wealthy, and will give the conjurer large sums of money, and that the duck recognizing this will at once salaam to the great one. No movement is visible on the part of the man, who is sitting away from the pail; nevertheless the duck bows thrice to the master of the house, and when ordered, to all the other members of the family.

Here is something for the unsophisticated European to talk about, when he returns to his native land, whenever the subject of mystery and magic crops up. He has seen it with his own eyes, and seeing is believing. Yes, the conjurer never moved and was some distance from the pail, he plainly had control of occult forces unknown to Western science! If one had not seen it one would not have believed it. No!

Yet the trick was simple. There was a tiny hole in the pail, through which a fine thread passes to the toe of the conjurer, the other end being attached to the neck of the duck. The conjurer, who is barefooted, squats on the sand, nobody thinks of watching his toes, which he would take care to keep out of sight, attention would be concentrated on his hands, the wrong place as usual.

It would be very difficult to perform this trick apart from its environment—to say nothing of the glamour and mystery of the Orient. In the first place, what little water percolated through the small hole in the pail would be soaked up in the sand unnoticed. Secondly, our conjurers are not in the habit of performing barefooted. And lastly, if they were, they could not use their toes with the ease and dexterity that comes natural to those whose feet have never been cramped by wearing boots. Neither would the trick make the same impression; for the Indian

arrives suddenly and has neither the time, nor the opportunity, to make elaborate arrangements for performing the trick as our conjurers have.

Everyone has heard of the Indian Rope Trick. No trick has been so widely discussed. Yet, says Col. Elliot, "it is not only very difficult, but absolutely impossible, to get into direct contact with anyone who can claim to have seen it for himself, and who is willing to stand up to a cross-examination on the subject. In this respect it is in striking contrast with all the other tricks we know of." When we come to the rope trick, "we pass into a thick blanket of fog."

In this trick, we are told, a rope is thrown upward and remains hanging in the air taut and vertical, a boy then climbs up the rope, hand over hand, his voice dying away as he vanishes into the blue. Later, the boy comes back from another part of the ground, to the astonishment of the beholders. Other elaborations of the story relate that the boy's dismembered head, limbs, and body come tumbling down, are placed in a basket which, when re-opened, reveals him restored safe and sound.

A fortune awaits the conjurer who can perform this trick. Lord Lonsdale offered ten thousand pounds to see this trick performed, and the late Mr. Maskelyne offered five thousand a year to any conjurer who would perform it in London, but in vain. When the Prince of Wales—who afterwards became King Edward—made the grand tour of India, every effort was made to get the trick performed, but without success, and where King Edward was unsuccessful, Col. Elliot was not likely to succeed. However, while practising his profession as a surgeon in India he made many friends, and during his travelling about the country, often found himself welcomed, as a reward for past services rendered in his hospital and elsewhere, by friends and relatives of those who had benefited by his skill. In consequence, he tells us, "Many doors were thrown open to me, but this one was banged, barred, locked and sealed. I was unable to get anybody who would attempt to do the trick before me, and I could never meet with any reliable person who would give a description of what he had seen, still less submit to cross-questioning on the subject."

And he concludes:—

There are wonderful stories of people who have taken photographs during the actual performances of the trick whilst the rope was in the air and the boy disappearing up it. It is added that the negatives showed nothing to confirm the claims made; there was no rope in the air and no boy. The explanation offered is that it was merely a question of hypnotism and mass-suggestion. I would go much further than this, for I have never been able to get into contact with one of these photographers, nor have I met anyone who has. I suggest that the explanation is a very simple one; the opportunities for such a photograph do not occur outside the fertile imagination of some more than usually gifted Baron von Munchausen, for the simple reason that *the trick is never even attempted*. Where the story originally started it would be hard to guess, but inquiries made about it in educated India to-day will, I think, be met with a smile of quiet amusement at the questioner's gullibility.

Col. Elliot tells us, that some time after he had left India, he was present at a meeting of the Magic Circle (The Magicians', or Conjurers' Club) when an officer who had served with distinction in the East, produced a photograph of the Indian Rope Trick. I examined it, says Col. Elliot, "with a magnifying glass, and there, clear for everyone to see, on what purported to be the rope were the characteristic knots of a hammock pole. It was an ordinary photograph of an acrobatic feat, common in India."

A popular magazine, a year or two ago, made a mild sensation by publishing a similar photograph. No doubt one of these photos, coupled with the photo of a group of fairies—in which the late Conan Doyle implicitly believed—will serve to illustrate some future history of *Curious Beliefs of the Nineteenth Century*. The type of mind that accepts these things is of the same type that provides the Spiritualist Medium with his dupes. Col. Elliot tells us:—

I have sat in a seance with earnest people who were persuaded that they were hearing voices and seeing lights, and even looking at and holding communion with astral beings. To me it was a dark silent room, nothing more. When I was asked, "Surely you hear them now?" I could only reply, "I see nothing and I hear nothing." On one occasion a friend who had gone in with me said afterwards, "I was so glad when you spoke quietly like that: I was beginning to think I saw things."

We have seen it stated somewhere that the myth of the Indian Rope Trick was the offspring of the fertile brain of an American journalist. However that may be, we can heartily agree with Col. Elliot's conclusion that: "The laws of nature are neither broken nor suspended. The great rope trick is a myth, and the sooner it joins the fire-breathing dragons and other similar inventions of a credulous past, the better. It never has been performed and it never will be. It sprang, Minerva-like, from the brain of an inventor of Jovian proportions; and, goddess-like, it has lived on far too long. Let it join the pantheon of a classic past."

W. MANN.

"The Nineteenth Centenary of Jesus Christ."

THE Pope has proclaimed a "Holy Year," the Archbishop of Canterbury "desires to associate himself" with the "jubilee of Our Lord"; and the *Search*, a queer sort of nondescript occult-jumble-sale paper issues a "Special Double Number Commemorating The Nineteenth Centenary of Jesus Christ."

Evidently the *Search* has heard that Christ died exactly nineteen hundred years ago last Friday week.

It is a commonplace fact that the ancient celebrations which we call Christmas and Easter notably ante-date the Christian era. But as St. Chrysostom said: "If they say it is the Birthday of the Sun, Christ is the Sun—the Sun of Justice."

There is always an excuse for a jollification, even if neither the day, nor the hour, nor the year, nor the season of the world's most wonderful birth and death days is agreed upon by those who believe Christ ever lived at all. Certainly once upon a time a child was born, and at an equally vague date a man once died.

Accepting the generally discarded view that Christ was born on December 25. A.D. 1, his Ministry is said to have begun when "Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke iii. 23) and lasted until Good Friday, A.D. 33. The Gospels differ, but the three years' guess is based on the maximum number of times He is said to have "gone up to Jerusalem," supposedly once a year.

Hence these dreary 400 pages about Christ, contributed to the *Search* by such world-famed authorities as William Platt and the Catholic Archbishop Goodier. Platt has a few pages about the "modern writers of fiction" being "astonishingly morbid and perverse," and about himself being "well read in Paleontology, Biology and Psychology," but not a word about the alleged hero of this Centenary volume. Jesus may have KNOWN all about these sciences, but he could not have READ anything about them.

The Archbishop naturally repeats like a parrot all that his church tells him. He may be a great theologian, but he "jokes wi' de-feculty"! He tells a funny story, carefully omitting the funny part of it, and attributes it to "the Atheist Voltaire."

This prelate pretends that Jesus was a sort of Mr. Joad, all things to all sorts of reformers. He goes so far as to say "Communism fights for the solidarity of man: does it offer more than He who prayed that all might be one"! He adds, rather inaptly: "Never was such brotherhood" as that for which Christians have been so famous!

In a very different key, Dr. Geikie Cobb writes. He is one of the most respected of modernists. Older and less witty than the gloomy Dean, Geikie-Cobb is far more human and more in sympathy with the under-dog. Here we can only note some characteristic admissions of one who nevertheless subscribes to all the Articles and doctrines of the Established Church.

He says forcibly enough that men are asking whether the Church intends "to become one more Big Business," or to further the St. James ideal of "religion pure and undefiled." He wonders what his Church "thinks of Christ," and why it is "so shy" of defining that attitude. This is a most searching question, but surely it is queer when an eminent leader of that church should be in doubt on this subject.

Then again, "when we speak of the Christ, what do we mean?" That is one of the conundrums of the whole church, not merely of its modernist section. Dr. Cobb refers to "the numerous guesses . . . which 'have agitated Christianity through nineteen centuries.'" The riddle becomes more puzzling: "That 'Jesus is God,' has been 'asserted vociferously . . . but the difficulty," says Dr. Cobb, "is to derive from the formula any rational meaning."

A Freethinker could hardly be more severe. But a Modernist could not remain a Church dignitary if he simply left it at that! So Dr. Cobb adds to the innumerable "new" conceptions "of what Jesus stood for FUNDAMENTALLY."

Jesus, it appears, recognized only "one false religion," and "revealed its opposite in the Love which is God." It is a very beautiful picture, of course: Nobody ever loving anybody OUTSIDE Christianity, and everybody teaching and practising love INSIDE Christianity. In case the critic objects that history and experience fail to note the exceeding great riches of Christian love, Dr. Cobb hastens to say "we may humbly plead that we have this treasure in EARTHEN vessels." Some of Christianity's victims would use the adjective HELLSH.

Dr. A. Marmonstein, for the Jews, "attempts to throw light on the mutual relations between Gospel teachings and Rabbinical thought." As this writer is still a Jew, it is not likely he throws overboard the latter in favour of the former. Nor does he attempt to explain the "genuine ignorance of Jesus and his party," in the Rabbinical records "of his alleged day." But he understands the feelings of Jewish writers "at a later age when the real person of Jesus was entirely overshadowed by the horrors and gnashing of teeth caused by the propagators of the Gospels; the incomparable sufferings and unpardonable cruelties committed in the name of Jesus."

The same writer denies that "Christianity conquered the Roman world by higher morality." He denounces "the merciless behaviour of Jesus, as exemplified in the ghastly parable of Abraham's unwillingness to help the suffering and tormented rich man in hell."

But will Dr. Marmonstein explain his cryptic allusion to "R. Zadok, who may have been an eye-witness of the crucifixion of Jesus?"

Another Jew, Dr. J. Sinnreich, takes a more friendly view of Jesus. He says "Man cannot live without a Messiah." Even this one is better than none at all. Dr. Sinnreich is apparently "a Jewish disciple of Jesus." His historical sense may be gauged by his ridiculous statement that "in dire need Israel could always appeal to His authority and find some sort of protection under His wings even in the darkest days of history!"

"The Christian Scientist Point of View," is the subject of Mr. Charles Tennant's eulogy. Anyone capable of understanding Mr. Tennant would probably believe in Mrs. Eddy herself. He apparently says that Christ is nothing but "man's real selfhood in human consciousness," but there are so many qualifying phrases that one hesitates to claim acquaintance with Mr. Tennant's meaning, if any.

"Did Jesus Found the Christian Church," asks Dr. Eisler. He says "Yes," but his only authority is Jesus himself who "in one of the most important historical documents" founded the church on a rock.

"Jesus as a Muslim Sees Him," is (unintentionally) a most amusing contribution by Abdul Madid. Muslims, he says, do not believe Jesus to be God, "because their conception of God is far too sublime." The delightful Muslim cannot think anyone could possibly be divine "who had not where to lay his head." Again, Jesus could not be the Son of God because "we know Jesus ate and drank and was subject to all the physical consequences of eating and drinking."

"As to His birth, there is nothing very peculiar," continues our Muslim, also "the Atonement is an immoral doctrine." Still, Jesus could quite easily have been a "Messiah," for the word "Messiah" simply means "one who travels in the land," so any bagman or travelling salesman could be a "messiah!"

The Muslim thinks "The Jews did not kill Him for sure. Mary took Him for the gardener, which shows that Jesus had disguised Himself as a gardener." "In all post-crucifixion appearances, Jesus is found concealing and hiding Himself as if He feared being discovered." "Jesus did not die on the cross."

In some unaccountable way this article seems to have been taken for an "appreciation" of Jesus. It is more like an exposure.

"What the Buddhists Think," is an article mildly patronizing Jesus and ending in a pious hope that "Jesus too may in a future birth attain to that perfection which was attained by Gotama."

"The Cosmic Christ," is J. O. Mackenzie's little joke! It is our old friend the "Esoteric Buddhist," who admits that he "cannot do better than quote from Madame Blavatsky." He is right.

In the *Zohar Doctrine of the Son*, Mr. Garstin points the finger of scorn at all other "esoteric occult pseudo qabalists." His is the only genuine "Qabalism" (How we wish these foreigners would learn the rules of spelling). We naturally rejoice that "Qabalist harmonies are more with the Gnostic heresies than with the surviving churches"; the Gnostics are at least DEAD.

Mr. Garstin's views are difficult to check, as he claims that the "Siphra-Dtzenioutha contains an epitome of the principal doctrines of the Qabala," but unfortunately he admits that the unpronounceable double-barrelled business is "unintelligible to those unacquainted with the tradition." So we shall never really know the *Zohar Doctrine of the Son*.

Two of the *Search's* contributors disagree on a tremendously important question of belief. The Rev. Theodore Dodd says he does "not believe that the 'Turin Shroud is genuine.'" The Rev. Hugh Schonfield readily disposes of this infidel by producing an actual picture of the very Shroud, which says itself that this IS the "Face of Christ," and, to remove the least misunderstanding, it even bears the additional words "See Article, page 303!"

This obviously straightforward snap-shot will confute all unbelievers for all future ages. Dr. Schonfield rightly says, "it is important that the material was CLEAN linen." Apart from more hygienic reasons for rejoicing thereat, this cleanliness enabled the photo to be taken more rapidly. The pose is capital. A second sitting would have put the Divine customer to great inconvenience, while the Roman officials would have hated to have to arrange a second "shooting" of the scene.

The importance of the Photographic Shroud is in what Dr. Schonfield says are "the following facts which have been brought to light" by a microscopic study of the "snap" (which must have been an anticipation of Mr. Daguerre's process of direct photography). These facts include details of the "double metal buttons"; a discovery that "the crown of thorns was not a wreath but a cap like an inverted bowl"; and above all, the photo reveals quite plainly "marks on the Left Shoulder where the Skin has been broken by the weight of the Cross."

This Centenary issue of the *Search* is remarkable (to put it mildly) if only for the reproduction of this truly "moving" picture.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Consistent Thinking.

A FIERCE war over the vexed question of Sunday Cinemas in Wallasey has just terminated in a win for the bigots. Knowing Wallasey one needs no further explanation. It was a strange spectacle, nevertheless, to see two local parsons ranged on opposite sides in the dispute, and one wonders what on earth, or rather in heaven, their God was doing to allow it; perhaps he was too absorbed in the Disarmament Conference to notice.

But let us to the point. During the height of the battle the bigots' warrior-in-chief wrote a typically parsonic letter to the *Liverpool Echo* from which I have taken the following passage: "Sunday golf and bathing are not, in my opinion, to be regarded in the same category as Sunday cinemas. I am no worshipper of mere consistency. 'Consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds.'"*

I am not in a position to know if the parson in question plays golf or bathes on Sunday, but one is tempted to believe, in order to explain his peculiar mode of argument that such is the case. He is obviously painfully aware that his attempt to segregate Sunday cinemas from Sunday golf and bathing is hazardous not to say unconvincing. So he forthwith launches an attack on consistency and borrows (and mis-reads) a passage from Emerson to justify his attitude. In this respect he is being faithfully Christian. As a general rule Christians care not a hang about consistent thinking, when their religious views are at stake—if they did they would cease to be Christians. When they are convinced on some matter, then what they think must be right irrespective of whether it is inconsistent, illogical, or supernatural. They alone are heirs to the truth.

Actually, of course, consistent thinking is of primal importance. It is the criterion of right thinking, of sound reasoning; it is fundamental to logic, indispensable to science. To declaim against it in the manner adopted by the parson herein referred to is a sure sign of dishonesty. We can excuse a man who is unconsciously inconsistent, but we condemn anybody who realizes that his habit of thought is erratic, yet glories in the fact.

Inconsistency of thought is frequently the mark of a slovenly mind; and as thought governs conduct, slovenly thinking is bound to result in a slovenly mode of life. Thus we believe it to be a truism to assert that many of the present-day evils and disorders are due solely to inconsistent thinking.

Consistency in thinking demands that we regard from the same angle all problems which we are called upon to solve. There must be no preferential treatment, no haloes of sanctity, no leaving aside such weapons as ridicule or the argument from analogy. Our method of examination must be strictly materialistic and scientific. If we accept a hypothesis let it at least have the virtue of utility and not make matters more complex as does the God hypothesis.

Scrupulous, careful thinking is exceedingly hard, for we are all more or less prone to do things or say things which we deprecate in other people; we have nearly all been guilty of sweeping some fallacy or superstition from our mind only to establish another equally as injurious. Still, by dint of constant reflection, a calm, dispassionate outlook on life, and a strict adherence to the laws of logic we shall have travelled a long way towards making our thinking consistent.

Our Christian friends will never be consistent thinkers until they have overthrown their religion, for, whereas the Freethinker makes a theory fit the facts, the Christian shapes the facts to fit the theory. Hence the parson's scorn respecting "mere consistency."

TOM BLAKE.

* I wrote a letter in answer, but the editor refused it publication.

The tongue is like a race-horse which runs faster the lesser weight it carries.—*Joseph Addison*.

Acid Drops.

June 12 has passed and the world is still going on in the same old way. The prophesied end of the world has not materialized and the world is going on as usual. The gentleman who was responsible for this last scare, for which the New Testament is primarily to blame, has now explained that what he really meant was that June the 12th would mark the end of an age. That is quite believable since a new age commences at any time one pleases and ends just when one likes. Prophesying the end of the world is quite safe. If it did end no one could complain, and if it does not end very few will grumble.

This "end of the world" business helps us to realize the kind of mentality which has always been the stand-by of genuine Christianity and the raw material out of which it was created. The people who could make such a prophecy and the people who could believe it help to indicate the mixture of folly and knavery that goes to the building of a religion, and is an adequate answer to those who imagine that in the historic period religions are created by high-minded individuals who are filled with lofty ethical and social aspirations. These often accompany a religion in its development, but they are forced upon it by the insistent pressure of purely social forces. Prophecies about the end of the world differ from the ordinary religious beliefs, such as those in God and a soul, in heaven and hell, only in the fact that they deal with supposedly actual events which will happen in a definitely given period. And while religion lasts there will always be plenty of opportunities for fools and knaves to find pleasure in the company of each other. Those who are marked out by nature for religion will look round for fresh occasions on which to exhibit their folly, and there will always be enough knavery in the rest of the population to see that they shall not look in vain.

According to Mr. J. L. Garvin, "Until the whole Swastika spirit is altered there will be no ease in Europe." But to hope for an alteration seems about as fatuous as expecting a change in the nature of a hyena. The jungle spirit never changes.

As an aid to understanding the Christian religion, some remarks by a reporter of a pious paper are illuminating. He is thrilled to note what religion "does to cheer the poor in unlovely places." He also says, "And the more one sees of hungry crowds the more one realizes that religion must be presented as the glad, joyous thing which it is." This is merely another way of affirming that, to the poverty-stricken, hungry, and miserable, religion is a dope which provides them with solace in affliction and engenders resignation to the affliction. It is obviously not a tonic to rouse them to fight for the affliction to be removed. Religion which, at the time of the Industrial Revolution with its appalling conditions for the employees, served so very useful a purpose is seemingly expected to serve a similar purpose to-day.

Apropos of a new film in which the heroine is depicted bathing "in the nude," a film paper remarks that it imagined "film producers had got beyond the childish exploitation of nudity for sensation's sake." Not at all! The producers know that most of their patrons have had some sort of Christian upbringing, and therefore regard nudity as "indecent" or "shameful" or "wicked"—and hence find it deliciously attractive. It is the essentially false and unwholesome notions about "sex" and the uncovered human form which the Christian religion engenders that give the film producers their opportunity to make a sensation with nudity and semi-nudity. A less Christian "spiritual" education of the people, and a more wholesome one in the direction of the point of view common among the pagan Greeks of pre-Christian times,

would prevent the film producers from being able to exploit Christian salaciousness.

A minister is supposed to have recently said, according to a Missionary Society, that "If you are not reading modern missionary literature you are denying yourself one of the fruits of the Spirit." But is the perusal of fairy-tales and highly coloured romances a proper kind of "fruit" for the Spirit? Presumably so, if it acts as a laxative to one's purse.

The *Daily Mirror* remarks that:—

Our simple-hearted ancestors believed that the Earth, with mankind, suddenly slipped into the vacancy of space on a certain date a few thousand years ago. . . . The thousands of years have been lengthened by Science to millions.

This should serve as a reminder that it was the Christian religion which encouraged this simple-minded belief, affirming with much heat that it must be true because it was derived from a Holy Book divinely inspired from cover to cover. There were other simple beliefs from the same source which science has also dislodged. The Holy Book, however, did not affirm that God himself "slipped into the vacancy of space" some time or other, but it appears to be the only explanation to account for the Christian God.

To the *Daily Mirror*, however, the great age of man and the Earth serves as a reminder that Man "might by now have arrived at adult intelligence." This is expecting rather too much, in view of the fact that the Christian Bible and the Christian Church have done so much to prevent Man from developing an adult intelligence. Incidentally, we note that the picture dailies have no cause for complaint. They are doing very well, catering for the un-adult intelligence, and pleasing it with pictures of the less intelligent activities of mankind. A glance at these encourages the conviction that the generality have certainly not arrived at adult intelligence. Nor is this likely to occur under the present journalistic dispensation.

Catholics can consider themselves lucky these days. The President of Spain, a pious Roman Catholic, signed the Religious Orders Bill the other day, and he has let himself in, under the Canon Laws of his Church, for the penalty of excommunication. This sentence used to be about the most awful that could be pronounced, and it made Kings and tyrants literally tremble with fright. We fancy President Tamora will not shake in his shoes in spite of being so faithful a son of his Church. The leaven of Freethought will have reached him; and excommunication and the other fearful threats of God's own Church, he will look upon as being a sort of ridiculous variation of the curses of a savage witch-doctor. How many educated Roman Catholics really fear excommunication now?

According to Sir Ernest Benn, there was in existence never a better crop of young people than to-day. How strange! For most of them ignore the churches and parsons, and have little or no regard for religion. Furthermore, they have no respect for the Christian Sunday, and endeavour to be happy on that day in whatever manner they may choose. Who can explain this enigma?

What a wonderful press the Roman Catholics can command in England! The laying of the foundation stone of the new Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool, filled columns in our national newspapers with special photographs and special correspondents complete. Even a divine of the Church of England was there in all his glory—and, no doubt, very respectful members of the many other Christian sects which grace the city of Liver-

pool were also there. The raising of such a Cathedral—however beautiful it may be as a work of art—and its credulous and superstitious associations should be a reminder to Freethinkers that our work is not done. Could anything be more pitiful than the spectacle of thousands of men, women and children grovelling on their knees when the "Papal Legate" passed them!

This declaration of loyalty is now taken by every official appointed to work for the League of Nations:—

I solemnly undertake to exercise in all loyalty, discretion, and conscience the functions that have been entrusted to me as—of the League of Nations, to discharge my functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the League alone in view, and not to seek or receive instructions from any Government or other authority external to the League.

Good Christians will be pained to observe that there is no "S'welp me Gawd!" anywhere in it. Seemingly, the League officials are regarded as intelligent persons who do not require to be frightened into loyalty by means of a Celestial Bogey. This is a lead from the League which all the nations would do well to follow in their own official affairs.

A Christian journalist provides a bit of "deep thinking" for his Christian audience, thus:—

When Darwin introduced his theory of Evolution to explain the development and variety of living creatures on the earth, many people thought that it meant the destruction of the Christian faith. It was certainly in conflict with the prevailing ideas of most Christian peoples, and many earnest souls regarded Darwin as an enemy of the faith. The folly of that attitude is now apparent to all. Evolution fits in with the Christian interpretation of life just as well as any other theory; . . .

Does it, indeed! How does the Christian apologist square with his "permanent truth" of a benevolent and loving Deity the facts of cruelty, bloodshed, pain and misery which are part of the evolutionary process?

Dean Inge, who is undoubtedly one of the few bright stars in the mediocre crowd in the Church of England today, can be relied upon to give his brothers-in-grace several severe shocks. He now insists that "Christianity must be preached in modern language, not the tongue of 1,500 years ago," and he wants to see Christianity made "intelligible and satisfying to people of the twentieth century." What a compliment this is to his Faith and Saviour! We always gathered that the beautiful, plain, simple words of Christ—so simple that a child of eight could understand them—were all that was necessary for salvation and were delivered once for all 1,900 years ago. Surely Dean Inge does not presume that he or anybody else can make them now *intelligible*? Or is he obliged to agree with the despised Freethinker that most of the teachings of "Our Lord" were, if not actual drivel, at least quite unintelligible?

According to a parsonic scribe there are numerous ways of "finding God." We shouldn't care to dispute the point. Human folly and stupidity have innumerable forms.

All over the country Catholics are boasting how they manage to scotch any attempt to teach birth control to the poor who want the information. The latest example comes from Cwmbran U.D.C., one of whose members, Councillor J. Darley, "induced his colleagues to refuse permission for lectures on birth control in the area." Whether the Council have any legal rights in the matter, we do not know, but the fact that a body of non-Catholics can be "induced" to show such impudent intolerance provides another example of the power this iniquitous and silly religion can exert. Why do not Freethinkers who have the time and means assert themselves more strongly?

Permission to give these lectures was also asked for at other places and refused, but we are told, "the applicants were successful at Barry, where there are no Catholics on the Urban Council." Could anything be more eloquent? The truth is that Catholics everywhere are worming themselves into public life and doing what their Church tells them to; and it seems to be a fact that the average Protestant, who may be more or less indifferent to religion, simply gives in to his more clamorous and insistent brother. What a sorry state of affairs in our once "glorious free" England!

A week or so back the *Daily Express* tells us, a party of pilgrims went to Lourdes. There were paralytics and consumptives among them, and they were blessed by a real Archbishop—who, it must be pointed out was a priest in direct succession, through the Blessed Apostles, of Jesus and therefore of God. So God, Jesus, the Blessed Apostles, a real Archbishop, the Blessed Bernadette, and Holy Lourdes, presided over by the Blessed Virgin, all had a hand in curing these hopeful sick people. Alas, something went wrong. "They came back as they went," said the *Daily Express*. The cripples who went on stretchers came back on stretchers and the ambulances that took them to the train took them back. "Hope shone in their eyes on the way to Lourdes, but they looked even happier on their return." What a consolation! And what a damnable shame this exploitation of sick people in the interests of a religion packed with such silly credulity and superstition. Holy oil, Holy water, Holy relics—and Holy bunk!

A Methodist parson wants to organize open-air services at the many camps used by walkers, cyclists, bathers, and other pleasure-seekers. This proposition is typical of the lack of consideration for others shown by Christian fanatics. They delight to thrust their religious opinions on all and sundry. If the campers have any hankering after religion they know where it can be had. And the fact that the majority of them do not trouble the churches or chapels should be a sufficient hint to all but religious bigots to leave the campers alone to enjoy themselves as they please. Campers will be far from pleased by the implication of the proposed intrusion, namely, that as they are endeavouring to be happy in their own way on Sundays they must be "wicked" and therefore in need of "salvation." One wonders how the pious would like being disturbed by the campers when the pious were busy at their Sunday amusement. The indignant worshippers would soon call on—not God—but the police for protection.

Fifty Years Ago.

ORTHODOX England has received a box on the ear from which what it regards as its brain will ring for many a day. Already a sad blow had been delivered by the repeated triumphs of Mr. Bradlaugh—a blow which had gone far to atone for the successful prosecution of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey, of the *Freethinker*. Upon the second trial all the honours have rested with the defendants, and no less eminent an authority than the Lord Chief Justice, has rendered a decision even more momentous than that whereby a late Lord Chancellor dismissed hell with costs, and deprived the members of the Church of England of their comfortable hopes of eternal damnation. The chief honours of the last *Freethinker* trial have been borne off by Mr. Foote. He and Ramsey had already been convicted, and were undergoing a sentence which to the mass of men seemed severe, when Sir H. Tyler, a member of Parliament, best known on our side of the Atlantic through his connexions with the Grand Trunk and other American railways, swooped down upon them and Mr. Bradlaugh with another indictment. The member for Northampton broke through the net, and the other defendants proved quite competent to defend themselves. Mr. Foote, in particular, delivered a speech which, for closeness of argument and vividness of presentation, has not often been equalled.—(From the *New York World*).

The "Freethinker," June 17, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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The Bradlaugh Centenary Commemoration Fund.

NINTH LIST OF DONATIONS.

AMOUNT previously acknowledged, £584 8s. 6d.; E. S. P. Haynes, £2 2s.; C. J. Pollard, £2; G. G. Glen, £1 1s.; E. Johnson, £1 1s.; Failsworth Secular Sunday School, £1 1s.; J. J. Browne, £1 1s.; D. M. Kinlock, £1; Mr. & Mrs. A. Clements, £1; J. J. Brockbank, in grateful memory of Plumstead Common, 1876, £1; J. Law, £1; J. H. Turner, £1; H. E. Anderson, £1; W. C. Bishop, £1; A. F. Bullock (4th donation), £1; C. Lambert, 15s. 6d.; Mrs. M. L. Seaton Tiedeman, 15s.; T. Dixon, 10s. 6d.; Rev. J. H. A. Hart, 10s.; J. Gibson, 10s.; E. Truelove, 10s.; Mrs. D. McKeever, 10s.; G. Ploen, 10s.; W. H. W. Ballast, 5s.; J. H. Dannatt, 5s.; R. V. Moore, 5s.; H. J. Savory, 5s.; A. G. Moss, 5s.; Pat Mills, 4s.; C. Lolley (Senr.), 2s. 6d.; Dinah, 2s. 6d.; C.V.T., 2s. 6d.; T. Dobson, 2s. 6d.; Port Sunlight Saints: W. A. Williams, 1s.; J. Dyson, 1s.; O. Bartlett, 1s.; J. E. Maddocks, 1s.; W. Dunbar, 1s.; T. Roberts, 1s.; S. Waring, 1s.; F. McLeary, 1s.; W. McPherson, 1s.; J. H. Dannatt, 1s.

Total £607 14 6

Total required £1,500

All subscriptions to be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer, Bradlaugh Centenary Fund, Mr. F. C. C. Watts, 33 Cursitor Street, London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. B. RUSH.—We are looking into the matter. The narrow and ignorant Nationalism against which you so properly protest has no place in the programme or policy of the N.S.S., and any speaker on its platform who indulges in it is abusing the hospitality that has been extended to him. The opinions we recently expressed on anti-Semitism and the parochial Nationalism of Hitler in Germany, and his followers in this country represent the opinions of the members of the National Secular Society. At least, we have never heard anything to the contrary.

DR. R. K. NOYES (U.S.A.)—Mr Cohen's record was sent to you on May 20, if same has gone astray, inform us and we will despatch by return another one.

P. J. MORSE.—Thanks for cuttings, also your continued keen interest in the paper.

H. S. WISHART.—Thanks for cuttings. As you say, they prove how much work we still have to do.

J. STEPHENS.—We are obliged for references. Will look them up.

C. HART.—Don't give way. You will find the result well worth the effort. Perhaps you had better read along with the works the essay on Spinoza, by Sir Frederick Pollock, which is still the most readable, and in some respects the best essay on the subject. But you must not be held in thrall by Spinoza's terminology. His one existence of which we know only certain modes is on its face value no more than a relic of theism. The unknown existence is only the ghost of a God which so haunts the works of even modern philosophers. But if you pierce through Spinoza's language to Spinoza's thought you will find there a complete atheistic system, and one which will protect you against the confusing verbalisms of Jeans and Co.

H. FISHER.—Thanks, but hardly up to standard although quite interesting in matter and sound in ideas.

J. L. WILSON.—We do not know where copies of the debate between Bradlaugh and Robert Roberts could be procured. You would have to depend upon getting a copy second hand.

H. AMERY.—The income from ground rents and rents in and around London amounts to about one million annually. This according to the figures for 1932.

H. WELMER.—We are afraid our intelligence lacks the subtlety to perceive any difference between the bombing of a city during a war and the carrying out of military duties, and the bombing of a native tribe in Arabia, India, or Africa in the course of the performance of police duties. Perhaps the distinction is that in London, Paris, Rome, or Berlin the bombed people have some means of defence and attack. The native tribes have none.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The excursion to Brookland, the Centenary visit to the tomb of Charles Bradlaugh, on June 10 last, proved exceptionally interesting. The day, though cool, was very pleasant, and the three charabancs, with nearly a hundred "pilgrims," threaded their way through town, country and village, making the journey delightful from every point of view. Well known members of the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association and friends intermingled to make the visit a memorable one, and few who saw the laying of the wreath on the tomb of the great "Iconoclast" by his great-grandson will never forget it.

The wreath was inscribed: "Charles Bradlaugh, born 1833—died 1891. In grateful memory of one of the most valiant champions of Liberty and Truth this country has ever known," and it must have been a proud moment for Bradlaugh's surviving daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, her son and grandsons, to see the homage paid to the splendid and courageous fighter and champion of liberty and truth, whose life-like bust rose above the assembly as if he were still our leader and guide.

The three speeches, by Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. J. P. Gilmour and Mr. Chapman Cohen were each in their way, excellent and befitted the solemn occasion, and neither the speeches nor the visit will ever be forgotten by those who were fortunate to be present. Later, an enjoyable tea was provided, before which Sir William Collins who had been prevented in arriving at the cemetery in time, gave his tribute to the hero of the day. The journey home ended all too quickly what will always be regarded as one of the outstanding days in the movement.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. scored a distinct success at the opening meeting at Platt Fields. A very large and orderly crowd listened to Mr. J. Clayton of Burnley, who was in good form and very much appreciated. Mr. W. H. Sissons of Bolton will be the speaker to-day (June 18), at 6.30 p.m., and the Branch should be able to report another successful meeting. Announcements will be made in the Lecture Notices column each week.

Starting from to-day (June 18) Mr. G. Whitehead will be in the Swansea area for two weeks. The local Branch of the N.S.S. is making every effort to organize the Freethinkers in the district, and already has a centre for recreation and instruction. The activity of the Branch can be greatly extended if the local saints will get together and Mr. Whitehead's visit could be made an excellent rallying ground for that purpose.

The Brighton Branch N.S.S. has been having some trouble at its open-air meetings. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will visit Brighton and speak at the Level to-day (June 18), at 3 p.m. There are sufficient saints in the area to give the local Branch all the support it needs for peaceful meetings. A well-supported platform has a wonderful soothing effect upon "Odds On" rowdies.

The Oxford Branch N.S.S. has already formed a discussion circle, and Mr. N. O'Leary-Curtis will speak to-day (June 18), at 22 St. John Street, Oxford, on "The Principles and Objects of the N.S.S." The meeting begins at 7 p.m., and admission is free.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

GRAFTON HOTEL, LONDON, JUNE 4, 1933.

MORNING SESSION.

MEMBERS and delegates filled the Conference Room when the President took the chair and formally declared the meeting open. He hoped the proceedings would be marked with its usual good humour—united as they were in a common interest.

Mr. Sylvester moved and Mr. Jacobs seconded that the minutes of the last Conference be taken as read, after which the Secretary called the Roll.

The following is a list of Delegates and Branches represented:—P. V. Morris, Ashington; A. C. Rosetti, Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, Birmingham; C. Samuels, P. Goldman, Bethnal Green; Mrs. Revitt, Mrs. Bulmer, B. L. Bowers, Bradford; G. Whitehead, Bolton; C. G. Quinton, Blackburn; Mrs. F. Warner, Birkenhead; J. Clayton, Burnley; J. T. Brighton, Chester-le-Street; J. Marsh, Cardiff; J. Seibert, Chester; E. S. Bryant, G. H. Barnes, Fulham and Chelsea; Mrs. J. D. Macdonald, Glasgow; L. M. Werrey-Easterbrook, Hants and Dorset; W. Collins, W. A. Atkinson, Manchester; H. R. Clifton, Newcastle; Mrs. A. Ballard, Nelson; L. Ebury, C. C. Marquis, H. Perry, North London; W. J. W. Easterbrook, Plymouth; Miss S. Dobson, Perth; G. A. Thomas, Swansea; F. P. Corrigan, H. Preece, Mrs. N. Grant, South London; R. Keble, Shields; J. Walton, H. M. Wood, Sunderland; G. Burgess, Stockport; J. Lane, Seaham; B. A. Le Maine, J. Jacobs, C. Tuson, West London; H. S. Wishart, Mrs. E. Venton, F. G. Warner, West Ham; T. J. Sutherland, H. J. Savory, Wembley and District; J. Daly, Oxford.

The Chairman then read the Executive's Annual Report, which was vigorously applauded. No comments were forthcoming, and its adoption was moved by Mr. Collins (Manchester), and seconded by Mr. Bowers (Bradford).

The third item on the Agenda was the Financial Report, the adoption of which was moved by Mr. Brighton (Chester-le-Street), and seconded by Mr. Bryant (Fulham). Questions were asked on various items in the Report, and satisfactorily replied to by the President. The Financial Report was then adopted.

Greetings from various sources, including the American Association for the advancement of Atheism, the Federation of Freethinkers in France and its Colonies, and Dublin, were read by the President, after which he vacated the chair as he was in nomination for office. Mr. R. H. Rosetti took the chair and Mr. Corrigan (South London) in a few well chosen words moved and Mr. Sutherland (Wembley) seconded that Mr. Chapman Cohen be re-elected President of the National Secular Society for the coming year. The motion was unanimously carried, and the President thanked the members present for the honour shown him once again, and added that out of his sixty-five years, forty-four had been spent in the National Secular Society. It was not an easy task to follow such men as Bradlaugh and Foote, but he was glad to point out that the Society was stronger in membership than it had been for many years, and better financially than at any time in its history.

The re-election of Mr. R. H. Rosetti as Secretary, was moved by the Executive and seconded by Mr. Bedborough, who had known both Robert Forder and Edith Vance (the former Secretaries). He felt that Mr. Rosetti was as well fitted for the post as the President was for his. Mr. Brighton supported the motion and referred to the unfailing sympathy and practical help and advice he always received from Mr. Rosetti. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Burgess (Stockport) and Mr. Marsh (Cardiff) then moved and seconded the re-election of the Treasurer, Mr. C. G. Quinton. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Savory (Wembley) and Mr. Collins (Manchester) moved and seconded the re-election of Messrs. H. Theobald & Co., as Auditors, which was carried.

Mr. Sutherland (Wembley) moved and Mr. Saphin seconded the election of the Executive as on the Agenda, which was carried unanimously.

Motion No. 9 on the Agenda was by Mrs. Venton:—

"That this Conference expresses its indignation at the suppression of the Freethought Movement in Germany, the confiscation of its funds, buildings and educational institutions; it also promises to our Freethinking brethren in Germany whatever help can be given them, and wishes also to place on record its horror at the brutal treatment of Jews, Freethinkers, Socialists and Communists by the Hitler Government."

She added that when in London Dr. Rosenberg admitted that 14,000 Socialists were imprisoned in Germany, and she also pointed out Hitler's declaration that in exterminating the Jews, he was doing the Lord's mission.

Mr. Lazarnick seconded the motion.

Mr. Gerhart Kumbleben, who carried with him the fraternal greetings of the Federation of Freethinkers of France, gave an interesting account of the attempted suppression of Freethought in Germany under the Hitler regime. He was also anxious to establish a more friendly feeling between England and France in the interest of our common cause. He was glad to report that in spite of statements in the press, there

was a strong feeling growing up all over Germany against the Nazis, who were bent on reintroducing the old Prussian training, and he hoped we here in England would give the Freethinkers in Germany every help and encouragement which would greatly strengthen them in their fight.

Mr. Bedborough suggested the insertion of "and others" after the word "Communists" in the motion, which was agreed to. Mr. Savory was puzzled by the Centre Party in Germany going "through the mill," as Hitler and the majority of his Cabinet were Catholics, and Mr. Wishart pointed out that both the *Catholic Times* and the *Universe* showed, at least indirectly, their sympathy with the Hitler regime. Mr. Bryant added his opinion that as the Communists themselves advocated force, they were only getting a dose of their own medicine under Hitler. Mr. Hornbrook claimed that we did not protest enough when force was being used against Mussolini's opponents in Italy, and both Mr. Werry-Easterbrook and Mr. Collins spoke in support of the motion. Mr. Jacobs hoped a copy of the motion would be sent to the German Ambassador.

The President said this would of course be done, and in summing up the discussion showed what the functions of the State and the individual were in relation to each other. He thought conditions here in England did not favour such movements as the Nazis, and felt it was no compliment to the intelligence of the people of England when our own Fascists showed such great fear of the Jews, who formed so small a percentage of the population. The resolution was carried.

Mr. H. R. Clifton then proposed:—

"That this being the Centenary Year of Charles Bradlaugh, founder and life-long member of the National Secular Society, this Conference places on record its deep sense of his great service to the Freethought cause, it endorses what has been done by the Executive in order to make the Centenary the occasion of a national demonstration, and further authorizes the Executive to take whatever steps it considers proper and possible fittingly to celebrate so notable an event."

In putting forward this motion Mr. Clifton read out some extracts from a speech made by the late G. W. Foote some twenty years after Bradlaugh's death—extracts which showed how high was the esteem felt by Foote for his late leader.

Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook in seconding the motion said that it was to Bradlaugh he owed his own conversion. Both his father and grandfather had related many things to him of the great "C.B." The President in supporting the motion said that the Executive would do all in its power to make the Centenary a fitting one, and would contribute a sum of money to the Centenary Committee—the exact amount to be determined later.

The motion was then carried.

Mr. Warner in moving:—

"That while welcoming the new Sunday Cinema Act as a recognition of the principle of a free Sunday, this Conference demands the abolition of all Sabbatarian restrictions, and draws special attention to the iniquity of closing playgrounds for children on Sundays."

described some of the things his own Branch had done in this matter. On one occasion it drew up and distributed from house to house 5,000 circulars in defence of Sunday Cinema opening. Mr. Bowers (Bradford) seconded, and Mr. Savory said that one reason for the opposition to opening playgrounds for children on Sunday was the extra cost to the ratepayers in providing guardians.

Mr. Burgess said he found that the Labour Party were the biggest opponents of Sunday Cinema opening

because so many of their own political supporters were Nonconformists. Mrs. Venton said one reason for the opposition was that so few Freethinkers took part in public and civic life. Mr. Brighton gave his experiences in Durham, and Mr. Easterbrook, Miss Moore and Dr. Carmichael, took part in the discussion, and it was finally decided to delete all before the words "this Conference." The motion was then carried, and the meeting adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

On the Conference resuming, Mr. Wishart put the following motion:—

"That in view of the serious threat to, and actual suppression of Freedom of thought and speech in Europe this Conference re-affirms its faith in the democratic principles laid down in the Society's Principles and Objects."

He did so with great satisfaction on behalf of his own Branch, and he thought it was necessary in this Centenary Year to reaffirm our Principles and Objects. The N.S.S. was the premier organization of its kind in Britain, and the forces of reaction were gathering strength and were doing their best to suppress freedom. He was sorry to add that, in his opinion, there were many people who ought to be democratic, and who even called themselves Atheists, who were opposed to freedom and Freethought. They seemed to believe that it was necessary to fight Theism merely because a belief in God was opposed to their own particular political creed. They openly advocated force and anti-democratic measures. He himself put it that a statement of genuine democracy was a statement of Freethought throughout its historic career. Our great principle was Freethought, and the N.S.S. should stand for that principle now as it has done throughout its history.

Mr. A. B. Moss seconded. Mr. Bedborough thought we ought to delete the word "democratic" from the resolution, and moved this as an amendment. In the discussion which followed, Miss Moore and Messrs. Werry-Easterbrook, Ebury and Bowers took part. The amendment was lost and the motion was carried.

Mr. Corrigan spoke to Motion 13:—

"That this Conference re-affirms its adherence to a non-political programme."

He thought that such a resolution was the best means of avoiding political party entanglements. It was obvious that members of the N.S.S. could not agree on everything, and we had to face the opposition of a political party which was definitely atheistical. He thought we should do well to remember the fate of the "lady of Niger," and he deprecated the advice of those members who were advocating a working arrangement with any political party. Mr. Sutherland seconded. Mr. Walton proposed an amendment that instead of the words "a non-political programme," we substitute "to party political neutrality." Mr. G. Whitehead seconded and Mr. Goodman asked how could we be absolutely neutral in political questions?

The President pointed out we were bound to touch some political questions—as for example the Blasphemy Laws or Secular Education. Miss Moore asked what exactly was meant by "political"? Were secular questions political? And Dr. Carmichael insisted that many phrases differently worded really meant the same. He thought we should consider the Motion in the light of current events. After Mr. Collins had also spoken the Chairman took the vote, and the amendment was lost. The Motion was then carried.

No. 14 was moved by Mr. G. F. Green:—

"That this Conference instructs the Executive to appoint forthwith a representative Committee to

draft a new set of "Principles and Objects," which shall be presented to the next Annual Conference for consideration."

He said that the fight for Freethought was in reality a fight against dogmas. In this fight the Church has been beaten again and again, but this did not in reality weaken her as she now employed two further weapons in the struggle, namely, economic and political weapons. The fight therefore had been shifted and our "Principles and Objects" had to be framed on different lines to harmonize more with current events, and to widen the scope for the admission of new members. Mr. Green thought we could shed the old Principles and Objects without disaster, and pressed the Conference to allow their change to be at least considered. We wanted a set of Objects which should be lucid, blunt and not redundant, and as he had the interest of the movement at heart, he hoped the discussion would be carried on without rancour.

Miss Moore seconded and Mr. Wishart proposed an amendment. He thought the resolution should give some idea of the suggested alterations to the proposed committee, and he felt that if the two last paragraphs of the Principles and Objects were deleted the case was well met. Mr. Green seemed to him to have spoken very vaguely throughout, and he would have liked some clear indication of what was in his mind.

Mr. Green replied that he would have been only too glad to speak at length on the question as he was bursting with ideas, but he thought he already had clearly indicated something of what he had in mind in the *Freethinker* of April 21. Miss Moore said that Mr. Green assumed everybody at the Conference would have read his article in the *Freethinker*, and it surely was obvious what their objective was. She felt that it was not the place for the N.S.S. to combat everything, and she wanted particular attention drawn to two points: (1) Those things should be withdrawn from the N.S.S. Principles and Objects on which there was disagreement among the members. For example, she herself disagreed with Utilitarianism, and many disagreed with her methods of abolishing war. (2) We ought to have inside the N.S.S. only people who are agreed to fight for Freethought.

The President in a few words pointed out that he was by no means opposed to re-wording our Principles and Objects to bring them in line with current thought and ideas, if on consideration this was found necessary, and Messrs. Morris (Wembley), Bedborough, Goldman and Easterbrook also took part in the discussion, the chief point of which was whether we were wise in delegating the drafting of new Principles and Objects to a Committee, the constitution of which we knew so little.

Finally the Chairman reminded members that the present Principles and Objects were not the original ones, but had been re-drafted by G. W. Foote to make them clearer and more in harmony with the thought of his day. He felt that a good deal of the discussion would have been obviated had Mr. Green been less vague, and had he read out his *Freethinker* article to the Conference. Obviously Mr. Green wants to restrict our Principles and Objects in one sense and widen them in another. But the question of the Committee and its responsibility can be safely left to the Executive. The resolution was then carried.

Mr. Morris moved

"That this Conference again enters its strong protest against the teaching of religion in State-supported schools as being unjust to a very large section of the community and to the teachers, and advises the formation of local committees for the purpose of organizing supporters of Secular Education for the withdrawal of children from religious instruction in accordance with the Education Act."

And after the President had impressed upon members the importance of the latter part of the resolution, and brief speeches were delivered by Mr. Werry-Easterbrook and Mr. Walton the motion was carried.

In moving:—

"That having in mind the importance of case of communication between the peoples of different countries this Conference urges upon British Freethinkers the importance of a study of Esperanto, which is increasingly used by many movements and professions."

Mr. Wishart said there was general agreement that an international auxiliary language was advisable, and for this purpose none was suited so well as Esperanto. It had been adopted all over the world and was increasing in popularity and usefulness.

Mr. Clayton on practical grounds, seconded the motion. As a teacher of Esperanto of many years' standing, he thought it was a tragedy people could not understand each other at Conferences abroad.

Motion carried.

Speaking on the Motion by Fulham and Chelsea Branch:—

(a) "That the whole time of the Conference be given up to the discussion of resolutions submitted by Branches and members."

Mr. Bryant said that it looked as if we should in the future be obliged to hold an Evening Session to get through all our business. He suggested that the usual papers generally read in the afternoon should not be read, as they were always printed in the *Freethinker*. Members could read them in that paper. Dr. Carmichael seconded and the motion was carried.

On:—

(b) "That in the opinion of this Conference the time has arrived when the N.S.S. should concentrate its efforts on the election to Parliament of members willing to promote the principles of the Secular Movement."

Mr. Bryant said there was no need to amplify the motion which was then seconded by Mr. Werry-Easterbrook and carried.

Motion No 18:—

"That this Conference urges upon all engaged in public life to (1) Uphold the rights of Freethinkers wherever they are threatened. (2) Protest against special privileges for religion wherever they exist or are proposed. (3) Affirm their own adherence to Freethought wherever possible."

was introduced by Mr. Savory, who showed how much clerical influence there was in political and civic elections. Mr. Moss seconded and the motion was carried.

No. 19, advocating the publication of books for children intended to counteract the influence of religion, and No. 20, asking for a pamphlet dealing with the case of Francesco Ferrer were carried.

Mr. Burgess moved:—

(a) "That this Conference strongly protests against the autocratic and unfair policy of the B.B.C. with regard to its Sunday programme."

He felt that Freethinkers were not taking the question seriously enough. He gave some striking facts and details of the strongly religious influence and bias of the B.B.C., and urged that we should do all in our power to combat the evil. In seconding, Mr. Savory said we ought to suggest to the B.B.C. a talk about Bradlaugh. The President pointed out that the strict censorship of the B.B.C. made any such address improbable. He was absolutely opposed to the strict censorship, and said that even if the B.B.C. consented to a talk about Bradlaugh, they would take care

to select some one who would agree to give a perfectly innocuous and useless speech that would be of little value to Freethought.

As the time of the Conference was running out Motions 21 and 22, as being non-controversial were carried without discussion.

On Motion 23 :—

"That the Executive be instructed to arrange that at least one page per week be given in the *Freethinker* to be devoted to Branch reports."

The President said that the pages of the *Freethinker* were always at the service of the Society, and, indeed, generally Branch and Society news appeared in the "Sugar Plum" column, which was the most read part of the paper. He was afraid that a page of reports, all saying the same thing, as most reports did in substance, would not make very interesting copy. But if Secretaries would try and write brief, bright reports room could be found for them. He had tried to run a column of "Society News," but Secretaries were not attentive enough to keep the column supplied with material. He would see what could be done in the matter. Mr. Morris then asked permission to alter the wording of the resolution to "Branches should be urged to send in news of their activities," which was carried. Mr. Brighton then moved that the Executive's Annual Report be printed and circulated.

The time of the Conference having more than expired, the President thanked those present for their attendance, and the interest shown in the proceedings, and declared the Conference at an end.

H.C.

The King Amuses Himself.

(Extract from an Historical Document.)

In the year 1680 Charles II. of Austria, King of Spain, wished to be present at an *Auto general da fe*. He was then nineteen years old.

Don Diego Sarmiento of Valladares, Bishop of Oviedo and Plasencia, Royal Counsellor and Member of the Cabinet during the minority of the Prince, and Inquisitor-General of the Kingdom, welcomed this idea of the young King, and promised to inform him as soon as there was got together a good collection of offenders. This opportunity soon occurred.

All the tribunals worked feverishly, and by the end of April a large number of trials had been concluded, and an equally large number of heretics had been taken from the cells of the Inquisition in Madrid, Toledo and other parts of the monarchy.

The King being informed, he arranged that the *Auto General* should take place in Madrid and in his presence, fixing the 30th June as the most suitable date as being the commemoration of Saint Paul. There now commenced to arrive in Madrid at dusk large mourning coaches, escorted by soldiers and priests.

The people guessed what they contained and looked forward with joy to the 30th June. These coaches were transporting offenders from the most distant tribunals of the Kingdom to the great bon-fire which was being prepared at the foot of Charles II. throne. The theatre was erected in the Plaza Mayor; a solemn procession took place in order to announce the proximity of the *Auto*, and indulgences were granted to those who would be present.

The theatre, prepared in a few days by Don Fernando Villegas, was superb. It consisted of a platform 13 feet high, 190 long and 100 wide. Two lofty perrons descended to it; dais for the corporations; cages for the offenders; tables for the secretaries; pulpits and tribunals for the priests; altars for the religious ceremonies; refreshment buffets for the Inquisitors who might feel hungry, and shelters for the soldiers who had to guard the condemned. No armed force whatever was

prepared to intimidate and subdue the populace, for it was known that they would not be indignant, but, on the contrary, would be greatly amused by the *Auto da Fe*.

The bonfire was prepared in the Puerta de Fuencarrel, about three hundred paces from the wall. It is still easy at the present time to find the spot.

At three o'clock in the afternoon on the eve of the great day a large procession set out which lasted until midnight. The offenders were given supper, and the Holy Tribunal assembled in order to keep vigil until the following morning.

A faggot of wood was presented to Charles II. The King showed it to the Queen, and after having held it in their hands for some time, they gave it to the Duke of Pastrana, recommending that it should be the first to be thrown on the pyre.

In the meantime the offenders were notified of their fate in the following style :—

"Brother (Brother!) Your case has been examined and discussed with persons very learned in letters and science, and your offences have been found so serious and of such a wicked character that, as a punishment and example for others, you have been sentenced to die tomorrow; prepare yourselves and get ready; and in order that you may be able to do so in a proper manner, two priests will remain with you."

This intimation was made to twenty-three of the condemned. At three o'clock in the morning the offenders were dressed. At five o'clock they breakfasted. They were then formed in a procession. There were eighty-six. There were in addition a further thirty-four in effigy, these having either died or being fugitives from justice. The effigies which represented the dead bore in their arms the bones of those they represented.

Of the 86 living offenders, 21 wore the "sanbenito." They were those condemned to "relajar," that is to say, die. There were two missing from the "23" announced on the programme; but this was due to the fact that on this same morning the penalty of death on two women had been commuted in return for certain revelations which had been made to the Inquisition.

Of the twenty-one condemned to the flames, twelve were handcuffed and gagged. There were six women amongst them. The ages of these women were: 30, 24, 52, 43, 60, 21 years. Their crime consisted in being of the Jewish faith.

The ages of the men were: 26, 25, 52, 65, 30, 35, 34, 33, 36, 24, 38, 33, 38, 27, 28 years.

Some were doctors, the greater number merchants, and almost all Portuguese. Their crime: being of the Jewish faith.

Of these twenty-one destined to be burned, there were some who would first suffer the penalty of being garroted; others would be burnt alive.

In addition, thirty-two of the thirty-four referred to were to be burnt in effigy. Twenty-two of them represented fugitives. The remaining ten had died in the secret dungeons of the Inquisition.

Those sentenced to public disgrace and to be whipped through the streets numbered six, including two women, both aged thirty-four years. The men were: a crippled tailor who had asked for alms; a herdsman who had married twice, for which he was to receive two hundred lashes and be banished for ten years, five of them rowing in the galleys.

Those condemned to banishment and imprisonment for life numbered twenty, twelve of them being women. Their ages were: 18, 39, 40, 34, 30, 14, 25, 50, 76, 17, 25 years.

Behind the offenders followed a very long procession, composed of the Corporations, Authorities, etc., which passed through the principal streets of Madrid amidst an immense crowd which gave loud demonstrations of joy.

At nine o'clock the procession arrived at the Plaza Mayor, and the ceremonies commenced. Mass was performed, followed by a sermon. At four o'clock the sentences of the condemned were read out, and they were at once conducted to the stake.

The King remained in the square until the other sentences had been carried out.

There followed exorcism, recantations, conjurations. Afterwards the *Veni Creator*, etc., was sung.

According to the document we quote, Charles II. trembled from time to time.

At half past nine at *night* Mass was concluded.

His Majesty asked the Inquisitors if he had still to remain there. He was told "No," and he at once returned to his palace. He had been twelve hours on the balcony without eating, without speaking, without moving, like a corpse.

But the Inquisition had not yet finished; there commenced a new procession which lasted all night.

As for those condemned to death, there remained nothing but a heap of cinders near the Puerta de Fuen-carral.

D. PEDRO A. DE ALARCON (Translated by J.R.)

A Christian Murderer.

STUDENTS of that strange thing, the "religious conscience" may find food for thought in the facts which this article embodies. True, it is but an isolated instance, taken as it stands from the old records, but there can be little doubt that similar cases could easily be found by anyone who cared to pursue the study with care.

Early in 1766 William Whittle, a Lancashire man, was arrested for the murder of his wife and two children, and on April 5 of that year was hanged. That is a very commonplace crime, but what makes the matter of interest to us to-day is the reason which he gave, in evidence, for its commission.

He was a Roman Catholic, and his wife a Protestant. That was the beginning of the trouble. And he came under the influence of a very strong-minded and ruthless priest. This man told Whittle that he would be damned for marrying a heretic. So that he conceived the idea of murder.

"But why," he was asked in court, "murder your innocent children? They had done nothing to deserve it."

His reply was that the mother had taken them to the church of the heretics, so that they also would have been damned if he had not killed them. But now that they were dead they would be in purgatory, and would get to heaven in time.

This is a very interesting case for the student, but, this is not all. He was attended at his execution by the prison chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Rogers, and soon after the execution Mr. Rogers received the following anonymous letter, which is the most beautiful example of Christian charity possible to imagine:—

Sir,—I make bold to acquaint you that your house, and every clergyman's that's in the town (Lancaster), or any black son of a bitch like you—for you are nothing but damned souls—if William Whittle, that worthy man, hangs up ten days, you may fully expect to be blown to damnation.

As to whether or how far the threat was carried out history remains silent. The whole transaction is a grim example of the way in which the human mind may be twisted and perverted by the tenets of intolerant religion.

JOHN ROWLAND.

Correspondence.

N.S.S. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Ready, I regret that he has selected a phrase of his own, and regardless of its context, given it a meaning that it did not at first clearly bear, in order to make it agree with a phrase which I suggested as the correct one. Then, for the sake of a mere verbal victory, he charges me with distorting his meaning.

I may misunderstand a writer's meaning, especially when his phrasing is indefinite, but I am not in the habit of distorting and, in this case, only desired a straightforward answer to the question raised by me.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Reason and Emotion."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. L. Ebury—"Humanity's Need of Free-thought."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson, Sunday, June 18. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, June 19, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, June 22, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, June 18, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Wednesday, June 21, Mr. H. S. Smith, Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, June 23, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside the Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. Saphin.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, June 18, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform 1, Messrs. A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. and Bryant. Platform 2, B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Platform 1, Messrs. Tuson and Bryant. Platform 2, Messrs. Saphin and Hyatt. Wednesday, June 21, 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Le Maine. Thursday, June 22, 7.30, E. C. Saphin. Friday, June 23, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. The *Freethinker* and other literature can be obtained during and after the meetings of Mr. Dunn outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

OXFORD BRANCH N.S.S. DISCUSSION CIRCLE (22 St. John Street, Oxford): 7.0, Mr. N. O'Leary-Curtis—"The Principles and Objects of the N.S.S."

OUTDOOR.

ACCINGTON MARKET, 7.0, Sunday, June 18, Mr. J. Clayton. BRIERFIELD (Quaker Bridge): 3.0, Sunday, June 18, Mr. J. Clayton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level, Brighton): 3.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecturc.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 7.30, Friday, June 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, June 18, Messrs. C. McKelvie and J. V. Shortt. Grierson Street, Monday, June 19, H. Little and P. Robinson. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road. Thursday, June 22, A. Jackson and E. S. Wollen. All at 8.0 p.m. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at all meetings.

LUMB-IN-ROSENDALE (near 'Bus Terminus): 7.30, Friday, June 16, Mr. J. Clayton, local Vicar to be in opposition.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields, Platt Lane, Manchester): 6.30, Mr. W. H. Sissons (Bolton), A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE SECULAR SOCIETY (Town Moor): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton and Mr. F. Bradford.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street, 7.30, Saturday, June 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Pier Head near Marine Park): 7.0, Wednesday, June 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Lambton Street): 7.0, Mr. Alan Flanders.

WORSTHORNE, 7.45, Tuesday, June 20, Mr. J. Clayton.

WANTED, Foote's "Comic Sermons." State price. LIBRA, Box No. 16, FREETHINKER, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

R. H. ROSETTI, 62 Farringdon Street, London.

E.C.4.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes super-natural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

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Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects

Name

Address

Occupation

Dated this.....day of.....19...

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

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