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Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions

Woman and Christianity

THE Church is once again in trouble over the question of women. For about five years a Commission, appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, has been sitting to consider whether women could be trusted to occupy the position of fully ordained Ministers. After a very long fight women have won the social right to play their part in the scientific, the artistic, and the political world. They may plead at the Bar, they may take a medical degree, they may engage in all sorts of business careers. But one position remains closed to them—the pulpit. Some of the Nonconformist bodies now admit, women ministers, but the Church of England, and the Roman Church, and many other branches of the Christian Church will have none of her in the pulpit. The Churches do not refuse the help of women, indeed, if the women went on strike and declined to take any part in the business of the Churches they would all close. As some wise man said, about sixty years ago, a man goes to Church because his wife takes him, because he wants a wife to take him, or because some other man's wife takes him. The women are really in a position to dictate terms, to impose sanctions, if they were only united to do so. But it is worth noting that the chief place in which sex equality is yet to be achieved is in the field of religion.

* * *

Not the Pulpit

All that this Commission after five years of labour can decide on is that women may be Deaconesses in the Church, but she must keep out of the priesthood. There is reason for believing that there were Deaconesses in the early Church, or in some branches of it, although exactly what they did is not very clear. Some writers of ecclesiastical history believe that this meant no more than being permitted to act as door-keepers, or to carry out certain very subordinate tasks to help the priest with his job. But whatever

the function of Deaconess involved in the early Church, it is certain that it was not very long before all offices were taken from her. The Christian view of the essentially evil nature of woman held the field; she could not be done without, but the Church was usually puzzled to know what the devil it could do with her. She lost all the freedom that she had under the later Roman law, and less than a hundred years ago a woman when married was practically the possession of her husband, unable to hold property in her own right, and with no right to exert any direct and open influence on the political life of the community. At law she was, when married, represented by the husband; and when single, social opinion, Christian social opinion, while it did not exactly condemn her to privacy, marked very clear lines beyond which she must not step under penalty of being socially banned. Master the European history of the subjection of women and you will be studying the history of the Christian Church. Master the history of the legal and social emancipation of women, and you will be reading a chapter in the history of Free-thought. The emancipation of women in Europe has kept pace with the disintegration of Christian belief.

* * *

Delayed Inspiration

The Commission based its decision on a "revelation of God's will for the Church as manifested in the New Testament, and in the history of the Church up to the present time." But Dr. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, does not agree. He says that we "do not show our belief in the guidance of the Holy Spirit by clinging unduly to traditional ways, but rather by a courageous readiness to adapt the methods of the Church to changing circumstances." It is a pity that the "Holy Spirit" had not in the early Christian ages as advanced an idea of the functions of women as was shown by the best of the Pagan writers. But I think that the Dean gives his *Christian* case away very completely when he says that:—

The whole situation has been changed by the emancipation of women, which has been a tardy consequence of the working of Christian principles in civilization.

The italics are mine, and if the Dean had stopped with the words italicized he would have been expressing a sociological truth. The latter part of his statement is properly described by the expressive word "lunkum." What part of Christian influence was it that led to a changed view of the nature and functions of women? Why is it, if that emancipating influence was present in Christianity, that it manifested itself only when other and non-Christian causes had brought about a changed conception of the place of woman in social life? Above all, why is it that there was a marked deterioration in the legal and social position of woman *after* the Church had assumed

complete control? Was it because of the working of Christian principles that the early Christian writers showered the vilest abuse upon women in language that no other literature could equal? Was it because of the elevating influence of Christianity that women lost the place in public life they held in pagan times, or that leaders of Christian thought, such as Knox and Luther believed that women must be confined to the home, and that every care must be taken to check the activities of this embodiment of evil? And why is it that the opposition to the equality of women in the Church—the last stronghold of the inequality of the sexes—is based upon profound Christian conviction? What is the "Holy Spirit" thinking of, and what is its influence worth when it tells one thing to Dean Matthews and quite the opposite to the overwhelming majority of his brother parsons?

Dr. Matthews is quite right when he says that the whole situation has been changed by the emancipation of women. Of course. How can even a Christian priest hope that women will be content to be shut out of the priesthood when they have fought their way to liberty in so many other directions? It is, of course, part of the irony of things that woman, who has owed so much of her degradation in social life to the influence of Christianity, should be struggling for the right to serve in the Christian priesthood. But in this she is only showing herself as the true equal of men, and demonstrating that if she can, given equal opportunities, match man in wisdom, she can also equal him in folly. But it is the changed circumstances that tell with priests like Dr. Matthews. He sees that the Church cannot with safety much longer deny in practice the religious and social equality of the sexes, and, wise in his generation, finds the influence of the "Holy Spirit" now following the lines laid down by Freethinkers from Mary Wollstonecraft onward.

* * *

Religion and Woman

Dr. Matthews says there is no greater justification for discrimination against women than there would be for discriminating against Jews and men with red hair. I thoroughly agree with this; neither in utility, in justice, nor in common sense is there ground for such discrimination. But again I would point out to Dr. Matthews that the grounds for this discrimination did not begin in the social or ethical field. It began in the field of religion, and it was only as religious belief decayed that the attempt was made to perpetuate the discrimination against women on other than religious grounds. That phase, too, has almost run its course, and it is significant that once again it is religion that prevents women receiving justice at the hands of men. Christians do not argue that women are inferior—necessarily inferior—to men in intelligence, or in character. It is not because woman is inferior to man in intelligence that she is denied the pulpit by all save a very small minority of Christians. It would be too much for anyone to say that it is impossible for women to equal the intelligence of the existing Christian clergy—when their mediocrity has now become a by-word. Lord Hugh Cecil once said, when it was argued against women having the suffrage, that voting was a nice lady-like process, and I am quite sure that both in the decorative value of the pulpit millinery worn and in the quality of the sermons preached, there is nothing that would put women to an intolerably severe strain. The Christian objection is, it will be noted religious.

The story of the cause of the discrimination against woman has never, I think, been fully told, nor until the last sixty or seventy years was enough understood

of the reaction of primitive religious ideas on social life for anyone to offer the full explanation. I can only say now that the distinction drawn in primitive society between men and women is due simply to the fact that the sexual functions of women, with the bearing of children surrounds her with an aura of supernatural force which may work to the injury of man. She must be kept apart from man at stated periods, and after child-birth, it is necessary, because she is still charged with this supernatural influence, to keep her from contact with man until after "purification." It is common to find among primitive peoples that a woman must not touch the weapons of a warrior for fear she will rob his weapons of their power, or milk the cows at certain times because the milk will turn sour. There is a remnant of this in the New Testament where the woman is not allowed to touch Jesus after the resurrection, while this may be done freely by a man. So the Church followed by not permitting a woman to touch the Eucharist with the bare hands; and in prohibiting women the priesthood, it was only reverting to the more primitive forms of superstition.

Dr. Matthews is quite correct in saying that there is no reasonable justification for discriminating against women. But there is every religious reason for so doing; and it is only when we turn to religion that the origin of the discrimination becomes clear. Of course, in this case, as in so many others we have later ethical and social reasons advanced for preventing a woman being placed on an equality with man. But these reasons are in the nature of an after-thought, a rationalization advanced to justify a completely unjustifiable belief and practice. The "mysteries of sex" are responsible for the taboo on women. Religion gives it its sole authority. Later, with the advancement of Society and with the decline of the power of religious beliefs, other reasons are advanced, but these always find their strongest support in the field of religion. It is here as in so many other instances that religion is the enemy. And of all religions none has yet equalled Christianity in insistence on the inferiority of women. I congratulate Dean Matthews in claiming the equality of the sexes with regard to the priesthood. But he should not forget that he is one among a multitude, and that he owes to non-Christian persons and forces the inspiration for his action.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ASTROLOGY

Nothing has been more generally spread, and nothing for a longer time believed, than astrology; yet nothing can possibly rest upon a foundation more fragile or lead to results more egregiously false. It has put its seal on almost all the monuments of antiquity. Nothing has been wanting in its prediction but truth; and millions have believed in it—millions believe in it still. Cicero proves the reality of divination by a crowd of facts that he adduces in support of the oracles of Delphi, and above all, by the fact of universal belief; he adds that there never was a people without their oracles, augurs, and prophets, and who had not faith in the fates, dreams, etc. That is true; but what shall we conclude therefrom except that credulity is one of the most ancient of all human maladies—an inveterate epidemic, spread over all societies, and that the world, or rather the people who are its occupants, naturally divide into classes—the class of cheats who dupe, and the class of fools who are duped. We might equally prove the reality of ghosts by the antiquity and universality of the opinion that ghosts have been. We decline, then, to believe in the certainty of the science practised by the augurs.

C. F. Dupuis, "The Origin of all Worship."

Cycles of Cathay

"Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education."—*Mark Twain.*

"East is East, and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet."—*Kipling.*

CHINA is in the news to-day. Japan is consolidating her hold upon the former Chinese Empire, and, in London, an exhibition of Chinese art during the centuries has attracted connoisseurs from all parts of the civilized world. Both events are of outstanding importance: the one auguring the downfall of a very ancient nation, and the other showing the remains of a civilization almost without parallel in the history of mankind.

Chinese culture extends from the twilight of human history to our own time. Compared to it some modern growths appear but as the mushrooms of yesterday. Long before there was any such thing as the Christian Religion the embroidered silks and beautiful bric-à-brac of China were the last word in luxury to the Emperors of Ancient Rome, at the time when the Cæsars were the acknowledged masters of the Western World. Monarchs of later times, and the aristocrats of century after century, decorated their palaces with vases, enamels, lacquers, and embroideries, the work of great artists and craftsmen from mysterious, glamorous, far-away Cathay, so remote that it ever remained a fabled El Dorado, "half as old as time," and the wonder-land of the Ancient and Modern Worlds.

The galleries of the Royal Academy at Burlington House, Piccadilly, have never before shown such marvellous relics, contributed by museums and collectors of three continents, as these incomparable works-of-art of five thousand years of Chinese glory.

To a Christian, brought up in the belief that his own narrow creed is the beginning and end of human culture and wisdom, and that the non-Christian World was given over to "Chaos and old night," such an exhibition should be chastening. Even in the dark days of their apparent decline and fall from ancient state the Chinese people have achieved a great moral victory. So much so, that, to the real lover of things of immortal beauty, the huge figure of Gotama Buddha, in the central hall, appears to wear an inscrutable and slightly supercilious smile, as if he were showing the wealth of the Orient to a party of innocents abroad, and his auditors were unaware of his identity.

The suggestion is by no means so absurd as it sounds. England, for example, has been very cavalier in dealing with other races. Owing to religious prejudice, carefully inculcated by priests, the English often trampled on the things they could not understand. Even in Ireland, the Protestant Englishman regards the Romish Church as a heathenish superstition, and behaves accordingly. In the East and the Far-East he epitomized his charitable sentiments concerning Oriental faiths by regarding all non-Aryans as "damned niggers" and all Celestials as "heathen Chinese." Of late years, owing to the decay of priestly influence, he has altered his attitude a little, and tried to make some amends, but it is a slow process.

The treatment of the Chinese themselves is a case in point, and the activity of our missionaries, to the reflective mind, is one of the sorriest of jests. There are many circumstances which take that great country out of the category of ordinary mission fields. It is only from the purely narrow and priestly point of view that the Chinese can be regarded as barbarians. They have a civilization which was very

ancient while as yet our forefathers were painted savages. They have native religions of their own, and, rightly or wrongly, they have an antipathy from foreign, and especially Western ideas. It is we who, in their eyes, are the barbarians and in need of reform, and truth to tell, what with the quarrels and animosities of the many Christian sects who seek by devious means to make converts, and the gross divergence that so obviously exists between Christian precept and practice, the spectacle offered by half-educated missionaries cannot be a very edifying one, or one that actually heightens an Oriental appreciation of European civilization.

Left to herself, the Chinese would have none of us with our bayonets and our bibles. We happen, however, to be a stronger Power, so we actually force a measure of toleration for these meddling missionaries, which all classes of Chinese view with undisguised contempt. Perhaps we could better understand their attitude if the relative positions were reversed, that is to say, if the Chinese were able by battle-ships, aeroplanes, and machine-guns, to extort terms for their almond-eyed and olive-skinned missionaries to preach Buddhism, Confucianism, or Taoism, among ourselves. In some places, such as Abyssinia, the missionary may be a civilizing agency, that is to say, he introduces Western social habits. That character he does not possess in contact with the Chinese. He has nothing but the Christian Superstition to offer the people in a number of contradictory versions. Not only do they conflict with each other, but they one and all run counter to the most cherished and ingrained ideas of Chinese society. To the Chinaman the highest of all human virtues is filial piety, and in his eyes some of the most familiar texts of the Christian Bible must appear most shocking and most immoral. We ought really to look at these things from a Chinese point of view. It is not pleasant to think what fate might befall Chinese missionaries with their unfamiliar rites and doctrines if they were imposed by bayonets and batons upon the sturdy, but ignorant population of our own Black Country, or upon the impulsive, and more ignorant Roman Catholics of Ireland.

What it costs to convert a Chinaman in blood and treasure we do not know, but it is very certain that missionary societies expend upon a barren soil like China an amount of energy and money which might be used to far better purpose in remedying severe social shortcomings at home among poverty-stricken men and women, who, destitute of the dignified morality of Confucius, stand in quite as much need of reclamation as the Celestial race whom we pretend to pity, and actually persecute.

Some time ago, it was gravely calculated that the mission harvest, on the most favourable computation, amounted to the very modest figures of two Chinese converts, per missionary, per year, and that even so, the quality and reputation of the converts was open to most distressing suspicion. The renegade Chinaman has a confirmed habit of turning his spiritual studies to material account, and is even said to frequent medical-missions, and even to succeed in being converted in turn by all the missionaries, Church of England, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and other varieties, in return for pocket-money and rice. The unfortunate sequel to this most regrettable rule of conduct is that one wily hypocrite figures as half a dozen converts to Christianity, and a bad Chinaman is transformed into a worse Christian. It would be interesting to estimate how long it would take at this modest rate of progress to convert China to the Christian Religion, remembering that there are some five hundred millions of Chinese. The answer would be sufficiently amusing to broaden the super-

cilious smile on the face of the Buddha at the Burlington House Exhibition of Chinese Art.

How small, mean, and even contemptible such a creed as Christianity appears, after all, in comparison with a great Pagan religion such as Buddhism. Were Gotama Buddha to "revisit the glimpses of the moon," and see great nations, pretending to civilization, and yet believing in hell, devils, and eternal torture, he would wonder what blight had fallen upon the human intellect after the lapse of twenty-five centuries. Listen to the words of the wise Pagan himself, as rendered in English by Edwin Arnold in *The Light of Asia*.

"Pray not! The darkness will not brighten! Ask
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak!
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!
Ah! brothers, sisters! seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;
Each man his prison makes."

MIMNERMUS.

Mark Twain

"I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions. Every decent and well-spoken individual affects and sways me more than is right. I ought to go upright and vital and speak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass?"

IN any attempt to appraise Mark Twain, this sentence of Emerson, his fellow countryman and contemporary, can usefully be borne in mind. It has a highly appropriate significance. In Samuel L. Clemens we had one of Nature's children. He dodged school, and indeed all forms of discipline, and dodged them successfully. He thus escaped an education of sorts. Instead he became a pilot on the great Mississippi River; he joined the "boys" in gold-mining ventures, he was even (for a very brief time) a soldier, and in this way he obtained an education of value. He mixed with elemental beings and found there was much in them that he could love. When by his own unaided efforts he found himself an accepted writer, he met for the first time the spiritual, the literary, the cultured (decent and well-spoken individuals all), and they affected him more than they ought. For Mark was both good-natured and modest, and having the defects of these qualities, he capitulated. It was but another case of conflicting loyalties, and it was the reverse of a cheerful surrender—it irked him and it damaged his pride. This foot-soldier in the war of human liberation (the rating would have pleased and satisfied him) felt strongly that his proper job was the speaking of rude truth in all sorts of ways, and in his knapsack he had the finest outfit issued to a soldier for this kind of battle, a passion for justice and a hatred of shams. So that when it happened that he met malice and vanity wearing the coat of philanthropy his instinct was to let them pass only over his dead body. This was the quite uncommon spiritual equipment of "Mark Twain" of Missouri. It was Mark's tragedy, and no minor one, that his own peculiar genius was only permitted to smoulder when it should have been encouraged to blaze.

After a small but startlingly successful literary effort in humour, *The Jumping Frog*, Mark joined the *Quaker City* excursion and sailed for Europe, with the result that Europe and the rest of the world had *The Innocents Abroad*, an immediate and sensational success. As a result of this trip he also encountered Love, which encounter, considering that

he possessed social potentialities, can only be described as a success in parts. Mark was only a "rough neck," but, strangely enough, he had sufficient conventional gentility in him to be what is known in some quarters as the model husband. He lavished love and devotion upon his wife till the end of his days. We are willing to believe that he elicited some response in kind, for the one reason that there is no case of anyone who knew Mark Twain who did not love him. But the blessings of Love can only be obtained at a price and most people at this time of day will admit that the price paid was grossly excessive.

Mrs. Twain had no independent taste or judgment, and what was worse she had no suspicion of her husband's greatness. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks tells us in his book, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, that her one idea was to make Mark a social success and "If he had to get on he had to qualify. We cannot properly grasp the significance of Mark Twain's marriage unless we realize that he had been manoeuvred into the role of a candidate for gentility."

In order to make good in this sense, Mark had to repress the deepest instinct in him. Candidates for gentility must not give offence, thought Mrs. Clemens. So she edited everything he wrote and after a while her husband found resistance too wearing and gave up the struggle. "I would quit wearing socks if she thought them immoral."

Mr. Paine, his biographer, tells us that she would blue pencil his writings

for the offence they might give in one way or another, and her sole object, however unconscious, in doing this, was to further him not as an artist, but as a popular success.

A sample of her censorship efforts is illuminating Twain has left in his papers a few of her criticisms followed by his own comments:—

I think some other word would be better than *stench*. You have used that pretty often.

But can't I get it in anywhere? You have knocked it out every time. Out it goes again. And yet "stench" is a noble good word.

Page 1038. I hate to have your father pictured as lashing a slave boy.

It's out and my father is whitewashed.

Page 1050. Change "breach clout." It's a word that you love and I abominate. I would take that and offal out of the language.

You are steadily weakening the English tongue, Livy.

Once when in Rome he remarked casually that if the old masters had labelled their fruit, one wouldn't be so likely to mistake pears for turnips. "Youth," said Mrs. Clemens gravely, "if you do not care for these masterpieces yourself, you might at least consider the feelings of others."

She called Mark, "Youth"!

* * *

Mr. Mencken, the well-known critic, considers Mark a great artist, but he will know that none who attacks established institutions in an unequivocal way, is readily allowed to be that. Mark has been attacked as an amateur by scores of literary gentlemen who have not a fraction of his humour, virility and directness. They forget if they ever knew it that Mark would have been thoroughly content to remain for ever a simple journalist. Fine writing was not his *objective*, and, most probably, for that as an end in itself, he had the heartiest contempt. But circumstances had decreed that he should meet both the spiritually-minded and the literary gent in good time.

The *Quaker City* also brought him face to face with

Henry Ward Beecher, a celebrated "spiritual leader" in America. Mark had a singular disregard for money and a singular regard for his craft, phenomena noticeable occasionally in the unspiritual. When Beecher had left Twain he had taught Mark how to make a bargain with his publishers by which he was paid one fifth more than the most opulent publishing house in the kingdom had ever paid any author. Such was "the lesson in self-help received from this priest of the ideal," writes Mr. Brooks. Beecher, in short, in a few days elevated this unselfish simple creature to the level of supreme artists such as Charles Dickens.

Twain had no ambition, as we have seen, to be a literary man. He would have said precisely what H. G. Wells has said in similar positions. "You say my book is not a novel. Well then, call it what you like." But so anxious was Mark really to learn from those he respected that he was much too self-depreciatory.

Bret Harte trimmed and schooled me patiently until he changed me from an awkward utterer of coarse grotesqueness to a writer of paragraphs and chapters that have found a certain favour in the eyes of men, some of them the decenter people in the land.

And note his pleasure in receiving praise from his friend, W. D. Howells—a paragraph which beyond a doubt his wife would have immediately excised, given the opportunity.

When I read that review of yours I felt like the woman who was so glad her baby had come white.

Mr. Howells deserves a little more space. Mark was also inclined to sit at his feet. Did the literary expert prove any more helpful than the Divinity expert? The truth is that he seconded all Mrs. Clemens' efforts. It is recorded, for example, that when Twain put into the mouth of Huckleberry Finn (indicative of Huck's contempt for the attention paid to his hair at home), "They comb me all to Hell," Mr. Howells counselled Twain, "I would leave that out." In so doing Howells was, at best, the inferior artist, for as it was just exactly what Huck would have said, it was Howells and not Twain who was guilty of o'erstepping the modesty of nature. In "this darling of the Gods and all the Graces," wrote Mr. Brooks, "he encountered once more the eternal, universal, instinctive American subservience to the genteel tradition." Poor Twain! Let us hope for the sake of the fair name of literature, he was just unlucky in finding himself in, as Huxley termed it, "an atmosphere of supersensitive, hypocritical refinement more destructive to vigour and originality than are hardship and deprivation."

We must not part with Mr. Howells yet. It is necessary that one should read part of a letter that Mark wrote to his brother, Orion.

I laid before him [Howells] in 1878 the whole story that referred to the manuscript, [*Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*], and he said, "You have got it, sure, this time. But drop the idea of making mere magazine stuff of it. Don't waste it. Print it by itself, publish it first in England—and ask Dean Stanley to endorse it, which will draw some of the teeth of the religious press, and then reprint it in America."

"Ask Dean Stanley to endorse it!" Is this then the voice of Literature? "This divided soul sought the greater leader," explains Mr. Brooks, "who told him that you had to sneak off behind the barn if you wanted to smoke the pipe of truth."

"Neither Howells nor I believe in Hell or the Divinity of the Saviour," said Twain plaintively, "but no matter."

There is no evidence that Twain ever really forsook

one of his high allegiances. There is plenty of evidence that his fellow-man became to him much less pleasing, after his having perforce to wade through this slough of decorum. The "damned human race" lost most of its redeeming features. One can be tolerably certain that Twain found it impossible to placate his better self, and that in a way he felt he had committed a sin against the Holy Ghost.

England regarded Twain with some suspicion after the launching of the *Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*. Mark had said that in America there were three precious things: freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and the prudence never to practise either. In this matter England and America were alike as two peas. Such free and easy utterances about the Monarchy and the Church, with which this book was packed, became evidence of an immature and in-artistic mind. The indictment had to be sidetracked by accusing the author of slovenliness and numbers of anachronisms. But the *Yankee* (with its illustrations) caught the venerable institutions amidships and continues to this day to cause them inconvenience.

One glimpse of the old Mark came late in life. Mr. Rockefeller, Jr., asked him to speak before his Sunday School Class. Mark suggested as his topic an exposition of Joseph's Egyptian policy. The invitation failed to be confirmed.

Mark Twain was a good Freethinker. He paid Colonel Ingersoll the magnificent compliment that he was "All man from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot." He was by nature the enemy of the Christian Religion and the Churches. He had a belief in a supreme being, an abstraction of his own, but as this God had not only never "revealed" himself but interfered in no way with human life, it was a religion with neither fangs nor claws. Who can compute what the world has lost by his lively irreverent manly spirit being harnessed to the chariot of caution and gentility?

T. H. ELSTON.

Things Worth Knowing*

XVIII.

RUSSIA UNDER CHURCH AND CZAR.

SCARCITY of food, spiritual and material has for long ages been the condition of the Russian peasantry, and the direct outcome of corrosive action of two institutions which, cancer-like, absorb the life-giving juices and deaden the moral energies of the nation. These powerful solvents are Autocracy, which gnaws away the substance and sucks up the life-blood of its subjects, and Orthodoxy, which blots out the conscience and palsies the souls of its children. . . .

No number of square miles of fertile black loam soil, no vast regions flowing with milk and honey, could save from poverty and wretchedness a people thus led astray, blinded and brutalized till it has lost the faculty of distinguishing between evil and good, and can scarcely tell its right hand from its left. . . . It cannot excite our surprise, therefore, to learn that that worst of all known scourges, famine, which is a very rare visitant in modern civilized countries . . . is chronic in Russia.

. . . Famine in Russia is periodical like the snows,

* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

or rather it is perennial like the Siberian plague. . . . Not a year ever elapses in which extreme distress in some province or provinces of the Empire does not assume the dimensions of a famine, while rarely a decade passes away in which the local calamity does not ripen into the national calamity.

. . . Travelling some five or six years ago through a vast district affected by the famine of the *golodovoka* (little hunger, or local famine, as opposed to the *golod* or national famine) I found myself unexpectedly behind the scenes of the lowest theatre of human existence which it is possible to conceive. Multiplying by an enormous figure the sights to be seen in the lugubrious wards of a typhus hospital, and intensifying the horror they inspire by substituting hunger for disease, criminal neglect for inevitable fate, one may form some idea of a state of things which should have produced an outburst of resistance sufficient to sweep away the system that brought it forth. Kazan was then the centre of the famine-stricken district, and the country folk round about journeyed hundreds of miles on foot, dragging themselves feebly along in search of food and finding only graves. . . . In 1887-1888, when the abundance of the harvest generally seemed to partake of the nature of the miraculous, the distress in certain districts was to the full as intense and disastrous as at present. (1892). In many villages the people are absolutely destitute of food, run the accounts published at the time. . . . Last year there was another partial famine of considerable proportions, scarcely noticed by the foreign press, the progress of which was marked by the usual concomitants; merciful homicide, arson, suicide, dirt-bread, typhus and death.

. . . 1891 is a leap year in the annals of distress; the famine extends over a much larger area . . . the district affected extends from Odessa, on the shores of the Black Sea through little Russia, athwart the black loam country, famous for its fabulous fertility, straight through the region watered by the Volga, across the Urals, until it reaches Tobolsk; in other words, it covers a tract of land 3,000 miles long and from 500 to 1,000 miles broad, which supports a population of forty millions.

. . . Having sold all they possess, and petitioned and prayed in vain (the peasants) nailed up their huts and took to roaming about the country in bands, seeking food or work and finding none. . . . In one district of Smolensk over 37,000 hungry helots cut their moorings; 50,000 more in another district made ready to set out for China, which they fancifully pictured to themselves as a paradise. . . . Most of these wandering advertisements of squalor were suffering from dysentery, scurvy, and other more horrible diseases, some of which had never been witnessed before. Their eyelids were swollen to monstrous dimensions; their faces pinched and withered, and their whole persons shrivelled from the likeness of aught human into horrible ghosts and shadows.

In November (1891) the local governments of Vyatka, Tula, Kerson, and Tavrida, which it was hoped would prove self-supporting, were added to the list of famine-stricken provinces, and the number of actually destitute was calculated at thirty millions of men, women and children.

The sufferings of these creatures . . . were horrible in the extreme. The first pinch of hunger was felt in July. . . . Then came the period of hunger-bread, one of the most horrible forms of torture to which fathers and mothers of families could be subjected. To the rye-flour were added bran, powdered bark, pulp, ground acorns, goosefoot and various plants, weeds and refuse. . . . Many families eat nothing for forty-eight hours at a stretch, and then break their fast, some eating the leaves of young birches,

others rib grass. Hunger-typhus, hunger pure and simple, poisoning, suicide and murder, committed in pure pity for children and wives, marked the famine. . . . Six men fell ill one day and were found to have been poisoned by the stuff they called bread. . . . A horse to whom a little of it was given sickened, and two hens who swallowed some died almost immediately. . . .

The condition of the children would bring tears to the eyes of the most phlegmatic. Thousands of them were encamped near Ufa, in November, clothed in rags, sleeping in the open-air, exposed to the snow and cold, without a roof over their heads, or a warm coat to their backs. A poor woman in the Government of Voronesh went about begging alms six days after she had given birth to a child. The child was in her arms. In a few hours it was dead and she herself had the greatest difficulty in getting back to her cheerless hovel, where she lay down on the earthen floor and gave up the ghost. . . . And while these tragedies were being enacted the Government was publishing accounts of the flourishing state of its finances, and boasting of the vast sums in gold that were lying unproductive in the coffers of the Treasury. . . .

For anything equal to this horrid entanglement of cruelty, cynicism, immorality and suffering which has been brought into such strong relief by the famine of 1891, it would be necessary to hark back to the history of the Spartans and their helots, or to the annals of the Egyptians and their Hebrews in the days of the new king that knew not Joseph. Certainly since Christianity was first preached, nothing to match it has been seen on earth. Myriads of human beings work like machines in order to raise 900 millions of roubles, which they forthwith pay into the Imperial Treasury, returning penniless to their families, to undergo the pangs of hunger, and possibly the pains of death. . . . The merchants and nobles who live on their labours lacerate the backs of the suffering and strip the bodies of the dying of the rags that scarcely cover their nakedness; the Government throttles the writhing wretches, exclaiming, "Die if you will, but pay me my pound of flesh." . . . The Church stretches forth her hand to curse and ruin hundreds of thousands of the most thriving farmers in the land, because they will insist on reading the Sermon on the Mount; soldiers shoot down their brothers who rise to protest; the police flog to death desperate wretches who steal a few bushels of the corn they have raised; special churchyards are set apart for, and speedily filled with the bodies of those whom want and hunger and misery have cut down; the prayers of the women and the moans of helpless children who have filled their little stomachs with clay and rags, pierce the ears and wring the hearts of the most callous, and combine to make up a picture, the like of which was never seen since peace on earth, to men good will, was announced two thousand years ago.

Russian Characteristics (1892), by E. J. DILLON (Professor of Comparative Philology in the University of Kharkoff, Private Adviser to Count Witte, 1903-1914, Russian Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, 1886-1914), pp. 557-604.

I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, it is all barren.—*Sterne*.

The conclusion forced on us is that the pursuit of individual happiness within those limits prescribed by social conditions is the first requisite to the attainment of the greatest general happiness.—*Herbert Spencer*.

Acid Drops

At Ipswich County Court a boy of eighteen, who appeared as a witness, was about to be sworn when the Judge asked him whether he had ever heard of Almighty God. To this the reply was, No. Then he was asked various other questions on the same line, and the Judge said that he could not allow him to swear as he did not seem to have any knowledge of God. In the circumstances the Judge was quite entitled to refuse the oath, and the boy appears to have been so extremely ignorant as not to know the meaning of ordinary language. He was evidently unfit to be a witness. But the Judge summed up the case thus:—

A person of eighteen comes into the box and is supposed to have been to school, and cannot take the oath because he cannot pronounce the name of Almighty God and cannot tell me who Almighty God is.

That seems rather hard ruling. If a witness is to tell who Almighty God is, or what he is, or what he does, or why the devil he does, it looks as though he is imposing a task on witnesses when they come before him that would puzzle some really acute minds. It looks as though the Judge might have put the matter with a little greater skill. We should like, as a great favour, the Judge to tell us exactly who and what God is. We have been trying to find out for a long while.

Religion dies very hard in some places, and Portree, Isle of Skye, may boast of having Christianity pure and undefiled. An Elder of the Kirk was there charged with helping to gather sheep on Saturday knowing they would be moved on Sunday. He further allowed his wife to attend a bazaar, and also that while acting as a road censor, although he refused to work on Sunday he accepted payment for the full week. God only knows what the Kirk would have done to him had he lived in earlier times, but in this instance the punishment was refusal to baptize his baby. Why the Church should select the baby for punishment, may be explained on the ground that it could do nothing serious to the parent.

But the meanness of it is significant of how ordinary decency of feeling goes where strong Christian belief exists. For, presumably, the child if it died unbaptized would go to hell, and the Kirk did not mind so punishing an innocent baby if it could not reach the parents in any other way. In the end the Elder was able to prove his innocence, the baby was duly baptized, and was saved—unless we regard its being made a member of such a church and being brought up under its influence as being as surely damned as anyone could be. Christianity is a lovely creed when it is secure from the influence of civilized common sense.

At a Missionary meeting, held in Huntingdon, the Bishop of Ely said that when the Japanese found any of their sons attracted to Christianity they sent them to England to cure them of their illusion. The Bishop said this was a terrible thing. From the Bishop's point of view, certainly, but we judge that it would be a very effective method. Christians have been for so long singing their own praises, that few of them realize what their religion looks like at close quarters. To the enlightened it is just a rehash of primitive superstitions, disguised in a thick coating of egotism and humbug.

The Archdeacon of York, in a recent sermon, said that the affairs of the League of Nations have shown that for the future peace of the world everything depends upon an unselfish spirit dominating the nations that are members of it. And where, he asks, can the world look but to the religion of Christ for the power that will give birth to the new spirit? The Archdeacon has evidently forgotten that both Abyssinia and Italy are Christian nations. We have not heard of any Freethought in Abyssinia and in Italy it is not permitted to exist. Most of the nations that form the League are Christian, and

all they have demonstrated is their unwillingness to trust each or to place the least reliance on each other's professions. For well over a thousand years these nations have been professing Christianity, and not only have they shown the world, that the only law they will obey is that of force, but each of them demands large armaments for the purpose of protecting itself against—the other Christians. Up to date Christianity has never stopped a single war, it has never made a war less blood-thirsty, and it has never prevented the priests of the Christian faith praying to God to help in slaughtering the enemy, and returning thanks to God when he has, presumably, helped them in the work of holy massacre. If we must have war, cannot we have it without this solemn humbug?

The Christian Evidence Society announces that during the past year it has delivered 1,379 open-air lectures in greater London alone. It also reports that in Hyde Park there are sometimes 2,000 people gathered round its platform. But all this energy might be dispensed with if the Lord would only take the matter in hand and miraculously bring conviction into the mind of every unbeliever. Generally from our experience of Christian Evidence-mongers, we should imagine that with thoughtful believers they are apt to create many more doubts than ever they are able to remove.

A writer in one of the religious papers thinks "it would be an enormous gain to the clergy if more of them had a thorough grounding in the literature of Greece and Rome and in the masters of philosophic thought." Most clergymen do have some kind of tuition in these directions, but, as usual, instruction given with a view to the student following a clerical career is not usually very helpful. Their reading is selected, their outlook is carefully limited and the result is usually the creation of an atmosphere of learning which can be better described as educated ignorance. Once upon a time there did exist among the clergy many who carried with their theology a certain distinction in philosophy and literature. But that was a long time ago, before modern life and knowledge had so robbed the Church of men of first-rate ability and left it thankful to get anything it could.

What we should like to see is a clergy well trained in religion. Our experience is that with rare exceptions the clergy are the most hopelessly ignorant on questions of the origin and meaning of religious beliefs and customs of all educated people. The average parson will discuss religion just as though we were living in 1735 instead of a couple of centuries later. For all the information a congregation gets from the parson the whole science of comparative religion and anthropology might have no existence. And when it comes to the application of modern psychology to religious beliefs the lacunæ are still more startling. If anyone doubts what has been said, we suggest they question any clergyman they know on any of these aspects of modern thought and see what kind of information they get. Ingersoll said that universities polish pebbles and dim diamonds. But a theological training does not even polish the pebbles—it merely gives dullness a coating of theological varnish which prevents the air of common sense making an entry. And as for dimming diamonds—well there are so few diamonds come the way of the churches nowadays that one need not bother about them. They may be classified among the freaks.

The same writer thinks that the failure of the modern clergy is due to their not teaching the "great doctrines of the faith." That, most decidedly is not the case. The most popular clergymen, those who draw the largest congregations, are those who say least about the "faith" and dispense amiable generalities concerning non-religious matters. The one certain thing is that if the clergy preached the "faith" and nothing but the "faith" they would soon be preaching to empty churches, or to Churches filled with a type of believer that would serve still further to discredit Christian

orthodoxy in the eyes of educated people. The clergy are to-day between the devil and the deep sea—between the devil of primitive religious beliefs and the deep sea of modern thought. The only game they can play is the one they are playing—that of preaching social generalities that may mean anything or nothing, and presenting them as that monstrous hybrid, “True Christianity.”

An Irish centenarian attributes his long life to prayer and belief in God. We do not think that anyone ought to saddle God with responsibility for his having lived so long. At least the opinion of the said centenarian's neighbours ought to be taken before thanks returned to God for producing another centenarian.

Mr. Arnold Lunn, a recent convert to Roman Catholicism, told an audience of Catholics that “almost any Roman Catholic is more than a match in controversy for any non-Catholic.” Mr. Lunn's modesty is overwhelming, since one can easily read the moral of his deliverance. And we have no doubt that “almost any Roman Catholic” of the Belloc, Chesterton, or Lunn type could easily overcome an opponent—if the verdict depended upon a Roman Catholic jury. Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton take great care never to engage in controversy under fair conditions, and Mr. Lunn's performances speak for themselves. They are the products of a mind incapable either of wisely stating his own case or with a capacity of understanding the case of his opponent. “God help” either of these three gentlemen if ever they do meet a capable opponent.

Human nature is pretty much alike the world over, and consequently the art of advertising does not differ much in its essentials. It was thus interesting to note that the advertising used here with regard to the Royal Family, is now being used in Russia with regard to Stalin. We noted, the other day, some reprints from Russian papers dealing with anecdotes of the Russian leader. In quite the orthodox style it told of his kindly notice of a young girl and his offer to pay her fare home to avoid her walking. And as is the case with a real King, he found he had no money and borrowed it of someone near him. Patting children on the head followed as a matter of course. These stories are so identical that one almost wonders whether there is a kind of handbook for the use of those who have to see that the heads of States gets the proper kind and quantity of publicity.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc says that the assumed site of Gethsemane is the most sacred spot on the face of the earth. Put in that way it sounds like a statement of an indisputable fact. But put it in another way and note the result. Gethsemane is the most sacred spot on earth to those who believe it is. But there are places on earth that are of all spots most sacred to Jews, Buddhists, Brahmans, and Mohammedans. By this plan we reduce the frothy statement of Mr. Belloc to its proper proportions. A certain place is sacred to all those to whom it is sacred. That hardly seems of sufficient rarity or importance to write about.

The Lord's Day Rest Association is “most gratified” to record that 482 Members of the present Parliament are pledged “against the Sunday opening of theatres and music-halls.” It is a proud boast—on the part of this fanatical society. But we know also that few of this enormous number of politicians “boasted” of this pledge to their constituents. They were sufficiently ashamed of it to leave out all reference to it in their election addresses and speeches and at Party Meetings. Only hypocrisy is capable of this disgusting differentiation between Movies and Theatres, and only religious humbug would use a political advantage to promote the narrowest of sectarian aims.

Five pounds for a sermon! Messrs. Paul & Matthew advertise that they will give this sum to anyone who can supply them with a copy of (or a reference to where it is

printed) a sermon by Sir Walter Scott. In the earliest edition of one of Scott's novels occurs a brief quotation from “one of my sermons.” Judging by internal evidence, Sir Walter did well to suppress the sermon itself. He wisely preferred his own stories to having to bolster up the fictions of inferior writers.

If Voltaire had only met John Wesley during Voltaire's visit to England, says the Rev. F. C. Spurr, “the course of European history might have been very different.” “Both were once sweet and attractive children,” says Mr. Spurr, but how different in old age! Mr. Spurr is down on “the sardonic grinning features of the statue of Voltaire,” which he contrasts with the Sunday-school benevolence of Wesley's photographs. Well, we grant there is a difference. Wesley's benevolence was consistent with a belief in the most cruel of all doctrines, the belief that an eternity of fire and torture awaited the majority of the human race. He also agreed with the persecution of witches. Mr. Spurr is indiscreet to mention in this connexion “the greatest orator of his time, George Whitefield,” the friend and co-worker with Wesley. We have exposed this man's slave-owning, in the *Freethinker*. If Voltaire had ever met these two, he might have been even more sardonic in consequence.

We are glad that our pious contemporaries do not always agree. The *Methodist Recorder* occupies two columns of small print to denounce Irish Sweepstakes and English Football Pools. It describes this miserable country of ours as being “flooded with coupons,” and calls the pools “alarming” and a “menace.” Similarly, the *Catholic Herald*, describing the effect of the Hospital Sweepstake as “demoralizing and disorderly,” declares that “the Irish Free State has become a sordid gambling den.” The *British Weekly*, with much more sense, complains that while it receives “many letters about gambling,” it receives “only a meagre postbag on slum-clearance and the education of children,” to say nothing of the “far more serious increasing danger of the roads.”

Whether Christians praise or slander Atheists, they do them an injustice. We noted at the time of Mr. J. M. Robertson's death, the ridiculous descriptions of his Atheist philosophy. To read the newspaper reports Robertson might have been a pious theist who at times lectured on the subject of religion. The latest illustration of the reluctance to credit Atheists with Atheism is to be found in Mr. Archibald Haddon's book *The Story of the Music Hall*. It was necessary to mention that Charles Bradlaugh was the principal speaker at a Peace Demonstration in Hyde Park, where the war-mongering rowdies interrupted him by singing Macdermott's song (which originated the word “jingoism” thenceforth applied to our imperialistic flag-waving war worshippers). This is the only description of one of the most courageous men of his age: “The Pacifist Bradlaugh” . . . Bradlaugh was an undoubted hater of war, but if a pacifist means a “Christian non-resister” of evil, Bradlaugh was neither. He loved liberty too much to submit to tyranny, whether of the mind or of the body.

We have often wondered at the relative success of Jewish enterprise in the Zionist experiment in Palestine. We confess the *Christian World's* explanation would not have been our own guess. We could have suggested some explanations connected with financial help supplied from many sources added to the hard work of a very capable race. No, we are wrong. Here is a *Christian World's* solution to the mystery: “the success of the Jews in that country is due, in no small measure, to their strict observance of the Sabbath Day.” . . . “The Jew is being rewarded in no unmistakable way for honouring the Sabbath Day. It is a lesson to the Christian nations.” As the Jews regard Saturday as their Sabbath, we shall expect to see our “Depressed Areas” beginning a trial run of Saturday Closing. Unfortunately in many of our Christian areas a great many shops have had to close seven days every week for some time past.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. CLAYSON.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader, paper being sent for four weeks.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—We do not think that what you suggest is likely to take place. The Dean, while not a philosopher, is not such a fool as to risk an encounter at close quarters.

W.M.—We agree. The taking of young and ignorant women and dooming them to the unnatural and unhealthy life of a Nun is an offence against all that is best in human nature.

R. PAYNE.—The Bishop of London's likening of the biblical miracles to the discoveries of modern science is all part of the innate stupidity of the man. And the endorsement of his characteristic nonsense by the writer of the *Daily Telegraph* letter proves that his kind of foolishness finds an echo in the minds of many others.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A.W., 108.

J. HUMPHRIES.—Belief and unbelief are two sides of the same thing. To say "I believe" so and so, implies a disbelief of its opposite. Doubt implies uncertainty, and has no relation to belief. Faith signifies confidence or trust in someone or something. All knowledge is concerned with facts, but the point you overlook is that an illusion is also a fact. It is a question of different classes of facts. We hope that this will make the matter clear.

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

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

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

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

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

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 offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Sugar Plums

Two items of seasonable importance are the New Year Greeting Cards issued by the Executive of the N.S.S., which may be obtained from the Pioneer Press, or offices of the N.S.S., at 2d. each, or in packets of seven for one shilling, post free, and the Annual Dinner which will be held in the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday evening, January 25 next. Tickets are now ready and the cost is 8s. each. Freethinkers wishing to give presents to friends might consider a ticket for the Annual Dinner. There are few who would not appreciate such an invitation.

The case for birth-control, or perhaps one ought to say, for Neo-Malthusianism, is well put by Dr. Frank H. White in *Birth-Control* and its Opponents, with a fore-

word by Lord Horder, M.D. (Bale Sons and Danielson, 3s. 6d.). Mainly the book deals with population and its relations to war, disease, poverty, and economics, and argues that it is mainly for economic reasons that makes birth-control a vital factor in promoting the happiness of mankind. There is a good outline of the work of the pioneers of this movement, and it is noticeable that these were nearly all Freethinkers—Francis Place, John Stuart Mill, Richard Carlile, Bradlaugh, Besant, etc. Compared with to-day these men and women had to face an amount of prejudice and misrepresentation that is unknown to the present advocates of Birth-Control. It was the desire to avoid the hostility faced and to some degree, broken down by the pioneers that largely induced the change from Malthusianism to "Birth-Control." But the main principle that civilized man should seek to control the growth of population, as he has learned to control so many other natural forces and processes, cannot now be confuted, and is in some form or other generally admitted. Mr. White's book is well documented, and the closing passage, from Justice McCardie—"In my view those who now oppose so strongly the spread of birth-control knowledge among the miserable and distressed, are hostile to social progress and enemies to the true interests of the poor," is one with which all enlightened men and women will agree.

Comment, a weekly journal, edited by Sheila MacCleod and Victor B. Neuburg, makes its first issue, dated December 7. It begins, and we think is likely to continue as an independent organ of opinion in art, literature and current events. The first issue is very promising, and we wish it a long—it is almost certain to an honourable—career. We see that the "Poet's Corner," which under Mr. Neuburg's direction was such a successful feature of the *Sunday Referee*, now appears in *Comment*. The price of the paper is 3d. It can be obtained of all newsagents.

The Blackburn Branch N.S.S. continues to do good work, and during the winter, Sunday evening lectures are to be held in the Cobden Hall, Cort Street. Such meetings should be the rallying centre for the local saints, and the Branch deserves all the support it can get. The local Secretary, Mr. J. Sharples, 51 Logwood Street, Blackburn, would be pleased to receive applications for membership, offers of help, or other details likely to assist in the further development of Branch activity.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture for the Leicester Secular Society in their hall at Humberstone Gate to-day (December 15) at 6.30 p.m., and will deal with a number of topical questions from a Freethought point of view. Mr. Rosetti has nothing but pleasant recollections of the local Secular Society, and is looking forward to again meeting many friends there.

Mr. Jack Clayton speaks on behalf of the Manchester Branch to-day (Sunday) at 3.0, on "Freethought or Dictatorship," and at 7.0 p.m., on "The Uselessness of God," in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester. Admission will be free, but there will be a number of reserved seats at 3d. 6d. and 1s. Friends from a distance and those who do not wish to hurry home at the conclusion of the afternoon lecture can obtain tea in the Cafe adjoining the Picture House.

That was a fine collection of sovereigns that first Nevada legislature. They levied taxes to the amount of thirty dollars and ordered expenditures to the extent of about a million. Yet they had their little periodical explosions of economy like all other bodies of the kind. A member proposed to save three dollars a day to the nation by dispensing with the Chaplain. And yet that short-sighted man needed the chaplain more than any other member perhaps, for he generally sat with his feet on his desk eating raw turnips during the morning prayer.—*Mark Twain*.

A Note on the Myth Theory of Jesus

ONE of my friends, who was present at the recent debate I held with Mr. H. G. Wood, wants me to deal with a point which, he says, seems not to have been met by the mythologists. He says that we believe that:—

Christianity has its origin in Myth, and it probably originally bore a resemblance to the mystery religions. It did not arise new during the first century. It has its roots far back in the past. But if so, how does it come about that the existence of Jesus has become so definitely dated? Not perhaps exactly, but all documents are quite clear that he was executed during the time of Pilate, and so in the reign of Tiberius. . . . Why did Christians suddenly date their hero in that manner? There was no need to do so, if, as Robertson and others seem to think the religion existed a long time before.

Now, it may at once be said that, perhaps, one reason why this point has not been met by Robertson and others who believe that Christ is a myth, is that they all consider it very unimportant. It is quite true that they are certain that the roots of Christianity can be traced back many years if not many centuries. But it is extremely difficult, at this time of the day, to say why some obscure sect of believers in something should become all-powerful, why their particular beliefs should gain ascendancy over all others. We do know now that the struggle between Mithra and Christ was far more intense than Christian historians lead us to believe; and it may well have been Mithraism which conquered.

Had that been so, and had those responsible for its propagation written gospels giving a life of their hero, it is quite possible that they would have placed him in some period which could be dated. The origin of most of the other gods—Attis, Adonis, Osiris, Venus, and the rest—is, of course, quite unknown. But that may be because there are no early documents containing the account in which their early disciples gave their origin. If any such documents existed or could be found, it might be that we should discover that even these gods were given a definite time and place as origin.

Jesus is the last of the saviour gods. Whether he was worshipped before our era, or whether some god known as Joshua (=Jesus) was worshipped in some mystery religion, and who later was identified with the Jesus supposed to be living in the reign of Tiberius, is certainly conjecture though many facts may go far to prove it. But the Jesus of the New Testament is not a man at all. He is a god. And if there ever has been a man, or as my correspondent puts it, "a real Jesus, who lived at the time stated, and whose career ended in the tragic manner recorded," the question is, what do we know about him? Anything whatever?

The truth is that, as soon as we start a discussion on Jesus, those who believe in his existence give up his deity almost at once. They are anxious to prove that there *must* have been a man. But that is rarely where they wish to stop. What they want is, first a man; then an extraordinary man; then, perhaps, a divine man; and lastly, if a divine man, why not a god?

Those who will not have a god insist upon a man but a man crucified. They will not give up "the career ended in the tragic manner recorded." One can bring up a thousand facts to show that it was im-

possible for any one to end his career as recorded in the gospels; but they carry no weight. Not Christ crucified, but a man crucified, is what they want. Yet there is not a scrap of proof that such a tragic ending to a career ever took place, except in the realm of faith.

If the gospels are, as the mythologists believe, accretions to some original documents containing a few moral sayings taken from Jewish and Pagan writings; becoming, in the form we have them, the final redaction of various editors who tried to vie with each other in writing a "life" of their hero, more or less based on the lives of other deities; it is not at all surprising that they should have placed him as living fifty or one hundred years previously in a definite reign. Jesus is a mixture of Paganism and Judaism and, when the gospels were finally being compiled, Jerusalem had been almost completely destroyed. It was rather a cute idea to make the Jewish capital and the surrounding country the scene of his "ministry," in a definite time, which few of the faithful followers of the then more or less obscure sect could test. The fact that the Jewish historian Josephus knew nothing about the remarkable "ministry" was at first rather disconcerting; but was got over by the worthy Eusebius inserting the passages necessary to prove the faithfulness of the gospel history. It was all a question of "humanizing" a myth; and placing the myth in the reign of Tiberius gave an air of reality and candour to it which the vague beginnings of the Pagan deities did not possess.

Supposing that the name of the author of the *Pickwick Papers* had perished, and in a thousand or two thousand years time, a discussion arose as to the actual reality of Mr. Samuel Pickwick. Those who believed in his existence could certainly make out a good case. Pictures of the hotels he stayed in during his "ministry"—or wanderings—could be had. The actual rooms where he slept were known. Pilgrimages of "disciples" to his "shrines" were known to have commenced very early after the story of his life appeared. Even "apocryphal" lives were compiled—like *Pickwick Abroad*, or the *Penny Pickwick*. Moreover, plays analogous to the Mystery Plays of Jesus were constantly performed in which Mr. Pickwick and his faithful disciple Sam Weller were the principal characters. Well, supposing someone who believed Mr. Pickwick actually lived, asked someone who did not—with an air of triumph, of course—"But how do you account for the fact that Mr. Pickwick was given a definite time, well known, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by those who are supposed to have invented him?" What, I ask my correspondent, ought to be the reply?

I, personally, in denying the history of Jesus Christ, am not in the least concerned with any identification of some obscure personage about whom nothing whatever is known. If this gentleman lived what did he do or say? It was not such a Jesus that moved (and still moves) the world to adopt him as its Lord and Saviour. It was the God Jesus, the Virgin-born Jesus Christ, the worker of miracles and wonders, the God who, like so many other gods, was put to death and rose again, and flew up to heaven, who became the supreme deity in that ancient world of frightened and credulous believers. We surely have outgrown such myths. Until we do, it seems hopeless to expect real progress.

H. CUTNER.

*Tis remarkable that they talk most who have the least to say.—*Prior*.

Fleet Street's Fight for Freedom

NEWS-DOCUMENTS in some form or other were in circulation both in early China and ancient Rome. Probably both in Babylonia and Egypt kindred methods of communication were in use. In England the control of the printed page passed from the Church to the Crown in the reign of Henry VIII., when that masterful monarch assumed the temporal lordship of the spiritual order. The Company of Stationers, acting as agents of the Government, assumed control of both printing and publishing, subject to the consent of the Star Chamber. This severe censorship of the Press was maintained throughout the Tudor and Stuart ascendancy, and was strictly enforced by the Long Parliament despite John Milton's eloquent appeal for liberty in his *Areopagitica*, and was reinforced more drastically still at the Stuart Restoration. For a time, the Revolution of 1688 failed to check its insidious influence when at last, in 1695, Parliament removed it from the list of temporary measures. In theory at least, the official censorship of the Press then came to an end in England. Yet, although few official restrictions on the liberty of publication survive, authors and publishers alike may be prosecuted under the laws of sedition or libel for any expression of opinion which the authorities deem criminal or injurious.

In rudimentary form the periodical Press, dates to the days of Daniel Defoe and even earlier. But it was during the eighteenth century that the power of the printed word grew with rapidity. Still, it was in the succeeding century that daily, weekly and quarterly publications exercised their most far-reaching influence on public opinion.

In the decade preceding the Reform Act of 1832, popular belief in the power of Parliament to establish an earthly paradise was simple and sincere. Yet, after the Reform the customary trials and tribulations of life continued, and keen indeed was the disappointment of the masses. Nevertheless popular faith in the efficacy of Parliamentary institutions remained largely unshaken. Radical and Chartist agitation in the middle century culminated in the Reform Act of 1867, which moderate reformers regarded as the crowning triumph of democracy. Then later, in 1884, the agricultural labourer was enfranchised, while women, after a long and embittered conflict, were granted the right to vote at Parliamentary elections with the conclusion of the War, when what is really universal suffrage became the law of the land.

All reformers hailed popular education as essential to liberty and enlightenment. Cheap books, newspapers, pamphlets and periodicals must therefore be made available. With the demand for literary sustenance a supply was soon forthcoming. The most eminent men of letters participated in the movement, and so potent became the pen that powerful politicians such as Palmerston were suspected of inspiring, if not subsidising, what were ostensibly free organs of public expression.

Among the high-class Reviews, the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly* and the Radical *Westminster* exerted an influence on the public mind which seems very remarkable to-day. This influence did not escape the eye of the authorities. Direct censorship terminated in 1695, but an indirect control persisted by means of advertisement, stamp and paper duties. But, as official fear of the aftermath of the French Revolution died away, the Press grew less dependent. Restrictions became less exasperating while a few advanced organs had already ignored or even flouted the law.

In his fine essay, *The Press, in Early Victorian*

England, Vol. II., Oxford, 1934, Mr. E. Kellett cites a passage from the *Examiner* of 1831, in which Fonblanque asserted that: "By imposing taxes on newspapers . . . a contraband trade has been called into existence, and cheap illicit spirit, ten times above proof, had been hawked among the working classes. The cheap publications, of whose inflammatory tendency so much is made, are the offspring of the stamp duties."

Chartists and Freethinkers boldly defied the Crown despite the heavy fines imposed, and the long terms of imprisonment endured. Carlile, Watson, Heywood and others, all went to gaol, and yet their work went on. Hetherington was one of the bravest of the brave, and when in 1831 he published the *Poor Man's Guardian*, minus the official stamp, with eight pages of excellent reading matter for a penny, he informed his readers that: "This is a weekly newspaper for the people, established contrary to law to try the power of Right against Might. Defiance is our only remedy." Of course, Hetherington was thrown into prison while, as Mr. Kellett notes, "800 vendors of his papers were prosecuted and 500 punished, but he went on. What added to the fury of the masses was the partiality of the Law. In trying a man for selling Hetherington's paper, the judge asked 'Why not sell the *Penny Magazine* or the *National Omnibus*, which contains none of the inflammatory trash of the *Poor Man's Guardian*?'"

Still, several organs disregarded the Government stamp and yet escaped prosecution. Only those publications inimical to the authorities were penalized. Unavailing efforts were made in the Commons to repeal all taxes on knowledge. In 1836, however, the Government compromised the matter by lowering the stamp duty from fourpence to a penny, but to compensate for this concession, the law was more strictly enforced. The change brought annoyance in place of appeasement, and the campaign for total repeal was resumed.

The duties exacted by the Inland Revenue Authorities from advertisements in public prints were fiercely resented. Their interpretation of the Law may be gathered from the circumstance that: "A favourable review was treated as an advertisement, especially if it mentioned the price of the book, nor was the proprietor of the paper entirely satisfied when, in 1833, the review cost him but eighteenpence instead of three and sixpence. The temptation to bid his band of critics 'slate' the book must have been strong, and was apparently not always resisted."

The Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge was steadfastly determined to compel the Crown to surrender. With an able President in Milner Gibson, and a fighting treasurer in the famous Freethinking Radical tailor of Charing Cross, Francis Place, the Association actually constrained Lord John Russell in 1851 to appoint a select committee and, moreover, "performed the miracle of making Parliament attend to the committee's suggestions." The battle was as good as won when, on the very anniversary of Magna Charta, June 15, 1855, the detested duties were repealed by Parliament. Even so, the obnoxious paper duties remained and these lingered till 1861, when Gladstone swept them away.

Despite all the onerous restrictions maintained by the Government, a more or less independent Press had steadily increased in power and this occasioned the bureaucrats grave anxiety. Also, the publications that appealed to the cultured classes were fully conscious of their potency.

It is certainly suggestive that, when the Whig Ministry fell in 1834, and Wellington was seeking support when engaged in consolidating his scratch Cabinet, he was very bluntly informed of the terms

to which he must submit in order to obtain the assistance of the *Times*, then edited by the celebrated Barnes.

There can be no question that Carlile who spent more than nine years in gaol in his gallant fight for the freedom of the Press did more than any other man of his generation in furtherance of the cause. Bradlaugh's struggle again, was of priceless importance. His establishment of the right to criticize religious and social injustice involved him in costly litigation which kept him ever in debt. His prosecution in 1868 for failure to give securities against the appearance of "blasphemy and sedition" in the columns of the *National Reformer* led, in the long run, to a notable Freethought triumph, as restrictions imposed on the democratic Press by the security laws were withdrawn by the Government of the day.

Mr. Kellett does not mention Bradlaugh, and says little of Carlile, although he does full justice to Hetherington. The following important passage in his essay, however, merits remembrance. In modern language, he writes, "there was no newspaper at all till the passing of Fox's Libel Act in 1792, which put the decision as to the character of a publication in the hands of juries. The judges struggled long to retain their old power, and it took some time before editors discovered the change in their position. It may be said with little exaggeration, that they did not fully realize it till the thirties; and as a result the years between 1830 and 1860 showed a greater advance than the whole previous century."

T. F. PALMER.

A Devout Anglican and Another

WHEN Charles Bradlaugh was seventeen years old he had his first experience of the Christian Persecutor in action. During the forty years from then till his death he had to maintain an endless warfare against the slanderers. Even at his death they were at it: it continues to this day.

In any field of controversy mis-representation of the opposing side seems to become the normal activity. It is many times quite unconsciously done, but in far too many cases is done intentionally, of malice aforethought. In the field of religious controversy this lying is at its best. Most of it is invented for, and retailed to the True Believer, the most ignorant kind of Christian, and not all of them laymen. Clergymen are experts at believing each other's lying inventions and going one better, if possible.

Examples of both kinds of misrepresentation turn up in all sorts of unexpected places. I have recently read two very different books. The first was by Viscount Gladstone to repel some untrue statements about his father, W. E. Gladstone. These were contained in various books of biography, including Queen Victoria's letters. Of his duty in defending his father's memory there can be no question, but at pages 162 and 163 of *After Thirty Years*, the author writes about three hundred words, full of controversy and with mistakes galore. The period is the opening of the 1880 parliament, and the question, is a member at liberty to affirm his allegiance?

The Author: "When the new Parliament met it had to face the Bradlaugh question at once. The Government ought to have foreseen consequences. The situation was not well handled by the whip's department."

Comment: If Mr. Gladstone had made it a party question he would have carried the day. But the whips were of the landed classes and were, later on, dropped for incompetence.

Author: "It was an embarrassing misfortune. The P. M. and all his colleagues under an antiquated practice were seeking re-election, when Mr. Bradlaugh, too ostentatiously asked leave to affirm. Some wisdom before the event was to be expected from experienced Parliamentarians."

Comment: It will be better if we stick to the facts. Mr. Bradlaugh had the opinion of the Law Officers that his view was right. He waited till Mr. Gladstone had chosen his Cabinet, etc., and on April 28, wrote to Mr. Speaker on 29th. The House decided to appoint a committee—May 3—Mr. Gladstone was returned unopposed on 10th and the committee reported—against Mr. Bradlaugh—on May 20. If there was either hurry or ostentation it was not on the part of Mr. Bradlaugh.

Author: "Mr. Bradlaugh's militant personality and the honesty antipathy of multitudes of persons to his views, made trouble certain—trouble moreover, especially to those responsible for party discipline. Religion and morals must always cut deep across the ties of party. The Liberal whips were caught napping."

Comment: Mr. Bradlaugh's militancy seems to have given great offence. Here the author's Liberalism becomes of so little use to him as an everyday philosophy of life, that he can write that sentence about "honest antipathy," and that other on "Religion and morals." What of morality was there in the attitude of the Tory and Papist die-hards who took the helpless Speaker and the more helpless Premier as of no account and acted accordingly? Their own leaders were set aside in similar fashion. Their religion consisted in putting that "Damned Bradlaugh on to Gladstone."

Author: "Mr. Speaker Brand made his one great mistake under the pressure of technical advisers. The Government made themselves parties to his mistake, and a duly-elected member, through a series of regrettable scenes and, with one exception, of discreditable debate, was prevented from taking his seat for five years."

Comment: The Law Officers were Sir Henry (afterwards Lord James of Hereford) and Mr. Herschell who was later Lord Justice. Both were of Mr. Bradlaugh's opinion. All the lawyers on the Committee voted in favour of Mr. Bradlaugh. There was no mistake such as is here implied—In *Morley's Life of Gladstone* there is another account which puts another face on it. "Whether or not he threaded his way (Mr. Gladstone) with his usual skill through a labyrinth of Parliamentary tactics incomparably intricate, experts may dispute, but in an ordeal beyond the region of tactics, he never swerved from the path alike of liberty and commonsense. It was a question of exacting the oath of allegiance before a member could take his seat." So that Mr. Premier and Mr. Speaker raised a question they would later have liked to suppress, and the die-hards refused to allow it. Mr. Morley also tells us that Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Speaker, one of the Whips, and several other notables (not named) had a conference in the Speaker's room, the Speaker went to dress, and when he returned was told about the motion to appoint a committee.

Author: In the hurry of the moment too little thought was given to all that was involved by the raising of questions which profoundly stirred human passions and prejudices. The right course would have been for the Government to have stood firmly on constitutional principle. Mr. Gladstone, accepting the Speaker's lead, left the matter to the House.

Comment: As we have seen, Mr. Speaker took the Premier's lead, and with evil consequences.

There is, however, another version. Mr. Speaker

Brand, in due course, retired and was awarded a Peerage. He afterwards published his Diaries, in which he records that "if Bradlaugh had taken the oath he would have allowed no intervention"! So that Mr. Bradlaugh had opposed to him the Speaker, the Premier, the Opposition Leader, the Whips and the "Persons of authority and sense." What a pity Mr. Morley did not tell us their names. Persons of authority were too plentiful in that House, the persons of common sense were too scarce. In his Bradlaugh Centenary Broadcast for the B.B.C., Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe said that to the Quaker, Mr. John Bright, is due a special tribute for "the fineness and rightness of his speeches." Those of us who have studied the period will readily agree, but Mr. Ratcliffe had just said, "To Mr. Gladstone, as a devout Anglican; the whole thing was utterly distasteful. He comes out of it with honour . . ." and to this, many of us will not agree. Mr. Gladstone was head of the Government which—in 1868—prosecuted the *National Reformer* for disobedience to the law relating to the newspaper tax. Mr. Bradlaugh refused to pay and beat the Government. Then Mr. Gladstone looked upon Malthusian propaganda as "loathsome," and had tried all he could do to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh being candidate for Northampton. He was prepared to split the vote and let in a Tory rather than have Mr. Bradlaugh in the House. Mr. Bradlaugh won in the Malthusian prosecution and won in the Northampton election. The "devout Anglican" was well beaten. Probably the best account was that of Augustine Birrell. "The self-elected champions of the Christian faith who ride into the lists are of a kind well calculated to make Piety hide her head for very shame. Rowdy noblemen, intemperate country gentlemen, sterile lawyers, cynical but wealthy sceptics who maintain religion as another fence round their property, hereditary Nonconformists whose God is respectability and whose goal a baronetcy, contrive, with a score or two of bigots thrown in, to make a carnival of folly, a veritable devil's-dance of blasphemy."

* * *

Somewhere in that ignoble list is the subject of the second book, the Earl of Halsbury. In his life, by Miss A. Wilson Fox, we have a story of intolerance of the narrowest kind. The Atheist is to be kept out, permitted neither to swear nor to affirm. So said Sir Hardinge Giffard, Tory Solicitor-General, and later Lord Chancellor of England. Mr. Bradlaugh is described as "the self-styled propagandist of Atheism and Malthusian advocate." Giffard might be described as the self-appointed Anti-Atheist and Anti-Malthusian. It is not recorded that he ever helped—in a long lifetime—any progressive movement or hindered a reactionary one. With quite unconscious humour Miss Fox writes that Mr. Bradlaugh "would hardly have hoped for anything but the most uncompromising hostility from a man like Giffard." She is quite correct. Mr. Bradlaugh had already encountered Giffard! We will come to that later. Then there is trotted out the untruthful tale that Mr. Bradlaugh said that the words "so help me God" were "mere sounds, conveying no definite meaning, and without any binding effect upon his conscience." "This announcement placed both Government and Opposition in a difficult position. . . ." Then we are told that the Speaker was about to retire, that Mr. Bradlaugh might vote in the election of the new Speaker, about Sir Stafford Northcote writing to Giffard. "We have a terribly clever fellow to deal with," and finally this gem, "Giffard did not care what happened so long as the Atheist was not permitted to swear or affirm, and right on to the end of the whole unhappy business . . . took what steps he

could to prevent Bradlaugh from taking his seat."

The facts, which are suppressed, are that in three law-suits, each of which went to the Appeal Courts, Mr. Bradlaugh defeated Giffard every time. The Knowlton trial, the Newdegate case and the Blasphemy Trial. In each case there were two or three Q.C.'s and Junior Counsel yet the lone Defender beat them so "thoroughly" that some of the law journals sarcastically advised the Crown agents to consult Mr. Bradlaugh about their writs in the future.

How did the dirty business end? The Liberals being defeated the Tories came in. The new Premier was not very interested in the Commons, he was a Peer, and a Cecil. Sir Stafford Northcote was elevated (!) to the Peerage and pushed aside, a leader who could not lead. Lord Randolph Churchill got a post in which his lack of aptitude was soon apparent. But Sir Hardinge Giffard, Q.C., having kept back progressive and ameliorative legislation for five years got his reward a Peerage and the Lord Chancellorship.

The New Speaker was a Tory, Mr. Peel, one of themselves, and their own choice; yet when Mr. Bradlaugh went to the table and the die-hards intervened, they were sternly rebuked. Mr. Speaker would have none of it; the oath was taken and there was an end of it. Later on, Giffard had to sit impotent on the Woolsack, while Mr. Bradlaugh's Bill was passed through its various stages!

Reputations for good and for evil were made in this long drawn-out fight. But one thing stands out in bold relief, the undaunted persistence of this soldier of Freedom. Mr. Bradlaugh attributed his success in the Law Courts to the fact that his opponents always under-rated him. Even to-day the publication of so-misleading an account as that in the *Life of Earl Halsbury* is a proof that the old game is still being played; if you cannot or dare not lie, you can at least suppress the truth.

AUTOLYCUS.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"
SCIENCE AND THE UNKNOWN

SIR,—The Rev. Witcomb writes with courtesy and sincerity in the correspondence columns of your issue of December 8. Perhaps the outstanding feature of his letter is its almost axiomatic assumption of a transcendental reality. So ingrained would this appear to be in his mind that he imagines science to be engaged in "judgments upon the nature of reality." Actually the work of science is to take a certain sort of experience called "knowing" and organize the various instances of it into a system, the test of which shall be consistency with life in general. When a scientist says he "knows" something, he only means that he has had an experience of a certain type, and he claims that he will infuse the greatest consistency into life, enabling him to show results the most reliable because the most constant, by approaching the study of it through this class of experience. Further than that he does not go. If anyone tells him that his experience refers to some ulterior entity which, at all events in part, is beyond "knowing," he answers, "In so far as it is beyond knowing it is out of my reach and completely outside my system."

In his first letter the Rev. Witcomb fell into the error of calling such an entity the "unknown," when in reality he meant the "unknowable." It will be clear that science is not concerned with "judgments upon the nature" of such an existent as the unknowable. To the scientist it is a gratuitous assumption with which he can never conceivably establish contact.

The Rev. Witcomb rightly raises the question whether the scientist himself makes assumptions with which to

commence his system of belief. He does, and they take for granted the "power to observe, analyse and form judgments," but not upon the "nature of reality"; merely upon the significance of experience. Moreover his assumptions differ in an exceedingly important manner from an "act of faith." The scientific assumption is always made with a view to deepening and enlarging the consistency of experience, and it is repeatedly tested against subsequent experience ready to be scrapped when it ceases to be consistent with new knowledge. The "act of faith," on the other hand, whatever it may be verbally, in fact resolves itself into a mere act of pre-judgment, to which we are supposed to adhere loyally, and which is actually applauded by the faithful in proportion as it resists the pressure of contradictory experience. It is, of course, open to the faithful to affirm that their act of faith leads them to better fruits of life than do the assumptions of the scientist. And that is where the real debate would commence.

To pass from science to philosophy, we must remind the Rev. Witcomb that there is neither an historical nor a logical connexion between the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion. They arose at different periods and as a result of widely different mental processes. The only purpose that is served by identifying them is to permit the God of religion to retire, during bombardment, into the inaccessible fastnesses of the Unknowable.

MEDICUS.

VIVISECTION AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—I wish to disclaim any question of personal attack.

But, your correspondent, Mr. Don Fisher, in his original letter states that certain things which I do almost daily, are *wrong*. While the material is not suited to the correspondence column of the *Freethinker*, one has a right to ask for an alternative.

What does he advise doing for (1) a case of diphtheria, and (2) a case of post partum hæmorrhage?

While the thing is technical, as the remarks were directed to readers of the *Freethinker* in the first instance, perhaps you would allow a purely technical discussion, that readers may see the answer.

The discussion of the thesis of the letter is beyond my powers, so this is my final effort.

W. L. ENGLISH.

[We should have no objection to such a discussion provided the letters were of moderate length.—EDITOR.]

FROM BARBARISM

The Christian theology, in its main features, was evolved during the most calamitous period which the human race has lived through in historic times. The decline and fall of the Roman Empire still remains the greatest catastrophe on record; the slow death protracted over five centuries of the ancient world. Every evil afflicted man in that terrible time; arbitrary power, the most remorseless and cruel; a grinding fiscal policy, which at last exterminated wealth; pestilences, which became endemic and depopulated whole provinces; and to crown all, a series of invasions by barbarous hordes, who passed over the country like a consuming fire. It was in this age that the foundations of Christian theology were laid—the theology of the Councils and Fathers. . . . God was an Almighty Emperor, a transcendental Diocletian or Constantine, doing as he list with his own. His edicts ran through all space and time, his punishments were eternal, and whatever he did, his justice must not be questioned. . . . For some 1500 years the human conscience was not shocked by it. Since the rise of the Arminian theology there has been a gradual and growing revulsion of feeling, and now it is said plainly that the "potter has no right to be angry with his pots." . . . The notion of the innocent Christ, is a thoroughly base and barbarous one. . . . Yet this cruel and barbarous notion is the centre of the Christian religion.—*J. Cotter Morison, "The Service of Man."*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday. Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. Current *Freethinkers* on sale.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Gauden Hotel, Gauden Road, Clapham, S. W.4): 7.30, Mr. J. MacNabb (British Union of Fascists)—"Fascism in Britain."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W. C.): 11.0, Dr. Moritz Bonn—"The Haves and Have-nots Amongst the States."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, December 16, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Freethought in the Poets, Ancient and Modern."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Rooms, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton, E.10): 7.30, Ivor Greenhouse—"The Province of Reason."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs. A. Saron—"The Collapse of the German Freethought Movement."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Tavern Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.30, Mr. C. E. Coe—"The Price of Peace."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead): 7.0, J. R. B. Hargreaves (Liverpool Buddhist Mission)—"The Basic Principles of Buddhism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham): 7.30, Mr. Harris. Cinema Lecture.—"Primitive Peoples, Animal Life, and Places of Interest."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Continuation of Impromptu Debate on "Evolution."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, A Discussion.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Unity House, Hillside Crescent): 6.45, Mr. S. G. Service (Glasgow)—"War, Cause and Cure."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street): 7.0, R. Gregory Absalom, M.Sc., Ph.D.—"Native's Camouflage." Lantern Lecture.

HETTON (Club Hall): 8.0, Wednesday, December 18, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"The Outlook—Spiritualism, Sunday Cinemas, etc."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12 Shaw Street, Liverpool): 7.0, Dr. W. Olaf Stapledon, M.A. (West Kirby)—"The Value and Danger of Modern Science."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester): Mr. Jack Clayton (Burnley). 3.0, "Freethought or Dictatorship?" 7.0, "The Uselessness of God." Admission free. Reserved Seats 3d. 6d. and 1s. Teas provided in Cafe.

NORTHERN FEDERATION OF N.S.S. BRANCHES (18 Churchill Street, Sunderland, Residence of Mr. Wilkins): 3.0, A Meeting.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Inn, Market Street): 7.30, Mr. Jenkinson—A Lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Hall, Laygate): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Men, Mind and Muddle."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. Flanders, Mr. Charlton and others.

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