

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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

Views and Opinions

Life and Letters

I FORGET who said that every time a new book came out he read an old one. In many instances, and in connexion with certain subjects, the rule is not a bad one. It may even be based on a perception of the fact that the majority of books are not *written* but *made*. They are made by that army of writers who are ready to write on anything from cookery via biography and alleged critical studies to astronomy. All that is required is a publisher ready to exploit the public interest of the moment, a few days at the British Museum or some public library, and a nose for sensational details, real or imaginary. Previous study of the subject is not expected of the professional "mugger-up." His policy is to play up to the market; and as he knows little or nothing of the subject five minutes before he decides to *make* a book, one may assume that he forgets it five minutes after publication, while he looks round for fresh fields of exploitation. The products of these scribbling machines ought to be classified with Lamb's books that are not books. In "outward form and semblance" they resemble books, but they are as far from the real thing as is the spirit of Socrates at a Spiritualistic seance from the Socrates of the Dialogues.

* * *

Conrad on a Future Life

I have put into practice something of this rule with regard to reading old books during my stay in hospital. After the first few days I read constantly—very few new books, but many old ones, which I had brought from home by a "chancy" method of selection. I am a very old admirer of Joseph Conrad, dating back to the *Nigger of the Narcissus* days, and among the books that cover the table at my bedside is his *Notes on Life and Letters*, published in 1921, consisting of a reprint of articles published between 1904 and 1919. Some of these essays are very

vivid, and all are shot through with that keen perception of motive and of the inner significance of events characteristic of Conrad. Here is a passage, which I cite, mainly because it illustrates the "forthright" style of Conrad when he pleases to adopt it; rather than as a sample of the qualities already referred to. It is written as part of a notice of a Spiritualistic work, *Existence after Death Implied by Science* :—

An immortality liable at any moment to betray itself fatuously by the forcible incantations of Mr. Stead or Professor Crookes is scarcely worth having. Can you imagine anything more squalid than an Immortality at the beck and call of Eusapia Palladino? That woman lives on the top floor of a Neapolitan house, and gets our poor, pitiful, august dead, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, spirit of our spirit, who have loved and suffered and died, as we must love, and suffer, and die—she gets them to beat tambourines in a corner and protrude shadowy limbs through a curtain. This is particularly horrible, because if one had to put one's faith in these things one could not even die safely from disgust as one would long to do.

And to believe that these manifestations, which the author evidently takes for modern miracles, will stay our tottering faith; to believe that the new psychology has, only the other day, discovered man to be a "spiritual mystery," is really carrying humility towards that universal providence, Science, too far.

... What Humanity needs is not the promise of scientific immortality, but compassionate pity in this life and infinite mercy on the day of judgment.

A fine illustration of the perception of the intrinsic horror of the belief in a future life, and of the cheap vulgarity of Spiritualism.

* * *

The Heart of Russia

An essay in this volume on "Autocracy and War," written in 1915, contains one of the most devastating and one of the most penetrating criticisms of Czarist Russia that one could read. The essay is not so much concerned with the *acts* of the Russian autocracy as with its essential character :—

This dreaded and strange apparition, bristling with bayonets, armed with chains, hung with holy images; that something . . . partaking of a ravenous ghoul, of a blind djinn grown up from a cloud . . . still faces us with its old stupidity and its strange mystical arrogance. (But the greatness of Russia, he points out), has been a myth that has been forced upon the world, a myth of which the war with Japan marked the beginning of its dissipation. The old monarchies of Europe were the creations of historical necessity.

They had a past and a future; they were human. But under the shadow of Russian autocracy nothing could grow. Russian autocracy succeeded to nothing; it had no historical past, and it cannot hope for a historical future. It can only end. By no in-

dustry of investigation, by no fantastic stretch of benevolence, can it be presented as a phase of development through which a Society, a State, must pass on the way to the full consciousness of its destiny. It lies outside the stream of progress. This despotism has been utterly un-European. Neither has it been Asiatic in its nature. . . . Oriental despotism belongs to the history of mankind; they have left their trace on our minds and our imagination by their splendour, by their culture, by their art, by the exploits of great conquerors. The record of their rise and decay has an intellectual value; they are in their origins and their course the manifestation of human needs, the instruments of racial temperament, of catastrophic force, of faith and fanaticism. The Russian autocracy as we see it now is a thing apart. It is impossible to assign to it any rational origin in the vices, the misfortunes, the necessities, or the aspirations of mankind. That despotism has neither an European nor an Oriental parentage; more, it seems to have no root in either the institutions or the follies of this earth. What strikes one with a sort of awe is just this something inhuman in its character. It is like a visitation, like a curse from Heaven falling in the darkness of ages upon the immense plains of forest and steppe lying dumbly on the confines of two continents; a true desert harbouring no spirit either of the East or of the West. . . . She is a yawning chasm between East and West; a bottomless abyss that has swallowed up every hope of mercy, every aspiration towards personal dignity, towards freedom, towards knowledge, every ennobling desire of the heart, every redeeming whisper of conscience. . . . It is safe to say tyranny, assuming a thousand protean shapes, will remain clinging to her struggles for a long time before her blind multitudes succeed at last in trampling her out of existence under their millions of bare feet.

* * *

The Censorship

I should like to have quoted further, but I pass on to his comments on that contemptible thing—censorship, and to that most contemptible form of it, a stage censorship. Conrad wrote a play, which he found had to be licensed. Licensed it was, produced, and “an exceptionally intelligent audience stared it coldly off the stage.” But he was content. He accepted “the verdict of a free and independent public.” Still he had found out that the Censor, a “monstrous and outlandish figure” actually lived. “It heaves its stomach, it rolls its eyes, it brandishes a monstrous arm, and . . . like a Bravo of old Venice . . . stabs its victim from behind. Less picturesque than the Venetian in cloak and mask, less estimable, too, in this, that the assassin plied his normal trade at his own risk, deriving no countenance from the powers of the Republic, it stands more malevolent inasmuch that the Bravo striking in the dusk killed but the body, whereas this grotesque thing nodding its Mandarin head, may in its absurd unconsciousness strike down at any time the spirit of an honest, of an artistic, perhaps of a sublime creation.”

This Chinese monstrosity, disguised in the trousers of the Western Barbarian and provided by the State with the immortal Mr. Stiggins's plug hat and umbrella, is with us. It is an office. An office of trust. And from time to time there is found an official to fill it. He is a public man. The least prominent of public men, the most unobtrusive, the most obscure, if not the most modest. . . . His office flourishes in the shade; not in the rustic shade beloved of the violet, but in the muddled twilight of mind, where tyranny of every sort flourishes. Its holder need not have either brain or heart, no sight, no taste, no imagination, not even bowels of compassion. He needs not these things. He has power. He can kill thought, and incidentally truth,

and beauty, providing they seek to live in a dramatic form. He can do it, without seeing, without understanding, without feeling anything; out of mere stupid superstition, as an irresponsible Roman Cæsar could kill a senator. . . . This figure in whose power it is to suppress an intellectual conception . . . seems designed to bring out the greatness of a Philistine's conceit and his moral cowardice.

Conceit, moral cowardice, these are the two outstanding qualities of censorship, whether it be dramatic, political or religious. A conceit that declines to admit even the probability of being in the wrong, a cowardice that fears to permit an antagonistic idea to be heard or seen, and a stupidity that fails to see the historic evidence for the ultimate futility of all censorships. I am not surprised Conrad decides that the qualifications for a Censor in a country such as ours are that:—

He must have done nothing, expressed nothing, imagined nothing. He must be obscure, insignificant and mediocre—in thought, art, speech and sympathy. He must know nothing of art, of life—and of himself. For if he did he would not dare to be what he is.

All this is true of a censorship that exists in a democratic country where the profession and the tradition of freedom exists, and the Censor has to slink along wearing a mask of freedom and justice, hoping that no one will penetrate his disguise. But whether open or disguised, censorship can only continue its existence at the cost of a progressive deterioration. In each generation it calls with the greatest success the poorest and least worthy spirits to its service. It descends to lower and lower levels in order to perpetuate its rule, until in the end it falls before the concentrated anger of an outraged humanity. In the main, censorship can do little or nothing that will really benefit mankind. Its chief energies are directed against the new, the advanced, the book or the play, or the word that questions the validity of what is, and the society which does that is surely on the downward path. A censor is much like a public executioner. He receives little enough honour from worthy people in his own day; and he is fortunate if the future rewards him with oblivion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Religion in the Raw

“Too comic for the solemn things they are,
Too solemn for the comic touches in them.”

Tennyson.

“The Salvation Army beats the big drum till it sounds like a German invasion. But it turns out to be only the awkward squad on a beanfeast.”—G. W. Foote.

“RELIGION is nothing but a trade,” said Dean Jonathan Swift, and he was in a position to know. Mark Twain also pointed out that the difference between a theatre and a church was that you paid to go into the one, and you paid to get out of the other. Certainly, money appears to be the chief concern of all the religious bodies, from the plutocratic Anglican Church, which is cadging money to provide places of worship for new suburban areas, to the wealthy Salvation Army, which asks for £200,000 as a Self-Denial Collection.

This direct appeal to the pockets of believers is well worth all the trouble, for last year this Salvation Army's Self Denial Fund totalled the modest sum of £158,000, and the game has been going on for fifty years. And remember that the Salvation Army is a comparative newcomer to the ranks of fancy re-

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ligions. She is the Cinderella of the Christian Churches, and by no means so wealthy as her much older sisters, Anglican and Romish, who have been in business for centuries, and who both possess wealth "beyond the dreams of avarice."

According to legend, the first Salvation Army was not a conspicuous financial success. It is said to have been sold up, including its managing director, for thirty pieces of silver. Nineteen hundred years later, the present Salvation Army was started by William Booth, a former pawnbroker's assistant, and there has always been an atmosphere of the "three brass balls" associated with the concern. This second Salvation Army, not long since, celebrated its Jubilee amid the plaudits of the newspaper press and the blessings of Royalty. Curiously, at the Jubilee celebrations much stress was laid on the social rather than the theological work of the Salvation Army. The Royal congratulations were fulsome, not to say fearsome. The late King George referred to this Army's "mighty achievements," and of its "works of love and mercy," whilst his Royal mother dwelt on "the great and beneficent work for mankind" initiated by the former pawnbroker's assistant. The "glorious free press" of England, which is the meanest and most contemptible in the world, took up the Royal refrain, and columns of the most colossal silliness appeared in print concerning this Salvation Army and its so-called benevolent work.

The blunt truth is that this Salvation Army is the most reactionary religious body, save the Roman Catholic Church, in England. General Booth's own trade-mark, "Blood and Fire," proves it beyond all cavil and dispute. It is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." It is an anachronism in a country pretending to some culture and civilization. It means, in plain English, that all must wash in the blood of Jesus Christ, or fall into the flames of everlasting hell. It may be Christian teaching, it may even be the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus, but most certainly it is not "great and beneficent work for mankind," as a titled and distinguished personage averred.

The value of the social work of this Salvation Army is exaggerated out of all sense and proportion. Salvationists have all to be teetotallers. What real effect has that on this country's consumption of alcohol? Salvationists have all to be abstainers from tobacco. The sale of tobacco and cigarettes was never so great as during the past few years, one tobacco company declaring an annual profit of over ten millions of money. As for the alleged restoration of tens of thousands of women and girls from lives of vice, it has not affected the conditions of our towns, or the statistics of the white-slave traffic and prostitution. Royalty and the sycophantic newspaper reporters may bless the Salvation Army "shelters" and the "beneficent work" at Hadleigh Farm Colony, but what have Trade Unionists to say concerning these matters? There is absolutely no "charity," Christian or Pagan, in the very business-like Emigration Department of the Salvation Army. The poor emigrants pay their fares, and the Army's officials take the emigration agents' usual commission from the railway and shipping companies. The so-called "suicide Bureau" of the Salvation Army is almost as farcical as the imaginary "Suicide Club" described by Stevenson. It is supposed to have saved thousands from self-murder, but it does not appear to have affected in any way the national statistics concerning suicide.

Flamboyant journalists claim that this Salvation Army took religion into the slums. Just so! And the slums are no better for it. Indeed, the whole

country is seething with industrial unrest. Working men and women are no longer to be cajoled into giving other people money in order to fight a purely imaginary Devil. They are going to fight the very greedy, and probably Christian, landlords, slum-owners, and profiteers. They have been lulled long enough with the luscious lullaby that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." They have discovered that, in England, the earth too often belongs to members of the House of Lords, a distinction with a big difference.

People have been hypnotised by the big drums, trumpets, tambourines, and fancy dress of this theatrical Salvation Army. They make so much noise that people think that there are many of them. Look at the figures concerning converts in any issue of the *War Cry*, and then add them together from the time this pious periodical first added to the gaiety of the nation, and disputed with *Punch* the premier position as a comic paper. The grand total amounts to millions, showing that the whole population has joined the Salvation Army, and been converted to Christ, which, as old Euclid expresses it, "is absurd."

It is a bad joke also for the Salvation Army to confine its attention to the working-classes. If its gaudily dressed officers are really interested in social problems, let them go to the West End of London, and tell the idle rich that it is immoral to draw rents from slum property. Let them go to the colliery and railway magnates and tell them that men are exposed to death and mutilation in order to pay royalties and dividends to shareholders. Let them tell their aristocratic patrons that it is immoral that women should sew fashionable garments for a few pence, and that little children should be half-starved and ragged. Let them say that two millions of men and women to-day are unable to find work, and are being cheated of their lives in the richest country in the world. Let them say that if the rich have eggs for breakfast they must not be boiled in other peoples' blood. It is the profiteers who should be at the penitent form, and not the poor victims of their greed.

The Salvation Army is, admittedly, a gigantic trading concern. It sells tea, articles of clothing, books, musical instruments, children's toys, and even insures its devotees against the risks of fire and death. For over half a century it has amply proved the association of the Christian Religion with hysteria and theatricality. What is worse, these evangelists have gauged their public to a nicety, and those who listen spellbound to their trombones and tambourines show to what depths Christians can sink if they refuse to use their brains. Savages do these things one way, and the soldiers and sympathisers of the Salvation Army another, but the nature of the action and the results are the same in both instances. England will never be civilized, in the true sense of the word, while it has a Christian majority. The change will come eventually. In the interests of humanity, the sooner it does come the better. And the quickest and most effective method for bringing about the change is to add to the number of Freethinkers.

MIMNERMUS.

It will hardly be believed that, when sulphuric ether was first used to lessen the pains of childbirth, it was objected to as "a profane attempt to abrogate the primal curse pronounced upon woman." The injury which the theological principal has done to the world is immense. It has prevented men from studying the laws of nature.—*Buckle*.

"A World Without God"

Of course there are many people "without God." There may be cities full of Atheists. One day a vast country like Russia may have preserved its last Theist in the Kremlin Museum of Antiquities.

But these are mere cases of unbelief. Atheists, we are often told, are not without God, they are merely without belief. Atheism cannot abolish God. A world cannot be without God if there is a God. "Look what you owe to Christianity," our lecturers are often told . . . by persons without a sense of irony.

So long as God remains in existence (we must not say "on the spot"—the films have made this phrase suggest assassination), we shall continue to enjoy whatever privileges God's presence guarantees. No Theist therefore should worry his head over Worlds without God. The title is itself blasphemous.

The Church Literature Association has issued a sort of Belisha Beacon pamphlet, in blazing red and black cover, warning us that God is the only safe way across the dangerous streets of experience. Mr. G. Fawkes is the author of this crudely conceived misleading attempt to "blow up" dialectically the Atheist propaganda. He draws a lurid picture of "What Would Happen in a World Without God."

Mr. G. Fawkes frightens us first by suggesting that Mr. Noel Coward may "not inappropriately" be described as "the twentieth century Isaiah," and his "Calvacade" as a "not unfair caricature of the times in which we live." Mr. Coward will not enjoy being likened to the author of the glorification of cannibalism in Isaiah ix. 12-20. But Mr. Fawkes is justified in inferentially describing the Book of Isaiah as a "caricature."

Mr. Julian Huxley is severely criticized for calling the "God hypothesis" "obsolete and untenable." Mr. Fawkes thinks that even an outworn religious hypothesis is better than "gross materialism." He says nothing whatever about *ordinary* materialism, and we gather that "gross materialism" is simply Mr. Fawkes's muddily missile thrown at what he considers objectionable in "post-war" life.

The post-War years have seen the zealous storm-troopers of Progress, intoxicated with new knowledge and served by a horde of cork-sniffing camp-followers, cheerfully smashing down all the standards which their forefathers laboriously built up, or received and held as sacred, and throwing them into a vast melting-pot from which it is alleged things new and better will be recast. And, of course, singled out as the first objective has been belief in God.

It is interesting, in passing, to observe that this critic has no denunciation or invective in regard to the war itself, nor to post-war Hitlerism, Fascism or the criminal activities of those who would repeat the crimes of past religious Dark Ages. "Cork-sniffing" suggests that Mr. Fawkes regards "drink" as the real evil of this terrible world. But he adds: "Suicide has become an appallingly familiar occurrence." Terrible too is the alleged fact that "it is not among the hungry and suffering"—whose suicide presumably would be proper or at least natural. No, there are actually "well-to-do, gifted and seemingly healthy persons," whose repeated suicides seem inexplicable if not so appalling as Mr. Fawkes feels them to be.

Mr. Fawkes does not explain why the healthy and rich die thus, nor does he specifically allege that they were all Atheists. While we see no evidence of any suicide epidemic of this character, we have no reason to doubt that healthy and wealthy suicides are likely

to be fashionably thoughtless theists, rather than unfashionable unorthodox Atheists. It is certainly a long time since Secular Societies benefited by bequests from suicides.

We learn that the war-period and after will be known in history "as the notable years of an upheaval as momentous and far-reaching as the Renaissance itself." We hope so. Mr. Fawkes's tribute is an unintended compliment. But he sees only the "conceited, cynical and ruthless spirit of destruction that is leaving nothing but chaos and disillusionment in its train." He does not do justice to the part his religion played in encouraging, if it did not create, the war conditions responsible for the destructive spirit he condemns.

But Mr. Fawkes's jaundiced vision sees only one aspect of contemporary history. Even disillusionment is not necessarily evil as so many pious moralists imagine. The disillusionment of huge masses of mankind in the utility and wisdom of war is something of tremendous moral value. There is evidence of a most healthy quest for international solutions to great problems such as formerly only a handful of far-sighted visionaries dreamt of.

The present state of the world is encouraging rather than depressing, if seen in the light of popular aspiration rather than in ends which cannot be accomplished in a single generation. It is very misleading to study only the despairing cries of well-to-do suicides. Even the murderous methods of dictators which pass unnoticed by Mr. Fawkes, must be studied side by side with the Concentration Camps which comprise myriads of the noblest samples of courage the world has ever seen. Sometimes a nation in chains is better than a mob of useless "free" conformists.

Why should a man complain (as Mr. Fawkes does) because "the new religion is to the Glory of Man" instead of God? What sense is there in describing science, as do Chesterton and Fawkes, as "advocating a return to the original, irrational, blind, and brutish sort of idolatry." This description exactly fits religion. It is the exact antithesis of science and of scientific aims.

If we are really coming to a "World Without God," we see nothing to make us afraid. The highest pinnacle to which religion has ascended, after centuries of Freethought propaganda, is the doctrine repeatedly found in the words of famous theologians to-day—the belief that God works only through man. The *Freethinker* quotes constantly, Christian Modernists who have reached this conclusion. They no longer believe that "Without God, man can do nothing." They realize that without man, God is impotent. It is a pity that Mr. Fawkes makes no attempt to prove that his God is different, or that any God of any kind is capable of preventing war, of eliminating disease, or eradicating poverty.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

CHASING SHADOWS

Apart from physical evolution which applies to every form of Life—from the Amoeba onwards—there is nothing discoverable in human life that has not been put into it by mankind.

Man makes his own religions, as shown by their unlimited variety from primitive times down to the present day. He has his own standards of values which vary racially and with every step of human progress.

To look for any other form of reality is merely "chasing shadows."—*Maud Simon.*

The Witch Mania

VIII.

ALTHOUGH the Church took a hand—and a pretty big hand—in the punishment of witches and sorcerers, it was not because she was convinced that nobody or nothing else would undertake the task. As a matter of fact the Church incessantly preached that selling one's soul to the Devil meant eternal punishment in Hell. The Devil was pitiless; Hell's flames were so fierce that it was difficult to put the exact degree of heat down in numbers. The people who were foolish enough to make any pact with the Infernal One would certainly frizzle for ever and ever, and even more than that, if possible. Wesley and Spurgeon concurred here with the Catholic Church in its three branches; and the Salvation Army, the Calvinist, and the Presbyterian, together with some of the minor Protestant sects, also here agree with Popery—however fiercely they differ on minor theological points. The Modernist may have put the fires of Hell completely out in his own mind, but no truly orthodox Christian would ever pander to such heretical views. He is too frightened.

At all events, the story of Satan or Lucifer carrying off a witch was put before the pious, both by word and picture. De Givry reproduces one of the earliest woodcut representations in his book on *Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy*. The Devil rides a black horse going at full speed, and some readers may remember that exciting, if not exactly authentic, romance by Harrison Ainsworth, *Windsor Castle*, with Herne the Hunter frightening almost everybody in the book as he flashes past on his magnificent black horse. (The etchings by George Cruikshank—representing some of his best work, by the way—are marvels of realism).

Why a witch or a sorcerer should always be expected to die a frightful death is difficult to understand, unless one takes the fear they inspired in the general public into consideration. Ignorance, credulity and superstition bred this fear into almost unbelievable proportions. Of course, there can be little doubt that some of the witches and wizards dealt in poisons, or preyed upon the terrors of the men and women among whom they lived. Still, the foul and cruel deaths inflicted upon perfectly innocent people merely because they were suspected of witchcraft are out of all proportion to their supposed crimes. It is expressly said in the Bible that witches should be put to death, but the earliest records of the punishments are by no means severe. The real persecutions began, we are told by de Givry, in the fifteenth century. He says:—

While the Portuguese authorities were content to banish the sorcerers from the land, in France—in Artois especially—they were treated with the uttermost severity. They were put to the question and tortured; fire was set under the soles of their feet, and they were forced to swallow boiling oil. Such cruelty was shown them that in 1491 the Parliament of Paris itself was concerned at it, and annulled all the trials before the Arras judges, accusing them of having wished to possess themselves of the property belonging to sorcerers.

But this attempt at some sort of humanity was not followed everywhere. Some of the most famous books published on Sorcery—for example, Boquet's *Discours exécration des Sorciers*, published in Rouen in 1603—actually describes the terrible scenes and cruelties the author practised himself. Perhaps the most terrible of all these works was *The Hammer of Witches* supposed to be written by Sprenger in 1489.

The infamous Duke of Alva, in the course of his campaign in Flanders, instituted a "Council of Blood," and one of his foul myrmidons was Martin del Rio. He wrote a work showing how to proceed against sorcerers which, knowing its source, one can imagine as being full of the most bestial cruelties. The Rev. Father Gaucius' *Compendium Maleficarum* has been translated into English within the past few years, and equals Martin del Rio's frightful work.

Most people, of course, know that our own most royal King, James I., fancied himself not a little as a writer. He wrote *Demonologia*, a sort of dialogue in which the question of sorcery is examined very carefully. James was a worthy follower in the matter of del Rio and Gaucius, and advocated that no consideration of any kind should be given to witches and wizards. He believed in burning them alive. There is, of course, quite a large number of other books on the subject, but it was not until a move away from Christianity towards Humanism was made, that the works dealing with witchcraft in general began to show some genuine scepticism.

The accounts of the trials, the tortures, the burnings, the witch hunts, show a barbarity almost unbelievable. Supposedly sane men and women joined in the persecution and gave vent to something far worse than savagery. Descriptions of what is called Chinese torture are on record, but Christians only three centuries ago could give points to the Chinese and, as the Americans say, even then some. No country seems to have been exempt. The Dutch, in spite of their own sufferings under Alva, have left prints of the tortures inflicted on sorcerers and witches, which prove they had learnt nothing in the way of mercy.

Pope innocent VIII., in 1488, says W. H. D. Adams, in *Magic and Magicians*:—

Fulminated his ecclesiastical thunders against heresy and witchcraft, and by bringing into action the latent forces of superstition, credulity, and fanaticism, did his utmost to swell the evil which he attempted to extirpate. In his celebrated Bull, he summoned the European nations to the rescue of the Church of Christ upon earth, and detailed the horrors of which accounts had reached his ears; how that hundreds of men and women had intercourse with infernal fiends; how by their sorceries they afflicted both man and beast—blighted the marriage bed, destroyed the young of women and the increase of cattle, blasted the corn of the ground, the grapes of the vineyard, the fruits of the trees, and the herbs of the fields. In order to extirpate from off the face of the earth such desperate and iniquitous sinners against the laws of God and man, he appointed inquisitors in every country armed with apostolic power to convict and punish. The result was the *witch mania*, to which every evil passion contributed avarice, revenge, hate, jealousy, the lust of notoriety, and the thirst of blood.

One knows the sequel. Thousands of innocent people were "denounced." Subjected to the most cruel tortures, they confessed—who would not?—to everything. And it need hardly be said that heresy was often linked to witchcraft—much in the same way as the modern Christian lumps as a crime "infidelity" with drunkenness or even murder.

Innocent's famous Bull proves the incontestable part played by Roman Catholicism in witch-hunting and witch-torturing, though no modern convert to this holy religion is likely to dwell too long on such a terrible chapter in its history. Both Calvin and Luther equally believed in witchcraft—again, no Protestant loves to dwell upon this side of the religion based only on the Holy Book.

One fact stands out in the story of witchcraft. It is the ease with which anybody could be accused, and the tremendous difficulty of rebutting the accusation.

And one can well imagine the number of people destroyed in this way through mere private revenge. The inquisitors seemed to be only too pleased to find victims. Mercy and justice were words which must have been loathed by these holy men of God.

In England, one of the most notorious names in connexion with witch-hunting was Matthew Hopkins. It is difficult for a modern reader to understand how this gentleman ever managed to obtain credence in his power. His principal method of discovering witches was by their "marks"—any poor woman who had some extra growth or slight malformation on her body was, if Hopkins heard about it, almost sure to be accused of being a witch. The accounts are very detailed, and some are given in Miss Murray's work. In Reginald Scott's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) he says, "The Devil giveth to every novice a mark, either with his teeth or with his claws." In fact the Devil used to "nip" the witch in some way, making a mark which looked like a flea-bite or a blue spot. Some witches were marked on the left shoulder, the mark looking like the footprint of a hare, but the marks were found on all parts of the body. Sometimes a "little teat" occurred also on various parts of the body, and "was said to secrete milk and give suck to the familiars, both human and animal; and was sometimes cut off by the witch before being searched." Miss Murray adds, "The descriptions of the teat point to its being the natural phenomenon, the supernumerary nipple. Cases of this sort are constantly recorded by modern medical observers."

It is horrible to reflect that men and women, endowed by nature in this way, were liable to be burned to death as sorcerers in those happy bygone days when the Christian religion was so powerful and omnipresent.

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops

Mr. Beverley Nichols has visited Jerusalem. And having visited Jerusalem, he has settled once and for all the vexed question of the historicity of Jesus. It is one thing to live in London, and to question the existence of Jesus Christ on the ground that everything he is supposed to have been, and everything he is supposed to have done were done by numerous saviour-gods long before he was born. But to go to Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ is said to have lived, and to walk on the same stones that he is said to have walked on, is to experience "thrills" and "emotions" which to a journalist writing for a Sunday paper in a Christian country, is absolutely convincing. The things related about Jesus *must* have happened, or how could these thrills and feelings occur? And, if they did not occur, well, in a Christian country, Othello's occupation would be gone.

This is the way it is done. "The place where, of all others you feel nearer to Christ in Jerusalem" is the Church of Ecce Homo. "The reason it is so moving is because it contains in its vaults the actual pavement . . . on which the crowd gathered to cry, 'Crucify him.'" The atmosphere of devotion (why not the smell?) which surrounds the pavement would make a profound impression upon "any sensitive man." "The whole effect is deeply moving." So on, up to the grand finale. "Christ was led out on those stones, crowned with thorns as He stood there." (It is an artistic lapse that led Mr. Nichols to record that he ran one of those thorns into his foot, and was led crying out "Oh Christ!") Thus testifying to the truth of the New Testament story). It was here that Christ was "given the Cross to carry. It means that on some of these stones, his blood must have fallen. Not might have fallen, but *must* have fallen."

That appears to settle the question for ever. As Mr. Nichols argues, how could Jesus ever have walked on those stones if he had never lived? And if they placed on Jesus the crown of thorns, and if some of his blood fell as a consequence, the blood must have fallen somewhere, and where else should it fall but on the stones which Mr. Nichols saw, and which filled him with thrills and emotions such as any sensitive man would feel. Had Mr. Nichols stood upon the spot from which Mohammed started on his trip to heaven, had he stood on the famous rock on which is imprinted the foot of the Buddha, had he stood in front of the coat of Jesus at Treves, or looked at the ink-marks made by Luther when he threw an inkwell at Satan, and which were for long shown in order to prove the truth of the vision, he would have felt no such emotions as he felt when he stood upon those sacred stones. It is these thrills that provided the decisive proof. As Mr. Nichols says with profound penetration, invincible logic, and a display of emotion such as "any sensitive man would feel" Jesus *must* have stood in Jerusalem, he *must* have been pricked by the crown of thorns (the New Testament, by the way, says that the crown of thorns was placed on the head of Jesus in the "hall," but probably the sensitiveness of Mr. Nichols caused him to sense that it happened on the pavement outside the hall) and if the blood fell, it *must* have fallen where Jesus stood. It is a most convincing argument—for a Sunday article in a Sunday paper for Sunday readers in a Christian country.

All the same we ought to chronicle the fact that when a friend who was evidently not "sensitive" and was without thrills and emotions, read Mr. Nichols' narrative he asked us, "How is it that a man of ordinary intelligence can when he comes to deal with religion make such an unadulterated fool of himself?" All we could do was to restate the evidence, and then we received the retort, "You're no more sense than he has." We recognized at once that the critic was not a sensitive man, and so left it at that. And after all, Mr. Nichols did write one readable book. It was on gardens. Perhaps Mr. Nichols ought to stick to greens.

The Rev. A. S. Rosecamp, Vicar of Wallasey, has been giving a special Lovers' Service at Birkenhead. His advice took this shape: "Cut religion out of your courting days, cut religion out of your honeymoon, and you're on the wrong road." St. Paul once counted for something as a representative Christian. He said, "Cut courting days and honeymoon out of religion, and you're on the right road." Who was Paul, anyhow?

Four Manchester children having lost their parents in tragic circumstances, have been offered adoption by a wealthy childless Morecambe couple. The offer was not accepted. The would-be adopters were not members of the Roman Church, but, in deference to the children's relatives, were willing for the children to continue in that body. However it was ruled by Spiritual advisers that it was essential that the children should be brought up in a "Catholic atmosphere." It is a Romanist's first principle that his teachings are self-evident, and that honest examination is bound to lead to their acceptance. But it is a Romanist's first practice to give the children this "Catholic atmosphere," for without that atmosphere, in spite of their claims being sun-clear, the Devil has a curious success in circumventing God and jeopardizing immortal souls.

And so the poor little mites are doomed to develop in the "Catholic atmosphere." Into their young minds will be plugged the slogans that the Church is Glorious, Big, Safe and Remunerative. They will be told that the non-Romanist represents the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and rejects Romanism from discreditable motives. God loves only Romanists, whom he has honoured with exclusive information and proprietary articles and the non-Romanists with rare exceptions, he is going to torture in perpetuity. He is, as well, grateful for any little help the orthodox can give him in the torturing line before they, the non-Romanists, arrive at Hell. The

worldly non-communicant must not be listened to, for although he is intellectually contemptible, no risks must be taken. He is a subtle fellow this Devil, and troubles Omnipotence much by his ingenuity. In such an atmosphere Souls will be saved and the great Plan of the great Artificer is, first and last, a plan for saving Souls. God will be pleased and God's Church will be pleased to have kept its customers, who, when their time comes, will, in turn, be instructed on pain of mortal sin, to be fruitful and multiply and provide more Catholic atmosphere for their offspring. In this way all will be quite well with the Church, and as for the world, what does the world matter anyhow? Again we say, Poor Little Mites!

As soon as one particular form of "gambling" is suppressed, another springs up in its place. The authorities—and by this word is mostly meant the kill-joys, the puritans, the Mrs. Grundies, the little Bethel deacons, and so on—seem often at their wit's end to abolish what may give some pleasure to crowds of people. They moved heaven and earth to make it almost impossible for the man without a club or a telephone to share a sweepstake ticket with a few pals. The idea that people may win a big prize sends those in power off in a sort of frenzy. Then a vigorous drive very nearly put out "Cross Words"—that is, where big money prizes are given; it is, of course, quite harmless to work one of these puzzles out "for nix." Now an attack is being made on Football Pools—here again because some people are lucky enough to win big sums of money. And the cream of the joke is that, if only the "authorities" really mean to suppress anything, the nation as a whole stands it quite calmly.

This encroachment on "liberty" is insidious. One wakes up in the morning to find that another Act has been passed filching away something that had hitherto been taken for granted. And one has only to notice the large number of magistrates who turn up, directly it is known some hotel or pub wants a renewal of its licence, and the vigorous way in which the matter is discussed, the slightest loophole, and the average magistrate almost whoops with joy if he can refuse the licence. The people must be protected against themselves, don't you know.

Against fraud of all kinds, we are opposed as much as anybody; and the law should be always put in force when any is discovered. But one ought really to protest against the way in which so many of us are ready to bow (and walk out backward) to those in authority. Is Mr. Justice Shallow quite forgotten?

Quotations are not always perfectly apt. Even the impeccable *Literary Digest* makes a "howler" in its issue of February 1. It gives its readers an excellent Map of the British Empire. In the top corner is a portrait of King Edward VIII., with his hand on his sword-hilt. Below is a quotation from Kipling: "Beneath Whose Awful Hand we hold Dominion over palm and pine." It sounds less than polite to call H.M. King Edward's well-manicured hand an "awful" one.

The Rev. W. J. Platt, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, is reported (in the *Methodist Recorder*), to have preached

a mighty and inspired sermon to a very large congregation, from the text, "A friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him." The challenge to everyone there was heart-searching. How little there was in our spiritual store, to set before a friend on the journey of life, who was in need of comfort and help.

The occasion was a "house party and dinner" at Harlow Manor, Harrogate. A "fleet of motor cars" is stated to have brought fifty live missionaries to the dinner. Among the numerous "clichés" of the report we select the delicious intimation that "When the confer-

ence assembled after lunch . . . the missionaries lost no time in getting to grips: the text was, 'Will ye also go away.'" Why not? Luncheon was over.

Some people praise God for strangely restricted "mercies." The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, in an interview, expresses "very great gratitude to God—and His people"—for sending, or inspiring rich people to send, enough money to liquidate the old debt of the Methodist Missionary Society. God—and His people—however are informed that "we confess a real sense of disappointment that the income for the General Fund shows a smaller increase than we believed likely; the aim was £50,000, the actual receipts are £28,000 less." This looks like a vote of censure on God—and His people. Blame-giving mingled with the thanksgiving.

James Douglas usually succeeds in making the *Sunday Express* amusing, but Mr. Hickey, one of the regular correspondents to the *Daily Express*, stands, in last Saturday's edition as a serious rival to James. When talking of Parkhurst Jail, he states that the *Daily Express* is one of the few newspapers allowed to the inmates; and he goes on to say, "No prisoner may read a paper at all until he has served 2½ years without punishment." After four years the *Daily Express* and a few other dailies are allowed; so that the idea is, apparently, that at the end of four years of mental stagnation, even the *Daily Express* will be palatable. Then, he adds, "All dailies and periodicals tending to Left politically are strictly barred." Of course, they would be! The paper the *Express* serves up to its readers is just as safe for a jail as it would be for a nursery. But the finishing sentence is a gem of snobbery. It proudly reports that the *Express* goes everywhere, and that in 1934, 36 copies were taken on board the Royal Yacht at Cowes.

A long dull verbose speech by Mr. Shoran Singha at Manchester suggests that Mr. Singha preaches better than he practices. His sermon complained that "We give all too little place for silence." . . . "The East can teach us how to find God in silence." We see no objection to so excellent a moral—but Mr. Singha continued to talk for a further half hour after convincing his audience that his Silence would be Golden. We expect he intended to convince his audience of the value of silence.

Nationalism, that is, of course, insane nationalism, is just as rampant in Japan as in so many European countries. For example, a Japanese Evangelical Christian "ventured to dissent, in a public park, from the tradition of the Emperor's descent from the sun goddess. Instantly he was denounced as a national enemy, and after long imprisonment, was condemned to penal servitude." This reads quite like the old *lèse majesté* against the ex-Emperor William II., or his world-famous successor, Mr. Hitler. That the Japanese may have been just as silly in believing Christianity as in not believing in the divine descent of the Emperor is beside the point. It is intolerable that anyone should be subject to imprisonment for free speech, even if we disagree with what is said.

A religious reviewer dealing with Mr. W. Williams' *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* tells us that the author "recognizes that Bernard was first and foremost a man of God; not only a great mystic, for whom heart and mind were lost in contemplation of sacred things, but also perforce a great man of affairs, whose influence was enormous, but who was, for all that, dedicated." And St. Bernard always did what he believed to be the will of God. Yet, we are told, "the worst incident" in the life of this man of God, "was his treatment of Abelard." Bernard "made it clear, by his part in the proceedings, that he did not intend, while he was dictator of Western Christendom to allow other men to think for themselves." So Abelard "was judged infamously, not by what he said and taught, but by what his more ignorant and obscurantist opponents inferred from his teaching." There are a few more and similar admissions about "the

man of God"; but most people, who read the story of Heloise and Abelard and the part St. Bernard played, must wonder where exactly the "beautiful" and "pure" story of Christianity comes in?

God gets worried by some queer requests. God can surely allow East Ham to decide for itself the comparatively insignificant decision as to whether East Ham pubs close at ten or ten-thirty. But a Mass Prayer Meeting was held at East Ham Central Hall to advise God to use his influence to secure the earlier hour. The Bishop of Barking and a host of dissenting clergy loudly appealed to the Creator of Worlds, Divine Counter of Human Hairs, and Saviour of Sparrows, to consider the critical fate of East Ham Beershops. Their prayer was answered, God coerced the magistrates who supported the opposition to the vile proposals of the only parties concerned. We are surprised that the Devil had even heard of East Ham. As God "created" the place, He must next be besought to end its destitution, bad housing, and other amenities of this salubrious suburb.

We have often heard that the Devil is responsible for all the divisions in the Christian Church: The joke is that Christians who believe this always believe that THEIR sect is different. The Rev. Norman Upright, addressing Birmingham Methodists, assured them that "The Ark of God was not altogether in human hands, Methodism had come down to them, not merely from their fathers, but from God." We willingly admit that all the contradictory sects come equally from the same God who founded Catholicism, etc., etc. It is so logical to imagine an All-wise God deliberately inventing rival religions to give hundreds of different interpretations to the Divine Message.

It is very, very amusing to find Dr. O'Donovan, that stout champion of superstition and credulity, who is fortunately debarred for the present from interfering in the name of the Pope, in the House of Commons, declaring that "England could be Catholic in two generations, if opportunities were seized in education." He thinks that "all the positions in the Civil Service and professions" would be available then to Catholic children—properly taught, naturally. Let the priest have full power in education, and everybody would then be bound to believe in saints, purgatory, Mass, and all the other divine things which form part of Roman Catholicism. Nobody would even venture a tiny doubt! What hopeless nonsense. Why, in Fr. Leycester King's book *A Way to End the Leakage*, he admits that a million Catholics have given up their religion in this country. Were they not taught by priests?

The Rev. H. H. V. de Candole has discovered that "God's dealing with man may be described as a drama in three acts." The first is entitled "Creation." It is laid in Eden, and "is bright with hope." The second is "overcast with tragedy." "God's purpose has been thwarted and overthrown." This obviously means that, in this drama, God somehow is *not* all-powerful. Act III. is, of course, "Redemption." God managed to get his own back, so to speak, "at a cost, indeed to himself, the cost of the Cross." And the proof that it was Redemption is that "the saints bear evidence to it." Naturally, the principal *dramatis personae* is Christ, the Son of God, made Man; and everybody is expected to ask as the drama unfolds, "How far am I letting Christ redeem me?" And this kind of drivel was actually preached in St. Paul's Cathedral a week or so back!

Everybody laughs at, say, a cinema travel picture, showing a native witch-doctor blessing some ridiculous totem pole or idol. Yet the *Universe* solemnly describes without the slightest twitter, the "blessing" of the "Statues of the Sacred Heart and of Our Lady Immaculate, by Mr. Eric Gill," at Ratcliffe College, by Bishop McNulty. Is it possible for any sane person to distinguish between the two witch-doctors and their "blessing"?

In the same Catholic journal (for February 7), there is a striking headline which says "Mgr. Hinsley Rejects the New School Proposals." It is a pity, of course, that the Government did not immediately throw out its Bill and go in sackcloth and ashes for having incurred Mgr. Hinsley's displeasure. However, in the issue for February 21, we are informed that the "Hierarchy welcomes the measure as a step in the right direction," while one point in Mgr. Hinsley's latest speech is that "We do *not* summarily reject the Bill before Parliament." This beautiful consistency reminds us of the Bible, where, though it may definitely say something *is* in one part, it just as definitely says it is *not* in another part; and therefore proves that the Bible is God's own Unchanging Word for Evermore.

Archbishop Hinsley adds that he has "declared that the Bill now before Parliament is a step in the right direction designed to further the betterment of education," so that's all right. But, of course, what he wants are "Catholic schools for Catholic children taught by Catholic teachers, and under due Catholic control—all the time." Well, why should he expect the majority of people in this country who are not Catholics to pay for that? Let Catholics themselves pay for the religious training they wish to give their own children—in their own time. The education, the only fair and just education which should be given in all State-aided schools ought to be purely secular. That is the fair solution of the problem—and it is bound to come in time.

It may come as a surprise to sensible people, but the *Daily Express* (and presumably other "national" papers) simply dare not give up the astrological predictions which have now become an important part of so many of its readers' lives. Miss Molly Castle has written a striking article on the subject. It is entitled: "One day we left out the horoscope—and then the telephone began to ring. . . ." So very pathetic, is it not? And this, remember, is in an age of science and discovery.

Miss Castle complains that nobody seemed to mind if her shopping article was omitted or the film notes, or the city or boxing news. No; only when the daily horoscope was missing. Not that she is on the side of the scoffers. As she rightly points out, "the study of the stars has outlived religions"—but whether this is in favour of astrology, or religion, or common-sense, is not altogether clear. Moreover, "the interest in horoscopy in America is more surprising than it is in this country." Oh, yeah! But then America has also given us the Shakers, the complete Fundamentalist, the Mormon, the gangster—and even a President who never told a lie. Why does not somebody now present us with the *Science* of divination from tea-leaves?

The Methodist parson, Dolan, who gave evidence in the recent Mosley libel action, is boasting that although he once was a wicked revolutionist he is now saved and full of the Holy Ghost. His part in the National Unemployed Workers' Committee consisted, he tells us, of "taking a prominent part in the disturbances in Hyde Park." He claims, no doubt with equal veracity, that he belonged to "an organization that planned the assassination of various personalities throughout the world." His must have been a bad case, for he wants us to think (in his own words):—

A really bad and unsatisfactory life has been absolutely and definitely changed to a complete life of usefulness and good citizenship, by the cleansing power of Christ who died on Calvary that I, and the likes of me, might be saved.

As the *Methodist Recorder* adds to these revelations (with no apparent satire or even the mildest sense of humour): "the days of miracles are not over"!!! And even Ananias is not unrepresented in this strange world of ours.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

EDITORIAL :

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. G. BURDON.—It would be a scurvy return for all the kind wishes expressed on our behalf not to exercise as much care as is possible. Thanks for your high opinion of our work.

L. H. BORRILL.—Thanks for article. Shall appear.

M. HERVEY.—We wrote as we felt, and we see no reason why any person of intelligence or moderate courage should have any fear of death. Regret, yes, because there is very much we would wish to do, and we hope to put in some good work yet.

F. J. CORINA.—We are pleased to hear of the success of the Bradford Branch. Where the work is steadily sustained some measure of success may be always counted on.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Cohen received your telegram, and much appreciates the motive that lies behind it. He regretted very much the circumstances that compelled his absence from the Annual Dinner. The occasion was in his mind. But there is a next year.

For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 38.

GLASGOW, NEWCASTLE AND NELSON BRANCHES OF N.S.S., AND PAILSWORTH SECULAR SCHOOL.—Mr. Cohen greatly appreciates the messages of sympathy and appreciation received. He hopes he deserves at least some of the kind things that are said.

D.P.S.—Next week.

THE Benevolent Fund of the N.S.S. acknowledges £1 from A.W. with many thanks.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A. W., 208.; A. F. Bullock, 108.

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

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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

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

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

I regard the Church as the basic principle of immortality in the world, and the most prolific source of pauperism, of crime, and of injustice to women.

Matilda Joslyn Gage.

SPECIAL

I AM writing this from home, having left the hospital on February 29. So far my recovery has been rapid, but there is now a period of convalescence before me during which, while *feeling* well, I have to act with great care, just as though I were very ill. My medical readers will understand this, and if they also understand me they will know how irksome the situation is; particularly as I am subjected to Home Office orders every hour, and dictatorial decrees several times a day. Still decrees may be cancelled, and orders carried out in an unexpected manner.

Meanwhile I can write. I am again writing a number of paragraphs, and commencing with this issue the "Views and Opinions," which have, I am pleased to say, become such a feature of the paper, will be continued regularly—unless nature plays me another scurvy trick.

And, once again, I want to thank the hospital doctors and nurses who behaved, not merely with skill, but with such unbroken kindness and patience, and who by their many thoughtful acts—not in the bond—made my stay in hospital such an agreeable one. Many of my fellow-patients also deserve a word of recognition and thanks for the many little things done for me.

So soon as I can manage it, I hope to get two or three weeks away at the seaside, so that I may get in as good as trim as possible for the Conference.

This is the last bulletin I shall issue. I write this one because the flow of kindly and sympathetic letters I have had demand some recognition, and this—apart from keeping on with the work that has won me much esteem and affection—is the most convenient way in which that recognition can be made. But I am getting better, and the work goes on.

C.C.

Sugar Plums

Whatever may be said about the King's recent speech to the Empire, there is one point which stands out very strikingly. It is simply that, though speaking on Sunday, the Lord's Day, he entirely omitted any mention of the Bible, of God, or of the Christian Religion; this is something to be remembered, and it is hoped that this sensible restraint will become a rule of practice. The completely secularistic note should be maintained.

Mr. Cohen's *Humanity and War* is still selling well, and it has, as we anticipated, thanks to the generosity of the friend who undertook the distribution, by post, of 2,000 copies, and also to those who have bought smaller quantities for distribution, been the means of securing new readers for the *Freethinker*. If our friends continue to lend a hand in its circulation, we see no reason why a third edition should not be issued. The subject of the essay is a live one, and is likely to remain one for some time. The certain thing is that if civilization cannot stop war, war will stop civilization.

The new *Reynold's News* is running a series of special articles dealing with "Ideas." Mr. Cohen has been asked to write, and has written, an article on "Will Religion Survive?" We believe the article will appear to-day (March 8), or on March 15. Writing the article was one of his diversions, while in hospital.

To-day (March 8) Mr. Cohen had arranged to visit Manchester, "Providence," however, willed otherwise. In the circumstances we congratulate Manchester folk on the fact that the platform will be filled by Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner—grandson of Charles Bradlaugh—who will speak on "Christianity in the Class Room." We hope to hear that the hall is packed. The lecturer, and the subject, deserves that it should be. The meeting place is the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester, and the chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. Admission is free, but there will be reserved seats at 6d. and 1s.

At the same hall (The Picture House), Mr. J. V. Shortt, President of the Liverpool Branch, will lecture in the afternoon at 3.0, on "Religion and Reason." Manchester friends should do what they can to make this meeting as widely known as possible. Mr. Shortt is a very "acceptable" lecturer on the Freethought platform.

Propagandist novels are not among our favourites—that is when the propaganda is open and avowed, for there is a sense in which all good novels are propagandist, and some novels have been powerful engines of reform. But in Mr. Eden Phillpotts' new book, *The Owl of Athene* (Hutchinson, 5s.), the propaganda overshadows everything else. It might almost be described as a novel without either character or plot. A large part of it is concerned with a discussion carried on by a Council of the Gods, presided over by Zeus, the object being a consideration of the state of man and the small use, or the bad use to which he has put the gifts the gods have given him. The discussion ranges over the neglect of Birth-Control, the abuse of acquired knowledge, the evils of war, etc., most of which might well have appeared as newspaper articles, and in themselves would make admirable reading. But in a novel they wear a strange air of unreality.

A way out of the situation, and a method of reforming mankind is at length found. The development of a species of deep-sea crab is planned, which, forsaking the sea, invades the land and threatens mankind with extinction. In sheer desperation mankind is driven to a closer co-operation which aims at securing mutual benefit, and achieves union in face of the common enemy. The final result is that the crabs are driven back to the sea, man repents the evil of his ways, and it is reported to Zeus that man "is finding his honour and his dignity in companionship, as members of one family bound together in good-willing which will lead to a liberty complete and conditioned by the paramount demand that it shall be devoted to human service." The sentiment is good enough, but there is a big gap between *The Secret Woman* and *The Owl of Athene*. We like better the Eden Phillpotts of the Dartmoor novels with their flashes of prose poetry, their keen appreciation of natural beauty and their lively studies of character. That field Mr. Phillpotts has made peculiarly his own, and his admirers, of whom we count ourself one, much prefer in him the field in which he has achieved a marked distinction.

The Glasgow Secular Society reports a very successful Second Annual Dinner. The dining hall was well filled, and it was soon evident that all present were in for an enjoyable evening. The menu was good, the speeches all reached a high level, and the musical programme was excellent. Kindly references were made to Mr. Chapman Cohen, who would have been present but for his illness, and a message of sympathy from those present was sent to the President in London. A word of praise is due to those who had the arrangements in hand, they did their work well, and helped considerably in the success of the evening.

The Brighton Branch N.S.S. is making renewed efforts to increase its activity, as well be seen by its announcements in the Lecture Notices column. Naturally the Branch is asking that local Freethinkers should come in and help strengthen the Branch and its work. The local Secretary, Mr. L. A. Miles, 23 Round Hill Crescent, Brighton, Sussex, will be pleased to give particulars of membership, etc., to would-be members and sympathizers.

Why do not magistrates and others concerned with the administration of the law make themselves acquainted with the law regarding the oath and affirmation? At Marylebone Police Court, on February 28, the question of how a Hindoo should give evidence was raised. A solicitor suggested affirmation, but the magistrate thought that affirmation was only possible where it was contrary to a person's religious belief. This is nonsense. Affirmation may be *claimed*, not requested, where there is no religious belief. Finally, the magistrate, apparently without being aware of it, dropped into the law on the subject by saying that he would accept any form of oath that was binding to the witness's religious belief. Except for the *form* of the ruling, this was quite good. But magistrates ought to make themselves acquainted with the elementary rules attaching to their office.

The witness took an oath according to his own God—the Lord Krishna. We feel certain that this God is as good an incentive to speak the truth as any other God. As an encouragement to truth-speaking the Gods appear to be pretty helpless, and all judges know it.

England in the Days of Old

THE ancient Britons so long depicted as painted barbarians, are now credited with the possession of at least a tincture of culture. When Julius Cæsar reduced Gaul to the status of a Roman province, several Celtic tribes from that country had already migrated to Britain. In fact, the then population of Northern France and Belgium was practically identical with the people then living in what is now Southern England. Cæsar sought to extend the dominion of Rome beyond the Channel so easily crossed in seasons of fair weather and favourable winds.

Cæsar's British adventures were mainly tentative, but during the succeeding century Roman influences made a deep impression on Southern Britain, even before its conquest was seriously undertaken. This is plainly apparent from the researches of Haverfield and other experts. It is evident that Roman customs, artistic and other products, and also some knowledge of Latin had penetrated the island. The arrival of the Romans in the reign of Claudius was not entirely that of an enemy invader merely bent on a campaign of plunder and annexation. As Mr. R. G. Collingwood remarks in his highly suggestive essay, *Britain and the Roman Empire*: "Nothing could be more misleading than to compare the Roman conquerors to a European force of a generation ago, plunging into the Congo basin or the Gold Coast. The tribal kings of Britain were rulers already in part Romanized, who were both able and willing to become more so, and to rule henceforth as viceroys of Claudius. No doubt this state of things was confined to the south east . . . but the fact that it did happen in the well-attested case of Cogidubnus at Chichester shows the level of civilization that had been reached in pre-Roman Britain."

The revolt of Caractacus and the later rebellion of Boudicca (Boadicea) apparently indicate that the Britons found Roman tutelage insupportable. But these upheavals seem to have been purely local in character, as they received no general support, while they find their explanation in the harsh oppressiveness of individual Roman officials, whose conduct was far different from that usually pursued. With the arrival of Agricola in 78 A.D., and his subsequent eight years of mild administration, the country enjoyed the peaceful conditions of a Roman province.

For nearly four centuries, England, in the vicinity of the Thames, through a region extending from Kent to Somerset and Dorset, with Bath as its splendid western City, prospered under Roman rule.

To the north, a large area embracing the eastern Midlands, the East Anglian districts, perhaps as far as Lincolnshire, with a western settlement in the Cotswolds retained the impress of Latin culture. Aldborough, Leicester, Wroxeter and Exeter were all outposts of civilized life, but beyond these frontiers, alike in the north and west, the island saw little or nothing of Rome's supremacy. It is a fair inference that about one half of modern England was under Roman sway although Roman roads extended over a far greater area.

Although the Government became Roman, and Roman cities and villas were everywhere in evidence, native amenities were by no means negligible. At the opening of the fourth century British builders and skilled artificers were acclaimed abroad, while one of the tribal monarchs who reigned near Colchester minted at least 40 different coins of his realm. According to Collingwood, civilized Britain's inhabitants were mainly divided into landed proprietors and peasantry, whose rights and customs were in no way infringed by the Roman authorities. Indeed, he contends that the conquest strengthened the property rights of native estate owners. But Prof. Vinogradoff, a very eminent expert, concluded, on the other hand, that the large native landholders, whether Roman settlers or British born, owed their origin to Roman law.

Druidism was Britain's native cult, but classical Paganism was powerful and, later, Christianity was introduced by missionaries, although this Eastern creed did not become the State cult in Rome until 324.

Earlier, the interblending of Roman and British art was reflected in religion. The Pagan divinities of Rome were blended with the Celtic deities and worshipped under double names. Pronounced proof of this is furnished in the military areas, but at Bath the fusion of the British Sul with the Roman Minerva (Sul-Minerva) suggests that the amalgam was general. The native cults were localized. Sul was the tutelary god of Bath, Nodens was sacred to Lydney, and so on elsewhere. The gods of Gaul were similar to those of Britain, and it appears that the local cults of Britain "differed from those of Gaul only in the same way as they differed among themselves. The military districts in Britain were a perfect museum of religious curiosities." When we remember that the legions were mainly composed of Iberians, Germans and Gauls this medley of cults is not at all surprising.

In methods of administration a composite system developed. The imperial legate and his staff of officials proclaimed the majesty of Rome, and in fiduciary matters the Imperial power was doubtless supreme. There was, however, little resembling the self-governing cities of Southern Europe where the urban community was predominant. It is true that the Romans stimulated town-growth, and that these centres of population became seats of administration. Still, they were not municipalities, as one municipal city only is known to have existed in Roman Britain, that at Verulamium (St. Alban's). The settlements at Lincoln, Colchester, Gloucester and York, may seem exceptions, but these were the abodes of pensioned legionaries and not of native self-government. Each British community managed its own affairs, and the leading men gathered in its central city to transact their public business. The towns therefore were "county capitals, each the administrative and social centre of a country district."

When the Western Roman Empire began to crumble and decay, and the Eternal City itself was menaced by the Barbarian Besieger, the few legions that remained in Britain were recalled to defend it from the foe. While Rome was the world's mistress the Scan-

dinavian and Saxon marauders who infested the Channel and the German Ocean were in large measure restrained. But now that the legions were withdrawn and the truculent Picts and Scots were stealing and destroying their neighbours' property and the Saxon pirates were harrying the coasts and river courses, the Britons stood in sore distress. In 470 the Roman Emperor Honorius had counselled the British to seek their own security if they desired to retain their integrity. But in this fifth century great changes occurred. The Teutonic tribes that invaded and settled in northern Gaul soon merged with the native peoples and became largely Romanized in consequence. But the Angles, Saxons and Jutes who sailed to England never experienced the humanizing influences of Rome. Unlike the Continent, Roman law was never received into England, as the late Prof. Maitland conclusively demonstrated. And as Collingwood cogently urges: "In spite of repeated attempts, it has never been successfully demonstrated that Anglo-Saxon England owes to Roman Britain anything tangible in the way of law, institutions, religion, or art, or that the rural or urban life of the one was in any sense a direct continuation of the rural or urban life of the other."

Prior to the close of the fourth century Romano-British culture was showing signs of decline and agrarian activities were seriously incommoded by a destructive incursion of the Picts in the reign of Valentinian.

Haverfield and others have remarked on the wide gulf that yawns for two centuries between Roman and Saxon England, as extremely little is certainly established concerning that dark interval. Yet, however unreliable they may be, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the statements of Bede, Gildas and other scribes perhaps provide a dim outline of the period. From these sources we gather that the Romans occasionally returned to help the Britons in their conflicts with the marauders until the year 446. Later, when the Britons were driven to desperation by the invaders they themselves defeated them with great slaughter. Then ensued a season of peace, during which the Britons wallowed in luxury and wantonness, while neglecting their defences.

In 449 arrived Hengist and Horsa, whose aid had been employed against the Picts, who had returned to their ravaging expeditions. But the Saxons liked the country so well that they decided to settle there. Hence began a conflict which, according to the *Chronicle*, was continued till the sixth century.

This story, taught as reliable history in our youth, is now largely discredited by scholars. The story that the Britons were either exterminated or else driven to the recesses of Wales and Cornwall needs rectification. For the earliest Saxon immigrants seem to have arrived and settled in small communities in all parts of England, and these settlements were mainly peaceful. Agriculture was the chief occupation, and there was land to spare for all. In many districts Saxon and Briton probably dwelt in harmony together. Crawford's maps of Salisbury Plain show British and Saxon homesteads, although he does not consider them contemporaneous. Still, Dr. Beddoe "traced a large Neolithic survival in the modern population of Wiltshire." This at least suggests that the earlier inhabitants were not extirpated, but mingled their blood with the newcomers.

T. F. PALMER.

One great lesson that life teaches is that while it is never singular to be wicked, it is usually wicked to be singular.—Chapman Cohen.

Things Worth Knowing*

XXXI.

THE PATHOLOGY OF RELIGION

MEN in many lands and in many ages have experienced certain extraordinary emotions and entertained certain extraordinary ideas, which unable to account for by reference to the ordinary form of experience, they have set down to the direct action of a powerful spirit or deity working on their minds and even entering into and taking possession of their bodies; and in this excited state—for violent excitement is characteristic of these manifestations—the patient believes himself to be possessed of supernatural knowledge and of supernatural power. This real or supposed mode of apprehending a divine spirit and entering into communication with it, is commonly and appropriately called inspiration. The phenomenon is familiar to us from the example of the Hebrew nation, who believed that their prophets were thus inspired by the deity, and that their sacred books were regularly composed under the divine afflatus. The belief is by no means singular, indeed it appears to be world-wide; for it would be hard to point to any race of men among whom instances of such inspiration have not been reported; and the more ignorant and savage the race the more numerous, to judge by the reports, are the cases of inspiration. Volumes might be filled with examples, but through the spread of information about the lower races in recent years the topic has become so familiar that I need not stop to illustrate it by examples. I will merely say that among savages the theory of inspiration or possession is commonly invoked to explain all abnormal mental states, particularly insanity or conditions of mind bordering on it, so that persons more or less crazed in their wits, and particularly hysterical or epileptic patients, are for that very reason thought to be peculiarly favoured by the spirits, and are therefore consulted as oracles, their wild and whirling words passing for the revelations of a higher power, whether a ghost or a god, who considerately screens his too dazzling light under a thick veil of dark sayings and mysterious ejaculations. I need hardly point out the very serious dangers which menace any society where such theories are commonly held and acted upon. If the decisions of a whole community in matters of the gravest importance are left to turn on the wayward fancies, the whims and vagaries of the insane or semi-insane, what are likely to be the consequences to the commonwealth? What, for example, can be expected to result from a war entered upon at such dictation and waged under such auspices? Are cattle-breeding, agriculture, commerce and all the arts of life on which a people depend for their subsistence, likely to thrive when they are directed by the ravings of epilepsy or the drivellings of hysteria? . . . The history of savage and barbarous tribes, could we follow it throughout, might furnish us with a thousand warning instances of the fatal effects of carrying out this crude theory of inspiration to its logical conclusion; and if we hear less than might be expected of such instances, it is probably because the tribes who consistently acted up to their beliefs have thereby wiped themselves out of existence. They have perished, the victims of their folly and left no record

* 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.

behind. I believe that historians have not yet reckoned sufficiently with the disastrous influence which this worship of insanity—for it is often nothing less—has exercised on the fortunes of peoples and on the development or decay of their institutions.

To a certain extent the evil has provided its own remedy. For men of strong heads and ambitious temper, perceiving the exorbitant influence which a belief in inspiration places in the hands of the feeble-minded, have often feigned to be similarly afflicted, and, trading on their reputation for imbecility, or rather inspiration, have acquired an authority over their fellows which though they have often abused it for vulgar ends, they have sometimes exerted for good, as for example by giving sound advice in matters of public concern, applying salutary remedies for the sick, and detecting and punishing crime . . . and to cement that respect for law and order which is essential to the stability of society, and without which any community must fall to pieces like a house of cards. These great services have been rendered to the cause of civilization and progress by the class of men who in primitive society are variously known as medicine-men, magicians, sorcerers, soothsayers, and so forth. Sometimes the respect which they have gained by the exercise of their profession has won for them political as well as spiritual or ghostly authority; in short, from being simple medicine-men or sorcerers they have grown into chiefs and kings. When such men, seated on the throne of state, retain their old reputation for being the vehicles of a divine spirit, they may be worshipped in the character of gods as well as revered as in the capacity of kings; and thus exerting a two-fold sway over the minds of men they possess a most potent instrument for elevating or depressing the fortunes of their worshippers and subjects. In this way the old savage notion of inspiration or possession gradually develops into the doctrine of the divinity of kings, which after a long period of florescence dwindles away into the modest theory that kings reign by divine right, a theory familiar to our ancestors not long ago, and perhaps not wholly obsolete among us even now.

The Belief in Immortality,
by SIR JAMES FRAZER, Vol. I., pp. 14-17.

Facts, Faith and Fate

NEW YEAR'S EVE and nearly midnight! All around is mirth, jollity, conviviality; dances, balls and parties are keyed up to the highest pitch of excitement; it is the one night of the year when one really looks to tomorrow. Almost the whole civilized world awaits the stroke of twelve to usher in the "glad" New Year with its hopes and its chances.

In a humble suburban flat sits a stricken family; "Mother" is dying of the "dread disease" medical science cannot conquer; no hope here, only stark realization and a vague antagonism towards everything.

Through the half-open window comes the voice of a preacher intoning the watch-night service; someone has the wireless going; presently on the still air can be heard a choir and then peoples' voices in prayer.

The strain is too much. One breaks and says many things that would shock a professing Christian to the core of his being. Presently, when passions are cooled, the conversation turns rationally and calmly on Death, Divine Visitation and Equity. . . .

A hard-living, vicious (in its true meaning) black-guard will be walking down the street and one day

drop dead. He is none the worse for his evil life or for his sudden death; his relatives suffer nothing but the shock; if he has no children, legitimate or otherwise, he cheats the alleged Divine Plan of "the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children even of the third and fourth generation."

A good soul who has done harm to nobody, and possibly a lot of good to many, so often dies a slow lingering death with much agony, driving the relatives frantic with anguish and fear.

The insane, maddening part of the whole nasty business is the attitude of the devout. Smug and inhuman, they sit back when confronted with a foul disease and say: "You can do nothing, it is the will of God, it is all planned." They have 1336 mentalities in 1936.

The ancients shunned the lepers and passed them by as accursed of God; even to-day in the backwoods of civilization a grievous affliction is regarded as marking the displeasure of a god; witness the rites and customs of some tribes in Africa.

We are not in a position to sneer at these people, while we have similar examples in our midst.

The application of leeches and blood letters marked the beginning of the revolt; now medical science has, at least with some of us, changed our outlook.

Religion confines itself to the abstract and to results; there is, however, a definite metaphysical chemical reason or cause for the "old shapes of foul disease"; when medical science has mastered that part of its job the last buttress supporting the idea of divine visitation will have been pulled down.

All through religious teaching runs the idea of suffering, of putting up with and of accepting the lot that "Fate" has, in fickle mood, allotted.

In political religion this is even more obvious; it seeks to placate the underdog, to reconcile him with his miserable existence and to bolster up the *status quo* wherein that existence will be perpetuated. It is a remarkable coincidence, to put it mildly, that all down History the dispensers of this doctrine have done pretty well for themselves. The early prelates preached to the serfs and dined with the princes; their modern counterparts condole with the have nots, urge them to bear their burden like men for "great will be their reward in heaven," and draw their position, wealth and security from the haves.

I believe in what? I believe in Man's ultimate mastery over the facts and troubles of his short span here on Earth. In times of sadness or of tragedy that gives comfort. Grip on to something real, go forward, help progress each in our humble way! From the dawn of History man has gone on, he has carved a complex society from reluctant Nature, he has constructed great monuments—in engineering and science—to his ingenuity and has built up great institutions.

He is, in spasms, destructive in his madness, spending vast sums on munitions and engines of war to kill millions, and denying paltry amounts to save lives from the ravages of disease.

The insanity will pass; Man, the greatest of the animals will win through. His life here is entirely in his own hands; only the force of circumstance, his own weakness or insanity and the power of superstition hold him back; those powers are slowly but effectively being pushed back. He has no master to drive him hither and thither no burden to carry, save that of his own making, no masters to whip him save those of his own creation and continued tolerance. That is why he is just one step above the animals.

We cannot support on modern or logical grounds the mumbo-jumbo mouthings of the would-be pious; the awfulness of sitting watching one in agony, help-

less, is not one whit alleviated by theories of divine visitation or platitudes of comfort from glib priests; as well copy the old-timers and have a rabbit's foot in the waistcoat pocket.

Can we trace the sin back? Can we not hope that just as we have birth-control despite religious opposition, we shall shortly have some control over nasty death?

But it is not Christian-like to cheat the element of pain and suffering. We must endure!

A. F. WILLIAMS.

Methods of Attack

THE contentions of Christian Fundamentalists on the one flank, and of Modernists on the other flank, require, I think, more and more a *differentiation* of Freethought methods of attack against each party, especially the Eddington and Jeans variety of Christian apologetists. While against the former the mythological and anthropological line of arguments are adequate and decisive, the Modernists' God, as Professor Leuba points out (*God or Man?* p. 267), is utterly different from the fundamentalist conceptions, and so require a different technique of dealing with. This new method, which will have to be more and more stressed in the near future, is, I think, *the logical analysis*.

I propose here the following techniques for the readers of the *Freethinker* to try out and report on the relative usefulness of each in dealing with Modernists' contentions.

Professor Rudolph Carnap's (Prague) method: "He, who wants to ask himself or another about the meaning of a term, to subject it to a logical analysis, must ascertain: (1) In what kind of propositions does this term appear? (2) From what propositions do *such* propositions follow, and what propositions do follow from *them*?" (From a paper read at the Congress of Philosophy, Prague, 1934).

Professor Moritz Schlick's method (Vienna): He who inquires after the meaning of a term, must "precisely ascertain: (1) What is meant by the various propositions, in which this term appears?" (From a paper read at the same); (2) "What are the conditions, under which the proposition involved would be confirmed, resp. the conditions, under which it would be negated. By these qualifications, and by these only, is the meaning of the proposition defined." (*Erkenntnis*, Vol. III., 1932, p. 6).

My method: He, who wants to make sure that a certain term has a meaning, must firstly ascertain, whether it is a designation for a thing, a quality, a relation, or for a behavior (process); in case of a thing designation (to which the last three are ultimately reducible) the inquirer must check the explicit or implicit definition of it by the following scheme of logical possibilities: A. The Whole: (a) The Universe—(b) everywhere (c) ever. B. The Part: (a) something—(b) somewhere—(c) sometime. C. Negation of the Part: (a) Nothing—(b) nowhere—(c) never. As there exists no outside choice, applying one of these terms necessarily implies also the two others of the *same* category, while any two terms applied to one subject from *different* categories, would produce an internal contradiction.

By the last method everyone can neatly perceive that the theological and philosophical terms as: God or Supreme Being or Creative Power or Providence or Absolute or Vital Force, etc., who (Ba) are believed to be immaterial (Cc) and eternal (Ac), or again such term as: Soul or Spirit (Ba), which is supposed to be also immaterial and immortal (*non-existing* middle between Ac and Bc!)—are after all nothing but sheer nonsense.

G. S. SMELTERS.

Riga, Latvia.

To Chapman Cohen

(President of the National Secular Society).

SOUND the trumpets, roll the drums,
Back to the fight our Captain comes,
From nursing grievous wounds;
Now that his strength has been renewed,
New courage has our ranks imbued,
And joy which knows no bounds.

Sometimes it takes a loss to show
A fact which the discerning know,
That leading men are few;
And rarer still is he who leads
The fight against the foolish creeds
Of Christian, Muslim, Jew.

We had no loss, but just a fright,
For to the struggle for the right
And superstition's end,
Has come again, to take command
As Captain of our Freethought band,
Our leader and our friend.

So now, great Captain, lead us on;
We have done well, but not yet won
The Citadel of Lies:
Till on the Church's ramparts high
We plant our flag, you must not die;
Not yet that standard flies.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

INTELLIGENCE SURPASSED!

SIR,—In your "Sugar Plums" of February 22 issue, you comment upon a Lashfield Headmaster's idea of patriotism.

In the Glasgow press recently the Rector of the Glasgow High School—one of the high lights of learning in the West of Scotland—was reported as saying "the men we admire are not the men with the big brains and brilliant intellect," but "the common man who, without any great intelligence . . . can do his job and do it well."

If this is the considered attitude of our educational experts, what hope is there in experts?

R. ERNEST WAY.

Obituary

MRS. EDWARD SNELLING

It is with sincere regret that we have to announce the death of Mrs. Edward Snelling, eldest daughter of William Barralet, who passed away in her sleep on February 22, in her 80th year. From her youth she had been an enthusiastic Freethinker, and among her intimate friends were Mrs. Hetherington, Edward Truelove, Joseph Wheeler, Mrs. H. Law, and most of the older Freethinkers. She was for many years a member of the South Place Society. The cremation took place at Golders Green, where Mr. F. G. Gould of the South Place Society paid a loving tribute to her memory. We offer most sincere sympathy to Mr. Snelling in his great loss.

SARAH DOBSON

FREETHOUGHT, and the Birmingham Branch have lost a loyal keen worker by the death of Sarah Dobson, which took place on Feb. 23, at the age of 55 years. She really never recovered from an operation which she underwent some time previously. The name of Dobson is very well known in Birmingham Freethought circles, and for

many years mother, father, and Sarah took an active and prominent part in the activities of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S., the daughter at one time acting as secretary to the Branch. The cremation took place on February 26, and as one would expect, who knew the personality of Sarah Dobson, a large number of relatives and friends were present to pay a final tribute. A Secular Service was conducted by Mr. C. H. Smith of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S.

FRANCES RACHEL CARTER

ON February 25, there died in hospital in Manchester, Frances Rachel Carter, wife of Mr. Carter of Preston, after considerable suffering. Although not connected with the N.S.S. the family have held Freethought convictions for some years, and at their request a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. Clayton on March 2 at the Manchester Crematorium. Our condolences go out to Mr. Carter and his two sons in their sad bereavement.

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, Rev. A. E. Taylor-Davis, M.A., H.C.F.—"Is the Universe Governed by Chance?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Har Dayal, M.A., Ph. D.—"East and West"

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, March 9, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Mohammedanism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs. A. Saran—"The Church Conflict in Germany."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Rooms, 70 Grange Park Road, Leyton, E.10): 7.30, Fredk. C. W. Dowson, M.A.—"Problems of Education."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level): 8.0, Saturday, March 7, Messrs. Byrne and Miles—"Crusade for Truth." The Level, 4.0, Sunday, March 8, Messrs. Miles and Byrne—"Bible Absurdities."

INDOOR

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street): 7.30, Impromptu Debate—"Is the Infliction of Punishment for Wrong-doing Justifiable?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Tavern Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.15, Mr. W. H. Sissons—"The Passing of the Gods."

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (164 Elm Grove, The Labour Institute, Brighton) 7.0, Mr. L. Anton Miles—"Christianity and Modern Knowledge."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 7.0, Mrs. M. Whitefield—"What Freethought Means to Me."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Sunday, March 8, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Myth Theory" No. 3.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. Service—"War and its Causes."

GREAT HARWOOD (Labour Hall): 7.30, Sunday, March 8, Mr. J. Clayton—"Religion and Woman."

(Continued on page 159)

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(Continued from page 158)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. C. Killick Millard, M.D., D.Sc.—"Voluntary Euthanasia."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Cooper's Hall, 12 Shaw Street, Liverpool): 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders—"The Menace of Catholic Action."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Labour Hall, Grange Road): 7.0, Sunday, March 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HETTON (Club Hall): 8.0, Wednesday, March 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street, Sunderland): Mr. Dalkin—"Religion and Morals."

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THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations; it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

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

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Occupation

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