

THE
FREETHINKER

EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LIV.—No. 1

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1934

PRICE THREEPENCE.

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Views and Opinions.

Santa Claus and Lord Hugh Cecil

I DO not imagine for a moment that Lord Hugh Cecil believes in Santa Claus coming down a chimney every Christmas and dispensing toys to expectant children. Lord Hugh Cecil is what is called an educated man—that is, he has received an expensive education and in most matters possesses the average intelligence. And in most matters, particularly concerning the religion of other people, he would manifest a moderate degree of educated scepticism. He would not believe that the prayers of an African Medicine-man have any influence on the crops, or on the weather, or on the health of those who believe in his incantations. But if he does not believe that Santa Claus comes down the chimney every Christmas, or that he ever did so descend, he does believe that one Christmas, a long time ago, some "God" came down to earth, and got himself born in quite the ordinary way, but without the co-operation of an earthly father. For this latter belief the only reason he has is that other grown-up people have believed in it before him. But as there is in support of Santa Claus the persistent belief of many generations of children, honours are equal between the child and the adult. Lord Hugh Cecil finds the belief in an incarnate God very "comforting" in a world full of trouble, and the child finds the belief in Santa Claus full of pleasure in a world where presents are always welcome. And I am quite certain that if every one above seven was suddenly removed from the world, and also those children who have not been brought to believe in Santa, we might easily have the belief in the Christmas present-giver proclaimed as an unimpeachable article of faith.

* * *

Man or God?

Lord Hugh Cecil has recently given a proof of the sincerity of his belief in the original Christmas appearance of an incarnate God. Of late there have been

many instances of what is known as an interchange of pulpits. Preachers of one sect have changed places with preachers of another sect, and have even appeared in the same pulpit side by side. In some quarters this has been cited as proof of the brotherly feeling aroused by Christianity, although on some of these occasions the power of the mundane policeman has been invoked to prevent Christians smiting the other cheek. But a crisis has been reached at Liverpool. The Bishop of the diocese has sanctioned the appearance of two Unitarians in the pulpit of the Cathedral. There was nothing against the character of these two men, on the contrary, they were quite respectable, and the primmest of maiden lady worshippers might have been left alone with either of them without the slightest danger. Lord Hugh Cecil raises no complaint on that head. His difference is not moral, it is not intellectual, it is entirely religious, that they are both Unitarians. They believe in Jesus and his mother, but they also believe that he had a father, just as an ordinary Tom, Dick or Harry has. They will not have it that Jesus was a God. He was a man, a very good man, but that is all.

Lord Hugh Cecil, although he does not believe in Santa Claus, or the historical actuality of Old Mother Hubbard, will have none of this playing fast and loose with Jesus. He says that the sole thing that makes Christ of value to him is that Jesus was actually God, and he denies the right of a Bishop who is paid to uphold the doctrines of the Church of England allowing the pulpit of the cathedral to men who flatly deny the very truth of a doctrine that is fundamental to the Christian religion. So Lord Hugh has written to the Bishop and to the Archbishop of York, and also threatens that if his Grace does not do something—once upon a time there would have been something with boiling oil in it—he will institute legal action himself. It is fortunate for the Judges, whoever they may be, that, if Lord Hugh is as good as his word, they will not have to settle whether Jesus Christ was really a God or not. Nor do I see how Lord Hugh Cecil would be able to produce the required proof if called upon to say so. He could only reply, as the children do with Santa Claus, "Daddy told me so." The task of the judges would be to decide whether it was in accordance with the Christianity of the Established Church for a bishop to encourage by his conduct a belief that (a) Jesus may not have been a God, and (b) in any case it does not very much matter.

* * *

Essential Christianity.

In this matter I am in complete agreement with Lord Hugh Cecil, although I do not believe in Santa Claus or in the virgin birth. Still I do believe that it is the duty of a Bishop, and of any minister of the Christian Church to believe, or at least to teach, that

Jesus really was a God, and not a mere man. That is the one thing that distinguishes Christianity from any other religion. You cannot differentiate Christianity from all other religions on the point of ethical teaching, or on that of a future state where the wicked will be punished and the good rewarded, or upon the belief in miracles, or even in the belief in a crucified saviour. The one differentiating feature is the particular person of Jesus. It is no use—no religious use—maintaining that Jesus was merely a good man. The martyrs did not go to the stake because of their devotion to moral instruction, Church doctrines were not framed round schemes of sanitation, and when Jesus said "I go to prepare a place for you," he did not mean that he would come back with a ready-made housing scheme for his disciples to work out. It is Jesus the miracle-working God that is essential to the Christian scheme of salvation, and no real Christian cares the value of a brass button about any other kind of Jesus. The Bishop of Liverpool has a perfect right to adopt Unitarianism if he so pleases. English law allows a man to adopt any form of religious stupidity he pleases. But he has no right to take pay for teaching certain things, and to enjoy the social standing a professed belief in Church of England religion gives him and then act so as to produce the impression that it really does not matter whether one believes that Christ was a God, or that he was a mere man teaching a number of goody-goody maxims.

* * *

The Game of Humbug.

Naturally I am not seriously interested in this ridiculous question of whether Jesus was all God or all man or a mixture of each. Such a dispute is intrinsically as interesting as that of whether Santa Claus wears side whiskers or whether he goes clean shaven. Of course, Lord Hugh Cecil takes his question seriously, but then, in this respect, he is still in the Santa Claus stage, and he would probably point to the results of his belief as evidence of its truth, just as a child might point to its Christmas toys as proof of a visit from Santa Claus. "If there is no Santa Claus, where do the toys come from?" is, in its way, quite as reasonable a question as, "If there is no God, where does the universe, and the English Church, and the House of Lords, and Lord Hugh Cecil come from?" The Santa Claus type of mind is very difficult to satisfy, whether it is dealing with Christmas presents or cosmical problems.

My interest in Lord Hugh's action is that it helps to expose a piece of current humbug, to which I have often called attention. Humbug and hypocrisy are inevitable when the life of a religion is prolonged into civilization. Religion and civilized thinking simply will not mix, save in the sense that one may mix together pebbles and peaches. There is contiguity, but there is no mutual permeation. And we see this evidenced very clearly in the popular policy of dealing with Jesus—on given occasions—as a good man or as a mere teacher of morals. But religion and morals have quite different origins, and have different spheres of application. The aim of the teacher of morals is to make men socially better. The aim of the religious or the Christian teacher is to *save* men, and by saving men Christianity has always meant salvation through right belief, not by conduct. No man could or would be accepted as a member of a Christian Church merely by proving that he was a good man; nor has the goodness of a man ever prevented his exclusion from a Christian Church. So far as Christianity is concerned, a man is accepted or rejected, saved or damned on a question of belief. And it was to save sinners that Jesus Christ came, not to make

men better citizens. One simply cannot picture a man getting into the Christian heaven on presentation of a card of membership of the I.L.P. or of some Ethical Society.

In the present game of making the Good Christ interchangeable with the good man Jesus, humbug and hypocrisy, confusion and deception are very close companions, and it is often difficult to separate one from the other. Thousands of Christian preachers to-day ask the world to accept Jesus Christ because he offered some alleged priceless moral teachings. And having gained assent to the proposition that Jesus Christ was a good *man*, there is immediately substituted an assent to an incarnate God. You buy one thing and are sold another. The Jesus Christ that is given you is not the one in which you were asked to believe. You bought a man and are given a God—a bad exchange at any time.

On the non-Christian side we have the same game being played. Normally man does not outgrow early beliefs very easily, and not often completely. And in the case of a religion such as established Christianity, the process of complete mental deliverance is very difficult. It requires clarity of mind and moral courage, and they are the rarest of qualities. To-day it is fairly safe to attack the mythology of Christianity. It requires neither courage nor ability to disbelieve in the Virgin Birth, or in the physical resurrection, or in the miracles of Jesus. The timid unbeliever may here shelter himself behind scores of parsons. But it breaks the fall from grace if when one questions the mythology of Christ one professes a strong admiration for the great ethical teacher Jesus. Yet admiration of the ethical Jesus is just as misplaced as is belief in the mythological one; but it does serve to protect one from the violent attack to which the more thorough-going thinker is exposed. So it happens that the timidity of some unbelievers and the accommodating quality of many parsons tends to set up a state of things which perpetuates the old superstition under another name. We get rid of the fictitious Christ only to place in his stead an imaginary Jesus.

If Lord Hugh Cecil's action makes this position clearer he will, unconsciously, have done the world a service. He is quite correct in saying that the only Jesus Christ that is of any service to the Christian Church is the God incarnate. Some unknown ancient teacher of ethics is of little consequence to anyone or anything. It is the incarnate God that Christianity must have, and in the eyes of civilized thought that, as another ancient observed, is absurd.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Freethinker's Farewell.

My poet John,
When all alone
My outcast state beweeeping,

You'll not refuse
An elder muse
This "fragment" in thy keeping:—

I'm far from my home and the past like a dream
Shines dimly but dear as I wander away,
Old voices grow fainter and fade in my ear
But sweet to me still as the murmuring stream.

Old Coila will flow through the ages to be,
When I all forgetting my hopes and my fears;
Still haunt my lone heart, ye dear ghosts of the
years,
For I long to be Home, and for ever with thee.

ANDREW MILLAR.

The Clergy's Business.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Shakespeare.*

"The services of the clergy are imaginary, and their payment should be of the same description."

—*G. W. Foote.*

"RELIGION is nothing but a trade," said Jonathan Swift, who was a dean of a Christian cathedral. Priests themselves prefer that their innocent congregations should think that religion is without money and without price, and entirely disassociated from financial considerations. Yet the blunt truth remains that religion is a trade, and is organized on the same lines as other business concerns. The offices of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and of the trustees of Queen Anne's Bounty, of the State Church are conducted precisely as purely commercial concerns. Rents are collected, tithes levied, royalties on coal gathered, and, in the event of non-payment, distraints issued, bailiffs put in, just as in the offices of a large estate office. The capitalized value of properties under the control of these two ecclesiastical organizations is not less than £100,000,000, the revenue of a small state.

The so-called "Free Churches" are run on the same business-like lines. Huge trust-funds are administered, and the ministers of local chapels compete with one another as keenly as commercial travellers for the shekels of the moneyed classes. This commercialization is not confined to the recognized religious bodies, but is extended to the fancy religions on the very fringes of Orthodoxy. The bold and alluring advertisements in newspapers and on hoardings of such organizations as the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations, and the Church and Salvation Armies, besides the numerous appeals of "Four-Square" and "Elim" Gospellers for cash, also remind the man-of-the-world that religion is a business, conducted by purely commercial methods. Missions and meetings are advertised in the same way as liver-pills, vacuum-cleaners, or the latest musical comedies and cinema attractions. Preachers and revivalists adopt similar methods to circus-proprietors, or boxing-promoters with similarly satisfactory results. The purely business side of religion is seen very clearly in the commercial methods adopted by the majority of churches, chapels, and tin-tabernacles in order to raise revenue for a religion alleged to be supported by celestial and not financial means.

The extent to which ordinary commercial means have displaced voluntary contributions so long in vogue in connexion with congregations, is very significant. The old-fashioned method of collecting "browns" and threepenny bits during the service is no longer considered adequate. Even the amateur sale-of-work and jumble-sale is being superseded by more up-to-date and efficient substitutes. So much is this the case, that trading by purely religious bodies is considered by business men as a menace to the welfare of the trading community. Bazaars, conducted on a strictly business basis, are held for the reduction of church and chapel debts, and the erection of costly places of worship. Missionary and other propagandist societies owe a good deal of their large incomes to sales of goods, and many thousands of pounds are raised annually for religious interests. At an East-Anglican bazaar over £1,000 was realized, and a week's missionary exhibition at a seaside-town brought £200 clear profit. A sale of work in South London produced £250, and a dozen similar functions realized over £2,000.

Imagine, for a moment, the many similar exhibitions and sales held annually throughout the entire country for the various religious organizations, Bible,

and missionary societies. Add to these the 13,000 parish churches, and 10,000 chapels, gospel halls, and tin tabernacles, all of which now look to bazaars, exhibitions, and sales, as an easy and legitimate means of raising money, and we begin to realize the extent of the trading practices of the various churches. Where is all this to end? The logical outcome is seen in the vast trading organization of the Salvation Army, which sells regularly among its members tea, clothing, children's toys, musical instruments, and all manner of articles, and uses the profits for its propaganda. This "Army" touts for emigrants at the usual charges, and, in turn, draws commissions from the shipping and railway companies. Insurance business is also encouraged by door-to-door canvassers, thus justifying the pleasantry that Salvationists seek to be insured against fire in this world and in an alleged post-mortem existence.

Priests, in all ages and in all countries, have always battered upon their followers. Tithe, or a ten-per-cent charge on agriculture, has been levied by priests on behalf of their gods since the twilight of history. The priests of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Judæa, collected tithe for their varying gods centuries before there was any Christian Religion at all. Christian priests simply carry on the same sorry process, substituting their own three-headed deity in place of the earlier gods. It is a nice game played slowly, especially for the priests. English farmers have contributed annually large sums of money in the shape of tithe, which has been used for the emolument of Christian priests and the furtherance of an Oriental superstition, which is claimed ironically to represent a gospel of poverty.

The whirligig of time brings in his revenges is proverbial. This commercialization of superstition has produced one unforeseen result, which would have shocked the uneducated, innocent Christians of the Ages of Faith. It has led to the desire to make religion itself a pleasant, as well as a profitable, pastime. To attract paying congregations priests have had to become showmen. Painful Sabbaths have been replaced by Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. String-bands, soloists, even cinema-pictures, have taken the place of leather-lunged preachers. Labour Members of Parliament, not averse to extra money, and other tame publicists, share the platforms with reformed burglars and converted policemen. "It is roses, roses, all the way." We sometimes wonder how the so-called "spiritual" work of the Christian churches and chapels was conducted before the introduction of these purely secular attractions, when hell had its lid off, and people gave more freely because they were told that the world was ending next week. Priests were greater bullies in those bad days of old, and credulity, we must suppose, was so much the stronger, for there was no need of the artificial impetus of purely secular amusement. Our frightened ancestors went to church, and their families went with them. It was a painful duty, but it had to be done, if they were to escape the red-hot-poker department in the next world.

This transformation of theology, this saucy somersault on the part of the Christian priests, is a portent of unusual significance. For this right-about-face of the clergy is the result of the biggest change that has come over the life of mankind since the Renaissance. This great change is the slow recognition that religion is dying, owing to the broadening of men's minds, due entirely to the untiring efforts of the Freethinkers. Men and women to-day can no longer accept whole-heartedly "the lie at the lips of the priest." Over the pulpits of the fast-emptying churches is inscribed: "To the glory of God." That is the voice of the past. Freethought sounds the



triumphant trumpet-call of the future. "To the service of man." This new call, which embraces the whole world in an ethical fraternity, should show mankind the way out of the existing anarchy of thought, bring back vitality to a tired world, and make life more worth-while. Freethinkers must continue their work until Secularism prevails, and mankind is freed from this terrible burden of Priestcraft.

A tale is told of the great French actress, Sarah Bernhardt. Whilst she was appearing in New York, an evangelist named Talmage made a violent attack on the theatre, and alluded to her as "the scarlet woman." Sarah sent him a note which read: "Dear Dr. Talmage, It is not customary for people in our profession to insult one another. Yours faithfully, Sarah Bernhardt." It was a clever and a shrewd rejoinder, and applies, not only to the Talmages, but to the priests of all the world.

MINNERMUS.

Bradlaugh and Ingersoll.

A REVIEW.

MR. COHEN'S latest book *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll* is a considerably enlarged and revised edition of his two already lengthy essays which appeared in the *Freethinker* in July and September last, and with its twelve plates should not merely find a place on the bookshelves of every freethinking reader, but will form an excellent introduction to Freethought itself. It will appeal to two types of reader: one whose already considerable acquaintance with these great figures in latter-day Freethought history renders him all the more eager for a competent appraisal of them, and the other, whose knowledge amounts to little more than that Bradlaugh was a great fighter, and Ingersoll a great orator. The latter reader has still to have his interest aroused and his outlook infinitely enriched. I write, as belonging to this class, in appreciation of the way in which Mr. Cohen has rendered the service of enlightenment.

It is inevitable that Bradlaugh should figure in the book more prominently than Ingersoll, if not simply because he was of our own land, then because his life was crowded with action and event to a degree that could not be attributed to Ingersoll's. But there is more than this distinction between the biographies. The author has chosen, and I think with excellent judgment, to treat them differently. Ingersoll's life is sketched along lines approaching those of conventional biography, but not so with Bradlaugh's. In his case we have not so much a biography as an essay, and a very comprehensive one, with Bradlaugh as the central figure. In the course of the book the reader becomes more and more clearly aware why this should be. Ingersoll, to a great extent, still belongs to his admirers, but Bradlaugh manifestly belongs to history. Thus it is possible to treat Ingersoll as an individual—poet, orator and thinker—and yet to make him intelligible; but in order to understand Bradlaugh he must be woven into his historical context with all the care and skill necessary to intertwine the threads binding one texture to another. There is a part of history that explains Bradlaugh, and a part that is explained by him; and, for all that the author betrays a strong personal admiration for Bradlaugh the man, he keeps him subservient to the greater biographical demands of Bradlaugh the force. The result is that we get on more intimate terms with Ingersoll than with Bradlaugh. We feel that we know the "Bob" of the armchair and the fireside; but it does not occur to us to think of Bradlaugh as "Charlie," and we

wonder, at times, if he ever sat by the fire at all; for he appeals to us in the light of a giant lashing his way through a terrific maelstrom of events; and sometimes, in the course of this vivid book, we imagine we can hear the thunderous impact of the waves of circumstance on the rock-like walls of his indomitable frame. His is no biography of trivialities. That reader will be disappointed who desires to know whether Bradlaugh rose early or late in the morning, or whether he preferred the country to the seaside. Instead, he will learn the part this great man played in securing the freedom of the Press, or again in paving the way for future generations to discuss and practise birth-control. Once more, in the course of reading, we discover the reason for this. It is because Bradlaugh the man is what orthodoxy would like us to be content with, but Bradlaugh the force it is hoped we will forget. Mr. Cohen's determination that this shall not be forgotten is the dominating feature of the biography. If Bradlaugh was thorough about Freethought, Mr. Cohen is equally thorough about Bradlaugh. Even the chronology is made subordinate to the central requirement. Bradlaugh's life appeals to Mr. Cohen not as a *sequence*, but as a *system* of events, in viewing which the sense of time is less called for than the understanding. Thus the author deals with the life not in stages, but in aspects, which later are woven together into an intelligible whole; and if at times we fail to grasp its chronology, we are abundantly clear as to its import.

It will be seen that, in order to bring out Bradlaugh's life in this fashion, there must be many excursions now into the background, now into the ramifications of events. It is here that we encounter Mr. Cohen the essayist, and, once when dealing with Bradlaugh's Atheism, Mr. Cohen the philosopher. Both of them we find altogether absorbing. Nowhere better than in some of these passages is shown the author's gift of gathering up the many-coloured skeins of history and weaving them into a meaningful pattern within a page or two of print. Yet there is nothing of the dull, academic style about his way of doing this. Our interest and our understanding are kept moving hand in hand, and we leave these sections of the book with the feeling that we have a grasp of the subject which we hardly deserve to have obtained so easily and in so short a space.

With Ingersoll our interest irresistibly goes out to what he *was*, rather than, as in the case of Bradlaugh, what he *did*. Not by any means that Ingersoll was not a doer, but his effect on contemporary life was obtained more subtly and, in a sense, more remotely. It was the broad effect of his writings and speeches spread over two continents, a type of influence that is always most difficult to gauge. Then again, as the author points out, the Constitution of the United States did not give rise to the same type of opposition which Bradlaugh met with here in England, and this accounts for most important differences in the whole course of the two lives. Both are brought out as great men, both as strong men, morally and physically, and both as fearless and uncompromising exponents of Freethought. Thus we are able to imagine that had Ingersoll been born in Bradlaugh's England, and Bradlaugh in Ingersoll's America, Ingersoll might have been much more a Bradlaugh and Bradlaugh much more an Ingersoll. But there would have remained a very great residuum of essential difference. Ingersoll's life was graced with the picturesque and favoured by fortune, and Mr. Cohen is not slow to bring out the full beauty of it. A quality of Ingersoll's great mind which the author renders vividly to us is one which has escaped the attention of many even among his admirers. It is that he was very much more than a poet and orator;

he was a genuinely great thinker. We have to thank Mr. Cohen for his profound and sympathetic treatment of Ingersoll's works, which are, of necessity, extensively quoted throughout the book. If the deep thoughtfulness behind the easy and graceful phrases of the great American has eluded the penetration of many, it has at least not been lost on Mr. Cohen, and his exposition of Ingersoll's genius makes us feel resolved, nay compelled, to read everything that ever came from that gifted pen.

Finally, Mr. Cohen devotes important sections of his book to the laying of ghosts and the sweeping up of rubbish. False stories and ill-founded criticisms in the case of both men are trenchantly and effectively dealt with, and the place of both among great Freethinkers is established in a manner that deserves the praise and gratitude of the Freethought Movement all the world over. In an admirable little preface the author compares the two subjects of his biography, and by the time we have turned over the last page of the book these imperishable names are enshrined together for all time in our hearts. *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll* is a book about two outstanding men. It is written by a third outstanding man. The result is an outstanding book.

MEDICUS.

Arnold Bennett's Religion.

It was courageous of Dr. Percy Dearmer to invite an avowed Freethinker to contribute to a series called "God in the Modern World." It is unlikely that Arnold Bennett's "chapter" was welcomed. The fact that the present writer bought a First Edition copy from the "Threepenny Box" of a well-known dealer, points to the probability that the late author's "fans" are not interested in this particular work.

Arnold Bennett's pamphlet is called (possibly the title was given it by the General Editor) *The Religious Interregnum*. There is nothing in Bennett's Essay to explain the phrase "Interregnum."

Except for some singularly inaccurate allusions to the "Beatitudes," the pamphlet is a frank condemnation of religious, Christianity, and the Churches.

Arnold Bennett's allusions to "the religious instinct" are not scientific, but one understands his view that "the instinct towards the worship and fear of an all-causing personal God was for an immense period nearly universal." Bennett only mentions this to deny that he himself ever felt the operations of such an instinct. He was interested, he says, "in the manifestation of religion, only to avoid and ignore them." And he knows that he "was not alone amongst persons of my age in this attitude" . . . and if his irreligion were then unfashionable it is now the ordinary point of view. "Nobody in my acquaintance openly expresses the least concern about it."

It is a gloomy outlook for religion, according to Bennett. Churches are doomed, even the most successful of them all. "In the end, the Roman Catholic Church will not escape the general disaster of Christian religions."

He draws attention to a phase often overlooked, but very important. Everybody knows that the masses of believers have always included the most credulous, stupid and ignorant. Bennett believed that even these crowds of low intelligences are only held in awe by their ridiculous superstitions so long as they are sure of the same superstitions being respected by the leaders of thought. Bennett reminds us of the tremendous influence of Newton and other men of

science which he contrasts with the current view of the "intelligentsia," that "this affair is over and done with." Its finality is its most striking characteristic. "It has not found a substitute, it has thrown down a god and erected no new deity in its place."

It seems a pity that Mr. Bennett at this stage begins to talk about some other "God," who is not only "unknowable," but "the chief thing that we shall never know." We are godless, he admits, but "spiritually humble"—quite a meaningless expression!

That the decline of spirituality (whether humble or otherwise) has had evil results, Bennett absolutely denies. "The admitted growth of irreligion" has not been accompanied by any sign of moral deterioration. Bennett proves conclusively the falsehood of the claim "that religious faith is necessary to good morals." He challenges a search of history on this point, and carries his challenge so far as to impeach historical religion as "always marked by desperate cruelty of one sort or another, narrow-mindedness, injustice and tyranny" . . . "religious propagandists have constantly outraged morality in their passion for upholding the faith."

He claims also that religionists have denied ("and still do on an immense scale") the moral precepts of their creed.

Yes, but what are these moral precepts?

Peace, no doubt, Bennett would say, ignoring Matt. x. 34 and Luke xii. 49-53. Christians overlook too, Christ's direct encouragement to the armament-makers of His day: "He that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one." (Matt xxii 36). It is about as pacifist as saying, "Sell your shirt and buy tanks."

Love, of course? See Luke xiv., where Hate is made a condition of discipleship.

Marriage and sex morality? It was Christ himself who recommended widespread castration, not for the priesthood in particular, but "He that is able to receive it let him receive it." (Luke xix. 12).

Freethinkers may almost pity the "sincere religionist," torn between obeying these "moral precepts" to his own destruction, and disobeying them at the cost of his "faith" and "righteousness." Of course Bennett does not quote these mad brutal "ethics." He only objects in general to Christians "deserting" Christ's teachings.

According to Bennett: "if the founder of the Christian Religion arrived on earth now and sought to bring about the application of the Sermon on the Mount, He would see the inside of a prison or a lunatic asylum." The inference is by no means inevitable.

Christians have been highly paid and honoured who believed and taught silly, untrue, anti-social and murderous "ethics," and induced vast nations to practice them.

Tolstoy, a man of exceedingly loving, friendly and pacific intentions, taught practically what Bennett seems to approve of Christ's teachings as well as a few more wisecracks from the same "Sermon on the Mount," which Bennett certainly regarded as best forgotten.

Was Tolstoy incarcerated in prison or asylum? Not at all. He lived, free, under the atrocious Tsarist régime which flogged, imprisoned and exiled even the most moderate of liberals. Everybody, even the Imperial police, recognized that Tolstoy and Christ taught an utterly impracticable and impossible rule of life, which could be laughed at and ignored. Christ would be a favourite turn on the B.B.C., and at afternoon tea parties for curates and "parish visitors."

Much of Mr. Bennett's wisdom is obscured by his endeavour to glorify "the teachings of Jesus," which, he says, "have probably a wonderful future."

It is astonishing how ignorantly men praise what they cannot define. There is no more indefinite a label than "the teachings of Jesus." It means nothing at all. It is not necessary to say anything here about the historic aspect of the mythical Jesus. No student could agree with Bennett, that if Jesus never lived "the legend of him is the most marvellous and triumphant example of convincing creative art in the world's literature."

Constantine's "conversion" had little to do with art or literature, but it had less still to do with whether Jesus was a man or a myth, or whether his "teachings" were good or bad. Constantine at least never pretended to admire any "Sermon on the Mount."

Bennett, like Matthew Arnold, thinks, "the kernel of the teaching of Christ is the desire for righteousness." It is a commonplace of observation that nobody in the world ever praises unrighteousness. The prisons and gibbets of mankind attest the multitude of victims of the lovers of righteousness. Even our wars have to be defended as "wars to end war."

It is not even safe to say that Christ inculcated human righteousness. Bennett (like Tolstoy and every other advocate of what they think is Christ's teaching) sadly misquotes Christ's words in praising what he wrongly claims Christ taught. Christ did NOT say as Bennett says he said: "Take no thought for your life . . . But seek ye first righteousness." What Christ said was, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and HIS righteousness."

Who can tell us what "HIS righteousness is?" We know from the Sacred Book of God that it is not what MAN calls righteousness; "our righteousness is as filthy rags" (Isaiah lxiv. 6), and it is fairly obvious that the Christian definition of righteousness is belief or credulity ("Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." "Faith, was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness." And even Abraham's begetting of a son when he was about a hundred years old "was imputed to him for righteousness." Romans iv.)

It is amusing to find Mr. Bennett declaring in conclusion, that this crusade for the advocacy of "Christ's Ethics" must be "in charge of persons of strong moral faith, but agnostic as to religious faith."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

An Oxford Group Rally.

(The following is an accurate presentation of the proceedings of a group meeting in Oxford. It tells its own moral.)

"Nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know."—*Montaigne*.

For a fortnight the city had been snowed under with handbills advertising a visit from the great A. J. Russell—author of *For Sinners Only*—and I presume, receiver of royalties from that and other Group effusions.

Picture then a large ugly Methodist Chapel with bright lights gleaming from its many windows on the appointed evening: it seats about 1,200 people. But inside are not more than 500, some old and middle-aged folk, and many, very many females. Numerous cars clattered the road outside.

As I slid into a back seat, Russell commenced to address the gathering. He appears well fed and prosperously groomed, so I presume the Group Movement or God looks well after him. For I gathered that God and the Group Movement are the same thing—

yet another definition of God. Russell is no theologian—he admits it—but he dabbles in it, which is dangerous. His words reiterated the "fullness of life in Christ"; belief in God produces a far greater and higher spirit in life. There is nothing new in the Group Movement—it is merely the old flame of the Holy Ghost, and the power of Christianity for what it stood, and for which it was persecuted in the first century.

At this point the Chairman intervened and demanded that a collection be taken. Even God, the Holy Ghost, the Group Movement, depends on cash from the faithful.

The collection boxes contained written questions from members of the vastly intelligent audience. Here they are:—

- i. Is personality inherited or achieved?
- ii. Should Groupists enter into sport?
- iii. Should a Groupist neglect house duties to attend a Group Meeting?

There was one other, more obtuse than these, and which really defies expression.

But Russell, with the aid of the Holy Ghost, answered them all—amazing mentality of questions; overpowering intellectual capacity of the replier!

Then an attack on the Church. It had failed to attract because congregations realized that preachers and pastors were sinners, and not without blemish. A little truth-bird come home to roost!

All this had been a mere preparation for the good things to come. In the rostrum were witnesses who were to testify to the truly wonderful things the Group Movement had done for them.

The honour of kicking-off fell to a young married woman, who immediately testified that her husband was such a dear that he was at home minding the baby so that she could have the evening off. A year ago she felt that she couldn't try to bring baby up as a true Christian—(poor innocent victim!)—until she herself had become one. She had been brought up in a Christian home, had attended and taught Sunday School, sung in the choir, and performed church work. She knew *all* about God. But now, under the influence of the Group Movement, she *knew* God. She realized, a year ago, that Group members had a joy she hadn't got. She felt she must either give up Christianity altogether or become a Grouper. She decided on the latter—and now she has absolute love, honesty, purity and unselfishness. She gave a *whole evening's* thought before making the great decision. Next day she was quite light-hearted (I expected her to say light-headed). Now she has a mission in the world—she helps others to find the true experience.

There followed a young fellow, very self-possessed. Before he was changed he didn't know what life was: he used to drift. He really couldn't get out of bed in the morning. Now that Christ is with him he is up with the lark: there is something to get up for. ("Kruschens" insisted on jumping into my mind). There used to be nothing to work for: he failed in his exams; he even cheated in exams. Now he is absolutely honest—he has "made restitution" with the head of his school.

One day he remembered that he had lied to his mother when he was but five years old. He was told by God to "make restitution," so he has apologized to her.

Life is now joyous; there is a definite goal, and fellowship with people living an honest life. He has lately felt a worldly call, but with the help of God he had again returned to the fuller life,

The mother and father of a girl of about eighteen years of age were Christians: they had brought her up to be a "comfortable Christian." But she was awkward, stubborn and irritable, and generally upset those at home. She didn't "get on" with mother. Then twelve months ago she ran against God by meeting people of the Group Movement. They had something she hadn't got. So she prayed night after night for God to come to her. Gradually she gave up her sins of awkwardness and stubbornness. God came, she accepted God's forgiveness, and "made restitution." A vision of Christ on the cross was of considerable assistance to her. The load rolled away, and she made friends with mother. Now Christ makes her feel safe. There is a joy in washing-up the crockery and in making the beds; for Christ is with her. Now she wants to be humble and meek—like Jesus was.

Russell had interspread these vastly entertaining confessions and testimonies with episodes of his own. Of these one: an ex-convict salesman (seeking newspaper orders) had doubled his orders since finding God. We can all have confidence in salesmanship, in business, and in our work, if we love God and trust him.

A business-man of about forty-five years of age suggested that he was a normal man. He had accumulated troubles and worries. There were difficulties at home and a growing collection of domestic debts. He had been a Christian all his life, was brought up in a Christian home, had done Church work. Still, there was no relief from his worries. Then he met his brother—a Minister who had been completely changed by the Group Movement. With the help of his brother the Group Movement, and the text "with God all things are possible," his life has now no cares or worries. He is now absolutely honest in business. He is a co-worker with God—"God, I am prepared to be used of Thee." . . .

Many people were beginning to drift out when another witness—a middle-aged spinster, and also a "brought-up" Christian—began to testify as to her super-Christianity.

I drifted out too, amazed, perturbed and saddened at the futile twaddle I had set myself to hear.

Not one who spoke was educated in the subjects of religion or irreligion, but I reckoned what a menace their power could be, working as it was, on the emotions of thoughtless people avidly listening to the sensational, the crude, the impossible.

Further words of Montaigne, "None is exempt from talking nonsense; the misfortune is to do it solemnly," flew to my mind as I came away. But if this Group Movement is but a death-rattle of expiring Christianity, then the rattle is none the less nasty and disturbing.

KERNOW.

It is the blackest sign of putrescence in a national religion, when men speak as if it were the only safeguard of conduct; and assume that, but for the fear of being burned, or for the hope of being rewarded, everybody would pass their lives in lying, stealing and murdering. I think quite one of the notablest historical events of this century (perhaps the very notablest) was the council of clergymen, horror-struck at the diminution in our dread of hell, at which the last of English clergymen whom one would have expected to see in such a function, rose as the devil's advocate; to tell us how impossible it was we could get on without him.

John Ruskin "Ethics of the Dust."

Acid Drops.

An astrologer of High Holborn was fined £50 for telling fortunes. The man was very foolish. He told people's fortunes in this world; had he been wise he would have confined his prognostications to the next. That is a business subsidized by the State, protected by the State, and held in the highest respect by large sections of the British public. Why, when there are so many ways of getting a dishonest living, men should run risks of fine or imprisonment by trying to get a living in an illegal manner, can only be explained on grounds of sheer human stupidity.

Lord Rothermere has been assuring the French people that if he were a Frenchman he would demand an air force that should be in a position of absolute superiority. The *Star* reminds us that only the other day Lord Rothermere was bellowing that England should have an air force that is absolutely superior to everyone else. Which only raises the question "Ought we really try to protect from bombing, people who are capable of swallowing such unadulterated rubbish?" Everybody is to be stronger than everybody else? There are reports that insanity is on the increase? We do not believe it. It is perhaps true only so far as the mentally-irresponsible now occupy more prominent positions than they used to do.

The director of the B.B.C. talks recently described the B.B.C. as a bulwark of democracy. Humour is a good thing, but sometimes it bears the stamp of satire. Democracy above all things stands for freedom of speech—not the freedom which permits speech, provided it is kept within decreed limits, and steers clear of attacking certain opinions, but which gives the pro and con of every subject with absolute fairness. Certainly, with regard to religion that has never been done by the B.B.C. It has never permitted a straightforward criticism of Christianity, while giving a large part of its time to the advocacy of religion, to most of which no reply of any kind is permitted. And in the case of Bradlaugh, when the B.B.C. found itself in a position that it could not exclude a talk about him, it first of all tried to limit the talk to five minutes on his political career alone, and in the end submitted to a ten minutes' talk, by one of its own speakers, and produced a speech which positively stamped Bradlaugh as a *dead* force, one who definitely belonged to the past. As though there are not quite enough living men who are virtually dead for us to cease bothering about dead men who have ceased to live. It would, of course, have been dangerous to have pointed out that Bradlaugh "being dead yet speaketh."

In one country town in England several children have died as a result of drinking polluted water, following on the water shortage resulting from the long drought. Another item worth noting is that the Government declines to lower the tax on Insulin, because it may affect the profits of a few manufacturers in this country. And Insulin is a daily necessity to all sufferers from diabetes, and therefore price becomes a vital consideration to poor people, when a better foreign product at about half the price charged for the English one could be purchased but for the action of the Government.

These two items have an underlying connexion. For they both turn upon cost. There is more than enough rain in this country to provide an ample supply of water for everyone. But finding storage accommodation means spending money—probably several millions. And the Government really cannot afford this. Had it been a case of providing several new battleships at a cost of five millions each, or fleets of aeroplanes that would enable us to defy the world, or spending on naval displays, or military manoeuvres, the situation would have been different. The difference is ultimately that between making preparations to take life and affording opportunities for saving it.

Five hundred Afrikander Church members have signed a protest against the Stellenbosch Kerdrad decision in

the recent "Heresy Hunt." Professor du Plessis has been thrown out of the South African Episcopal Church because he does not believe what that Church paid him to preach. His frankness is commendable. But what would these 500 protesting churchmen wish the sceptical parson to do? Do they desire the Church to employ an eloquent denunciator of all that the Church teaches? So long as the five hundred remain inside their Church, the latter can afford to sit tight and look out for a more conformist professor.

A "Heresy Hunt" is also reported from Australia, full details of which will be found in the *Modern Churchman*. Dr. Angus, of St. Andrew's College, Sydney, is putting up a strenuous fight, and has won the first round. His accusers have appealed to the N.S.W. Assembly. The *Modern Churchman* says that "the literal application of the Thirty-Nine Articles in the sense that they were written would eliminate almost the entire ministry of the Church of England." What a pity they keep this secret to themselves! Do they fear elimination? Dr. Angus apparently is a genuine heretic who dares to set his own intelligence against the plain teachings of his Church. He claims that "The mind is as much of God as the spirit or soul . . . and must be granted its right to seek and test and accept truth."

Of course all the churches will agree to this obedient type of "mind"—the type which "accepts" their "truth." Dr. Angus evidently has fallen foul of the "Fathers" because his mind seeks and tests and rejects some of the Church's "truths." The one-way mind is all right, but Dr. Angus can only remain a churchman if his mind accepts . . . that "seeking" and "testing" are meaningless words!

A penchant for stunts displayed by the Rev. I. A. Ewart, vicar of Earls Barton, near Northampton, received a deserved rebuff the other day. Some time ago the reverend gentleman wrote to Adolph Hitler, asking for a "full answer" to a number of questions, including one—"Is Germany thinking of War?" Although extracts from a sermon were sent by the eager seeker after truth, the Nazi leader failed to evince interest, and it devolved upon a member of his staff to reply acknowledging receipt of the communication with "best thanks." The conceit of some parsons is highly diverting. Whatever Hitler's politics may be, he directs the destiny of a nation, and to picture him devoting his time to explaining himself to an inquisitive country clergyman desirous of tickling the palates of his congregation is most comical. Imagine Mr. Macdonald being asked to peruse a sermon and answer a questionnaire from some obscure ecclesiastic abroad!

We took a wrong turning on Christmas Day—no, not morally, but on our wireless set, and had the misfortune to hear one of the silliest sermons we have ever heard delivered by a Roman Catholic priest. It may be possible to deliver sillier ones, but we don't see how. The burden of the priest's complaint was that man who was the lowest of the low, utterly beneath the contempt of God Almighty, did not seem quite to appreciate the way in which the said God Almighty demeaned himself in coming among us as a Babe. He actually took upon himself the revolting garment of humanity—so much he loved his children, and he died for our terrible sins! And there must have been a large number of Christians who could actually stand this kind of thing!

Yet the terrible news, this Christmas, from Paris, was the account of one of the worst railway accidents that has ever taken place at any time, and the priest never once alluded to it. We do not find any connexion one way or other between the Babe and the accident, but we do ask, what is the good of any Deity, whether he came to us in the flesh or not, who, able to prevent such a calamity, refuses to do so? What is the good of a Deity who literally does *nothing*?

It should be added, however, that Cardinal Verdier, went to the Gare de l'Est, where over 200 bodies of the

victims were lying and *blessed* them. This must be a source of great joy, both to the relatives of the victims and to the Deity. The Roman Catholic religion is such a consolation!

In the introduction to a life of the Rev. Sydney Smith by Hesketh Pearson, Mr. G. K. Chesterton claims that Smith was "the real originator of nonsense"—the forerunner of Lear and Lewis Carroll. A reviewer of the book doesn't like this at all—it means, he says, that "when all is said that can be said for Sydney Smith—he was a keen reformer, he was a distinguished writer—he remains just a creator of nonsense, a clerical clown, and the clerical clown is certainly never a great asset of the Church." How churchmen hate a touch of wit or humour! No wonder they insist that Jesus was a Man of Sorrows in spite of the modern tendency to make him the greatest humorist the world has ever known. And no wonder they have always hated the contemptuous stab of irony, the hearty laugh against their solemn nonsense, the ridicule and wit of a Voltaire or Ingersoll! It is not surprising to find that Sydney Smith after all, as the reviewer sadly admits, "believed little or nothing, and did not understand in the least the real nature of religion," and he ridiculed the Puseyites and Tractarians. Good for Sydney Smith!

Another new *Life of Our Lord* has just been written by Dr. P. Carrington. Needless to say the author has made some important new discoveries. One of them is that Jesus "was a magnificent leader of men who made an organization which overcame the world." In other words, Jesus was the greatest organizer that has ever appeared on this planet. Unfortunately, according to a critic of the book, Dr. Carrington has not been as successful as he ought to have been in drawing all the right conclusions. The gospels were really "liturgical, rather than literary," and they gave information already known to the reader rather than provided "material for discovering the personality of Him whom they portray." This is a very sad admission, but if the critic thinks it will stop further new lives of Jesus, he is mistaken. There is room for at least 9,873 new lives, all written from new standpoints, and *they will be written*. That is *our* prophecy.

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," and we are delighted to call the attention of the pious to a little incident in Calabria in South Italy. The tower of a church crashed there and fell on the town gaol. Six convicts were killed and four injured. If that does not prove the reality of God's vengeance on the wicked, what does? We hope it will be a warning to wrongdoers. And, by the way, we think it is very suggestive to build a prison near a church with a good tower. Church and prison, prison and church—they go so well together!

The new incarnation of the deity in the person of a negro, to which we referred a fortnight ago has advanced another stage. A Committee was appointed by a judge of the New Jersey Court of Common Pleas to examine the case. The Committee has now reported that the followers of the negro believe him to be an incarnation of God, that he has many thousands of converts, that he has worked miracles, and has a restraining influence over people of bad character. So the Judge has declined to take any action in the matter, and the new deity will run his course. Whether he will end by being crucified or not remains to be seen.

But in other circumstances he is furnishing the evidence, up to date, that exists for the New Testament incarnation, minus being born without a father, and being raised from the dead. The time for the last miracle has not arrived, but we are quite prepared to believe that the evidence for this, if it is ever given, will be quite as good as the evidence for the Jerusalem one. But up to date the last Messiah has been more fortunate than the earlier one. For when he was cited before a court, for the same offence as the negro, he was ordered off to execution.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

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

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FRED.—There is very little chance of getting anything in the general press that makes a direct attack on Christianity, but it does occur sometimes.

T.S.—When you say that Freethinkers must be a miserable set, it is useless for us to pretend any longer. We may as well confess that nearly all the Freethinkers we know spend their time in tears. That is the reason why they face death more cheerfully than Christians. Death is a release from a miserable existence.

J. POLLARD.—Pleased to hear from a new reader. A copy of the paper required is being sent you.

FOR ADVERTISING THE "FREETHINKER."—Our acknowledgement last week from C. S. Fraser as £2 2s. should have read £1 5s.

D. KNIGHT.—We have said often enough that many who call themselves Freethinkers are as fundamentally religious in their thinking as are avowed religionists. But you appear to be under some misapprehension as to what constitutes Freethought. It is a mental attitude not a statement of detailed scientific "truth."

J. TRESSIDOR.—We cannot trace the letter at either address.

G. H. TAYLOR.—Of course the situation to-day does not permit the same form of fighting as that of a century ago, but there is an incitement to resistance where bigotry is openly aggressive, and we incline to the opinion that the situation to-day calls for a steadier and fundamentally higher form of courage to-day than it did. Open aggression invites resistance, but the aggression of a silent, social, political and social boycott brings resistance only from such as are very much above the average. The reason why so many are ready to make friends with compromising religion is to be found in this direction. We have every admiration for your own course of conduct.

TWINKLE.—Thanks. Shall appear.

S. T. YOUNG writes, "It is about seventy years, since as a mere boy I first heard Charles Bradlaugh speak. I heard him very frequently afterwards, and have a very vivid recollection of his personality. . . . The fact of your never having heard Bradlaugh makes the picture you draw of him in your book the more remarkable. You have given us a very vivid and living picture of one who will always stand out in my memory as a very remarkable man. Bradlaugh and Ingersoll adds to the debt the Freethought Movement already owes you."

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

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

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

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

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."

Even in the last dread scene of all personal conviction is sufficient to produce calmness and confidence. There was one, who for three months suffered agonies unutterable, who exclaimed in his anguish "So much torture, O God! to kill a poor worm! Yet, if by one word I could shorten this misery, I would not say it." And at last folded his arms, and calmly said, "Now I die!" Yet this man was an avowed infidel, and, worse, an apostate priest.

(Spoken of Blanco White by Cardinal Newman.)

Sugar Plums.

A Happy New Year to all our readers, and the Editor's thanks for all the kind wishes he has received over the holiday period. They are too numerous to permit of individual replies.

We do not know what kind of year lies before us, but of one thing we are certain. The need for Freethought during 1934 will be greater than ever. Apart from the desperate efforts being made by the Churches to regain some of their lost ground, and the social demoralization that to some extent plays into their hands, there has not been a period in our lifetime when the principles of Freethought were so openly assailed as they are at present. The assault comes not merely from the Churches, but from those who laugh at the principle of individual liberty of thought and speech as an outworn concept. The greater need for those who value genuine Freethinking to do what lies in their power to help on the Cause.

We suggest some ways in which this may be done without over-taxing the individual. First there is this paper. The *Freethinker* is now in the fifty-fourth year of its existence. It has always been run at a loss, and is still being run at a loss. We are not moaning over that. It was not started as a business enterprise, but to serve a great movement, and we can flatter ourselves that it has done that with unbroken loyalty. It delivers its message careless of friend or foe, and it gains the respect of those whose respect is worth having.

We are not able to do much in the way of advertising the existence of this paper, but our readers may do much to help by introducing it to likely readers. To those who are not already subscribers we will send a copy for four weeks, post free. On another page will be found a form for the purpose. An extra copy taken for the purpose of giving to a friend has also been the means of getting new subscribers. We will send on parcels of specimen copies for distribution to those who will undertake the work.

Then there is the National Secular Society, to which only a small proportion of our readers belong. The Bradlaugh Centenary has had the result it was intended to have, calling attention to the Society founded by Bradlaugh over seventy years ago, and which has always remained faithful to his motto of "Thorough." Subscriptions to the Society is nominal, and dates from January 1. We suggest to those who have not joined the Society to write the General Secretary for particulars. To those who are already members we remind them that all subscriptions are due, and to make their 1934 subscription as large as possible.

Finally, there is the Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society, which will take place at the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday, February 3. This function is noted for being an enjoyable one, and we do not think that the one this year will prove an exception. We again print a list of excursion trains that will be running from various towns on February 3, and that should mean the presence of a larger number of provincial friends than usual. But we press upon all who intend being present sending in their application for tickets as early as possible. A large public dinner takes a deal of arranging, if it is to run smoothly, and the sooner we can form an idea of the likely number the better. Tickets will be 8s. each.

It may help provincial members and friends in their arrangements for attending the Annual Dinner of the N.S.S. on February 3, to know that the following excursions to London will be run on that day:—

Liverpool (Lime Street) 11.30 a.m. Return fare 10s. 6d.
Return time 12.30 a.m.
Birmingham (New Street) about 8.10 a.m. Return
Euston about 12.30 a.m. Return fare 12s.
Leicester, about 10.30 a.m. Return St. Pancras about
midnight. Return fare 5s. 6d.
Coventry, about 8.40 a.m. Return about 12.30 a.m. Re-
turn fare 10s. 6d.
Bradford (Exchange) 7.25 a.m. Return Kings Cross 11.50
p.m. Return fare 16s.
Bradford (Exchange) 11.10 a.m. Return Kings Cross
11.50 p.m. Return fare 10s. 6d.
Leeds (Central) 7.50 a.m. Return Kings Cross 11.50
p.m. Return fare 15s. 6d.
Sheffield (Victoria) 7.30 a.m. Return Marylebone 11.0
p.m. Return fare 14s.
Nottingham (Victoria) 8.21 a.m. Return Marylebone,
11.0 p.m. Return fare 12s. 6d.

Visitors requiring hotel accommodation in London should communicate their requirements to the General Secretary at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Vegetarians will be looked after as usual, but it will be necessary to notify the Secretary when ordering tickets if the Vegetarian menu is required.

Tom Barclay, one of the oldest, most original and best loved of the members of the Leicester Secular Society, who died on New Year's Day, 1933, at the age of eighty, has left behind a most interesting and strikingly written Autobiography. This tells of the struggles of a child born of poverty-stricken Irish parents living in a Leicester slum. Self-taught, he became well read and equipped to more than hold his own in philosophical or literary argument. He early became a Freethinker and pioneer of Socialism. The Autobiography is "full of meat," and capital reading, a real Human Document. It is desired to publish his story, but this can only be done if enough subscribers can be secured. If published the price will be 5s., bound in cloth and well produced, with illustrations, and the publisher will be Edgar Backus, of 44 Cank Street, Leicester, who will send a preliminary circular to any enquirers. Barclay had contacts with Ruskin, William Morris, Bernard Shaw and Edward Carpenter, who are all referred to in his book.

An effort is being made to form a Branch of the National Secular Society in Kings Lynn, and local Freethinkers willing to co-operate are invited to communicate with Mr. J. O. Hanlon, "Oak View," 43 Chase Avenue, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. We wish the effort every possible success. And take occasion to remind Freethinkers in the neglected areas of the country, that active Freethought work was never more necessary than to-day.

The Manchester Branch commences the new session to-day (January 7) in the Clarion Cafe, Market Street, when Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "The Ethics of Persecution." The local Branch has had a very successful half year, and there should be a good start for the second half to-day. The lecture will begin at 7.30 p.m.

On Sunday, January 14, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak for the Stockport Branch N.S.S. in the Central Hall, Hillgate, on "Christianity and the Crisis." In connexion with the visit the Branch has arranged its Annual Social, Whist Drive and Dance in the same Hall, on the Saturday evening (January 13). Tickets are 1s. 3d. each, including refreshments. All Freethinkers and friends in the area are invited. Mr. Rosetti will be present, and the proceedings begin at 7.30 p.m.

No negative thinking can stop at the negative point. To teach men to hate superstition and injustice is a sure, if indirect, way of teaching them to seek after their opposites.—John Morley.

Spirits in Ulster.

LONG years ago I went to a spiritualist meeting; I saw manifestations, heard voices and rappings, and in the darkness a young woman clung to my arm and called me darling. That scared me off, till after a lapse of a quarter of a century I risked it again, but the proceedings were so silly that I abandoned my argument with the lady lecturer (who did *not* call me darling) and contented myself with writing it up facetiously for the *Freethinker*. And now, for the third time in forty years, I have done it again.

The place was the Ulster Hall, Belfast, the subject was, "You can speak with your dead," and the lecturer was "the well known Irish author, Shaw Desmond."

The great Irish author is pitifully deficient in humour. Surely never was there a duller lecture, never a more self-satisfied performer.

"Swank" is about the only word that can properly be applied to the greater part of the brilliant Irish author's address. He literally chucks his weight about. Fourteen stones he says he scales, and ready at any moment "to fight my weight in wild cats." To counter this argument I could produce an eighteen stone Atheist prepared to tackle a cartload of monkeys, but that wouldn't strike me as convincing proof that Freethought was more reasonable than Spiritualism!

Mr. Desmond prides himself that in literary matter he could not be fooled. Still, I think that a judge of "some of the finest prose ever written" (spirit writing) would impress me more if he didn't say "those sort of things," and commit other atrocities on our own beautiful language.

Let me make my meaning abundantly clear in descending to such trifles. If the most important subject that can concern human beings is what happens after death, then the discussion ought to be on a high plane, and most decidedly all the shams and fakes of the cheap entertainment world are sadly out of place. At this meeting the spirit of quackery was in the air, quite a suitable atmosphere, I submit. But when we are supposedly dealing in the supernatural it strikes a jarring note to pretend that seats are booked when they are not; and when we are told that in Blackpool there were over four hundred questions keeping the scholarly Irish author busy until after midnight, while only four questions were permitted in Belfast, the meeting closing before ten, we are reluctantly forced to wink the other eye.

I will not insult the intelligence of *Freethinker* readers by seriously considering any of the utterly fantastic and thoroughly discredited taradiddles put forward by this intrepid Irish author. Confound Sir Oliver Lodge. A thing is not necessarily true because this amiable old gentleman wrote a silly book about it. The argument seems to be—if it's good enough for Sir Oliver, it ought to be good enough for you! I strongly object to the reverent and exclusive use of the word "scientist." There are departments of scientific knowledge in which I am undoubtedly the superior of the eminent physicist, but I cheerfully admit that is neither here nor there; a thing is not necessarily untrue because Huxley may say so, and that form of argument is merely a Julian for an Oliver.

The first question to be asked at the meeting dealt with the all-important issue as to whether Jesus Christ, when he rose from the dead, was materialized, spiritualized, discarnate or decarbonized. I may have got it a bit mixed, for the articulation of the anxious enquirer and the acoustics of the half-empty,

hall were alike faulty, but the eloquent Desmond in a lengthy reply satisfied his supporters, for Jesus, as Marie Corelli told us long ago, is still the big noise in spiritism. Then a lady asked a question of terrifying importance. Do spirits remain the same age after so-called death?

The earnest Irish author welcomed this question, and fairly chewed the cud with it. He knew a boy who passed over at the age of ten. Years later (on reaching puberty) his voice broke and deepened, adolescence supervened, then safety razors, for we must remember things are much the same on the Astral as on the Earth plane. I think by now the bright youth will be married! So there we are, friends. No wonder I can't hear grandpa's voice, for the poor old chap is now well on in his second hundred!

Then up I popped with my little lot. All in once. Sound psychology, for, as I had anticipated, I got no further chance from the sporting Irish author.

Question: Seeing that the lecturer has quoted the names of eminent men who are believers in Spiritualism, is he not aware that an equally formidable list could be made of men who rejected that creed, notably the late Mr. Maskelyne, who said "I have investigated spiritualistic phenomena for forty years, and I have found nothing but fraud, fraud, fraud?" (Loud applause from a considerable section of the audience.)

If the hospitable Irish author did not quite welcome this question, he gave quite an elaborate answer. True, Sir Arthur Keith said we got snuffed out like a candle, and many other scientists, notably Jeans, the astronomer, did not believe in survival after bodily death, but, of course, they were wrong. It surprised me to hear that in his declining years Mr. Maskelyne was an ardent Spiritualist! The charming Irish author alluded to me as an earnest young enquirer (it was dark in the cheapest seats) and he had little doubt that I would soon become a believer. For some reason he told me to study a book called *The Invisible World*, but I am interested in life, not in death, and other worlds leave me cold. This little globe of ours means more to me than Venus or Mars. A beetle without a microscope, to me, is a finer sight than Betelgeuse with a telescope, and my own braces generally give me more concern than the belt of Orion.

Two points in the cultured Irish author's address seem to call for remark. Very old points too, but they are constantly cropping up. Mr. Shaw Desmond said that if he believed that death ended all, he would throw himself into the Lough, a statement I heard also, some time ago, from the reverend Mr. Agnew of Belfast. I may say that I disbelieve them both. The fourteen-stone wild cat killer and prodigious globe-trotter looks as if he got a considerable kick out of life, and as an honest Atheist, my firm conviction that this is the only world I shall ever see quickens the desire in me to make the most of my time. I love life, but I shrink from the thought of immortality. "Let perpetual light shine upon us," frightens me, for, at the end of a perfect day, I want a perfect sleep in coolness and darkness.

The second point is that we all want our departed dead back again. We have all loved and lost, and "Oh for the touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still" will always bring tears to our eyes, whatever our ideas of the Ultimate. We are all sorely taxed at times to find a crumb of "comfort." But surely nothing can be more despicable than this preying upon the strained nerves and the unrestrained emotions of sorrowing men and women!

To my mind, Spiritualists are worse than Burke and Hare, for these miscreants were only body snatchers, and they certainly delivered the goods, and did not pretend to deal in immortal souls. Hands off our dead, you ghouls. My father's hand was warm, but I spurn the itching palm and the sticky fingers of the professional medium. The Pater had a sweet tenor voice that is still a golden memory to me, but I do not wish it blasphemed by blaring trumpet, or through the mouth of Red Hawk, the mighty head hunter of Siberia, and via the lips of a convicted female charlatan.

That last sentence brings me back to a sane sense of proportion, for the whole subject from beginning to end reeks with silliness. For a moment let me just play with the idea that there is no death, and all creatures who have passed this way still live on the astral plane. If only we are sensitive enough, we can see them and speak with them. I ought to master the trick, for I lived a long time with those who saw and heard and did strange things—only they were not called psychic, but looney. Hark, what was that? Did ye not hear it? It is the rhythmic tramp, tramp, the marching of men; louder and louder it sounds in mine ears. Confused shapes, wraith-like figures, fill the street, weird music is in the air as I gaze from my study window. The shapes become more visible, the sounds more audible. Drums and flutes have materialized, and banners with familiar devices are borne by venerable men. I discern the captions, "No surrender," "not an inch," and "To hell with the Pope." Comes a ghostly horse with royal rider. But woe is me! for the Prince of Orange is no heroic figure now, with three hundred years of stubble on his chin. But the old lad sticks it out gamely, leading the triple centenarians from Derry, Aughrim, Shankill and Sandy Row. The beards of the brethren are festooned with ectoplasm, and etherealized seccotine fringes their sashes; but they bear their banners bravely. "Lodge, Lodge, Lodge," they croon in eerie tones.

"Speak ye of Sir Oliver?" I entreat.

"L.O.L." is the somewhat cryptic answer, "not Oliver Lodge but Orange Lodge do we follow." And the pied piper of Crumlin, and the tired drummer of Lambeg dance wearily, as merrily they did foot it centuries ago at the Circus.

What the relevancy is I know not. "God, God, God," I cry in anguish.

But echo answers, "Cod, Cod, Cod."

"William," I cry, "give me, I implore, a message from the spirit world."

But ould Willum, no longer a Gordon Richards, is hard of hearing. Yet his withered lips move, and the selectivity of my ears is strained to cut out the Portland mouth organ band with "Onward Christian Soldiers," and Phil the Fluter's playing "Derry's Walls." I hear faintly the voice of William of Orange.

"Prod, Prod, Prod," it seems to say.

Yet my sad spirit still is striving, still is striving, some satisfaction to find. I turn me to the quadruped.

"Oh, Bucephalus," I cry, for white is black, and all is vague in the Cosmos, "Is there, is there any horse sense in the spirit world of Ulster?"

The aged beast reared up on his hind legs as in days of yore he bestrode the Boyne; his nostrils dilated and he snorted scornfully. Clearly and unmistakably, straight from the horse's mouth came the answer to my enquiry, that satisfied me as much as the humans had disappointed. For the words then spoken were:

"FRAUD, FRAUD, FRAUD."

J. EFFEL.

Christian Hypocrisy and Humbug

THERE is so much hypocrisy in the Christian Churches today that it is hard to determine which among them is the greatest sinner in this respect. But I will give two concrete examples that came within my own experience, not so very long ago, to illustrate my point. Well, about a year ago a knock came to my door, and a young clergyman presented himself and said that he had just been appointed Vicar of the Parish, and was making enquiries as to those of his parishioners who were likely to attend his Church. I treated him with studied courtesy, but I told him very frankly that he had come to the wrong house in coming to me, because I did not believe in his religion or any other, and did not attend any Church. "But, why not?" he asked. "Well," I replied, "because I found out when I was quite a young man that all religions were based upon primitive superstitions, and therefore unworthy of belief." "And I can prove it," I said, "if you will come inside. I will give you the evidence which I think will establish my case." So he walked into my parlour and I produced the book upon which I proposed to prove my case. The book was one presented to me by the late Dr. Herbert Junius Hardwicke, of Sheffield, after a lecture of mine, many years ago, in that town. He was present, and said he was pleased with my lecture. He also presented, about the same time, a copy of his book entitled *Evolution and Creation*, to all the well-known Freethought advocates of that day.

The book treats of: *Man Whence and Whither*, and goes through all the stages of his development, from the lowest form of animated matter up to that of the civilized races of to-day. It also deals with man's great antiquity.

The Evolution of Mind in animals and man gives numerous illustrations to prove his point. There are pictures of a Lemur Half-ape, the face of a Proboscis Monkey, and the Moor Monkey with Child (after Mivart), and the Chimpanzee and the Male Orang (both from Mivart). Then he gives portraits of "The Hairy Family of Burmah," that were exhibited at the Piccadilly Hall, London, in 1886, in which are seen mother and son covered with hair, so that from the picture you could not tell which was the mother and which the son. When he saw these, my clerical friend exclaimed: "Wonderful! I've never seen anything like it!"

Then Dr. Hardwicke gives his view of the Evolution of the God idea, in which he came to substantially the same conclusion as Grant Allen, viz: that our early ignorant ancestors made all the Gods—and that the more ignorant the races the more gods they worshipped. He then follows with illustrations of the skeleton of man, and compares it with the skeletons of the gorilla and the chimpanzee—and shows exactly the line of development. Again my clerical friend exclaimed, "extraordinary!"

The author then turned to other religions to show their resemblances and differences. He gives a picture of Brahm, the Hindu Androgynous creator, and a picture of Isis, Horus, and Fish, from a photograph of the bronze image in the Mayor Collection of Browne's Museum, Liverpool, and a picture of the Vedic Virgin Ingrancee, and the Hindu God Vishnu, nursed by his virgin wife-mother.

I was going on to show my clerical friend some more, but he intimated that he had seen enough; he also said it was all very wonderful; but he could not offer anything in the nature of argument against any of it. And so he departed.

Now this young Vicar is an M.A. of either Oxford or Cambridge, and he is doomed by the circumstances of his life to go on preaching that the Christian religion is true that Jesus was the son of a God, that he was born of a virgin, that he was crucified, dead and buried, and yet rose from the dead and lives now somewhere, in infinite spaces called Heaven, awaiting "The Day," to pronounce judgment upon the quick and the dead. And the young Vicar has got to continue to teach the lies of his religion, and even if he has some doubts, to play the part of a hypocrite, continue this humbug and pleading perhaps that "a man must live."

I also told the young Vicar that when Dr. Hardwicke had written his book he could not get any printer or publisher in Sheffield to produce it for him. He came to London and could not find any printer to produce it with the illustrations, as he desired. Although he was an eminent Doctor, and had no previous experience of printing, he set up an establishment in his laboratory, and there he produced this remarkable work. So the young Vicar learned, for the first time, what an immense amount of prejudice there was among printers and publishers against producing a work—no matter how scientific or learned—on such a subject, from a purely Freethought view fifty years ago, but could say nothing in extenuation of such bigotry, if Christianity was true.

My second experience with a Christian preacher—a young Wesleyan Pastor this time—occurred in this wise. I wrote a letter to a well known South London journal criticizing the alleged teachings of Jesus, and pointing out that they were absolutely impracticable in the present age, and anybody who tried to put them into practice would find themselves ultimately either in the workhouse or the gaol. These teachings were from "The Sermon on the Mount," such as "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or for your body what ye shall put on." "consider the lilies of the field," etc.—and so on.

Two parsons replied to me—one a clergyman of the Church of England, and the other the young Wesleyan Minister I have just referred to, and they both said the same, viz: the Gospels were wrongly translated. What Jesus really said they affirmed was—"Take no anxious thought about the morrow"; but when I replied the next week and asked them why they did not write to the Bible Society and tell them about this wrong translation and so prevent their continuing to circulate the Bible in millions all over the civilized world with the wrong translation, both parsons were silent.

And now this young man has been appointed Wesleyan Minister to a large London Church. He also announces himself as a B.A. and Bachelor of Science, and surely he must know that the teachings of modern science are opposed to the supernatural doctrines of the Christian Faith. Consequently he has to adopt the tactics of the showman, and attract an audience to his Church by giving a free Cinematograph show—all seats free—I am not sure about a collection—every week-end. And so as men must live, this young man with high educational qualifications has to adopt the tactics of the showman, which, after all, seems a very degrading kind of business. Personally I feel sorry for such gifted and talented young men, but there are so many in the same predicament. They have unfortunately joined what the Bishop of London once described as "a Rotten Profession," and they have got to put up with the consequences.

ARTHUR B. MOSS,

Clerical Impudence in Australia.

SHOULD a husband or wife become entitled to a divorce when the other party to the marriage has been for three years in a mental home—or, in any other way, a pronounced or certified victim of insanity for that period?

Opinions may differ.

For the moment, I am merely concerned with recording that such is the present proposal here in New South Wales (Australia); that legislation to this effect is being urged by A. S. Henry, M.L.A.; and that discussion has resulted in clerical opponents getting a public drubbing that is most refreshing in this part of the world. Protests by the Churches included one bearing the signature of no less than six Anglican Bishops. To these, in the course of a reply through the leading daily papers of the State, Mr. Henry said:—

Every new move to make laws more in keeping with human happiness and endeavour is met with unswerving opposition from those in whom power and authority are vested.

This applies, with emphasis, to high dignitaries of ecclesiastical institutions. These great divines have always either lagged reluctantly behind all movements for human emancipation, or have stoutly opposed them. One great church did much to free men's bodies from slavery. But the Anglican Church was not conspicuous. The great Reform Acts were opposed tooth and nail by the churches.

In many respects, great prelates have shown themselves reactionary and conservative; but reforms have been won, despite their pastoral denunciations.

Within their spiritual domain I do not intrude. But in the secular affairs of humanity I claim mental freedom to regard laws and conventions from a critical angle. Laws are made for mankind, and not mankind for ecclesiastical ritual and belief. The contest for secular supremacy waxed for long and bitter centuries, and finally the State emerged triumphant.

We are now governed by the State, and the State is responsible to itself alone.

Simple truths, these, it may be. But it is a distinct rarity to hear them uttered through a Parliamentarian. Mr. Henry's remarks represent (1) a denunciation of the conduct of the church in the past, (2) a repudiation of any authority on its part to determine the legislative affairs of the people, and (3) a challenge—so far as it feels that it is within its power to injure him, personally or politically—to do its damndest.

Mr. Henry's courage is all the more striking in the light of a political libel action that has just been heard here.

Plaintiff was John C. Eldridge, a former member of the Federal Parliament. From the head of Mr. Henry's Party—B. S. B. Stevens, Premier of the New South Wales State Parliament—Eldridge claimed £5,000 damages for the statement that he was "a person of low moral character, irreligious, blasphemous, and opposed to the teachings of Christianity," and therefore "quite unfitted to become a member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales." Stevens and Eldridge were the opposing candidates at the last New South Wales elections for the same seat—Croydon. The victory at the polls went to Stevens.

There was the interesting promise of the court being required to give a ruling—in keeping with what would appear to be the views of Stevens—that a person, because he is irreligious, is unfit to occupy a seat in Parliament!

Eldridge and Stevens are both lay preachers. The accusation by Stevens was based on a speech delivered by Eldridge in the Federal Parliament. For a few moments, it would seem, Eldridge, the pietist, became lost in Eldridge the man. In a burst of candour, he uttered what he knew to be the truth respecting the church—or, more correctly, those by whom it is exploited for their own ends.

A few sentences from the cross-examination reveal the whole story.

"Did you in your speech," counsel for Stevens asked Eldridge, in reference to an anti-Labour manifesto issued by the Council of Churches of South Australia, "say

that the Church has failed humanity?" Eldridge belongs to the Labour Party. "Yes," was the reply: "I did say that."

"Did you say, 'The churchmen are conspicuous by their absence from the ranks of those down and out'?" "That is my opinion."

"And did you say, 'In this failure of some churchmen—and the alliance of the churches with the moneyed interests of the day—the churches which are guilty of such things are the Harlots of Mammon'?" "Yes, I said that."

Comes, now, a glimpse which, if correct, greatly heightens the frank and fearless stand in which I have already presented Mr. Henry with regard to the impudence of the Church.

Counsel for Stevens referred to Frank Brennan, a fellow-member of the Eldridge party, and the Attorney-General at the time the speech was made. "Is it true," pressed Stevens' counsel, "that Mr. Brennan dissociated himself publicly on behalf of the Labour Party—and, indeed, the House—from your statements as being repugnant in the highest degree to every member in the chamber?" "Yes," replied Eldridge; "it is perfectly true. But the night before he congratulated me on the speech. I can produce proof. He personally congratulated me."

What a suggestion of truckling to the Church vote have we here!

But to return to the issue before the court. The evidence closed without any witnesses for the defence being called. Reference was made by the Judge in his summing-up to the latitude allowed in the heat of political controversies. The outcome was a verdict for Stevens.

Lost, in the welter of the conflict, was the point upon which, it was hoped by many, the whole case would turn—the imputation by Stevens that irreligion, or even the failure to show what he deems to be a becoming respect for religion, is a bar to entering Parliament; and damages for Eldridge in the event of the court not upholding Stevens in this utterly barbaric contention.

Stevens, it is clear, is most appreciative of the Church vote.

Easy it is to imagine what a snuffling pietist of his order must think of the daring of Mr. Henry—a member of his own political party.

But to get a full appraisal of Mr. Henry, it is necessary to reflect that we have, in our public life, a Brennan—foremost in the Labour Party—and a Stevens at the head of the anti-Labour Party!

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Charles Bradlaugh and the Post Office.

[The following is taken from *The Record*, the official organ of the Liverpool and District Branches of the Union of Post Office Workers. It has a useful bearing on the last of our Bradlaugh Centenary Notes—"The Parliamentary Question."]

WITH the Centenary of his birth the name of Charles Bradlaugh is naturally in the minds of many who know him as a name only, but to those who had met him personally there is a fragrant memory which all the libels and misunderstandings which were once current about him will never efface. Probably there is not a single member of the Liverpool staff to-day who can remember how Bradlaugh helped us in the early days of the U.K.P.C.A., our old friend Anno Domini has seen to that, but one incident deserves to be rescued from oblivion as being unique in the history of Postal agitation. A certain sorting clerk in Liverpool had been making the running for promotion to the first class, and had used all the old familiar methods of belittling his competitors and glorifying himself, which his duty on "the corridor" enabled him to do. In course of time the promotion duly came off, and he passed over thirteen men; most of them far better men. On occasions prior to this incident Bradlaugh had assisted us by asking questions in the House, as had many other more or less independent members, but we decided that a firm stand must be

made over this case, and Bradlaugh was our man. He was well primed with all the facts, and when he got the usual evasive answer he gave notice to raise the question on the adjournment resolution. He was further coached at a personal interview in London, and when the matter was ultimately fought out the Postmaster-General had not a leg to stand on. The local postmaster was instructed to attend in the Superintendent's room during the debate, ready to answer any awkward point which might arise, for Bradlaugh had a reputation for thoroughness which made the Postmaster-General anxious for the result. Several instances of local jobbery were exposed, and so far as the main incident was concerned *eleven of the thirteen men* who had been passed over were specially promoted to the first class of sorting clerk, the number in the class being increased for the purpose.

Correspondence.

CHURCH AND STATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of December 31 you say: "Russia would have liked to have stamped out religion, but could not. Mussolini tried to ignore the Church, but could not. Hitler tried to control religion, but could not."

All the above assertions need much qualification. There is no better authority on Russia than Maurice Hindus. He was born and brought up there, and has revisited the country every year for ten years. In his new book, *The Great Offensive*, he has a chapter on "Religion: The Last Stand," in which he says: "The Russian revolutionaries regard their battle against religion as finished, with all religions, Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Buddhist, stripped of power and appeal, and in a state of utter collapse."

I have read a number of other books by Russians or people who have lived a long time in Russia, and they all say much the same thing.

I do not think Mussolini tried to ignore the Church. The Church is one of the biggest industries of Italy, and brings vast sums of money into the country. Mussolini is not the man to ignore that. Besides, he holds the view of Napoleon, that religion is a good thing for keeping the multitude in order. He has, however, succeeded in keeping the Church out of politics, which was all he tried to do.

Hitler also considers religion good for the multitude, as he tells us in his book. He has, however, fought the Catholic Church on two points. First, he ordered the extinction of the Centre Party, a purely Catholic body, which for half a century has sent a hundred members to the Reichstag. That Party has been entirely broken up and destroyed. Hitler has also ordered the sterilization of mental defectives, which the Pope has denounced over and over again. We do not yet know whether Hitler will succeed, but if he fails, he will have had less success than others have had. Many hundreds have been sterilized in California, in defiance of the Pope.

R. B. KERR.

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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.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square): 8.0, Mr. S. Burke—"Our Impotent God."

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. R. J. Willis (I.L.P.)—"The Policy of the I.L.P."

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

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 8, Mr. Paul Goldman—"Freethought and the Child."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 Buxton Road, opposite Kings' Cross Station): 7.15, Debate, Clifford Prothero v. G. S. Gueroult (British Union of Fascists). Subject: "Communism or Fascism?" Chair—Mr. F. A. Hornibrook.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

CHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Peoples' Hall, Delamere Street, Chester): 7.0, Mr. E. S. Wollen (Liverpool)—"The Life of Christ." (A bar to Progress).

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, 36 Claughton Road, Birkenhead): 8.0, Monday, January 8, Mr. F. Stevens—"Freethought and Reform."

BURNLEY (St. James' Hall): 11.0, Sunday, January 7, Mr. J. Clayton—"Gods, Priests and People."

BURNLEY (Co-operative Rooms, Grey Street): 7.30, Tuesday, January 9, Mr. J. Clayton—"Sex and Religion."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Our Changing Beliefs."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, M'Lellan Galleries, Sauchichall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. Carl Caplan, M.A.—"The Geographical Background of Religion." *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

HULL (Metropole Hall): 7.30, Mr. R. K. Roberts, B.Sc.—"The New Psychology."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, A. Jackson (Bootle)—"Do We Desire a Future Life?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street): 7.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti (General Secretary N.S.S.—"The Ethics of Persecution."

NORTH SHIELDS (Labour Social Hall): 7.0, Thursday, January 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Pope and his Church."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Hall 5, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. J. Matthews—"The Attack on Christianity."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Central Hall, Chapter Row): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Are the Clergy Honest?"

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