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

Views and Opinions.

Our Superstitions.

Of what proportion of the population can it be said that they are without superstition? I have a fairly large circle of friends and acquaintances, and they range over a very wide area. They are educated and uneducated, professional, scientific, literary, legal, and commercial, reading men and non-reading men. And yet I do not think I could safely claim that more than ten per cent are without superstition. I daresay that most of them would be surprised to read this estimate, but I am safe, for each of them will probably rank himself, or herself, with the minority. I am, I may say, using that term "superstitious" in a wide sense. To throw off the gross form of superstition embodied in religion is comparatively easy. But the superstitious type of mind may exist in relation to science, to politics, to philosophy, to life in general; and the "thought forms" that have been baulked of expression in the field of religion seek satisfaction elsewhere. Whenever I find the philosopher talking of "Reality," as though it stood for something apart from the things we know, whenever I find the politician speaking of the "destiny of a nation," or the "spirit of a people," as though these stood for an innate endowment, or the lay preacher dilating on the "categorical imperative" in ethics, or the scientist explaining things in terms of "instinct," I recognize the influence of the grosser forms of superstition that once dominated the mind of man in terms of ghosts and gods, of good and evil spirits. And when we add to these examples those of everyday and ordinary life, the half-ashamed belief in luck, and mascots, the fascination that astrology has for masses of the people, and the trade done in fortune telling, the vogue of palmistry and spiritualism, and the fascination that stories of the "occult" have for multitudes, I am afraid that some of my critics may well wonder why I have claimed as much as ten per cent to be free from superstition.

Our Uncivilized Selves.

As an apology for mankind let us remember that the opportunity for civilized and scientific thinking (by that I do not mean thinking about "scientific" subjects) has been present only since yesterday. In relation to the history of mankind that opportunity stands as a fraction of an inch does to the cross on the top of St. Paul's Cathedral. And behind this day or so of civilized life there lie millions of generations, during which the mind of man was dominated by the grossest of superstitions. Man's mental development has been through superstition to science, and at every step forward he has felt the pull—sometimes the irresistible pull, of the ghosts and gods he was attempting to leave behind. He has not merely to think new things, but he has had to create new thought forms with which to express them. The institutions he had created were there to threaten him, the language he had fashioned were constantly suggesting false things to him. His mind was, and is clogged with vestigial forms of thought that ever threatens to set up a mental sepsis.

An apology of this kind may well be set up on behalf of the prevalence of Spiritualism. The silliness of it all, the uselessness of it all, even the horror of it all, and the frequent exposures of trickery—conscious and unconscious—and downright fraud has little apparent force in preventing a large number of people being influenced by it. Let a medium be exposed and he, or she, will not lack champions; followers and believers will remain, and even those who are reluctantly compelled to accept the exposure will not look very kindly upon those who have opened their eyes. If Mrs. A. is a fraud, well, there is Mrs. B., who has never been exposed. And there is the testimony of men of science! Oh, those men of science! The solemnity with which they fix their attention on things that do not matter, and their positive blindness to things that do! The careful way in which they take temperatures and weights, chronicle the colour of the wall-paper or of the medium's eyes, and a dozen other things that do not matter in the slightest. No fraud could wish for a more accommodating audience than a committee of scientific men. The matter they are asked to deal with is so completely out of their line.

* * *

A Ghost Detector.

I do not think, for the reasons indicated, that the very telling exposure of the frauds and follies of Spiritualism recently issued by Mr. Harry Price, Director of the Laboratory of Psychical Research (*Leaves from a Psychist's Case-book*. Gollancz, 15s.) will influence Spiritualists very much. They will not deny the exposure, but they will probably argue, as they have argued before, that the fact of a medium being found out in trickery—a fate which overtakes

nearly all sooner or later—does not prove that the medium was not genuine at other times. And for the perpetuation of this frame of mind I think Mr. Price is to some degree responsible. For example, his book, extending to about 400 large pages, with numerous plates, is almost an unbroken record of the exposure of one trickster after another, some of them coming to him with the very highest testimonials from scientific men. It is amusing to note how Mr. Price takes them in hand: Mrs Duncan with her ectoplasmic bodies manufactured from cheesecloth (there is in addition to the discovery, the sworn testimony of a maid servant who actually purchased it), "Margery" with the thumb prints of her dead brother that have been identified with those of a living person; Valliantine (who for so long imposed on Dennis Bradley, until the latter finally dismissed him as a fraud) whose speciality was the direct voice, but who could get nothing from an Italian composer save phrases which were all to be found in a cheap Italian phrase book; Rudi Schneider, who is bowled out by the camera; so the list runs on. One knows that given time and patience, exposure is the inevitable consequence. Mr. Price's list of cases detected is as interesting as is the account of how this or that professional conjuror does his particular tricks; and to those who are interested in finding out how it is done, one could not recommend a more interesting volume.

All the same I question whether Mr. Price's method is quite so effective as he thinks it is. First, because his policy of running all over the world after this or that medium, with an elaborate set of mechanisms for detecting fraud, gives the whole business an air of actuality that it does not deserve. One might as profitably appoint a committee to investigate every time it is reported that some witch has cast a spell over a farmer's child. It leaves both the professed Spiritualist and the "there-may-be-something-in-it" type of character with a conviction that if one only sticks to it long enough the genuine article will be found. An air of scientific probability is given to a superstition in the very act of discrediting it. One might as well appoint a commission to investigate the stories of the miraculously winking Madonnas, or whether a person is cured of disease by touching the bones of a dead saint. Superstitions have never been killed in this way.

Moreover, Mr. Price himself fails to draw the proper conclusion from his own experience. He says that all the spirit photographers he has ever examined have been frauds. He also believes that every "genuine" medium cheats occasionally. But he has not managed to catch every medium at the game. Now it would seem that the right line of argument would be, "If A. B. C. and D. have, when watched long enough and carefully enough, been detected cheating, either consciously or unconsciously cheating, then if we watch E. and F. long enough and carefully we shall find them cheating also." On the basis of experience it is wholly a question of whether we can find out how it is done. But instead of this Mr. Price divides his cases into three classes. Those who are detected frauds, those mediums who are undetected frauds, but who are open to suspicion, and those with whom there is a probability of genuineness. If I were a Spiritualist I should not ask for more. The case for a future life does not depend upon quantity, one proven case is as good as a million. The wholly useful line of enquiry would be to take the exposed cases as illustrating the types of mind that accept such evidence as genuine, and deal with the operator and the believer as presenting the problem for explanation. And with the material at hand there is no

greater need to go chasing mediums over different continents to see whether one has at last opened up communications between this and some other world, than there is to form committees of investigation into the existence of werewolves. These investigations make good newspaper copy, but add nothing of scientific or sociological value.

* * *

The Persistence of the Primitive.

The prevalence of Spiritualism is in the last resort an illustration of the existence of the type of mind with which I dealt in commencing these notes. The experience of the past twenty years has shown all with the power of adequate reflection how prevalent and how powerful is the thought-world of the savage. The thinly disguised slogans which inspire and animate a people at war, are the strict analogues of the hardly disguised primitive superstitions that meet us in the world of religion. The believer in miracles does not require evidence for his belief, all that Lourdes can provide him with is the occasion to proclaim his belief to those around him. Who is there with an adequate knowledge of the origin of the inherent absurdity of the belief in a continuance of personality in another world that has ever been converted by the phenomena—real or "faked"—of the seance room? The believer in a future life, or the half-believer in a future life, the person who does not know, but thinks "there might be something in it," and who shelters his credulity beneath the wholly untrue maxim that "with nature all things are possible," these are the types of mind on which things such as Spiritualism live. And with such the "scientific" apparatus with which men like Mr. Price approach the problem has about as much influence in correcting folly as a scientific criticism of the Lourdes miracles has with the average Roman Catholic believer. The methods devised to undeceive the believers are often those that cause them to cling the more stubbornly to their superstitions. Generally speaking you cannot disprove a superstition, the surest way to kill it is to provide a medium in which it cannot exist.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A God's Birthday.

"John P. Robinson, he
Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee."

Lowell.

"The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies."

Lucretius.

THERE is a legend as old as any in the Christian Churches, which has put a premium upon gloom, and has helped to make it part and parcel of the orthodox superstition. It is that Jesus Christ was never seen to smile, but often to weep. This does not concern Free-thinkers overmuch, for those light-hearted sinners do not think it likely that any "Man of Sorrows" would, as Shakespeare says, "laugh mortal." Man, however, is a laughing animal, and in this he is superior, if in nothing else. To be ashamed of laughter, to hold back merriment and mirth, to live in gloom and seriousness, may suit morbid ascetics, but is unworthy of men, who should love sunshine and the open breezy day, rather than the spectral gloom of the church, cloister, and monastery.

Hence the convivial nature of Christmas Day, alleged to be the birthday of the founder of the Christian Religion, has been noted frequently to the discomfiture of theologians, who object to all rationalistic explanation of their Eastern creed. "God's

birthday" is an annual orgy of gluttony and godliness, and the real reasons for this contradictory combination forms a most excellent piece of Christian evidence, for it plucks the heart out of the orthodox superstition.

Christmas Day was not kept regularly as a holiday until many generations after the alleged birth of Christ. When first observed it was kept on varying dates. The precise date of Christ's birth, like that of Thackeray's *James de la Pluche*, was "wropt in mystery"; but it certainly was not in the month of December. Why, then, do innocent Christians observe Christmas Day on December 25, and why is the birthday of the alleged "Man of Sorrows" a veritable carnival of conviviality, and not a Golgotha of gloom?

Like all human institutions, the Christian Churches and their feast-days have had to contend in open warfare for survival. The festivals of old Pagan Rome were numerous and popular, and it was in competition with the feast of the Saturnalia, one of the principal Roman festivals, that Christmas Day came to be instituted by the astute Christian priests, and the date fixed as December 25. The anniversary of Saturn was then an old-established institution, and the propensity of converts from Paganism to cling to custom proved invincible. If these apostates were to be retained within the folds of the new religion, it was imperative for the Christians to incorporate the old under the mask of the new.

The anniversary of Saturn and his wife was held from December 17 to 20, and the Roman Emperor, Caligula, added a fifth day of popular rejoicing. On these five festal days of Pagan Rome, the schools were closed, no punishment was inflicted, the toga was replaced by undress garment, distinctions of rank were laid aside, servants sat at table with their employers, and all classes exchanged gifts. This struggle for survival has also incorporated other widespread Pagan features. In the far-off centuries, white robed Druid priests cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, and chanted their hymns to the frosty air. Even these features have been absorbed into the Christmas festivities, and the mistletoe and carol-singing play their minor and interesting parts in the modern celebrations of an event that never happened.

Thus it is that "God's birthday" has become the merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows, and the legend of an Oriental ascetic deity is at this period of the year associated with feasting, winebibbing, and merriment. Why this particular Hebrew god, who is described, nowadays, as triune and eternal, should have a birthday at all, is a matter for Christian theologians to settle among themselves. Freethinkers and Non-Christians regard this Christ as a purely mythical personage, like all the other saviours and sun-gods of antiquity, who were generally born miraculously of virgin mothers, and whose careers, like that of Jesus, were marked by so many alleged marvellous happenings. Whether there was once a man called Jesus, who lived and preached in Galilee, is a matter of comparatively minor importance. The Romish, Greek, and other great Christian Churches worship the purely fanciful figure embodied in the New Testament, and not a Galilean carpenter, and have done so for near two thousand years. Christmastide throws a searchlight on the devious story of Christian origins. For it is a jumble of Paganism and Christianity, and has as many diverse and indigestible ingredients as a Christmas pudding.

This "old, old story" of "God's birthday," may be very edifying to innocent Christians, and satisfactory to priests, who make millions out of the pious fiction, but of what real value is this Oriental story to-

day? It is no more true than the yarns of Father Christmas and his reindeer-sledge, or the story of Red Riding Hood and the talkative wolf. The clergy are not deceived. They would sympathize with the worldly-minded stock-broker, candidate at a Parliamentary election, who was asked by a fierce Churchwoman if he believed in the immaculate conception. "My dear lady," sweetly replied the canny candidate, "I believe in all conceptions that are immaculate." Christmastide, so far as the numerous Christian Churches are concerned, is an organized hypocrisy and make-believe, a contradictory celebration of an event that never happened. As a holiday it was observed for centuries before there was such a thing as the Christian Religion, and it will survive the passing of that Oriental Superstition. Its present, and temporary, association with the abracadabra of Christian theology is a further proof that priests are the cleverest showmen that the world has ever known.

MIMNERMUS.

The Usual Answers.

III.

AFTER having considered the two popular answers (i) "Look at the beauties of nature! There must be *something* behind it all," and (ii) "But we must believe in *something*!" let us turn an interrogative eye upon another popular answer. It is this: (iii) "After all, we don't know everything." Or, alternatively, for those who favour the classics: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

The implication here is the same as in the two previous answers. We are expected to believe in "something" which, in this case, is admittedly beyond the knowledge of the speaker. And as before we run the risk of being regarded as social pariahs or eccentrics if we do not give this vaporous "something" (which the speaker calls "God") the honour of our lip-service. What sort of thing this "something" is, those who would have us believe are unable to describe in terms that are intelligible even to themselves. It is much vaguer than the two previous "somethings," for it usually only makes its appearance after the absurdities of the first two answers have been laid bare.

The particularly vague form which this answer takes is not necessarily adopted consciously or of deliberate intent. But it is a form which has acquired popularity because it is particularly efficacious in concealing the ignorance of its utterer by drawing a red-herring across the subject being discussed. And the red-herring is the wholly irrelevant fact, which no one disputes, that everyone is relatively ignorant upon some subject. "I admit," says the speaker in effect, "that I am unable to counter your arguments on the religious question. But you don't know everything any more than I do. So you may be wrong, even though I cannot prove that you are. And since you may be wrong, I consider that to be sufficient justification for sticking to a belief that I am myself unable to prove true."

It is, of course, the old appeal to ignorance so beloved of priest and parson. In using it, three facts are gaily brushed aside in favour of one irrelevancy. First, the fact that the speaker has no valid grounds for believing what he says he believes. Second, the fact that the Atheist *has* valid grounds for his disbelief. Third, the fact that the validity of *one* particular belief is being discussed and not the validity of *any* belief in general. And these three material points are ignored on the irrelevant plea that everyone is ignorant on some subject! On the self-same grounds any-

one would be justified in believing that the world is flat, that babies are born on gooseberry bushes, that pigs have wings, or any other absurdity.

Of course no one knows everything. And the logical Atheist is the last person to pretend knowledge of what he doesn't know. Of course there are more things in the universe than any one person could imagine. And the logical Atheist lays no greater claim to universal knowledge than anyone else. But what excuse can these facts provide for holding a belief in support of which we cannot adduce any logical evidence?

The uninformed religious man, whose best argument in favour of his own god is to point to the relative ignorance of everyone, is not likely to know much about the Ju-Ju or Voodoo deities. Yet it is quite certain that he would not admit *his* own ignorance concerning the latter to be a convincing justification for the beliefs held by Ju-Ju or Voodoo worshippers. But still he justifies his own belief on the grounds of other people's ignorance! Nor is it to be supposed that he would admit the Ju-Ju and Voodoo beliefs to be as true as his own, on the grounds that any belief may be true because everyone doesn't know everything. The fact is that, if he were put to it, he would examine all other beliefs critically, and would apply his common-sense to every argument which might be brought forward in their favour. Yet he always makes his own "God" the one exception to this rule. What is the reason for this?

Roughly speaking there are three reasons. To the Atheist, the most obvious reason is that the word "God" represents a convenient rag-bag for all those things concerning which a person says, "I don't know." Few people like to confess to ignorance about matters which are supposed to be of the highest importance. And if one's ignorance can be concealed under a suitably vague word, then that word becomes extremely useful in discussion. Everything that is mysterious, or beyond immediate comprehension, is simply disposed of by attributing it to the action of "God." For example, we still have the legal phrase "an act of God," when referring to such events as a house or person struck by lightning. This phrase was formerly regarded as a full and sufficient explanation of the causes of these events—though, of course, it explained nothing. Similarly we still use the phrase, "God knows," when all that we really mean is "I don't know."

The second reason why people find it so difficult to apply their common-sense criticism to their belief in "God," is because the idea was planted in their minds at such an early age, that it is almost impossible to get at its roots in later life. Like every other belief or habit, the earlier it has been acquired, the more difficult it is to change in after years. The truth of this is to be witnessed in such different things as one's pronunciation, one's moral and social standards, and one's politics. And since religious beliefs make less contact with the practical things of everyday existence than any other, it is easily understood why they remain untouched by the purifying breezes of experience. "Gods," "devils," "angels," and all the other creations of religious imagination manage to survive in belief only in so far as they are left to float undisturbed in their own fog, and are kept out of the daylight of reason. As soon as they are brought into association with reality their shapes melt away like dreams. Look at poor "Santa Claus"! What a lesson he teaches of the dangers of bringing religion in contact with reality. Once he was a Good Saint—now he is just Father!

The third reason why people refuse to abandon their belief in "God" or "something" is that they labour

under the delusion that it is impossible to be moral without some sort of religion. This delusion is one that the priests and parsons are keenest to keep alive, because without it people would soon come to see how utterly useless priests and parsons are. More than half the yarns that they broadcast from their pulpits are already swallowed with a large dose of salt by their congregations. But as long as this lie about morality is swallowed neat, ministers of religion can continue to enjoy their unearned incomes in comparative security.

That religion is not necessary to morality of a high standard can be proved in several ways, the most convincing of which is the test of experience. That the standards of morality which have generally been upheld as the highest, even by religious persons, have any necessary connexion with supernatural beliefs is an untruth which can be demonstrated from the Bible itself. The fact is that those very precepts which omit all reference to the supernatural are just the ones that have suffered least change through the ages; while those that are tied up to "God" in some way or other have constantly been revised and altered, or even done away with altogether.

"Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you," is a moral precept which originated centuries before its supposed invention by Jesus. Its value lies in its practical application to living human beings in this life. "God," or a fictitious "life after death," have nothing whatever to do with it. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," is another precept whose value lies in its purely rational advice. There is no insistence here upon the superlative goodness of any particular religion or religious belief. (Incidentally it is remarkable to note that although these precepts appear so often upon the lips of Christians, the more religious they are, the less do they act up to them.)

Then, on the other side, we have such precepts as these: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; etc., etc." The impossibility of acting up to all the injunctions contained in this commandment is now accepted as a commonplace even by earnest Jews and Christians. And again: "Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." This utterly inhumane law of sexual morality is consistently ignored by most Christian Churches. Even Roman Catholics, who profess to adhere to it, have invented ways and means to circumvent it—provided that the necessary "backsheesh" passes into the clerical coffers. And so on through any list of moral precepts one might care to compile.

In spite of this clear distinction between religion and morality, there are still thousands of people who dare not admit to having no religion at all, because of the mistaken idea that religion and morality are one and the same thing. And in any ordinary discussion it is well-nigh impossible to educate the religious ignoramus out of his many false beliefs. He has no logical arguments, no valid reasons on his side. Yet he fears to admit the truth of Atheistic arguments because of his own ignorance, and because of the prejudice and narrowmindedness which he knows to exist in the minds of other ignorant religious folk like himself.

Admittedly there are more things in the universe than are dreamt of in anyone's philosophy. Yet who but a credulous nincompoop could believe in the truth or value of what "we don't know"? Personal ignorance is no excuse for stubborn adherence to false beliefs; and the ignorance of others is utterly beside the point.

Charles Bradlaugh:

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VACCINATION.

AMONGST the many tributes to the memory of our great leader, no reference has been made, so far as I have seen, to his services on the Royal Commission on Vaccination. The appointment was made on May 29, 1889. He attended the first eight sittings of the Commission, when he was stricken with illness, and after some improvement was ordered a sea voyage, which resulted in a visit to India. He returned, as his daughter tells us in the *Life*, "at the end of January" [1890] and made his reappearance on the Commission at the first available opportunity, which was on the 29th of that month. From that time he attended every sitting until December 10, and in little more than a month he was no more. We know what a great loss to the causes of truth and freedom his death was, and a perusal of the three volumes of Reports, containing the minutes of the evidence which had been placed before the Commission, brings this home to the reader. His examinations of witnesses are masterpieces which are a delight to read. In particular his examination of Dr. Ogle is a striking example of the keenness of his intellect in detecting the exaggerations of orthodoxy. He fastened upon a statement in the Registrar-General's Forty-Third Annual Report, which claimed that "Before vaccination came into use, few persons escaped having small-pox at some or other time in their lives. The great majority had it when young, and of these a large proportion died." His clear mind saw at once that if this were true, small-pox deaths would have formed an enormous percentage of the deaths from all causes, and an increase of population would have been well nigh impossible. Under his skilful examination this inflated bubble was pricked, and the "large proportion" was admitted to be "less than one in eleven." This bald account gives no idea of the deadly suavity with which the witness is lured to his doom. Anti-vaccinators have every reason to remember with gratitude the services rendered by Charles Bradlaugh. The following tribute to his memory, from Dr. W. J. Collins (to "whose assiduous care" Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner refers in the *Life*) appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He wrote, "It was in his rôle as a Royal Commissioner that I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Bradlaugh. . . . By his own request I have occupied the chair next to him at the meetings of that Commission, and a valued acquaintance rapidly ripened into a close friendship.

"During the long illness of last winter, by day and by night at his bedside, I had many a charming conversation with him upon men and things, the memory of which I shall ever value. Of his work on the Commission, his strict impartiality, his mental grasp of even pathological intricacies, his skilful handling of a witness, none could speak but with ungrudging praise and admiration. The impression which the evidence hitherto adduced had made upon his mind, and which he freely communicated to me at the last conversation which I had with him, . . . it may be my duty some day to publish. At that last conversation it seemed impossible that that active brain, full of will, noble ambition, and plans for future labour could so soon be at rest, did not one recognize only too clearly how the more merely physical organs of heart and kidneys were damaged beyond repair. He had, to use his own expression, lived three lives in one, so inveterate a worker had he been. His splendid will would have carried him through if man could live by will alone."

Another friend whose meed of praise deserves resuscitation at this time is Alfred Milnes, M.A. It appeared in *The Vaccination Inquirer*: "His departure is as a light gone out, and hope now shines upon us

with fainter ray. Another brave man's heart is still for ever; another tireless and teeming brain shall weave in Liberty's behalf the warp and woof of patient thought no more. All despotisms look up and are glad; while Freedom mourns a man after her own heart, and sorrows over the grave of one who through all his life had served her and followed her, and loved her with a perfect love, casting out all thought of self. Wise and noble, strong and true, I have it, none now living will be privileged to look upon his like again.

"The first time I ever personally met Charles Bradlaugh was about seventeen years ago, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford. He came to give two lectures in that seat of what should be learning, and was refused a hearing by the undergraduates of the time. To myself and to another this seemed so intolerable that we hurriedly organized a little supper party for him in my rooms, which happened to be a trifle bigger than those of my friend, and there, after the storm was over and the abortive attempt at holding a meeting was done with, Mr. Bradlaugh met privately a few men whom we had been able hastily to call in. The late James Hinton happened to be in Oxford at the time, and came at my invitation, and thus these two remarkable men were confronted on opposite sides of my very humble board. For me it was a very memorable night; I remember as but of yesterday the impression made on me by Mr. Bradlaugh's perfect forbearance with those whose howls and yells and shouted insults had just been making him inaudible to the audience he had come to address. 'I wish they had consented to hear me,' was his only remark, 'for, as it is, I am afraid they have only seen the worst side of Charles Bradlaugh.' However that might be, and I think he judged himself too harshly, we that night were privileged to see the best of him, and a wonderfully winning side it was. From that time I attended his meetings and heard his speeches as often as I could, which was far from being as often as I wished. It is very hard for me to speak of his oratory in terms which should not appear exaggerated to those who have never come under its spell; but my deliberate conviction is that, while I cannot decide whether John Bright or Charles Bradlaugh was the greatest amongst those sons of men who have wielded in humanity's cause the mighty weapon of the human tongue, certain I am that pre-eminence lies between them. Were I called upon to select the speech which I would hand down to posterity as the finest specimen of what our glorious English mother tongue can do, I know not how I can decide between Bright's speech against Roebuck's motion to acknowledge the Southern Confederacy, or Bradlaugh's plea for justice at the Bar of the Commons. His earnestness was something terrific—the whole man went with the words; while vehement as he could be, and as he sometimes was, you ever felt that no unconsidered syllable could escape the sleepless vigilance of his judgment and the granite resolution of his lips. Instinct with the true spirit of chivalry, he was as courteous as he could be formidable. . . .

"And now all the influence that was his through his priceless gift of character, all the power that he wielded through the love of him that dwelt in the hearts of tens of thousands of his countrymen, all the respect which he had compelled even at the hands of his enemies, all is lost, to the service of our sorely tried cause. For ours it would have been. From the first Mr. Bradlaugh was opposed to compulsion in the matter of medical treatment. The columns of his paper were always open to both sides of the controversy, and often he has printed letters from myself in reply to arguments which he had printed in common with other papers, but to which all right of reply had by those other papers been refused. . . .

"The loss of such a man when the report stage is reached on the Commission will be beyond all counting. Our hearts are sore for our little ones, who have lost in Charles Bradlaugh one of the bravest and best of those who would surround infancy with respect and the cradle with the sanctity of freedom."

It was never my privilege to hear Charles Bradlaugh, but it was once my pleasure to see him as he sat at the open window of the hotel where he was staying after speaking at a miners' demonstration. Not much to speak of, perhaps, but something to remember, to treasure, and to recall with pleasure. That, however, is a purely personal affair. The wider service to which I have drawn attention is of supreme importance, and no account of Charles Bradlaugh can be complete, or do him justice, if it omits the work on which he was engaged almost up to the last moment of his life.

E.G.B.

True Piety.

THE General [Sarrail] told me the following story :

A worthy curé of L'Aude . . . who had long been a friend of the "rabid sectarian," one day opened his heart to him on the subject of his flock :—

Poor sinners, General, poor sinners! How can you expect them to confess; they don't know themselves. One beats his wife to a pulp . . . and yet he's a good Christian who often comes to see me . . . I hear of the conjugal beatings from hearsay. He thinks he's doing right, because he thinks he is responsible for a soul and is compelled at all costs to cure his wife of her terrible mania for slander. Another has for years been blaming himself in the most grotesque way because a long time ago he missed a church service; yet in fits of rage this man will throw his entire household out of doors. Though he doesn't mention it to me, he takes upon himself a tremendous moral authority. These poor people do not understand; they don't even know *themselves*, so there you are.

"But what about yourself, curé?" Sarrail answered, laughing. "You don't know *yourself* either. I know your little parish, and here you come blurting out the secrets of your confessional!"

"The good curé," Sarrail concluded, "nearly made himself ill when he realized what he had done, and I had great difficulty in restoring his peace of mind."

(*The Silence of Sarrail*, by Coblenz, p. 21.)

Acid Drops.

It is a kind of a comment on our "Views and Opinions" of last week, that Poland and Italy should have both protested against the present constitution of the League of Nations, and have asked for such a change that will divorce it from the treaty of Versailles. We agree that a League of Nations which regards itself as chiefly concerned with the enforcement of the terms of a treaty dictated by conquerors is pretty hopeless as a peace-making factor. The only possible good that the League could have done, that could not have been done without its expensive and bamboozling procedure, was to familiarize the public mind with the principle of arbitration. The League needs reforming.

But the reforming should include the elimination of the dominating influence of the governing gang of each country represented. So long as that is maintained a League of Nations will represent only the policy of each of the Governments represented, and Geneva, or elsewhere, will represent only another platform for the exhibition of the trickery, the hand to mouth policy, and the dishonesties of each Government represented. We deny altogether that these politicians, most of whom pass their whole life in tricks and scrambles for office and

power, properly represent either the British, or the French or any other nation. Let the politicians be represented, but let it be seen that they are not more than represented. Then see that the League is composed of the best men we can send representing the whole of the life of the country—science, literature, art, etc. That will bring an element of imaginative intellectuality into the League which it has not yet possessed.

Above all the League should have the status of an independent tribunal, delivering its opinion on all matters that come before it. These decisions should have as little fear of Governments or leading politicians as a judge of our own High Courts has of the frown of a Prime Minister. An independent League of this kind, delivering its judgments without regard to the policy of any particular Government, would exert such a force in creating a public opinion that no Government would dare ignore it. A League of Nations that is dependent upon orders from a number of politicians who are prominent to-day and either unknown or ignored to-morrow, is too ridiculous for words.

A number of Buchmanites, who follow a crazy form of religious evangelism, were invited by Sir Francis Freemantle, to hold a meeting in the House of Commons. The meeting was held, and the newspapers report that about 150 Members of Parliament attended. We do not know what rights private members have in this direction, but we suggest that other members who have their peculiar opinions, Freethinking, Communistic, Socialistic, or other, should also hold a meeting for the benefit of the rest of the members. Or, alternatively, will any Freethinker in the House have the courage to ask a question and raise a protest against the House of Commons being used for this purpose?

We presume that Viscountess Snowden thought her audience of Nonconformists at Manchester recently was in special need of the advice she gave them. Said she: "Never deliberately lie; never be dishonest. Always be upright in your dealings with men and women. Always search for the truth. Honour integrity wherever you see it in other people." We sincerely hope that some of the seed that she sowed fell into good ground and brought forth fruit.

We mentioned a book the other day by a Russian writer, called *Jesus the Unknown*. It is perfectly delightful to find how it was written. It seems that Mr. Merezhkovsky was not content to find his "facts" in the four official biographies. He also went to the New Testament apocrypha and was not in the least disturbed that even the Christian Churches had given them up as lying forgeries. But the cream of the joke is that he actually *invented* his own Apocrypha when he could not find out details of the unknown Jesus he imagined should be put into his work. Here then we have a typical example of the way in which the original lives were possibly written, and the only reason why this last book is not enthusiastically received by the Churches is that only four "genuine" lives are needed. An orthodox reviewer actually welcomes it: "It has real value and importance," he says. Any book boosting up Jesus is of importance, of course. It almost always is the basis of a good cash transaction; and it seems, the more the "facts" are invented, the bigger the book's importance.

Another *Punch* comment :—

"Insertion of false teeth and eyes by the best methods."—*Trade Advt. in China*.
Not primitive ones, we hope?

Leonard Woolf writes in the *New Statesman* :—

The history of the human race is a history of the ebb and flow of civilizations, and one accompaniment of the ebb has always been a loud quacking of mysticism and mystics. The symptoms are always the same,

although superficially they may differ. Reason is dethroned as old-fashioned, and the man who asks for proof of a fact before he will believe it is magisterially dismissed to the bottom of the form as a nincompoop, and told to write out 500 times: "I must not ask for proof."

"In such a state of affairs—and we are in it to-day," continues Mr. Woolf, "one requires a little courage not to quack with the quacks."

We learn through the *San Francisco Examiner*, that "a new and revolutionary religion based upon the misunderstood sayings of the Galilean Carpenter" is just out. A New Psychological Religion is discovered by Dr. F. B. Robinson. He has discovered that it is possible for every human being to-day "to duplicate every work that the Carpenter of Nazareth ever did, even to raising the dead." For Jesus said, "The things that I do shall ye do also."

The things that Jesus did, included (by psychical means), the turning of water into wine, the manufacture of food to meet all requirements, the calming of the waves, the withering up of fruit trees by a curse, and the production of money from a fish's mouth. If these accomplishments became general it would seem, at first thought, that all our troubles were over. In reality existence would become more terrible, much more terrible, than it is at present, as a little reflection will show.

It is easy to write this all off as "bunk" of the most benighted kind, but it is fair to say that it is not Dr. F. B. Robinson's bunk. The great and solemn truth of Human Immortality was brought to light by the Resurrection of Jesus. After he came to life for the second time, he said very little, but he did say this (Mark xvi. 15):—

Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

After that Jesus went up to heaven and sat on the right hand of God. Mr. Robinson thinks his very last words on earth had some little importance. He even thinks they are true. Christians generally put that kind of believer in gaol, but, in matters of this kind, our sympathies are with Dr. Robinson every time.

As an item of news it may be recorded that Richard Aldington's novel *All Men are Enemies*, has been banned on the grounds of indecency by the Government of Australia. The novel, it will be remembered was an indictment of war, written by a man who served in the last European Civil War, and received the D.S.O. for his services. Sincerity was its fault, plain language its offence, and one wonders if the intellectual level of an aborigine is the standard of taste for literature to enter the portals of Australia.

In an article in *Everyman*, the Earl of Iddesleigh, making an attack on birth-control writes, "Luxury and irreligion have undermined our self-control." The noble Earl can have the liberty to speak for himself in this manner, but something more practical must be produced before he may get away with that wonderful journalistic trick of "our." The noble Earl may be an authority on luxury—we are not, and as he is writing through his coronet, we may add to the fun by handing him a *framboise* for his strawberry leaves in a plain statement of fact that birth-control is self-control, and self-control dispenses with the priest's control.

The Archbishop of York, Dr. Temple, devoted his Presidential address at the York Diocesan Conference to the subject of Christian Evidence and the interpretation of the Bible in the light of modern research. He suggested that from time to time they should put forward to the world "a sort of survey of Christian thought." We are afraid that the unassisted laymen, without training in theological subtleties, would be apt to regard this process as a kind of spring-cleaning carried out in order that the Oracles of God may be kept up to date.

Put in appropriate and sedate language, Dr. Temple would appear to be a believer in what is called "progressive revelation," but just as this conclusion is reached, Dr. Temple remarks:—

A large number of those who criticize the Church from outside criticize it for holding beliefs which the accredited teachers never have held.

So that there is a definite Christian belief which persists, and against which all the depredations of time and tide cannot prevail. Well, what is it? We presume that in Dr. Temple's case, the Church is the Church of England by Law established, and that its accredited teachers are its ordained ministers, or perhaps he might whittle these down to the more fussily ordained ministers, the Bench of Bishops. We would ask if the Bench of Bishops to-day could put forward any creed possessing intelligibility to which they could all subscribe. We stress *intelligibility* for, of course, our point is not met if undefined and indefinable terms are going to be used so that a pretence of agreement may be reached.

Let us apply this to the one point of "the interpretation of the Bible in the light of Modern Criticism." We believe that Dr. Temple and perhaps most of the Bishops would accept the conclusions of Bishop Colenso, as put forward by him in his *Examination of the Pentateuch*. The Bench of Bishops in Colenso's day, with the Primate of All England as their mouthpiece, pronounced Colenso's objections "for the most part, puerile and trite; so puerile that an intelligent youth who read his Bible with care, could draw the fitting answers from the Bible itself—so trite that they have been again and again refuted." Now which, on this subject of God's Revelation to man, is the Truth, and when this is decided, which is the Belief which the Church's accredited representatives have never held?

The power of religion is illustrated in two cases reported on the same page of a Scottish evening newspaper. One was the inquest on a man known as the "Rev. Stephen Russell," who was found dead in bed gassed at his flat. His son deposed that about a year before, his father had had a stroke and disappeared in August, 1932; but early in October, 1933 he was enabled to trace him. The father would have nothing to do with the son; was very strange and wild, and threatened to throw himself under a bus. It was not a case of lack of money. His father was never a minister but was a lay licensed reader.

This case is probably one of thwarted ambition. It certainly looked as if the poor man aspired to be a "Reverend"; and eventually having resolved to masquerade as such, he cut himself off entirely from his family. His son testified that he was a man of "very simple tastes"; but it may be inferred that the great longing to be a cleric had obsessed him for years; and when he had taken up new quarters and adopted a false name with "Rev." tacked on in front, and was discovered by his son, he resolved to commit suicide. The verdict was that he had taken his life while of unsound mind. It was stated that he had for long been very depressed. A man of over 60, who deserts his home and cuts himself off from his relatives and friends to enable him to pose in new scenes as a parson, is a curious study!

The other case was that of a young man, who stole £10 from a Glasgow Employment Exchange and was captured after a street chase. He pleaded guilty. On his behalf it was stated that he was not of the criminal type, that he had been in ill-health, and that his mental balance had been upset by troubles. He resorted to money-lenders, who were pressing him, and temptation came on him suddenly. A city minister described the accused as a young man of splendid character and chairman of one of his Church Clubs for young men. The magistrate, in spite of this testimonial, sent accused to prison for 60 days, observing that he could not look lightly on the offence.

What blessed words are "Christian Unity!" Mention the word Protestant to an Anglo-Catholic and he nearly foams at the mouth. Mention the same word to a Roman Catholic and he looks at you with pitying contempt. The Anglo-Catholic, however, is always presenting bouquets to the Roman Catholic, and would gladly join Rome if only Papal supremacy were denied. The Roman Catholic, on the contrary—but let us give the exact words of a Roman Catholic editor. This is what he thinks of the Anglos:—

The "Anglo-Catholics" are simply a section of the Protestant Church of England, as by law established. They may call themselves "Catholics," but they are Protestants all the same. They have no fixed belief, but choose their own doctrines just like all other Protestants. Hence it is impossible to say in advance how much of the Catholic faith any individual "Anglo-Catholic" believes. A Catholic is one who is a member of the Catholic Church. There is only one Catholic Church, and the head of it is the Pope. Anglican "priests" have no valid orders, and so cannot say Mass. Every Anglican vicar has read from his pulpit a solemn declaration that "the sacrifices of Masses" are "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."

What a beautiful chance this gives to Mr. Sidney Dark or Lord Halifax to speak or write on a tender *rapprochement* between the two God-selected parties!

"H.M.," of the *Methodist Recorder*, states that a well-known Bradford paper, because of certain correspondence about closing certain churches, sent a reporter out to see what were the attendances at a dozen Free Churches a short distance from the Town Hall. In one (the reporter told "H.M.") he found 25 people, in another 28, in another 30, and so on. But the paper did not publish his statistics. Says "H.M.": "It was wise, for they would have been somewhat disheartening." Quite so! According to Methodist ethics, it is "wise" to suppress facts and truth where religion and the Churches are concerned. It is Christian wisdom as well for such tactics have been employed by Christians for nineteen centuries, without any revelation of God's displeasure.

The firm of J. S. Fry & Sons has just been called to attention by the Croydon Grocers Association for advertising their delectabilities in the Sunday Newspapers. Messrs. Fry reply that they see no connexion between Sunday Trading and Sunday Advertising. It is amazing to think that a commercial body, as we presume the Croydon Grocers Association to be, is at this time of day run by people who hate to see people reading Sunday papers instead of being at Church. We will believe that these bigots are really concerned about Sunday trading when they object to *Monday* Newspapers, which, of course, are produced on Sundays, and do involve Sunday labour.

Who shall say that all our youth do not study current history? John Simmons (17) errand-boy, when told by a London Police Inspector that he would be arrested for throwing a firework in the street smartly retorted: "I want none of your Hitlerism." Simmons quite ably stated his own defence with the result that the charge of throwing the firework was departed from and he was fined 5s. for "insulting words and behaviour." We

shall all have to be very careful, and to remember that to accuse a Police Inspector of Hitlerism is an insult, and can cost at least five bob.

Anglo-Catholics are every jubilant at the recent confessions of "Nonconformists" in the *Christian World*. One gentleman, an "Oxonian," admits that he no longer believes in the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Birth, the Descent into Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Second Coming, and possibly—though he does not actually say so—the Miracles and the Bible. Needless to say, "Oxonian" is a genuine Christian Nonconformist. Another one, also a believing Christian, says he does not believe in the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the Atonement. That these people, and there are large numbers, should so blatantly admit disbelief in everything that Anglo-Catholics hold most dear and true, and yet cling to the title of Christian is enough to make Jesus himself turn in his empty grave. But the Anglos are delighted because they have always contended that Protestants—that is, Nonconformists—are heretics and not Christians at all; and that they, the Anglos, are real Christians of the first rank, with Roman Catholics a good second. But what a merry bone of contention is this eternal wrangle between Christians—to outsiders like ourselves!

Archbishop Macdonald, O.S.B., has written a pastoral letter, in which he enthusiastically extols the immense benefit the proclamation of a Holy Year has given to the world. "We see wars averted," he declares, "misunderstandings removed, harmony restored, and good will encouraged, with an ever spreading recognition throughout the world of the rights of God . . . There is a growing movement in many countries to seek a formal definition by the Church that Our Lady is the Mediatrix of all graces . . ." and so on. It is difficult to believe that anyone could pen such drivel, but there it is in plain black and white for both the godly and ungodly to read. Perhaps, if any excuse can be found for the dear Archbishop, it is that he lives in Edinburgh, and possibly never ventures out. But fancy our recently converted Catholic *intelligentsia* trying to agree with him! Or trying to make sense out of his hopeless nonsense!

Fifty Years Ago.

Once admits that the Bible is in the same category as other books, and has been no better preserved than other ancient so-called sacred literature, and the position of the Rationalist is secured. There is nothing for it but to use our own reason and conscience as much in regard to it as to any other documents. We must be critics over the holy ghost and judge for ourselves what is his handiwork. The infallible book must be vouched for by our own fallible judgments. And here the disingenuousness of the clergy steps in. They say that when any passage in the Bible coincides with our highest morality and comes home to our best feelings, that is a proof of its inspiration; but instead of taking the many passages which contradict our morality as a proof of the reverse, a system of interpretation is resorted to which would make a divine revelation of Jack the Giant-killer.

What better proof could there be that the Bible is the product of men, and those but semi-civilized, than such stories as those of God commanding Abraham to murder his own son; of his killing the first born of Egypt because Pharaoh would not let the Jews go; of his sanguinary orders against the Canaanites and others? If anyone found such a story as that of Joshua staying the sun in the legends of other people he would take it as conclusive evidence of their ignorance and barbarity. To quote from the Koran how Mahomet sanctioned the slaughter of Jewish male prisoners is considered by Christians sufficient evidence of his not having been sent of God, yet at the same time they are ready to credit that Jahveh ordered the extermination of the Midianites.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- P. POLLOCK AND OTHERS.—We are not always able to make immediate use of cuttings, useful though they may be, but their receipt is always appreciated.
- D. FINLAYSON.—We have been hoping to use the paragraph about Bradlaugh and may yet. Thank you.
- T. MURRAY.—Why not read Berkeley for yourself instead of reading what someone else says about him. Berkeley did not deny "objective reality." He asserted that things exist objectively to the observer as he sees them. His whole system depends upon this and it would have been fatal to the object he had in view for him to have concluded otherwise.
- D. KNIGHT.—We cannot undertake to answer at length all questions put to us, and your case proves that to answer them briefly is often to court misunderstanding. What you mean by "thought beyond the conception of thought" we have no idea.
- S. HANLY.—Thanks for securing new subscriber. That is the way to help in the most effective manner, both this paper and the Freethought cause.
- D.P.S.—Of course, no possible arrangements could prevent political opportunists, self-seeking financial groups, etc., from trying to influence a League of Peoples, but the risk becomes a certainty under existing conditions. At present the League of Nations is little better than a means of carrying into operations the self-seeking ambitions of the chief powers interested. All the considerations that are present in a court of justice are absent. It is too much like a committee of burglars representing each nation discussing under what conditions the holding of private property should continue to exist.
- J. MCKENNA.—You are quite correct Henry's title "Defender of the Faith," was given him by the Pope. Thanks.

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

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, 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."

Sugar Plums.

We referred last week to a Catholic journal which had been sued by Mary Borden, because of their comments upon her in connexion with her recent novel, *Mary of Nazareth*. The paper on which we based our comments was the *Catholic Herald*. It was a mere slip of the pen that led us to write the *Catholic Times*. Nothing of what we had to say had any reference to the *Catholic Times*, and we offer our apologies to that journal for any annoyance our blunder may have caused.

This is not exactly a "Sugar Plum," but there is no other part of the paper in which it can conveniently go. But we are quite sure that all our readers will have heard with the greatest regret of the accident that has happened to Mr. George Lansbury. To have broken his thigh at his time of life is no light blow, and he will have the best wishes of all Freethinkers for a rapid recovery. Devotion to principle is not so common in present-day politics than we can afford to lose a man of Mr. Lansbury's type.

Mr. Cohen's new work *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll* is now ready. It is a critical study of these two leading Freethinkers, and contains twelve plates. Nicely bound in cloth, the price is 2s. 6d., or by post 2s. 9d. Those who wish to introduce Freethought to a friend can hardly do better than offer this volume as a Christmas or New Year's present. The work of the Bradlaugh Centenary Committee did something to make Bradlaugh known to the present generation, but little appeared concerning Ingersoll, whose influence on Freethought was not less than that of Bradlaugh's, save the Ingersoll special issue of the *Freethinker*. We anticipate a good demand for this book.

We have received a copy of *Now I see*, by Mr. Arnold Lunn. We imagine that Mr. Lunn has written the book under the conviction that it provides a study of the reasons which may induce other people to join the Roman Church. In fact it does no more than to provide material for a study of Mr. Lunn, and the psychological study of any man, from the genius to the idiot is never without its value to the scientific psychologist. We do not know with whom Mr. Lunn's reasoning will be effective, but if it provides a reliable indication of the mentality of those who are brought over to the Roman Church, we fancy his superiors will wish that he had remained silent. One should never give reasons for accepting stupidities.

Mr. Lunn has in religion been many things in turn, and nothing for long. He shows an acquaintance with a number of writers in defence of some sort of a religion, but there is no evidence of independent study; he evidently has no acquaintance whatever with modern Freethought. He is greatly impressed by the unswerving orthodoxy of the Roman Church (something might be said against this) but the conclusion is not quite clear unless it is that Mr. Lunn believes that when an institution repeats the same stupidities for centuries it becomes wisdom. His evidence for religious beliefs is away back in the days of Paley. His presentment of the argument for design drawn from the structure of the eye, is, for example, extraordinarily crude. He is also deeply impressed by the arguments of Aquinas. This was also the case with quite a number of Roman Catholics with whom I have recently come into contact, although it was quite evident that they had never read a line of that writer. Evidently they were repeating a lesson, like good little Roman Catholics. There is no clear proof from Mr. Lunn's writing that he has made any independent study of Aquinas; if he had, and had followed this up by a study of more recent writers, he would know how frequently his arguments have been shattered. But whether Mr. Lunn has read Aquinas or not we venture to present this from that writer for his edification. He will find it in the *Summa Theologica*. "When a man brings reasons that are not cogent to demonstrate the faith, he only provokes the scorn of the unbelieving." *Now I See* is published by Sheed and Ward at 7s. 6d.

In the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, to-day (December 17) Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael, of Liverpool, will give a Lantern Lecture on "Body and Soul." Dr. Carmichael is an attractive speaker, with a style of his own, and well equipped with reasoned and instructive matter. The lecture is under the auspices of the local N.S.S. Branch, commences at 7 p.m., and should be supported by every local saint.

The Bradford Branch N.S.S. will be busy in the Jowett Hall, Chapel Street, Leeds Road, to-day (December 17) when Mr. George Whitehead (London) will speak on "Why Man Made God." Admission is free, with reserved seats at 6d. and 1s. each. The lecture commences at 7.30 p.m. Further lectures will be arranged, always providing the saints in the area will support the efforts.

Mr. J. T. Brighton is doing some good organizing work in the Durham and Northumberland district. He has the knack of gathering workers around him, and all Freethinkers in that area willing to promote some local activity should get into touch with him at 18 South View, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham.

A big consignment of the seasonal greeting card suitable for Freethinkers is now to hand. They can be forwarded to any address at 1s. for seven cards, from the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, or the National Secular Society, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Roman Catholic historians find it now profitable to deny wholesale the "Protestant" judgments of last century. Here is Mr. William Walsh with a cheap edition of a biography of *Isabella of Spain*, who, more or less ridicules Prescott. The Spanish Inquisition, it seems, was really a beneficent institution, was a life-saving organization, "averting far more deaths than it caused." What a blessing it should prove now! Why does not Mr. Walsh agitate for its re-institution? Then Torquemada was a "pleasant, kindly, industrious, able and modest man, whose chief ambition was to imitate Jesus Christ." Whether this makes Torquemada like Jesus or Jesus like Torquemada is not quite clear, but it shows the contempt for modern criticism and the power of Roman Catholicism, in that it can hold up a monster like Torquemada as a Christian model. We hope that some Catholic historian will now try to whitewash a few of the Popes—John XII. or Alexander VI., for instance.

Freethought & Political Science.

II.

(Concluded from page 787.)

ORDERED politics, where conference and debate enters into the conduct of affairs and public decisions, must have related executive agencies. After the failure of the antique experiment therein, their emergence takes on another form. Medieval policy was largely in the hands of ecclesiastical statesmen, and was concerned mainly with defining relations under a régime of regulated status, both within the community, and in dealings with other countries similarly placed. The first appearance of any such agency on a national scale is in England during the Anglo-Norman period; in a Parliament or Conference between the King and certified *representatives* of his subjects, recalling in a measure the earlier Saxon Witan. The idea of representation had not entered into Græco-Roman concepts. As the English nation was consolidated in the thirteenth century, onwards, Parliament became an organic element of the Constitution, concerned with things like taxation and supply, and questions arising out of growing trading interests at that time.

The Mother of Parliaments attained to its supremacy in the State by slow stages. The civil broils of the seventeenth century were connected with its *place* in the Constitution, mixed up with ecclesiastical issues. Even in the early part of Anne's reign the House of Commons "still regarded itself as the critic of Government which it had been in the past, not the

seat of Government which it was to be in the future. In the reign of William and Mary all the leading Cabinet ministers were found in the Upper House. . . . Sir Robert Walpole was the first of our rulers who preferred to govern the country from his seat on the front bench of the House of Commons, and to go up to the Lords only when he left office. . . . The idea of Government was personally associated no longer with the Court, but with the House of Lords; and against the House of Lords the Commons nourished a tradition of jealousy almost as strong as that which it nourished against the Court."* By the time of the Reform Bill of 1832 the respective prerogatives of the two Houses had been defined, as with finance and control of administration, mainly by force of circumstance and expediency. So with extensions of the franchise during and after 1832, this has been due more to the pressure of public agitation than to any formulated doctrine of "democracy," except in so far as this was influenced by popular advocacy like Paine's *Rights of Man*.

Still, public discontents and urgent secular interests set men thinking afresh on first principles of government. The creation of a Federal Union of the revolted States or Colonies of North America was a practical issue. But its framers prefaced their work by a Declaration of Rights, as a necessary article. When the National Assembly in France, in 1789 were confronted by a related task, they drew up a set of principles or rights as a basis upon which to build, as they hoped, a new order in place of the old régime: "The end of all political associations, is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression." It is significant too that emphasis is laid on the unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions, including religious opinions, as being one of the most precious rights of man. Therefore "every citizen may speak, write, and publish freely, provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law." The disastrous course of the movement that followed, and its strengthen reaction in one direction, and to evoke reflection on popular advancement in another.

The doctrine of "Rights" has had ample criticism, and those of "property" are now much called in question. Yet behind it is an attempt to find in right reason an intellectual view of life and living distinct from Theocracy; just as utility is a similar step in morals. These things belong to a comprehensive social philosophy, still in the making, and link with free inquiry all along the line, of which Government is one phase. To its exponents in this country we owe the first valid illumination here; as with the classic studies of J. S. Mill in *Liberty and Representative Government*, and the conditions essential to their successful conduct in the body politic. One is capacity and will for responsible citizenship. That goes with opportunity for full development and education for each person, as the quality of the unit determines the effective quality of the whole society. The end in view is an upstanding People, each alive to his own interest, able to direct advisedly his affairs either personally or in concert with others; and to form a more or less intelligent judgment on matters that fall for consideration as a citizen. Ordered public opinion is therefore the leading factor in shaping national policy, reached by a consensus under fair means of open canvass and decision.

Of such is the Free State—whatever its difficulty of achievement. As its rulers are responsible to public feeling there must be a true representative system.

* G. M. Trevelyan.

which excludes all arbitrary will. The function of science in this connexion is to give exact shape to the mechanism and process which best fulfil the purpose. Art, perhaps, is the more correct term, as it must deal with things largely of an empirical or experimental order; the organization of opinion and its just representation; a stable Executive versus Parliamentary independence; the limits or extent of Administrative action, and the like. Some of these questions are connected with highly controversial material concerns which complicate the clear issue before us. We may return to them in a separate regard.

Now the above positions imply a State constituted so as to draw its power from the generative force of its members. Though its partial attainment is of yesterday, it is now called in question, or derided and outraged, at home and abroad by devotees of another cult—that of the Robot State; which include some so-called intellectualists here, and is exhibited in practice by sundry foreign dictatorships. Whether distinguished as Brown, Black, or Red, they have this in common—that the individual subject is rolled out to pattern under a patent juggernaut, according to the design supplied by a self-appointed hierarchy at the controls. A reversion to barbaric standards, the cause of which is a subject apart; but we will point, in conclusion, to intimations of the disorder in our own midst.

During the present century the English Parliamentary system, based on two parties, has been complicated by the advent of a third party, strongly Socialist, which has strengthened its position at the expense of what formerly ranked as the progressive section; besides a revolutionary faction in the offing. Our electoral method since its adoption in the '80's has failed to give correct results. With three candidates, or more, contending for one seat it becomes a mere gamble, shown by recent elections, and the Socialist rout at the last, where they obtained a fraction of the membership of the Commons to whatever voting strength they were entitled. Moreover, through this change of allegiance, no one section could now command a clear majority in the country, under an equitable method of return, to make a Government of one colour. To meet this situation fairly, quite another mode of envisaging Parliament and National Government is requisite.

Yet for specious reasons the two larger parties avoid facing it. The best counsel in the interest of "strong government" that a Socialist light, professor of the "science," can offer is the Alternative Vote; which allows to the free and independent elector the choice of supporting those he dislikes least—a difficult decision itself.† While from the same school comes a proposal to jettison Parliament altogether, once a chance majority can be returned to force on a Socialist programme; supported by the revolutionary wing on the plea of "preventive action" to forestall an impending capitalist dictatorship!

In view of all this there is left to others the duty to enhance the efficacy of institutions upon which depend, absolutely, sure progress—and Freethought.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

† In an article in the *Labour Magazine*, prior to the Election, which advances familiar objections to proportional, that is, real representation. Objections met, authoritatively, by publications of the Proportional Representation Society dealing with the whole subject of Executive and Parliament.

The problem of evil only exists for those who believe that the world is created and governed by God.

Archbishop of York (Dr. Temple).

Figuring It Out.

WHENEVER a religion or philosophy pops up its head to-day it claims to have the support of scientists and science, or, if it is at all possible, it masquerades as a science. Christianity, after hundreds of years suppression and persecution of science, now does its best in the sacred cause of publicity to attract scientists to its gatherings. Having done its damndest to annihilate the seekers after truth, and failed, religion smiles sweetly at them and says, "Of course, you are really on our side all the time."

During the last few years the "science" of Numerology has been trying to edge its way into the limelight of the philosophic stage, and, since a number of books have been published on the subject, and many people apparently pay fancy fees for readings, there is obviously still plenty of money to be made by taking advantage of the public's puerile superstitions.

What is Numerology? It calls itself the science of numbers, and tells you how you may be lucky without buying all those Birmingham-made mystic charms of the East. It is not a religion, but since it seems to involve its adherents in a religious belief in astrology, Jesus and Madame Blavatsky one may readily comprehend that this science does not stand on a very solid scientific foundation.

Determination to judge everything on its merits has often been a valuable steadying influence when enthusiasm has got the better of public sanity, and it is our plain duty to help the more gullible to retain what sense of proportion they have in the face of propagandist activities in favour of this new old superstition of numbers.

According to the Numerologists there are only nine types of character on earth, and if you want to find out to which you belong you simply add up the date of your birth, and keep on adding until you reduce the total to a single figure. If you were born on the First of April, 1899, your "fadic" number is $1+4$ (the number of the month) $+1+8+9+9=32$, and $3+2=5$. Thus you are a five-type. Each type has certain clearly defined characteristics, and lucky and unlucky dates. Each type has a "year of destiny" every nine years, the exact year being decided by its fadic number; hence, 1933 is a destiny year for number seven type ($1+9+3+3=16$, $1+6=7$). No explanation is offered as to why this should be so. That is the significant point which always distinguishes these pseudo-sciences. A freak theory is dogmatically stated, and then the "scientists" scratch about looking for evidence to support it.

This Numerology could doubtless provide us with an excellent parlour game, especially if the ladies played fairly and told us their real ages, but when people start to take it seriously . . . !

The theory will not withstand the simplest tests. If you believe it you must maintain that heredity and environment play no important part in the formation of character. Every man born on the same day has fundamentally the same character, whether his parents are Nordic or Negro, whether he is brought up in Park Lane or Poplar.

Now consider the question of one's years of destiny. Let it be understood that these are not necessarily lucky years; to allow themselves the widest scope for taking advantage of coincidence, the Numerologists define a destiny year merely as an important or eventful year. Imaginative people can persuade themselves that any year the Numerologist cares to name is an important year in their lives.

In my particular instance Numerology has been specially unlucky. From my birth-date I find that I am a seven type (I, a militant Atheist, am of the

psychic type; this type, we are told, is nearly always a potential spiritualist medium, and is also well-fitted to become a clergyman!). My last destiny year was 1924. Had 1923, 1925, or 1926 been chosen I could have found some evidence to support the choice, but 1924 was one of the least eventful years of my life. I must apologize for having been so inconsiderate about the date of my birth; I promise it won't happen again.

It will be noted that the odds are eight to one that one of the most important events in life, namely, birth, does not occur in a year of destiny. Indeed, the case against Numerology, like that against all religious and semi-religious superstitions, is so overwhelming that one might continue indefinitely producing conclusive arguments against it. Let us therefore examine the case for the defence.

The institute propagating this gospel issues a handbook introducing the subject to the public, and while it is the least pretentious book on the subject it is nevertheless an amazing piece of audacity. Does it provide evidence? Evidence? Dear me, no! "Proof" is the word used. It cites three examples as "actual proof of the science of Numerology." And what a trinity! Gladstone, Christ, and Crippen. These Numerological people are assuredly unconscious humorists—"unconscious" in the full American sense of the word.

But to show how terribly thin these "proofs" are, let us take the Gladstone figures. He was born on December 29, 1809, hence he is a five personality. It therefore becomes necessary to find a few numbers in the "Grand Old Man's" life which add up to total five. With nearly eighty-nine years of material they succeed in finding seven examples.

A casual glance through Gladstone's life will allow one to "prove" (equally unconvincingly) that seven was his governing number, thus:—

Lord of the Treasury, 1834	...	...	7
At the age of 25	...	...	7
Raised to Cabinet rank, 1843	...	...	7
At the age of 34	...	...	7
Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1852	...	...	7
At the age of 43	...	...	7
Died at the age of 88	...	...	7
250,000 viewed his body in the Abbey during its two days' Christian exhibition	...	...	7

This last one, I admit, is feeble, but it is no worse than one of the Numerologist's examples, namely, that when he was first elected for Parliament Gladstone polled 887 votes. My case for seven is definitely better than the Numerologist's case for five, and I have not the slightest doubt that anyone reasonably at home with figures could "prove" that Gladstone's life was governed by any number one liked to name.

The whole theory is so extraordinarily unconvincing that it would have been laughed out of existence at birth had it been presented to an intelligent world; but the ignorant, fearful, superstitious Christian mind is fertile soil for such a doctrine. In a world where at any given moment the religious-minded may be persuaded that it is pious to kill every member of any race with which one's government has quarrelled; in a world where a Hitler can convince his followers that a certain Jesus of Nazareth was not a Jew but a German; in a world which still largely believes that upwards of 17,000 feet of rain can fall in the dry Ararat area in forty days when the wettest place on earth gets considerably less than fifty feet in a year; in such a world as this Numerology should go from strength to strength.

H. T. BUCKLE.

A Kind Jaques.

THESE verses and epigrams are the product of a mind which feels the tragedy as well as sees the comedy of life. The author tilts at conventions—the convention faith, conventional patriotism and conventional love-making. He give us his philosophy of life in a series of beautifully finished verses reminiscent, by their terseness, of Dryden and Pope; and cruelty and humbug are the pet objects of his satire. He also treats of man's mistakes, and quite early in this treasure-house we find a jibe at himself:—

I made an armament to overcome
The embattled brutishness of Tweedledum,
Only to find that weapons forged by me
Upheld the brutish cause of Tweedledee.

A patriot, he is not blind to our faults; though we may be the best of a poor bunch.

When all our prides and pomps are past,
When Fortune sets her face to frown,
And England is allowed at last
To lay the White Man's Jingo down . . .
. . . We shall not know, we cannot care,
In casual graves or quiet vaults,
If the report be false or fair
Of all our virtues and our faults.

Obviously he doesn't expect any hereafter, if one may judge by his humorous epitaphs. Try this one on *A Gentleman of the Old School*:—

Here lies a man of wealth and rank
Who hunted, whored, made bets and drank:
There is not much to tell beside
Except that he was born and died.

The epitaphs on *A Gentleman of the New School*, *A Fashionable Man*, or *A Selfish Man*, are equally neat. There is another fine one on *Everyman*: and that entitled *An old-fashioned epitaph* might well have been written on Ingersoll:—

A man whom all men loved lies here—
Pity not him whose life is ended,
But drop for those who held him dear
And, stranger, for thyself a tear,
Who cannot be by him befriended.

The conflicting aims of modern civilization are expressed in a couplet:—

Science finds out ingenious ways to kill
Strong men, and keep alive the weak and ill.

And what he terms *Bungaloid Growth* is ticked off in in a quatrain:—

When England's multitudes observed with frowns
That those who came before had spoiled the towns,
"This can no longer be endured!" they cried,
And set to work to spoil the countryside.

A tale *From the Chinese* is a neat satire on the rewards of literature, and incidentally illustrates the dictum "with how little wisdom is the world governed."

Some of the longer poems such as *Living in the Midlands* are really little essays in criticism and similarly *A death—not in the desert*. I hope the author will not mind my pilfering the last verse of this satire:—

On the day of resurrection
Must I be raised from where I rot?
Meet once more the whole collection?
Let's hope not!

The verses on *Adolescence*, *Youth*, and on *Oh it's my delight* get right down to the heart of matters and indicate a mind that has pondered deeply on essentials: and which comes through with a philosophy of one world at a time and making the best of it. This is happily exemplified in *Euripides at Cambridge*.

The Sonnet on *My M.P.* just bristles with clever hits at the Public Schools; and the M.P. who claims monopoly of honesty and sense:—

And shouts too loudly in the Party fight
"Down with the Left, and God defend the Right!"

I must not pilfer too much of the poet's work: though the temptation to do so is very great: for his thought is so varied and so well-expressed that every verse yields something fresh. Two couplets on dining—one for not dining with Peter, and another why he has not been invited by Paul are simply perfect: and a quatrain on Head and Heart hits off the Hollywood-made romance: while the ode *Profiteers, O Profiteers* is a scathing commentary on the commercialism which has been so long our pride, and is becoming the world's apoplexy.

A *Missionary Sermon* will delight the hearts of all Freethinkers, for here are portrayed the steps by which, first our missionaries, then our traders, and then our soldiers come on the scene, and how we annex the lands of the heathen who bow down to stocks and stone . . .

Then all may be at last as God has willed,
The Sermon on the Mount be then fulfilled,
And Earth inherited by us, the meek,
While coloured peoples turn the other cheek.

There, we have pilfered another stanza, and conscience does not allow us to repeat the offence, or we should quote the whole of *Caliban's God*. It consists of only eight lines, but it puts the case against Theism with unerring skill, more than cancelling out *The Preferential Creditor*, where a faint Theism shows itself.

The New Vicar of Bray is undoubtedly a Brimstone Ballad of the type made familiar to readers of this journal by G. L. Mackenzie: while *Spaniel Sermons* is almost equal to the best in the volume.

Although this book appeared over a year ago, *In Athens when the Poets Sowed* might have been written to point to the Hitler régime in Germany: but, of course, its applicability to all religious persecution will make it topical while any group of men desire to tyrannize over the thoughts of others.

The Mysterious Universe pokes fun at the mathematician's and physicist's formula-God, in a manner to bring joy to the heart of everyone who loves clear thinking; and by the time the writer has finished with the "Mumbo Jumbo of the Skies," there is nothing left for him but to ask, "may x have mercy on my soul." *It may be there are some who know* is really a discussion of "Is life worth living," and the author's answer is "yes." He believes in the secular view of life, and when pain or trouble comes he will grin and bear it—not ask some parson if he "knows a way to cheat the Fates." *A Guide to Conduct* reminds one of the "moral tales" of fifty years ago—with a difference all to the reader's enjoyment. *Life after Death—to Crusoe*, a *Spaniel* gives us a clue to the author's fondness for dogs, and he suggests that the dog's heaven, like man's, must be in the memory of those who are left behind to love.

Il faut vivre (one must live), *Chimney Corner* and *Nox Venit* are new renderings of the age-long philosophy "gather ye rosebuds while ye may," and his final verses *Already Lost* is a further reminder that we are only young once.

Many of the epigrams are well worth memorizing, while the longer poems generally repay a second and a third reading. I hail this new Freethought singer, for his readers will find that *Mournful Numbers* are very cheerful, and deserve shelf-room beside James Thomson (B.V.) and Robt. Buchanan.

ULYSSES.

* *Mournful Numbers* (Verses and Epigrams.) Colin Ellis
Published by Macmillan, 5s. net.

Extremes in Destinations.

"MR. WALLACE NELSON," writes Frank Hill from Sydney (N.S.W., Australia) "may still be remembered by some of your readers. He was a prominent figure on the Freethought platform in Scotland and England forty years ago. Since then he has been settled in Australia, beginning here as a Freethought lecturer, and then devoting himself almost entirely to newspaper writing, with a wide range of subjects. I am sending you a few lines of verse, written by Mr. Nelson, and heard, so far, only by those of his friends that he has entertained with them. The verse humorously yet truthfully describes the happy conditions that prevail in the married life of Mr. and Mrs. Nelson."

The lines enclosed by Mr. Hill, with the heading given to them by Mr. Nelson, are as follows:—

THE NEW TOLERATION.

My wife's a Holy Romanist,
I am an Infidel;
And yet, delightful to relate,
We get on very well.

I pardon her excess of faith,
Although it doth me grieve;
And she in turn forgives me for
The things I don't believe.

And so we trip along through life,
As through a flowery dell,
Though she is off to Paradise—
And I am bound for Hell.

Correspondence.

GROCCERS AS BIGOTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I trust the following will be of interest. Contributions to your pages appear to emanate from the "profession" for which there is probably a very good reason. I wish contributions from those in the "trades" appeared. The writer is employed in the dairy distributing trade, and has roughly one thousand connexions in the grocery and dairy trades. Do your readers realize how strong religion is in the grocery trade? The *Grocers Gazette* (which claim to have the largest circulation of any grocery paper in the Empire) gives one a good idea.

Every month or thereabouts uplift by way of a sermonette appears from the pen of one Millett. Sunday trading appears regularly each week, and the fight against it is on strictly religious grounds. In the case of Glasgow, we find the local grocers association working with the Sunday Observance Society. The choicest bit is the following culled from the issue of the *Grocers Gazette*, November 11, 1933. Under the heading *Sunderland Grocers Association* will be found *Sunday Broadcasts*:—

Sunday Broadcasts.—With reference to the protests of the Sunderland and Middlesbrough Associations and the North-Eastern Council to Messrs. Fry, of Bristol, against the announcement of their Sunday advertising broadcast from Athlone, satisfaction was expressed that the broadcast did not take place.

In plain words these grocers, by an indirect threat of the withdrawal of their business, were able to stop the Sunday Broadcasts. Messrs. Fry were woefully weak in the matter. Another firm who have been threatened have, up to date, ignored the grocers association, and continued their broadcast. The Metropolitan Grocers' Association did not go so far as a threat, but require "an assurance from the firms using Sunday Broadcasts that it will be discontinued when present contracts expire." The Editor of the *Freethinker* has pointed out that eternal vigilance is necessary, so is it too much to ask those in the grocery and distributing trades who read the

Freethinker to register their opinion. If necessary the writer is willing to work in conjunction with anyone in the grocery trade to fight these Christian grocers. I trust the instances I have given will give those readers in the "professions" some idea of the bigotry existing in one trade. Much more could be written.

A. H. JACKSON.

THEOLOGY IS FARCICAL.

SIR,—I went to a theological college, not to become a padre, although my family is patron of a Church of England living, but to study theology.

I cannot now honestly say the Nicene Creed when it says "Maker of Heaven, and Christ the only begotten Son of God," as we are all sons of God, if by God we mean the spiritual as opposed to the material, and there is no proof that spirit made matter, or vice versa. Only an evil spirit could make such a world as it has been since the Dawn of Life.

"Born of the Virgin Mary" does not worry me, as in those days people had no surnames, and even after marriage this Mary could be called the Virgin, to distinguish her from the other Mary Magdalene, who married first most likely. Dr. Goudge, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford produces this theory and quotes the nickname Pontius also. Two thousand years hence we may read "born of Miss Gladys Cooper," and it may not then be realized that an actress kept, although married, her maiden name to retain better her youth in people's minds, whose minds then won't need to be bluffed by such trickery.

Even in later times we find John Vandyk, meaning the John who lived near the dyke. "Mary, the Mother of Jesus," is another expression used to distinguish her.

Your paper can do much good, but I admit the power of prayer. Suggestion and auto-suggestion are powerful forces, and had our soldiers prayed more, there would have been fewer shell shock cases and mental derangements in battle. Any psychologist will allow this. The churches teach singing and some of the best brains of musicians have contributed in compositions for services.

In fact the church or chapel is like the curate's egg, good in parts.

H. CRAWSHAY FROST.

Letters from Cine Cere, H. Della-Verde, Austin Verney, held over till next week.

Obituary.

WILLIAM HENRY HOLT.

ON Tuesday, November 28, the remains of William Henry Holt were interred at the City of London Cemetery, Manor Park, London, E. Death took place after several months of suffering from cancer. He was a member of the West Ham Branch, and was known as thoroughly sincere in his principles. Although in pain for months, his Freethought opinions remained firm to the end, which came in his sixtieth year. Members of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. mourn the loss of a comrade, and offer sincere sympathy to the surviving members of the family. At the cemetery the last scene was carried out quietly, and with dignity, a Secular Service being read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

WILLIAM JAMES WHITE.

At Mitcham Cemetery, Surrey, the remains of William James White, only child of Mr. and Mrs. William White, were interred on Thursday, December 7. Death, which took place at the age of twenty-three, ensued under tragic circumstances. An injury to his foot, caused by his motor-cycle, appeared to be progressing favourably under treatment, when tetanus developed, and although he was at once taken to hospital, death took place on December 1. The loss of one so young, and so full of promise is a terrible blow to the parents, both of whom are Freethinkers. We are sure all members of the movement will join in an expression of deep-felt sympathy with them in their great loss. A Secular Service was read at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform 1, Messrs. Collins and Bryant. Platform 2, B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Various speakers. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Collins and Le Maine.

INDOOR.

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Euston Road, opposite King's Cross Station): 7.30, Mr. H. W. Armstrong—"Secular Education."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.): 7.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe (President, Metropolitan Secular Society)—"Are We any Better than Christians?"

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

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, December 18, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Shakespeare the Freethinker."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. F. J. Hill (Brierfield)—"Buddha and Asoka."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Jowett Hall, Chapel Street, Leeds Road, Bradford): 7.30, Mr. George Whitehead (London)—"Why Man Made God." Reserved Seats 6d. and 1s. each.

CHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Peoples' Hall, Delamere Street, Chester): 7.0, Mr. W. J. Paul (Heston)—"Religion in Soviet Russia."

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

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael, M.B., C.M.B. (Liverpool), A Lantern Lecture—"Body and Soul." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Joseph McCabe—"The Triumph of Materialism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. F. C. Moore, M.A. (For the Merseyside Anti-War Committee)—"Religion and the Menace of War."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street): 7.30, Mrs. Janet Chance—"The Legalization of Abortion."

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Social Hall): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"How Spirits are Born and Live."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. E. G. Harwood—"What do We Know of Jesus?"

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Chapter Row): 7.0, A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND: 7.30, Tuesday, December 19, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.15, Mr. Alan Flanders, A Lecture.

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