

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

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Views and Opinions

The King and His Oath

SINCE the passing of the Oaths Amendment Act of 1888, the religious oath may be dispensed with, if desired, on every occasion where an oath is usually demanded. This dispensation is not at the good-will of the judge or any other official who presides, it is the absolute legal right of any witness, or any public official, of any member of the public who cares to demand the right to affirm. In passing this Act Parliament declared that between speaking the truth, and the faithful discharge of one's duty and religion there was no necessary connexion. If a man wished to ask the help of God for either of the purposes named, or if he wished to call God's vengeance on him if he failed in either direction, he might do so. But if a man had sufficient strength of character to feel that he was independent of such help he was at liberty to dispense with it.

But there is still one office in the State to which a profession of religious belief, and of a special religious belief, is considered necessary. This is the office of King or Queen. The monarch must profess a particular form of religious belief; if he forsakes this before he is called to the throne his title lapses. If after, his office becomes vacant. The monarch is the one person who cannot choose his own religion, and who cannot even marry into any religion he pleases. The wife or the husband must be of the religion decreed by law. In this respect the King has less liberty than the coal-heaver. The rights of conscience are not for him, or, at least if he exercises them he does so at his peril.

The King must not merely swear he is a Protestant, and will defend the English Church, he must swear to protect the Presbyterian Church (in Scotland) although he cannot very well believe in the complete doctrines of both churches. He does not take under his protection any other Church or creed, as such, although there are a great variety of both in the Em-

pire over which he rules. They must be content with being protected against assault, which is all that any just-minded body of people would desire.

* * *

What is Protestantism ?

On Tuesday, November 3, Edward VIII. attended the opening of Parliament and took the customary accession oath, with regard to religion :—

I do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God testify and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and that I will, according to the true intent of the enactments which secure the Protestant succession to the throne of my realm, uphold and maintain the same enactments to the best of my power according to law.

Now it is not for me to say whether the King is a faithful Protestant or not, although it is permissible to wonder in the case of a man whose religion goes with his office, and which religion was selected for him by Parliament several centuries before he was born. Of most people it is true that their religion is due to the union of a geographical accident with a family adventure, and it is certainly true in the case of a King whose religion is settled by Act of Parliament before he existed. If the King had belonged to the Spanish Royal Family and had been born in Spain, he would have been swearing to uphold the Roman Catholic faith. As he is born in England he is swearing to uphold the Protestant faith. I do not say that the King is not sincere in his oath, only that the sincerity is in its object the consequence of a geographical accident. No one can logically think more of the King on account of this oath. There are millions of his subjects who would think more highly of him if he declined to take it.

The language of the oath is plain, but its meaning is very obscure. What is the Protestantism to which the King declares he is faithful? Legally, I suppose it should be the Protestantism of the State Church. But the State Church is governed by the Thirty-nine Articles, and they, whoever drew them up, receive their authority from Parliament: and while Convocation may suggest, it is Parliament alone that can confirm. At law the only form of religion known is that of the Church of England. Other Churches are only so many religious bodies which are given the protection the law gives to other lawful associations, with privileges such as relief from rates.

But Parliament which makes can also unmake. It can change the form of the Thirty-nine Articles, it can disestablish the Church altogether, and it can vote that the accession oath referring to Protestantism is no longer necessary. Now suppose that these things, none of which is unlikely, even though not probable at the present moment, were to transpire. Does anyone imagine that the King as a "faithful Protestant" would head a revolution? Everyone knows he would not. As a constitutional monarch

he would sign the decree that had been constitutionally drawn, and he is as much under the obligation, legal and moral, to obey alterations in the constitution as any among us. So it looks as though the King will, as King, remain faithful to the Protestantism that is fathered by Parliament.

The Oath

The only clear thing about the oath is that it is anti-Catholic. The legal insistence that the King should be a Protestant and that there should be a Protestant succession, dates from the time when there was some fear that a Roman Catholic might sit upon the throne, and so secure the supremacy of the Roman Church in this country. I agree that this would be a disaster, greater than that of Protestantism being in power. That is a choice of admittedly two evils, but there is a way out. I will come to that in a moment; meanwhile we may note the implied indictment of Christianity in what has been said. Catholics and Protestants are both Christians. They worship the same God, and hold substantially the same religious belief. But Catholics complain that the Protestants, in consequence of their religion will not act justly towards their Catholic fellow-countrymen. Protestants say they are compelled to act as they do because no one can trust Catholics to act properly to Protestants once the former are in power. But whichever is right the same conclusion follows—it is the belief in religion, Catholic or Protestant, that leads to what each side brands as an injustice. The fundamental unity of social life is broken up by this intrusion of religion. The King is called upon to profess he is a Protestant, for fear he should publicly profess Catholicism. If he is that in private it cannot be helped. As usual, religion prefers conformity to honesty.

A Way Out

But there is a way out. Why not abolish the accession oath altogether, Why insist on the King being a Protestant? Why not give to the King the same liberty of conscience which we claim is the right of every man? Why say that not only the present King shall be a Protestant, but all his descendants shall be Protestants also? Is the King to be the only person in the country to be debarred taking full advantage of modern thought, and to remain throughout his life shackled to a creed outworn. Why not be content to ask from the King a promise to carry out his constitutional duties, and leave him to take what religion he pleases, or go without it altogether if he feels so inclined. He certainly is likely to do the latter privately if he feels the full impact of modern thought; and he would set an example of intellectual honesty to his subjects if he did so publicly.

There is even a political aspect of the subject which would make this policy advisable. As King and Emperor he is monarch of every subject in the British Empire. But these subjects include believers in every religion under the Sun. Why this preference for Protestantism? If we take the number of Mohammedans, Buddhists, Jews, Hindoos, Freethinkers and other non-Christians, it is plain that Christianity is not the belief of anything like a majority of his subjects, and if we restrict the calculation to Protestants, and to that Protestantism represented by the Church of England, the King's religion is that of a very small minority indeed.

Still further. No profession of Protestantism is asked from judges, police, army or navy, or from any public official. Even Members of Parliament, who make and unmake the laws of the country, are asked for no profession of religious faith. Any of these may take a religious oath if he wishes to, but their simple

word of honour will do quite as well. They all swear loyalty to the King (who is legally King only so far and so long as Parliament admits the claim) some in the name of God and some without it. Yet the King, I am quite sure, feels as safe with the man who leaves God out as he does with the man who invokes God to witness his loyalty. The lives and liberties of the people rest, as a matter of fact, more with the judges of the High Courts than they do with the Royal Family; yet none of these is compelled to take a religious oath, and Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Atheists may all sit administering the law, and no one feels in danger on that account. If we can trust judges and other officials to do their duty without forcing upon them and their children a profession of a particular form of religion, why cannot we trust the King to an equal extent?

Here, in fact, is the dilemma. In a land where all forms of religious belief, are not merely tolerated, but where they are all theoretically on an equality, it is practically admitted that religion is not vital to a proper discharge of social duties. It is a confession that religion is not vital to good citizenship. When men believed that the stability of society depended upon the goodwill of the Gods the position was different. When it was believed that there was not merely a "divinity that hedged a King," but that the King was an embodiment of the deity, then it was dangerous to tolerate a professed unbeliever. But who believes these things to-day? The very man who is likely to protest against the King being relieved of this foolish oath, is the very man who will, in the next breath, tell you that everyone should be free to choose his own religion.

If I had the power I would give to Edward the Eighth the same liberty of conscience that is enjoyed by the meanest of his subjects. So long as England has a King I would see that the man was evident in the King, and not permit the King to eclipse the man. I would make it legal for the King to form his own opinions on religion, and to profess them publicly without loss of either office or status. His opinions on religion should be independent of his office; his office should be independent of his opinions on religion. I would have the King as the chief officer in the State set his subjects an example of intellectual self-respect. And, by the Lord Harry! if there is one thing that most of his subjects need it is that.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Mother Earth

(A SONNET)

ARE we then weary, that we sometimes yearn
To leave the splendour of this flashing sun;
Refreshing breezes, when the day is done;
And those fierce joys that through our pulses burn?

Is it because lithe Theories seem to spurn
Those difficult Secrets from harsh Nature won:
Looking toward a Heaven, where Heaven is none,
Or on whose Ivory Gates stands *No Return!*

Oh, let us love this brief, brief life of ours,
Ere we to full Oblivion may be hurled!
Let us love Winters and unseasonable Springs,
And cease aspiring for Angelic Wings,—
Love all the pagantry of this magnificent world,
Ere sinking to the Dust . . . though decked with
flow'rs!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.
Nigeria.

Man or Monstrosity

"What gasconading rascals those saints must have been if they first boasted these exploits or invented these miracles."—*Charlotte Brontë*.

"The creed of Christendom is gradually melting away, like a Northern iceberg floating into Southern seas."
G. W. Foote.

PROTESTANT Christians are supposed to be averse from saints. But, like so many other things connected with religion, this is far more accurate in theory than in fact. For there is one "saint" who is treated with some degree of respect in this country. An alleged portrait of "Saint George" is on the gold coinage, some of the banknotes, and one of the markings on the "Union Jack" flag represents the "cross" of this pious paragon. Or, rather, there is a design on the coins of a man on horseback, apparently killing a militant cockroach with a carving-knife, and this flamboyant figure is supposed to be the patron-saint of a Protestant country.

It may, therefore, be of some little interest to many to be informed who this particular George was, of his association with English history, and of his connexion with religion. It is with regret that one finds the saint's biography is unpleasant reading, quite unsuited for the perusal of young persons, and the youthful "buds" of the Primrose League. Historians agree in disclosing a pitiable story of a misspent life. For Edward Gibbon identified "Saint George" with George of Cappadocia, who may have been a saint, but most certainly was a scoundrel. Here is what Emerson says of him in his *English Traits*:—

George of Cappadocia born at Epiphania, in Cilicia, was a low parasite, who got a lucrative contract to supply the army with bacon. A rogue and informer, he got rich, and was forced to run from justice. He saved his money, embraced Arianism, collected a library, and got promoted by a faction to the episcopal throne of Alexandria. When Julian came, A.D. 361, George was dragged to prison. The prison was burst open by the mob, and George was lynched as he deserved. And this precious knave became in good time Saint George of England, patron of chivalry, emblem of victory and civility, and the pride of the best blood of the modern world.

A cynic might liken the history of this patron-saint of England to a purple page from the Old Testament, or an extract from the *Newgate Calendar*. Indeed, some pious writers, realizing that this story was a bad piece of Christian Evidence and acutely sensitive to the ethical drawbacks of this saint's career, have made desperate attempts to whitewash the life of this holy man. They have asserted that George was not George, but another man of the same name. And the alternative and more respectable George, who is said to have suffered martyrdom under Diocletian, was a still more extraordinary, and even a ludicrous figure. This other "George" was, we are told, killed three times, coming to life again on two of the occasions. Among the things that happened to him were that he was roasted, beaten with iron rods, decapitated, and then exposed to wild animals. Coming to life again, he was set on a wooden horse, and a fire kindled under him. No less than sixty nails were driven in his head, and he was sawn in four pieces. These were thrown into boiling pitch. Again he came to life, and he was finally forced into heaven on a wheel spiked with swords. The chief exploit that we connect this shadowy saint with is the slaying of a dragon. This is the one incident that is confessed, even by his warmest admirers, to be a mere solar myth. It is, in the last analysis, just another version of Apollo and the Python, Belleroph-

on and the Chimera, Perseus and the Sea Monster. This dissolves this precious saint into a solar myth. It also disposes of him as the Christian crusader, champion of chivalry, and patron-saint of England, and one in the confidence of "Our Lord."

What has all this Oriental nonsense to do with England, or even with common sense? Only in one fable is he described as having even visited this country. If patriotic English Christians really believe that the laws of Nature are affected by saintly intervention, of what use whatever is this spectral and scoundrelly saint? Is he not, in any event, one of the patron-saints of Austria and Germany as well as of England?

It is pretty plain that this legend of Saint George is but a classic myth with a fanciful veneer of Christian theology. And those people who would readily resent such an impeachment must remember that men who could fake gospels by the dozen could also write lying histories of saints by the score. The so-called "Apocryphal Gospels" and the alleged "Lives of the Saints" prove it beyond all reasonable doubt. And the tricksters who still arrange the annual Easter celebration of the "sacred fire" at Jerusalem, and the annual swindle of the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples, are the descendants of the humbugs who penned the fictitious accounts of the Gospels and the *Acta Sanctorum*.

There is no getting out of the dilemma. Whether we identify the patron-saint of England with the scoundrelly army-contractor of Alexandria, or the other hero of a fairy-tale, he is equally unedifying and unsatisfactory. Edward Gibbon, he it noted, identified "Saint George" with George of Cappadocia. As he was writing history, and not collecting fairy tales, the great historian was justified. And if this particular "saint" moulted many a feather in the process, he emerges from the ordeal as a man not unlike the late-lamented Horatio Bottomley, and not as a monstrosity. Saint George, in either version, is one of the most complete and fabricated shams from which greedily credulous folk ever sought to extract religious sentiment. His story may appear as reasonable and true as the Gospels to the unlettered, and often unsoaped, members of the Greek Church in Eastern Europe, and to the half-educated Romanists on the Continent, but what concern have decent, educated folk in England with the infamous bacon-curer of Alexandria, or with the central figure in an old-world and old-time solar myth? Every school-boy should know that Saint George's vogue came to England with the Crusades, though the legend itself was known long before. As a Protestant country, we do not need a patron-saint at all, and Roman Catholic ecclesiastics must rub their hands with glee when they recall that one of their own saints still figures on our gold coinage, banknotes, and in the design of our national flag.

Custom makes cowards of most people, but it is no use pretending in the twentieth century that the bulk of people in a country with some degree of civilization can be made really to care for a hypocritical and meaningless blend of classic myth and long-deceased Cappadocian. Why not throw over the whole silly farce? So far from recommending any otherwise sane citizen to wear an artificial rose in honour of a still more manufactured and artificial saint, we suggest that it would be a kindness to strew the poppy of oblivion over the grave of the get-rich-quick army-contractor of old Alexandria. For the so-called patron-saint of England, like so many sacred heroes, is a sham, a delusion, and a snare. On the whole, we prefer the notoriety whom some of his constituents used to call "Oratorio" Bottomley.

MIMNERMUS.

The Scientist With a Wand

(Continued from page 709)

CONSIDER the situation between doctor and public. The layman welcomes, though he professes to criticize, the fact that the doctor has all his dealings with disease, in foreign languages. That they are dead languages seems rather to enhance their reputation in the eyes of the patient; there is a suggestion of quality about falling ill in Latin, and recovering in Greek. Bold indeed would be the man who faced an operation in English; for he would feel that he had passed out of the hands of the surgeon and fallen into those of the plumber. Illness, too, is made more bearable in the classics. How much more humiliating, for instance, to fall ill with Chicken Pox than with Varicella, which is the classical term for the same thing, or to have one's ailment labelled "Mumps" when it could be called "Epidemic Parotitis," without adding anything to one's suffering.

Just as the layman secretly likes his doctor's unintelligible language, so he welcomes his illegible handwriting. Assuredly that doctor has gone a long way to success who gives you a piece of information that you cannot understand, written in such a way that you cannot read it; and he achieves an even higher reputation if by any chance he cannot read it himself.

The young doctor, fresh from the laboratory and the lecture room, to whom the least semblance of hocus pocus is repellent, is very much given to explanations, taking a just pride in his science and feeling that its worth is to be judged by its power to conquer sickness with understanding. Such a practitioner is coldly received by the public, and when we meet him again in riper years, as often as not he has developed the full professional regalia, with its knit brows, its "hums" and "laws" and its ominous head-wagging. He is then a man of few words, letting fall from the oracular lips only the slenderest hints of information, and giving a few well-chosen directions, whose bearing upon the case remains completely obscure.

This mystery-hungry, with its consequent mystery-mongering, is the secret of success among quacks. Not only is the quack a more mysterious person than the average doctor, but his knowledge has not the disadvantage of a scientific origin. Mystery enshrouds both the man and his paraphernalia. Dr. Axel Munthe relates a revealing story in this connexion. It seems that a drive against quacks was being made in Paris somewhere about the beginning of the century. An order was issued instructing them all to appear at a certain bureau to give particulars about themselves, so that a register could be kept of their activities. One who presented himself was in a state of great agitation, and when told by an official that no harm was to be done to the quacks, replied: "But I am really one of the best qualified practitioners in Paris. Everyone, however, thinks I am a quack, and if it comes out that I am not I shall lose my livelihood."

An interesting sidelight on our thesis concerns the subject of faith. Have you noticed that, among people in general, there are only two occasions on which they talk of faith? One is when speaking of the Deity and the other of the doctor. In all other instances the word used is "confidence." We do not have faith in a plumber, a taxi-driver, a cabinet minister or a lawyer. We have confidence in them. The difference between confidence and faith is that one arises in the head and the other in the heart.

The one bases itself upon reason, the other may defy it and be all the stronger for doing so.

This atmosphere of faith, more appropriate to the medicine-man than to the physician, is yet another link with the past: and the doctor who is forced to work in it soon discovers that it is good neither for himself nor his patient. Not that the patient does not benefit from the mental suggestion derived from his faith, but this comes equally from a well-placed confidence without the accompanying evils born of blind trust. Furthermore, we must not think that, in the case of the skilful and sincere practitioner, these evils are more than counterbalanced by the freedom from criticism which his patient's trust bestows upon him, and the resulting opportunity to work the more smoothly and efficiently, for in fact a doctor finds his chief critics among the patient's relatives and friends. This truth is expressed in the witty saying of one great medical teacher to his class: "At present you are learning how to treat patients; after you qualify you, will be treating their relatives."

Thus the bedside gives us a situation in which, in any event, there is no shortage of criticism, but it is criticism of the wrong sort because it is uninformed and unscientific. No one—neither patient nor relative—has an understanding of medical matters, because such has never been implied in the relationship between the doctor and the public, with the result that we find the doctor all too frequently working between blind trust from his patient and blind suspicion from the relatives, which is to say between the Devil and the deep sea. I think you will find a growing number of doctors who would much prefer not to be objects of faith, but rather to be the recipients of a confidence they have earned. They prefer a stethoscope to a wand, a microscope to a crystal, for, when all is said and done, they know that they only use the wand and crystal when and because they have failed with the proper instruments of science.

Those readers who are in agreement with what has been said will see in it many causes to explain the relative backwardness of medical science. The public cannot have failed to notice that discoveries in medicine, for all that they have included a few of revolutionizing scope, have yet not kept pace with those in other branches of science. Doctors themselves are more painfully aware of this than the public, for they alone realize how many innovations in treatment are merely specious and how few can be deemed genuine advances. I should like, therefore, in the concluding portion of this essay to give the reader an idea of the great difficulties that beset medical research, so that he may understand more sympathetically the historic struggle with disease, and perhaps, by his understanding, rightly use some opportunity, legislative or personal, to lend a helping hand. Causes that have held back the progress of medicine are to be found deeper than any we have yet hinted at.

(To be concluded)

MEDICUS.

We should teach our children nothing which they shall ever need to unlearn; we should strive to transmit to them the best possessions, the truest thought, the noblest sentiments of the age in which we live.

Felix Adler.

Science has never sought to ally herself to civil power. . . . She has never subjected anyone to mental torment, physical torture, least of all to death, for the purpose of upholding or promoting her ideas. She presents herself unstained by cruelties and crimes.—*Drapier*.

Intolerance

It is interesting to note that the well-worn aphorism—"to know all, is to pardon all"—frequently attributed to Amiel, or Goethe—is really due to Thomas à Kempis ("Imitatio"). The phrase might be taken as a definition of tolerance *sub specie aternitatis*. Such tolerance can obviously be predicted only of Omniscient Deity. For poor human nature, tolerance cannot be haloed as a self-evident virtue; it can—like religion, as defined by Dr. Julian Huxley—be either good or bad, right or wrong; and is as relative as conscience to the particular circumstances of an individual or a society. In seeking to define its limits we note first that it is passive; while the opposed principle of intolerance is active. If tolerance be putting-up with things we dislike; then intolerance is *not* putting-up with them—or rather, actively opposing them.

Evidently the superficial judgment—that tolerance is a virtue and intolerance a vice—cannot stand. We are forever bound to oppose, and where possible to destroy, what we *know* to be evil. The correlative principle—viz., that we must stay our hands as regards any principle, person, or thing of whose evilness we are *not sure*, is—as all history testifies—of even greater social importance. It furnishes the true basis for tolerance.

The difficulty is, of course, to define what we mean by "*knowing*" and "*being sure*"; and the problem set by the term "intolerance" is just this: To what extent—for purposes of repressive activity—must we discount our most fondly-cherished beliefs on questions of right and wrong, good and evil?

The maxim with which we started puts intolerance to the account of ignorance; and is right in so doing, only if the "Will of Allah" point of view is to prevail over all natural human reactions to evil.

Ignorance is the soil in which the "herd instinct" flourishes; this in turn gives rise to every form of intolerance—good and bad. The progress of knowledge, and the application of scientific method to its acquirement, tend gradually to eliminate some of the major evils of intolerance—e.g., those associated with religious beliefs—but can with difficulty make headway against the multitude of minor intolerances associated with social conventions.

Some twenty years ago, in a large northern city, I witnessed a nearly tragic instance of intolerance of this latter type. A well-dressed young lady—who happened to be wearing a garment which, falling under the fanatical condemnation of the conventionalists of that day, had attracted the attention of the crowd—was with the greatest difficulty rescued by the police from its maniacal violence. Again, in these days of universal bicycle-riding, it is difficult to realize the fury with which "right-feeling" matrons attacked those members of their sex who first mounted the steel wonder. One of these outraged matrons was seen to rush towards a young girl on a bicycle, and to fling her violently to the ground.

Unfortunately, those who—in the name of convention—commit these outrages, never realize the social value of the principle of tolerance; even when the conventions they once so fanatically defended have gone the way of all conventions, and given place to a new set. The educated minority reads history; but only a few draw the proper inference as to the unreliability of contemporary judgments. While no one questions the utility of convention as a restraining influence over the unreflecting majority, it is precisely in that majority that it engenders intolerance; and must continue to do so until the race is "made over."

If we regard conventional intolerance as just a

public nuisance, to be put up with until "the times do alter," we cannot so lightly dismiss those forms of religious intolerance which unhappily still linger in our social and political life.

Dr. Edward Greenly and others have convincingly shown that the religions with which we, in this country, have most to do—Judaism and Christianity—are essentially persecuting religions. They share this undesirable characteristic with Islam (being all three derived mainly from the same sources) and it differentiates these three from practically all others. Further, Mr. J. W. Poynter and Mr. Joseph McCabe (both ex-Roman Catholics) have conclusively demonstrated that intolerance is—at the present moment, as well as throughout the Church's history—inseparable from the Roman Catholic religion. It stands in their Canon Law, and has been reaffirmed in successive Papal Edicts.

In face of this menace to the peace of society and the political principle (religious toleration) adopted by most European States, there naturally arises the question whether tolerance ought to be reciprocal; in other words, whether the intolerant should be tolerated. In discussing this thorny problem, we may safely put aside the doctrine of "turning the other cheek," because there is no evidence that more than a negligible minority of persons of any faith (including a handful of Christians), ever acted upon it. Clearly it does not accord with the practice, or even with the precepts, of the greater branch of the Christian Church as regards "heretics." For us, if we have accepted the principle with which we started, the question is one of social and political convenience only. We are told, for instance, by the advocates of Free Trade, that it *does not pay* to retaliate. The problem before us, we think, should be discussed on the same lines. We do not pretend to have solved it.

Fortunately, in these days of dwindling "faith," we no longer scour the villages for poor old women to burn, nor expect to encounter evil spirits at every street corner. We do not even burn Atheists, though we still ostracize them in the Press and elsewhere. The modern student of history, while shrinking from the horrors of ecclesiastical intolerance realizes only with difficulty that they resulted from the convictions of men as competent as ourselves to form judgments, and to draw correct inferences, from the facts known to them. Their fatal error was "cocksureness"—a disease not unknown among us to-day. They could not learn the lesson which—at the cost of so much blood and so many tears—we are beginning to learn to-day. That lesson is—intellectual modesty. It teaches us to distrust not only our emotional "urges," but also our intellectual conclusions, before we begin to persecute. It teaches us to acquire knowledge, and yet more knowledge; to subject all our conclusions to the strictest scientific criticism; finally to remember that not even Science is infallible, and that every conclusion involving intolerant action must be maintained with scrupulous diffidence.

G. TODDUNTER.

Prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft—As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect.—Emerson.

It is wrong to use words so that they shall have one sense to some people and another sense to other people; wrong to suppress the truth when that suppression leads to false belief in others.—

W. K. Clifford: "Lectures and Essays."

All Honourable Men

It needs a robust faith in our national virtues to hold that we are honourably governed. But this faith exists. Being one of a nation of quality, that this quality is bound to be reflected in those who have come to the head of our affairs is an easy assumption. They, it is felt, at any rate, in the great majority of cases, give a fair deal, play the game, and never say the thing that is not; in short they are English.

Simplissimus has a wireless set to confirm him in this belief. The news is chosen and prepared carefully for his consumption, so that his simple faith need not be disturbed. The order, length and wording of each item of news is carefully considered. This is not only true about the delicate phases of internationalism, but true about such things as the cricket matches with our colonies, in which it is considered as a matter of first importance that our prowess continues or appears to continue unimpaired. It is sportsmanlike and honourable, therefore, to dilate upon the items which gratify our vanity, and to be dumb over the things that don't. Yet we have heard that Waterloo was won upon the playing fields of Eton, and much play used to be made with the slogan, "Hands across the Sea."

A fair deal for all opinions is affected. So that on Sundays if you don't want to listen to a sermon, all you have got to do is to turn a knob—and there is Luxemburg. Could broadmindedness and toleration go further than this? This catholicity springs from the fact that we believe in freedom of thought, and its expression, and are almost the only nation keeping aloft the flag of democratic institutions. In the best tradition of Eton, Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge, we tell Demos what we know is good for him to know. Simplissimus is even allowed to tune in to Moscow. John Smith fixes 1744 and hears "Regarding the Portuguese statement" (Boom, Boom, Boom) "This is not" (Tingaling, Tingaling). . . . "Please write and tell us what you think of this broadcast to" (Tzing-boom, Tzing-boom). Smith turns back to the Home News Bulletin in despair. "There doesn't seem to be anything about Spain to-night, Liza." "No, John, but the Queen's cold is better." The paucity of material about Spain is compensated for by five minutes' talk about the Herring Girls, thus proving, should criticism arise, a healthy interest in working-class affairs.

The honourable men in the Churches are for the most part engaged in adapting an old gospel, divinely inspired and unalterable, to the needs of the times. Every Tom, Dick and Harry preaches as the gospel of Christ, the gospel of Tom, Dick or Harry. The Roman Church gets guidance from Rome, where sits the Vicar of Christ. In times of difficulty the advice of the Vicar of Christ is as noncommittal as that of the most practised politician. And what passes for Catholicism in one country is not allowed in another. Publications extolling the value of holy oil at so much a bottle are allowed in Australia, but not in England! Honourable men all!

Enter the Newspaper Office. "Look here, Mac. Here's old Baldwin saying that we will never stand for Government by Castor Oil in this country. That mustn't go in. Government forces in Spain seem to have had a good day. Say nothing. Have the British won any of the international sports? One event. Well, thank God for that! Make a splash over the top of page iii.: Winkle Wins the 2½ Kilometres. Mix up all the other results so that no one can make head or tail of them. No, we won't make any use of the Muggleswick Divorce Case. That

would be hitting below the belt. We'll let that brick fall at election time."

In the political Holy of Holies. "Now about these speeches in the recess. A's line had better be judicially impartial; B can veer a little to the right; C to the left. I'm going to have lumbago for a fortnight; T, luckily, is really ill. Tell XX to have breakfast with a few of the big men in Fleet Street, those 'sweet creatures of bombast,' and put them sufficiently wise. What's that? Another big business patriot wants to get rid of 'red tape.' Mind your step with him, M, or he may go to live in Jersey.

"What's that? Codlin is going down to Slocum to speak. That's all right, Tell him to avoid every matter of consequence—or be ambiguous. Tell him to dwell upon our democratic institutions, our honourable traditions. And he can say anything he likes about Short. *Anything he likes.* Call him Red—or Yellow; either'll do. Ask for a renewal of popular confidence. Say we *trust* our people, and if they will only trust us, they can rely upon our best endeavours to carry out the honourable traditions of this great country.

"What's that about Bishop Barnes? He's made a speech about Peace which will discourage recruiting. Some of the papers have reported it. (Take a note of those papers, XX.) This is important. Didn't Crozier say the Clergy were the finest creators of blood lust the country possesses? They mustn't be allowed to relax. Turn on one of our honourable men; Duff Cooper will do. Squash him, Duff. *You'll call him a tub-thumper.* Splendid! Well, will be seeing you all again soon I hope. It all depends upon my lumbago."

T. H. ELSTON.

Ecclesiastical Craft

THE origin of title was superstition. It was a payment to the gods—"deity"—collected by those who contrived to persuade the industrious that they had a seat on the Heavenly Board. The "Church" fostered the notion that the gifts of nature would only respond to gifts to the "Church." A potato would not come up unless one-tenth of the crop was handed over to the "deity"—via the "Church." If it did, it would be blighted and unfit to eat. They (the "Church"), using their influence on the Board of God-Directors of Heaven, would placate the jealous gods, and would get them to hold their destructive hand—so long as they (the "Church") had the one-tenth regularly put into *their* hand.

This worked! It worked so well, that the "Church" became very powerful—potatoes, cabbages, lettuce, fruits, and other products of the labourer in the vineyard filling their stores.

But, anticipating a day when the superstition would not have such a hold on the people, it thought it would use the power which this wealth gave it, to make the matter "legal." A Heavenly decree was all very well. But a Government decree was better. A Heavenly decree was up in the air, and people might be taken by the idea that what was not seen was not there. A decree in Heaven was likely to be out of sight out of mind. But a decree in the Government was on the earth—concrete—in sight, in mind, and in operation at one and the same time. A decree in the Golden Book was fairy-like. But a decree on the Statute Book was solid. The one was written in the imagination; the other in ink.

They got this to work too! And ever since, the

Tithe payment has been collected on earth for earthly and heavenly purposes.

Once the matter was connected to earth, the notion of Heavenly influence over crops was no longer necessary. The stuff could be gathered in the same way as other landlords were gathering—in rent—and to make it more convenient, it was to be paid in cash instead of in "kind"; although this amounted to the same thing, for the "Church" buys the kind of products it wants, with the cash it receives. So, as the superstition went, the Law came. The Tithe kept going.

The "Church" now sits on the Board of landlords—The House of Lords—which has far more influence over the crops than ever had the Heavenly Board. Gods or deities are now out-of-date, together with their astral departments; and in their place are men or privileged persons, together with State-departments. It is no longer necessary for the Bishops to point to the sky and threaten reluctant payers with the wrath of the Almighty. They can now point to the Statute Book, and threaten them with the Law-Courts. This is indubitably an ecclesiastical advance.

But the "Church" never stands still. At all costs its income must be assured. Anticipating that the same fate might befall the inky decrees as has befallen the imaginary decrees, the clerics have planned another advance.

They are getting this one to work also! Tithe is still a payment "for land," which the Almighty was supposed to have given specially to a small number of his children—those in the "Church." The writing in the Statute Book is to this effect, and therefore depends for its validity upon its coinciding with the writing in Heaven. There are doubters who deny its validity, and their numbers are growing. The ink is regarded by these people as not worth the paper it is written on, since it denies the plain right of all the inhabitants of the earth to use the produce thereof.

Since the "Church" cannot show the writing in Heaven (though there are still some of their members who are convinced it is there), there is every possibility that the doubters will tear up the Government "decrees" or ignore them. They will object to paying Tithe for land which is already their own. The purpose of the latest advance, therefore, is to sever the taint of "payment for land" from the "Church's" income, and to change its form into "interest on Government Bonds." The Government will decree that Tithe be "extinguished," and will hand over £70,000,000 worth of Bonds—at 3 per cent or (if the "Church" can manage it) more.

In this way, the "Church," relying on the supposedly short memory of the public, and on the next generations not being acquainted with the origin of the Bonds, will get the cash out of general taxation; their income will be *guaranteed* by the "State" of pickpocketing politicians, and will be mixed up in the total interest payments made, as though it is a payment for money originally lent by the "Church" to the "community."

This is a masterpiece of ecclesiastical craft, and, as fast as they can, the "Commissioners" intend to extend it to other payments they are stealing for land—"coal-royalties," etc.

They do not mind losing superstition, so long as they do not lose cash. If the choice is between superstition and cash, the "Church" plump for the cash every time.

Let them be warned, and let all the people note: This procedure is dishonest and deceitful theft.

One of the greatest barriers to changes for the better is the tendency of industrious people to be im-

pressed by sanctimonious pomp and display. Did they but realize it, they themselves are paying for it all, and are in poverty as a result. The greatest hypocrites are the heads of the Church of England. For they are *compelling by law* the poor to keep them in luxury.

ERIC R. JONES.

Acid Drops

A correspondent of the *News-Chronicle* protests against the Bishop of Durham refusing to sanction the march on London of the Jarrow unemployed. He says that had Jesus Christ been here he would have walked with the unemployed. We beg to differ. We have no evidence of Jesus ever having taken sides in such questions, but we do read that he once fed a multitude with a handful of fishes and a few loaves, and then had more left than when he commenced. And a leader of that kind would have been of incalculable service to a procession of unemployed. It is a pity that the critic of the Bishop of Durham did not recall this incident. Consider what it would have meant to Christianity in this country if Jesus had performed this feeding trick in the middle of Hyde Park. The only people who would have been displeased would have been the cheap eating-house keepers.

Father Coughlin of the Roman Church in the States, has been doing his little bit of electioneering for Landon, opposing Roosevelt's return with vehemence. Bishop Gallagher, attired in the mantle of the past, assured the American citizens that the voice of Father Coughlin was the voice of God. As Roosevelt has been returned by an unprecedented majority, the voice of God has received contemptuous attention, which, political reasons apart, is a gratifying phenomenon. The Voice always favours a Theocracy, and that as a force in the U.S.A. is evidently an *Also Ran*.

"Most certainly," says a Catholic editor to one of his anxious readers, "no Catholic should talk to an Anglican 'as if she were a real Catholic.'" This beautiful and brotherly advice proves without question how Christians love one another. Needless to say, the editor follows it up with, "There is only one kind of Catholic, and that is the Catholic in communion with the See of Rome, which Our Lord established as the centre of unity for His one true Church." If that is not a "smack in the eyes" for the Anglos (and incidentally for unity), what is?

Father Vincent McNabb said, at a recent meeting of the Catholic Guild of Israel, "when a Jew becomes a Catholic he is not really converted, he is simply expanding the knowledge that was in him before." Well, it all depends. The greater number of "convert" Jews generally remain Jews privately to the end of their lives. They find an almost insuperable difficulty in believing they can eat their newly acquired god. The others become far more Catholic than Catholics, an extremely difficult position to hold when appearances and names are against them. But it was the secretary of the Guild who spoke the real—if bitter—truth. "Many conversions," she said, "are known to us, but we must remember that the Jews resent the very suggestion of missionary work among them. Hence the comparative slowness of palpable results in our apostolate." Alas, so slow are the results that it takes at least £10,000 a year to convert one Jew, and even then it is not quite certain that he is converted.

Bishop Poskitt of Leeds claimed at a recent meeting of the Catholic Evidence Guild, that "in all districts it is achieving good results. Atheists are being converted, lax Catholics are becoming good Catholics, and good Catholics are becoming even better." We just love to

hear of Atheists being converted. We are always being told so but, names seem never forthcoming—particularly from such a body as the Catholic Evidence Guild with its reputation for sprinting further and quicker away from opposition than any other body we know of. The Bishop emphasized that the best way to make converts was by "personal contact with non-Catholics." And if no results accrue from following this advice—which, of course, is never followed—the would-be converters were told to "leave the results to God." And God alone knows what this really means.

Another speaker at the same time complained of the "slowness" of their work. If they were only converting about 12,000 people a year, he reckoned that "the conversion of England would take 3,000 years." This must have upset the meeting, for Fr. Corish said that "outside the Catholic Church, the vast majority of the people of this country are living Godless lives." We can only say—if this be true—amen!

Dr. Iddings Bell has just published a new work, *A Catholic Looks at His World*, and it is interesting to note that he does *not* consider the "dividing line" lies between Communism and Fascism, or even between Liberty and the Totalitarian State. In his opinion, it is between Secularism and Christianity. Such a pronouncement, made at the present time, when the whole world seems to talk of nothing so much as on Fascism and Communism, proves that Dr. Bell can think for himself, and we congratulate him upon his perspicacity. It is our own position, and completely justifies, as coming from an enemy, the work of the National Secular Society.

At a meeting of the League of National Life, the other day, the usual twaddle on contraceptives was voiced by various religious leaders, who seem to think that their foolish talk will have every effect in producing big families. These people ought to know by now that the birth-control movement has come to stay, and that very few women these days are going to allow themselves to become the breeding machines they often were in the good old days. Both men and women love children just as much now as they did—if they did—then, but intelligent people wisely refrain when they must, from bringing numerous children into a world of misery.

What angers these religious busybodies so much is that young people "went on living a life of selfish enjoyment" instead of bringing up huge families. The truth really is that economic conditions are so uncertain for large numbers of workers—who, after all, form the great majority of the population—that they rightly prefer to live their own lives in their own way and are educated enough to do so without any instruction from celibate priests or even Catholic women doctors. It is significant to note that the meeting did not include questions or discussion. It would never have done to show how strong was the opposition or how unconvincing the arguments. The League of National Life is now almost as dead as a brass button.

A Pan-American religious Conference was held recently in Chicago. A number of American bishops let themselves go, and it would not be unjust to state that they had scarcely an original idea among them. Loyalty to Christ was one theme—as if Bishops at previous Conferences would have admitted disloyalty to the same mythical deity. Another theme—according to one account it was most disappointing—was on Christian missions and one speaker thought our English Bishops needed "converting" on the question. "Do they ever go," he asked scornfully, "to the best of their clergy and ask them why they do not go out to some post overseas, where they are urgently needed?" We opine they do not, as a rule; nor do they go out themselves if they can help it; nor do American Bishops go even when they ought to. What does go out is plenty of hard cash which could do infinitely better work if spent here; and perhaps our Bishops are beginning to learn that very simple fact.

Mr. Win. H. Paynter, of Callington, Cornwall, is known to Cornish bards as "Whyler Pestry," or Searcher-out of Witchcraft. He has devoted many years to the study, and informs a Sunday newspaper that "In isolated Cornish districts credulous folk still cling tenaciously to the belief that witchcraft is at the bottom of every mischance." He receives hundreds of letters begging for charms and spells. ("No, Tommy; Foreign Missions concern our work abroad: and among the *heathen*, you know. 'The heathen in his blindness'—you know the hymn!")

If ever there occurred a world "lamentation," at the loss of the "Holy Bible," a worthy substitute could be compiled from the files of a Long Acre publication. The weekly miracles, faith-healings, divine-savings and devil-confoundings already recorded in its columns would suffice to provide several new "Bibles," and even more new religions.

One of the latest stories published is, indeed, equal to anything in scripture. Near Ypres, in the early days of the war, a Flemish woman met a Seaforth Highlander. They became lovers. The soldier was killed, but the woman kept the news secret, pretending to be still seeing him occasionally. Then she announced their forthcoming marriage, and married they were—secretly, "to avoid British military regulations," says the reporter, and spiritually, we suppose, because the bridegroom's body was in the like predicament to "John Brown's." "A local priest, who has since made a statement," married the "pair," and "is positive the bridegroom wore the uniform of a Highlander, and the necessary responses were made in English."

For twenty years past the "spirit" of that Highlander dwelt with that woman. "Who was the physical bridegroom?" asks Long Acre in its constant striving to "rend the veil." . . . Unfortunately, there are no big prizes or runners-up: nay, not even a "Wonder of the Age" presentation volume offered for an answer.

It is most significant that religion is the only subject upon which *anyone* may write with fair hope of letter or manuscript being accepted if the argument upholds the "faith." The one-time advanced journal, *The Referee*, the other Sunday, gave room for a sneer at "Science's" spiritual shortcomings, by Osbert Sitwell. Popular names—especially of the younger generation—are in great demand these days by the every-day press to bolster-up tottering religion. Mr. Sitwell's article is typical of many of late, in that the dominating note is a mixture of fear, frustration and stultification of human effort—particularly as represented in the person of the writer—in face of the discoveries of Science and Man's incapability of adapting them properly *under the present dispensation*.

The "Freethinker" Circulation Drive

It is proposed to celebrate the coming-of-age of the present editorship by an attempt to create a substantial increase in the circulation of this paper. The plan suggested is:—

- (1) Each interested reader is to take an extra copy for a period of twelve months, and to use this copy as a means of interesting a non-subscriber to the point of taking the *Freethinker* regularly.
- (2) So soon as this new subscriber is secured, the extra copy may be dropped by the present subscriber. Until this is accomplished, he will regard the extra threepence weekly (for one year) as a fine for his want of success.

The plan is simple, and it is not costly; but it does mean a little work, and whether or not it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is certainly easier for most to give than it is to work. But in this case it is the work alone that will yield permanent benefit. There are many thousands of potential readers in the country; why not try to secure some of them?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CINE CERE.—Thanks. We supply the *Freethinker* to many public libraries, Derby included. Glad that so good a use is made of it.

P. HOBDDAY.—My compliments to your father. Hope to have him many years yet as a reader. With reference to the other matter, there is no reason other than we thought it was not suitable at the moment. Our judgment may have been wrong, but that is the penalty of your having an editor.

M. BERTRAM.—We are not overlooking the matter. An important announcement will be made about the end of December.

C. RAWTON.—Thanks for appreciation of the article on Bible English. The laudation of the Bible for its influence on English writers is due to a foolish following of accepted opinion. None of the great Elizabethan writers owed their quality to the Bible, and it was then that English literature of the grand school was born.

J. ROWLAND.—Crowded out, will appear next week.

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 68 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. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9. All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

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

Sugar Plums

The Executive of the N.S.S. has arranged a Social and Dance to take place on Saturday, November 28, at the Caxton Hall, Council Chamber, Victoria Street, Westminster, at 6.30. The evening is always an enjoyable one, and it offers a good opportunity for Freethinkers meeting each other in friendly intercourse, and also introducing their unconverted friends to the movement. Tickets are 2s. 6d. each, and includes refreshments. Tickets from either the *Freethinker* or the N.S.S. Offices, 68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Early application will help considerably the making of the necessary arrangements.

Mr. Cohen had a large and very appreciative audience at Leicester on Sunday last. The hall was quite full, and the lecture was listened to with evident interest. Mr. Hassell occupied the chair, and made an earnest appeal for more general support. We hope that this met with an adequate response.

We are glad to learn our old friend Mr. Sydney Gimson, who has been undergoing an operation in a nursing home, is now making a very steady recovery, and is expected soon to be back home, and all the better for the experience. We sincerely hope so. Apart from personal feelings, Gimson is a name that has always been

very closely associated with the Leicester Secular Hall, and we hope to be able to meet him on our visits to the city as often as possible.

We are not surprised that the London Federation of Peace Councils is protesting, not merely against the City authorities refusing to permit a "Peace Tableau" as part of the Lord Mayor's Show, but also against the resolve to turn the procession into a military parade, and a strong advertisement of the armed forces. The Lord Mayor's Show, admitting that this usually very cheap kind of a procession is to be continued for ever, is essentially a celebration of civic life, and if it is one thing it should emphasize it is the question of peace and the futility of war. A strong protest against the militaristic poster issued by the London Transport Board has resulted in the withdrawal of the advertisement, and an equally strong protest may have some effect on the City authorities. Unchecked, this militaristic movement may land us with Goering's "Guns are more important than butter."

Mr. A. Laurence Housman writes in *John O'London's Weekly* of the religious opinions of A. E. Housman. He says:—

Of the poem called *New Year's Eve*, which he published in a magazine while at Oxford, he wrote it, he said, in his twentieth year. "I was then a Deist." "And now," I asked, "what do you call yourself—Agnostic?" "No, I am an Atheist," he said, decisively. He then went on to say that he thought the Church of England the best religion ever invented; it was less disturbing than other forms, and eliminated "so much Christian nonsense," Christianity, he added, was most harmful in its social application.

Belief in immortality was quite unnecessary, he said, for good morals. The Hebrews had a higher code of morals than the Egyptians, and did not allow themselves to be perverted from non-belief in a future life by Egyptian superstition. The Sadducees represented the orthodox religion of their race: the Pharisees were the Modernists. He mentioned the difficulty some missionaries had with a South African tribe who had no religion at all, and therefore no word for God. So they searched for the thing the natives most valued and desired, and finding it to be "decomposing meat," gave that name to God. When I said that I supposed he regarded decomposing meat as a suitable symbol for God in the modern world, he laughed and said, "Yes." The worship of the well-hung god might, he thought, fit in quite well with Christian symbolism.

On his last hours Mr. L. Housman quoting the doctor in attendance, says:—

I asked his doctor how long before his death he was fully conscious. Just about two days, I was told. And this, as far as I can remember it in his own words, is the doctor's account of their last meeting.

"You know," he said, "how silent and reserved he always was; but this time he talked quite a lot and very affectionately. He held my hand for nearly half an hour 'You have been a good friend to me,' he said, 'I know you have brought me here so that I may not commit suicide, and I know that you may not help me to it more than the law allows. But I do ask you not to let me have any more unnecessary suffering than you can help.' I told him that he should not suffer any more; and from that time on he did not. Then, to cheer him just before I left, I told him a thoroughly naughty story. He was very weak, but he threw his head back on the pillow laughing heartily. 'Yes, that's a good one,' he said, 'and to-morrow I shall be telling it again on the Golden Floor.'"

I hope that no pious friend will try to force from that characteristic remark an interpretation implying belief in a future life, which it was most certainly not intended to convey.

We hope also that the last words of Housman will not be twisted in the interests of Christian propaganda. But we know too much of the nature of Christian veracity to be over sanguine in the matter.

The following from the *New Statesman* explains itself:—

Sir,—The following two press telegrams appear to have some bearing on the controversy to which Sir

Francis Lindley refers in his letter published by you in your issue of October 10 :—

The first telegram, sent by Reuters to their subscribers, timed 1.35 p.m. on August 9, 1932, reads :—

"*Britain welcomes Stimson speech. In closer formation behind the League.* Mr. Stimson's speech in support of the League Manchurian Commission before the United States Council on Foreign Relations is welcomed in official circles in London, Reuter learns, as an indication that America is lining up in closer formation with the other nations behind the League. The speech is regarded as further proof of America's eagerness to promote world peace in the spirit of the Kellogg Pact and of Locarno."

The second telegram, a "Service Telegram," went out at 5 p.m. on the same day, telling all recipients of the earlier message :—

"Please kill our paragraph wired at 1.35 p.m., headed 'Britain welcomes Stimson speech.' This is done at the request of the Foreign Office."

I do not think any comment is required.

The Foreign Office is obviously the British Foreign Office.

The opening indoor meeting of the new Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. was pronounced a decided success. The hall, clean and comfortable, was well filled, and Mr. Rosetti's lecture was followed with interest and many questions. Another lecture will be given in the same hall, The Clarence Club House, 56 London Road, Kingston, this evening (November 15) at 7 o'clock. The name of the speaker is not to hand, but those who were present on the first occasion will no doubt be there with perhaps an orthodox friend or two.

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. will hold a Social in Earlham Hall, Earlham Gove, Forest Gate, London, E., on Saturday evening, November 21. There is always a good muster and an enjoyable evening at the West Ham Socials, and London Freethinkers and their friends may take this notice as a hearty invitation to be present. Proceedings commence at 7 p.m., and admission is free.

The West London Branch had a good meeting last Sunday, Miss Melzi's address on Vincent Van Gogh meeting with general appreciation, being delivered with individuality as well as being quite free from the vagueness which unfortunately is so commonly associated with the "artistic" treatment of a subject. To-day, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner will speak on "Freethought Lessons from Abroad."

The following might have appeared in the *Freethinker*, in the columns of which it might have appeared—in fact it has appeared, in substance, on many occasions. But it is taken from the *Church Times* for November 6, in connexion with a review of a recent work on Voltaire :—

To-day we need a Voltaire. The one permanent governing idea of all his books is the love of freedom. He lamented that liberty declined in his own France and in England, and he fought all his life for its re-establishment. Those who wrote about Voltaire in the last century wrote under the conviction that the battle was over in England, and that the enemies of freedom were, at least, hopelessly on the decline in Europe. To-day we have no such assurance. How seriously freedom is threatened here it would be rash to conjecture; from the rest of Europe, except in France and some of the smaller countries, it has been banished; and no man can say a word in its favour. But a revolt against the reign of tyranny is due; and it is possible that this fine and judicious study of one of its greatest champions may herald the inauguration of that rebellion.

It is due to the Christian Church in all countries where it exerts influence that Voltaire's influence is not openly admitted, and therefore that more men do not consciously seek to guide their lives by his example. As it is, the myriads of people who have to thank Voltaire and his fellows for the sense of freedom that they have are quite unaware of the name of their benefactor. It is fortunate that it is not so easy to kill a principle that is once enunciated as it is to kill the memory of the man who first set it forth.

Germinal Essentials to Civilization

IN a striking work entitled *The Philosophy of Civilization* (Putnam, 2 vols.), Mr. R. H. Towner has advanced the view that the decline and fall of past civilizations are primarily attributable to reversed selection. Towner contends that while frigid females remain mothers, and transmit their superior nervous structures to their offspring, the State advances mentally, morally and physically. But as the community becomes more and more composed of the children of ardent women, and an ever increasing percentage of colder women decline the burdens of maternity, decay and downfall are the inevitable penalties imposed by Nature.

Despite the undoubted advantages of birth-control to the individual, Towner evidently shares the opinion of the late J. F. Nisbet, that to the nation it spells disaster. For the less ardent females now so largely barren to posterity are, it is argued, absolutely essential to the maintenance of a virile population. Their sterility is therefore regarded as the main cause of the alleged decadence that has overtaken Western Civilization. While the Britons of preceding generations displayed boldness, energy and enterprise, and developed into the leading exploiters of the earth, there are now, it seems, ominous signs of decay. Towner pessimistically surveys the mass of the English stocks as those who "leave pioneering to higher spirits, and, for themselves, love to concentrate in cities, to huddle around a government and expect it to keep them and their offspring perpetually and uniformly fed, clothed, housed, warmed, pleased and good. Such was the Roman rabble under Augustus; such is now most of the English-speaking race."

Towner regards human ascent as coinciding with moral betterment, with an increasing continence clearly illustrated by the growth of sexual frigidity among women. Two American physicians are cited as evidence of the wide prevalence of sexual coldness in New World wives. Various authorities consider that from ten to twenty per cent of females suffer in this way. Speaking from professional experience, Dr. Talmey considers this an under-estimate, while, according to Dr. Malchow, it is a fair deduction that "nearly one half the (married) women are leading lives that can be neither healthful nor congenial, and whose homes are lacking in a fundamental requisite for happiness."

In his chapter on ancient Israel, several Biblical examples are instanced by Towner in support of his contention, but these appear of little value. Greece was in her glory, it is claimed, when cold women were constrained to bear children. But as females grew in power and independence, acquired property and gained the right of divorce, strict monogamy was constantly replaced by concubinage and other evils. So it is urged that: "These customs in Greece had the effect of polygamous marriages elsewhere. Cold women escaped some of the pressure to which they had been subject in previous generations. Fewer of them bore children. Gradually the strain of sexual coldness became extinguished; and with its extinction perished the intellectual brilliance and high spirit of Greece."

Rome is then surveyed, and its prolonged supremacy and ultimate ruin are both attributed to the part played by frigid females in family life. The social groups that successively sustained the Repub-

lic and later Empire, indirectly derived their ability to govern from maternal influences. The evolution of Roman marriage is sketched, and it is asserted that as the morals of the upper classes became corrupted by luxury and moneyed ease, the class below them who had preserved the sterner ethics of the East gradually supplanted them. When this social stratum in its turn became enervated by idleness and luxury a more virile provincial stock rose to power. For long centuries, despite all shortcomings in the ruling orders, there was ever in reserve a section of the community that had remained immune to the fashionable vices of the time. Towner dates the inception of Rome's decline during the reign of Augustus, and he contends that: "By the free distribution of corn, Augustus exactly reversed the selection of mothers, begun seven hundred years earlier by Numa. Through all these centuries of poverty and oppression, the Numan selection of mothers had augmented, slowly it is true, but steadily, until the nervous organization of the Roman plebeians had become, in comparison with the contemporaneous proletariats of other nations, a race of supermen. While freedom, diversity, private property and monogamy had made the character of posterity depend upon other factors than fecundity, their spiritual stature rose, and they conquered the Mediterranean world. With all other factors abolished, and only fecundity retained, the Romans were easily worsted by the very nations they had vanquished. Their augmented nervous organizations could not multiply as fast as the prolific groups of low nervous organization. The latter had an easy victory, and the Roman stock died out without replacing itself."

Towner accepts the theory that while the primitive Christians continued a miserable minority, their austere morals served to sustain the Roman State, while the splendid Imperial achievements of Trajan, Hadrian, the two noble Antonines and other sagacious rulers appear plainly traceable to quite independent antecedents. Still, the improvements ascribed by Towner to the influence of the adherents of the new cult, he confesses were of very brief duration. Moreover, Towner does not contend that the early Christians did more than restore the ancient virtues of Pagan Rome.

The primitive Church fostered monogamy and deprecated divorce, but the Fathers' later encouragement and institution of celibacy was, in our author's opinion, the leading cause of the downfall of the Roman Empire in the West. In the fourth century the Christian Fathers frowned on sexual intercourse, even within lawful wedlock, and this condemnation of matrimonial life soon embraced the entire Christian world. Gibbon thus sums up clerical teaching: "It was their favourite opinion, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of immortal beings. The use of marriage was only permitted to his fallen posterity, as a necessary expedient to continue the human species and as a restraint, however imperfect, on the natural licentiousness of desire."

The more delicate and refined were earnestly petitioned to enter religious sanctuaries in order to safeguard their virgin purity from carnal enticements. Men, women and children crowded into convents and monasteries, therein to lead a pious and chaste existence. In every province of the Empire these institutions multiplied and were very speedily filled. Gibbon notes the eagerness with which peasants, mechanics and even slaves seized the opportunity of escaping the trials of the workaday world, while taxpayers

evaded the extortions of the State by entering a monkish abode. The legions absolutely indispensable for security from barbarian invasion were decimated through defection to monastic life, and, again to quote Gibbon, "the same cause which relieved the distress of individuals impaired the strength and fortitude of the Empire."

An almost enforced infertility of frigid and intellectual females became customary. Towner declares that: "In the brief period of two generations, the perennial sterilization of the virtuous completely changed the character of the population. . . . Wherever the Christian religion was most successfully preached, and was most devoutly believed, each successive generation of men and women was more debased than its predecessors."

Athanasius advocated celibacy in Rome as early as 341 A.D., and his teaching speedily became popular. Freedom of thought and expression were soon made capital offences by Christian Church and State. Law was orientalized and the fruits of industry and commerce were ruthlessly swept into the maws of the Imperial Exchequer. All the factors of social and mental progress were eliminated, above all that untrammelled exercise of the intellect which is absolutely necessary to the maintenance of progress and civilization.

No marvel then that the long-proud Pagan mistress of the world was assailed and sacked by the Gothic invader, when so large a proportion of the more intelligent sections of the population were condemned to sterility. Towner trenchantly declares that in the generation that opened the fifth century the Christian world had been reduced to a condition of pitiful slavery.

In the Eastern Empire which so long outlived the West, many Roman traditions were assimilated, but it became enervated by similar causes and finally shared its fate. Here again, our historian discovers the seed-plot of decay and death in the unfavourable selection of mothers. Divorce was easy within the jurisdiction of the Greek Church, and marriage was in practice by no means monogamous. As in Rome, devout females were constantly immured in convents, and this, and other detrimental factors, Towner regards as the antecedents of the State's destruction. In his own words: "Religious and worldly sterilization completely extinguished sexual coldness, and with it the augmented nervous organizations by which civilizations rise. From this one underlying cause, which was not only active, but increased with each succeeding generation, developed all the minor and later symptoms of spiritual decay in national and religious life."

The asceticism and sexual laxity to which Towner ascribes the ruin of ancient culture, he thinks also has its bearings on the rise, rapid conquests and brief, but brilliant civilizations of Islam. Instead of the exaltation of chastity, the Moslem communities were earnestly encouraged to increase the numbers of the faithful, not merely by means of conversion, but through procreation. Almost all women in Moslem settlements became mothers, with the result that the once wild and zealous disciples of Mohammed, both in Spain and other lands, in a few centuries produced a galaxy of illustrious representatives in science, philosophy and letters at a time when Christian Europe grovelled in dirt, destitution and mental poverty. Towner argues that Moslem grandeur and glory coincided with the constant infusion of fresh blood through the child-bearing of conquered women. Progress rapidly proceeded until this fruitful blending was exhausted, while frigid females became increas-

ingly released from the trials of maternity owing to the prevalence of polygamy. Spy government; the repression of civil liberty; prohibition of alcoholic beverages and the influences of superstition, are also assigned as contributory causes of the decay and downfall of civilized States.

T. F. PALMER.

The Fascist Axe at Work

Under the Axe of Fascism, by GAETANO SALVEMINI. (Gollancz, 7s. 6d. Also Left Book Club, for October).

THE book under review is likely to administer a shock to many readers who have settled down with the comfortable belief that Fascist Italy is working out her destiny in her own way, that this is not quite our way of doing things, but after all the worst features of early Fascism are vanishing, and everybody in Italy is getting along splendidly; with many thanks to Mussolini.

Under the Axe of Fascism is not a sensational book; it is not overloaded with accounts of "beating-up" and shooting, etc. Prof. Salvemini is fully acquainted with such happenings, but he appears to say to the new leaders of Italy, Well, gentlemen, you claim to be accomplishing much by way of building a new Italy. Be it so; I will investigate, if you do not mind, by starting off with the assumption that your claims are most likely correct. The result is a devastating revelation of the futility of Fascism, except for suppressing the many in the interest of the few, which should convince even those who are not prepared to condemn Fascism merely on the score of its brutality and bloodshed.

There is not a single department of human activity in which Fascism is proving to be an instrument for improving the life of the nation as a whole, in spite of all the Mussolini claims to be solving problems as no other Government could do.

An excellent feature of the book is in the numerous quotations from Fascist sources which, taken in conjunction with the documents and speeches laying down the actual laws and workings of the Italian Fascist State, give some idea of the extent to which lying and misrepresentation are indulged in by those who are anxious to convince us that Fascism is bestowing benefits upon mankind. The statements of many writers who are favourable to Fascism are exploded, and those who have been misled by such as Sir Leo Chiozza-Money, Major Barnes, Signor Villari, Mr. S. A. Jones, Mr. H. R. Knickerbocker, etc., would do well to read carefully *Under the Axe of Fascism*.

In a work which deals with the actual life of the Italian people, and is not a mere theoretical polemic against Fascism, a goodly portion is taken up by chapters on "Unions"; "Labour Agreements"; "The Court of Labour"; "Social Revolution"; "Wages"; "The Cost of Living"; "Housing"; "Social Insurance"; "Unemployment"; but it is not to be imagined that these subjects are dealt with in any narrow fashion: as if only the workers are suffering under Fascism.

The book does much to reveal the extent to which Italy is in the grip of a deadly system, wielded in the interests of the big Capitalists and benefiting them along with certain of the more privileged sections of the community.

There is not a chapter in the book which should be missed, but Freethinkers will be interested in questions of organization, democracy, methods of election, the general conditions of the people, and the

attitude of the Fascists to the professional classes. On all of these subjects the author has much to say.

I select the professional classes not out of any disrespect for the non-professional, but because there are still so many liberal-minded and comfortably-placed people who imagine that professional men are bound to be all right under Fascism. Consequently they take the fight against the Fascist movement as if it concerns only the workers, and hang back instead of joining the ranks of anti-Fascists in defence of freedom and democracy.

Prof. Salvemini explodes the myth that democratic methods are in force when officials of the various Italian organizations are being "elected." He says: "The word 'election' does not, however, have the same significance in Fascist terminology as that to which we are accustomed in democratic regimes, namely, a secret balloting on competing lists of freely nominated candidates. The 'elections' as a rule consist of simple 'acclamations.' The secretary of the Party in the province or the city, according to the importance of the association, indicates officially the names of those who must compose the executive committee, or even intervenes personally in the election meeting and announces the list of 'candidates.' The members are invited to 'acclaim.' Anyone raising any objections would thereby immediately brand himself as 'anti-national.' Everyone therefore 'acclaims'—and the election is over. In fairness it must be admitted that sometimes there is an actual election by ballot. The voter is given a ballot paper prepared by the men at the top and deposits it in the urn. Nobody checks the number of votes, the personal identity of the voters, or the work of the tellers. The latter invariably announce that the official list has been elected by a unanimous vote. Fairness likewise compels us to concede that there are occasions upon which there is even a real election with the secret ballot. But if the official list is not returned, the election is invalidated." pp. 56-57.

Even with such methods the big boys of business are sure of having the ear of the appointed officials but after dealing with "Labour Agreements," Prof. Salvemini says: "Viewed in the most favourable light, in the Fascist legal organizations the rank and file have no greater authority than do the animals in a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals." p. 83.

What of the organizations for professional classes; men of letters, artists, lawyers, etc? Membership is not compulsory, but the position of non-members may be gauged from the words of the national secretary of the Federation of Physicians, "Everyone can evince the minimum of sympathy towards the Fascist regime by enrolling in the association." (quoted p. 99.)

As failure to enrol means a person cannot practise his profession, the value of membership being non-compulsory will hardly impress the democratically-minded on the score of freedom.

Journalists are in no better case, especially as they are liable to be struck off the lists of membership if they fail to evince minimum sympathy for Fascism. "There were 3,330 journalists in Italy during 1924-5; by December 30, 1927, their number had shrunk to 1,664." (p. 100.)

Editors of supposed to be privately-owned newspapers can be transferred from one paper to another at the discretion of Mussolini. (see p. 101.)

Perhaps one might innocently expect lawyers to be free from Fascist humbug with regard to joining an association; but this is not so in Italy.

In the old days there was an organization for Barristers, and one for solicitors, in every province, open to all lawyers of every political

party. They could also take part in the election of the board of directors. The Fascists did not disband these associations even when they set up their own associations for lawyers; but in May, and again in August, 1926, a royal decree placed all lawyers more under the reactionary power of the new Fascist associations. Names began to be struck off the lists, and in 1927 more than 2,000 lawyers found their names wiped out from membership.

In May, 1931, Signor Rocco, Minister of Justice, was able to tell the Chamber that things had changed and all "Italian lawyers understood the spirit of Fascist legislation." (quoted, p. 103.) In November, 1933, the old non-political Lawyers' Associations were abolished, and membership or cancellation put in the hands of Fascist associations, which would see that lawyers realized that falling from grace also means falling from membership. So one might go on with similar accounts about engineer-architects, public officials, railway, postal, telegraphic employees, and educational staffs, including elementary and secondary teachers, university professors and librarians. All of these "may form associations only for purposes of mutual aid, education, amusement, and similar objects." (p. 104.)

Numerous quotations might be given from the comprehensive data, presented by Prof. Salvemini, on the general conditions of the people in Italy under Fascism, but space is limited.

Many pages are devoted to the cost of living, wages, and the cost of production, but we must content ourselves with the story from *Æsop*, which Salvemini quotes. A monkey was appointed to divide a piece of cheese into two equal parts for the benefit of two dogs. The monkey cut the cheese into two parts, but they were not equal. He then bit off a piece from the larger portion and swallowed it. So the other part was the larger. The process was repeated until the monkey had eaten the whole cheese. Salvemini adds, "Mussolini follows the same method in 'equalizing' wages with the cost of living. His endeavour to equalize the cost of living with wages and then wages with the cost of living bids fair to end with the total abolition of wages." (p. 225.)

The chapter on housing is heartbreaking, and puts to shame the tourists and newspaper men who return from a visit to Italy and give glowing accounts of what has been done in this matter. Yet, in town and country thousands of people live in the most disgusting conditions, as is attested by Fascist deputies and newspapers. About a fifth of the population of Potenza lives in dugouts, below the street level. They are damp, unhealthy, dark, and beyond repair, "where death is easier than birth." In Matera the working population "is housed in caverns dug into the rock, row upon row like cells of a beehive." (p. 334.)

True, the housing problem was not tackled properly in pre-Fascist days and, with characteristic fairness, Prof. Salvemini does not blame Mussolini for not working miracles but, as the author says, "the objectionable point in Fascist propaganda is that it claims that nothing had been accomplished before Mussolini, and that since his advent all problems have been speedily solved." (p. 338.)

In his "battles" against tuberculosis and malaria, and for the protection of women and children Mussolini does not come out as the superman he is claimed to be, and, it has been noted, that "assistance to mothers and children has become an instrument of political pressure in the hands of the party in power." (p. 348.) So careful of the health and well-being of the women and children, are the Fascists, that we find the conditions under which they work are frequently hellish; and it is not surprising that Fascism

keeps a grip on the young people in their sports and pleasures. They must not please themselves in these matters; "The worker who seeks recreation must register in one of the institutions subordinate to the national Dopolavoro. (Afterwork.) In order even to fish or bowl, it is necessary to belong to a club controlled by the Dopolavoro, and to pay dues." (p. 366.) There are reductions in theatre, cinema, and railway tickets, but protest against being enrolled means trouble. The Dopolavoro institutions are used for spying upon the workers, and for militaristic propaganda. (See p. 368.)

There are some aspects of the Fascist regime which one would like to see treated by Prof. Salvemini, in another work. In this one he has set himself a given task, accomplished it well, and rendered a great service to the cause of anti-Fascism. He writes as a Liberal, and at the end of over 400 pages his verdict is against the Fascist experiment.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

"Blessed are the Meek"

MR. LINDSAY'S attempts to persuade us to form a Common Front take a turn which makes us think of the proverb as to curses, that they come home to roost—we are invited to leave our present perches and roost in the Communist poultry yard. So anxious is Mr. Lindsay to be persuasive, that he goes out of his way to attack other Freethinkers—(Freethinker is a very wide and generous term) on the principle that the way to make people feel friendly towards you is to kick them hard in the pants unexpected-like. In Mr. Lindsay's Common Front we others are to give way and Mr. Lindsay give wallops.

Now I should like Mr. Lindsay to consider that there may be other manners than his of welding Freethought forces. There is a man more experienced than any other, I should imagine, in inducing Freethinkers of every species to work together for the common aim of Freedom of Thought and Freedom to Express Thought. This is Dr. Modeste Terwagne, for long President of the International Federation, now called the World Union of Freethinkers. At Prague, last Easter, the latest step of a long series was taken; one to make Freethought a rallying cry against the forces of Reaction and Brute Force.

The old Freethought Federation, often called the Brussels Federation, because it was initiated at Brussels in 1880, and because the seat has usually been Brussels, was steeped in the idealism of the '80's, an idealism which should be respected by all true Freethinkers. One of its conditions of affiliation was No Politics in Freethought. This is still the condition of association in the National Secular Society, which is soaked in the idealism of the '60's.

The latest body of Freethinkers (as I have already remarked, the term is a wide and generous one) to be brought into the fold, is the International Federation of Proletarian Freethinkers, the principal member society of which is the Union of Militant Atheists of the U.S.S.R. The preliminary discussions were very interesting. One remark in particular should be brought to Mr. Lindsay's attention. Dr. Galperin, one of the Communist representatives, said, speaking of his association, "*Nous avons fait beaucoup de bêtises.*" (We have done many silly things). It was in this spirit of humility that the old and the new Freethinkers met, and in this spirit that they have united to withstand those sealed with the Swastika and the Fasces, the Marks of the Beast.

This August the first meeting of the new Executive of the World Union was held in Paris. In order to allay fears which disturbed the nights of my brethren of the N.S.S. and R.P.A., I asked the Committee to recommend the deletion of certain sentences from the Declaration made by the Prague Congress, and also to lay down once

and again as an essential principle for co-operation the condition of No Political Bias. The first to speak in support of my motion was a Communist. It was passed unanimously. Not only that, but, to my surprise, each and every individual member spontaneously declared that he would look upon it as his bounden duty to see that this condition was carried out, not only by the World Union, but by the association which he represented in all its co-operation with the World Union.

What is more, the Proletarian associations, which are fewer in members, outside U.S.S.R., than the older associations, have been instructed to fuse with the older bodies. If Mr. Lindsay will take orders from UMA, he will, instead of asking us to become Communists, invite all Communists to become paying members of the N.S.S. All that I ask of him is that he should not apply to them his Kick-in-the-pants method unless he is sure that they will enjoy it in the right spirit. The N.S.S. does not bar the worshippers of the Hammer and the Sickle as long as they will work shoulder to shoulder with us for Liberty of Speech and Freedom of the Press and all similar ideals which are as yet incompletely attained, and also brutally menaced, in the present day.

The formation of the World Union of Freethinkers has fluttered more than one dove-cote. It has led in Poland to the prohibition of Freethought associations. In Holland and Belgium the Catholic newspapers have hurled at it a stream of abuse, endeavouring to curdle the blood of their readers.

The need for union has, since Easter, been emphasized by the terrible events in Spain, where the Fascist and the Priest have not hesitated to destroy their country with modern war rather than submit to a Liberal Government which had a Left backing.

In Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland, Roumania, Lithuania, Latvia, Esthonia and Bulgaria, Freethought is banned. Yet the Pansy grows hidden in secret places despite the Crutched Cross, the Swastika and the Axe.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Obituary

ARTHUR DOWNING

ON Tuesday, November 3, the remains of Arthur Downing were interred at the Wembley Burial Bround, Alper-ton. Death occurred as a result of bronchial pneumonia, at the age of 56. A Freethinker of many years standing, he was a member of the Wembley Branch N.S.S., and in a quiet but effective way was continually scattering seeds of the movement among friends and acquaintances. An all-round humanitarian, he was an active member of the local branch of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, which was represented at the graveside by a uniformed contingent. Before a large muster of relatives and friends a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

MR. E. PINDER

WE regret to announce the death of Mr. E. Pinder, a very old and staunch supporter of the Freethought movement, and a fifty-year-old member of the Leicester Secular Society. He was definite in his beliefs, and strongly straightforward in their presentation. He and his wife were familiar and welcome figures at all Leicester Secular meetings, and for some years he was a Vice-President of the Society. Ill-health, and the prospect of improvement if a change of scene was made, induced him to settle some ten years ago at Newark, where he passed peacefully away at the age of 73. His many friends in Leicester and neighbourhood will mourn his loss, and Freethought will record the death of another staunch soldier in the battle for human freedom. In accordance with his wish a Secular Service was conducted at his grave by Mr. E. H. Hassell, Vice-President of the Leicester Secular Society.—H.E.A.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Evans, Barnes and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment. *Freethinker* and *Spain and the Church* on sale outside the Park gates.

INDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (The Clarence House Club, 56 London Road, Kingston): 7.0, A Lecture.

MODERN CULTURE INSTITUTE (Caxton Hall): 8.0, Friday, November 20, Dr. Har Dayal—"Peace and World Government."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30, G. Bedborough—"The Sermon on the Mount."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Debate—"Can this Life be All?" *Affir.*: Mr. F. P. Corrigan. *Neg.*: Fr. Dunstan Pontifex, O.S.B.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor B. Malinowski, Ph.D.—"The Ethics of Modern Warfare in the Light of Evolution."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A.—"Freethought Lessons from Abroad."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, G. Garrett (Liverpool)—"The Hairy Ape."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Livery Street): 7.0, Impromptu Debate—"Individualism or Collectivism."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance via passage facing Burtons): 7.15, Capt. F. D. Russell (Leeds Psychic Centre)—"Spiritualism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Bishop's Apologetics."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 6.45, J. P. Kelly, A Lecture.

MIDDLESBOUGH: 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Berkeley Hall, Kent Road): 7.0, Mr. John Grant—"Dialectical Materialism."

HETTON (Workmens' Club Hall): 7.0, Tuesday, November 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. M. Saron (German Refugee)—"Progress and Reaction in Sex Laws."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, Councillor J. J. Cleary, J.P. (Liverpool)—"My Philosophy."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Havelock Hall, Laygate): 7.15, Wednesday, November 18, Norman Charlton—"Co-operation of Conflict?"

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, A Lecture.

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