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FREETHINKER**

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Views and Opinions

Bible Superstition

WITH those possessing a sense of logic and an adequate understanding of history, there can be no question that the position of the Bible in Christian countries is entirely due to its being a "fetish-book." It was accepted as a revelation from God. A religion was built upon it; a Church was founded on it. For many centuries, whatever education existed was permeated with it. Denial of the truth of any of its teachings was an unforgivable crime; it meant exclusion from office, social boycott, prison, or even death. A little more than a century and a quarter ago there were no less than 120 men and women in English prisons at the same time, for the crime of selling Paine's *Age of Reason*, which is a criticism of the Bible that is now endorsed, in the main, by leading Christians. The Bible is still in use in our courts; it is in all our schools, and a teacher who criticized it would lose his position. Nor is there in the whole of the country a single newspaper that would dare print a straightforward attack on the Bible. The Bible is so well guarded, that it seems superfluous for Freethinkers to say much in its defence, and if they say less than they might, it is because what they say will certainly be used by Christians to perpetuate a view of the Bible that every sane Freethinker should be fighting.

Personally I read the Bible much more after I was an avowed Freethinker than I did before I reached that stage. That is, I read it with an informed mind, and not with a religiously prejudiced one. And I read it then with appreciation and profit. I did not read it to see how little of my religion I had to give up, for I had none. Neither did I read it with a view to picking out parts that I could praise, with the feeling that it might soften the attitude of religious friends by proving to them that I still treasured the "fetish-book." I just read it. I still consult it. I

read it and consult it as I do other books on folk-lore and primitive thinking. When I find the Bible testing the chastity of a woman by her drinking magic water, or the tribal joss sending plagues of boils or lice upon the people, when I find Jesus curing people with an incantation, or producing a miraculous supply of food, when I find that God invented different languages, or sent bears to devour children when they "cheeked" his medicine-man, I see that these tales are illustrative of the beliefs of other savage and semi-savage people. I was not at all impressed by "scholars" of all sorts trying to prove that there was something about Bible legends that raised them above others. I knew that was all bunkum. Sometimes it was obviously so; at other times the writer was deceiving himself as a preliminary to deceiving others. The belief in the Bible was one of the great superstitions of the world; it owed its position and value to superstition, and to nothing other than that.

* * *

How Superstitions Die

But superstitions, as we all know, die very slowly. Like the proverbial old soldier, they do not die, they "simply fade away." And they are a devil of a time fading. All the thousands of years that lie between us and the origin of the King in the magic of a semi-incarnation of a God, or in the deification of the medicine-man, has not destroyed the sense of divinity that "doth hedge a King." To the vulgar mind, highly or lowly placed, there is something sacred, something awe-inspiring about the person of a King that is not present in ordinary humanity. Thousands would rush to look at a king—even one who has been turned out of office—who would not turn their heads to look at the greatest philosopher or the greatest scientist in the world. There is indeed something significant in the fact that, to the general mind, the great philosopher is thought of as a very simple, absent-minded sort of a figure, often of insignificant build, while a King is pictured as a stately commanding kind of person. Superstitions decay slowly. They are protected by all the interests—financial, social, and family—that have gathered round them. Lack of critical acumen, fear of offending one's friends and the general public, want of knowledge, and incapacity to stand the strain of careful thinking; all these things combine to make the disappearance of superstition a very slow process. The dog curling himself on the drawing-room rug still goes through a ceremonial search for grass-hidden enemies before settling down with a satisfied grunt, and without the slightest knowledge that he has been engaged in an automatic repetition of a habit that has no longer a logical meaning. So it happens that thousands of generations after man has left the social state in which certain superstitions originated, he is still repeating them as if civilization and science had no existence.

The Creation of a Myth

The general attitude of men and women to-day towards the Bible falls under this law of the tenacity of superstitions. When it became plain that its historic teaching was no longer consonant with a sense of intellectual dignity, there was with the majority of people—particularly with those in position—not a rejection of the Bible superstition so much as a refinement of it. If the Bible could not maintain a supreme place as a fetish-book, then a justification for giving it a position superior to other books had to be found. It would never do to accept the substantial truth about the Bible as told by men like Paine, and Carlyle, and others of that type. There was a lack of "culture," a directness of language, that could not be tolerated. They were "violent," "aggressive," "destructive"; they showed no consideration for the feelings of religious people. Somehow the fall of the Bible had to be made easy. If it did not tell the truth concerning the only things which gave the Bible its authoritative position, then a first place must be found for it on other grounds. Often this policy of laying false trails was deliberate, but often it was not so, because of the immense capacity that man has of hiding from himself the real motives that incite him to action.

So grew up the tradition of the enormous value of the moral quality of the Bible, its thirst for righteousness, in spite of the obvious fact that the God of the Bible sponsored some of the most brutal acts, and the most stupid superstitions in human history. And late in the day, almost in our own time, the special apology that came to the front was that of the cultural and literary value of the Bible. This superstition, invented to provide a feather-bed for all whose fall from grace had to be made easy, found great favour with some university professors, who might have found their positions uncomfortable had they spoken plainly. They argued that there would be a "cultural" gap if the Bible were "removed." No one wished to remove the Bible as a book, but only to "remove" it as a book above other books, a book without which the history of the people would have been non-understandable, or as a revelation from God. A "gap" would be left in our literature had all copies of *Piers Plowman*, or *Aesop's Fables* or *Boccaccio's Tales*, or *Munchausen's Travels*, or the *Sentimental Journey*, or *Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*, been "removed." But I do not know that their total disappearance would have greatly altered the course of English literary history, for the reason that the impulses which produced these books would still have been active in their primary, secondary and later consequences.

* * *

Helping the Enemy

The number of those in high positions who have adopted this method of apologizing for the rejection of the Bible is fairly large, and others who were not in such prominent positions have followed them. But I think that a specimen sample may be taken in the following from Professor T. H. Huxley, written on the eve of the election of the first School Board for London, in 1870. It was a specially mischievous expression, because the fight for Secular Education was on, and this involved the removal of the Bible from a privileged position in the schools. Huxley must have known this quite well, and also the consequences of his pronouncement on behalf of the Bible. I cite the statement here because it puts well the case for the literary and cultural value of the Bible:—

Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate. There still remains in this old literature a vast residuum

of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John-o'-Groat's to Land's End as Dante and Tasso were to the Italians, that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form, and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other civilizations, and of a greater past that goes stretching back to the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be made to feel that each figure in the vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they are earning their payment for their work.

We are not surprised that a few years ago the Religious Tract Society reprinted this tribute as a reason for retaining the Bible in its present social and educational supremacy. Huxley did not believe in the Bible as a religious book, but he was willing to keep the book in a position, and to give it a standing where he knew quite well it would be used for the maintenance of a very stupid form of religion, and would serve as a drag upon the child's future intellectual development. The evil of that passage is that it set the pattern for those who were anxious to soften their break with current superstition.

I think this passage, along with another from the historian, John Richard Green, will serve as texts for an examination of this rationalized superstition concerning the Bible. I have space this week for criticism of one passage only from Huxley:—

For three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history.

Of course a book that has been widely read, and which young people have been forced to read, must be woven into their lives to some extent, although demonstrably not to the extent Huxley indicates. But why restrict this influence to all that is best and noblest? Huxley must have known that had the passage read, "for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that was brutal, intolerant and degrading in English history," although very one-sided, it would certainly not have been more one-sided than the case as presented by Huxley. Remember that the seventeenth century saw the greatest outbreak of persecutions for witchcraft that this country has ever seen. This was avowedly based on the Bible. The denial of rights to dissenters, the ear-cutting, nose-slitting, killing and imprisoning, of those that criticized the Bible, obviously had the same origin. The creation of a Puritan Sunday which robbed a man of cultural and physical educational opportunities on the one day he was free from labour, was owing to the influence of the Bible. The denial of justice to Freethinkers, generation after generation, was due to the Bible. Opposition to science was due to the Bible. Huxley himself once wrote that he had to attack the Bible, because whichever road he took he had not advanced far before he came across a notice, "No Admittance. By order, Moses." What was this but fighting the influence of the Bible. It was the place given her in the Bible that made it so difficult to give justice to women. It was the teachings of the Bible that gave the Christian slave-holder his authority for holding slaves. It was the influence of the Bible that made intolerance a habit with the people, and led to the opposition of many reforms.

Why then restrict the influence of the Bible to the best and noblest? Why not have pointed out, say, that not only was it bound up with the best and noblest, but also with the worst and vilest, and that it actually had the effect of converting the better qualities of a man's character into his worst? It took a sense of duty and made a man a bigot; it moralized persecution, and, just as Huxley himself was doing in the passage cited, rationalized superstition.

Certainly superstitions die hard, and one of the calamities of British Freethought is that Christianity should have so often found apologists for it from those whose first duty should have been to expose the true nature of its claims.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued)

The Half-Way House

"I did not really understand what I meant by Liberty until I heard it called by the new name of "Human Dignity."—G. K. Chesterton.

"Thought fights with thought; out springs a spark of truth

From the collision of the sword and shield."—Landor.

Few things are more noticeable in contemporary religionism than the enormous growth of the cult of Spiritualism. Churches and chapels are closing, but halls for Spiritualist meetings are opening everywhere. This is due largely to the decay of the Christian Religion, which is now in the melting-pot. Spiritualists have even exploited this situation by giving a veneer of orthodoxy to their own very heterodox movement, and have roped-in a number of dissatisfied Christians, who are attracted by the novelty and mystery of the rival abracadabra. Any one who has visited such Spiritualist meetings can tell this at a glance, for the familiarity of the audiences with the borrowed Christian hymns is only too noticeable, and their demeanour is always that of the tabernacle rather than that of the lecture-hall, where people do not smell their hats and walk on tiptoe like undertakers following a corpse.

The tortoise-like progress seems peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon peoples, and may be due to the unspeculative nature of the national character. In religion, as in politics, it is always compromise and never as direct action. Among Latin peoples you find little of this caution and hesitation. If a Frenchman becomes dissatisfied with the Romish Church in which he was brought up, he does not join a chapel, tin-tabernacle, or a mission hall. He drops religion altogether, and reads the newspaper instead of the romantic lives of the saints. But an Englishman may act like a "Bush-Baptist," or "Rice-Christian," and very nearly box the compass in a lengthy life. Not that he is dishonest, but that he is timid in such speculative matters in which he has so little knowledge. It is not hypocrisy, for the pastors and masters always take his money in every place of worship.

With the exception of the Christian Religion itself, there is, probably, no other cult whose history is so steeped and saturated in fraud and unadulterated charlatany as that of modern Spiritualism. Even the Spiritualists themselves have to admit it, and are actually driven to argue that the detection of fraudulent mediums is no proof that all such manifestations are entirely unsatisfactory. The cases of detection range from the far-off days of the Davenport brothers, the Fox sisters, down to the time of Mme. Blavatsky, Husapia Palladino, and others even later. Although Spiritualism is supposed to be primarily concerned with the question of man's immortality, it is full of

the talk of telepathy; it is about the alleged "soul" of man, and full of chatter of clairvoyance; it is of matters religious, and discusses automatic handwriting. In the last analysis, the Spiritualists base their case for human survival on these things, and innocent Christians are attracted. They do not realize that behind all the long-winded verbiage of telepathy, clairvoyance, automatic handwriting, precognition, and the like, there is always the furtive figure of "Sludge, the Medium," often a most disappointing personage in private life. Innocent Christians are hypnotized by the novelty of the whole proceedings, and do not realize that these "spooks" have contributed nothing to human knowledge, and are only made to talk the veriest platitudes. In this respect the Christian priests are far more clever than their rivals, the Spiritualists. The "spooks" of Orthodoxy are no more real than the theatrical "bogeys" of the Spiritualists, but the priests know that if a showman never lifts the curtain, it does not matter whether he has anything or nothing on the other side of the stage.

Spiritualism may be "a feather-bed for a falling Christian," but it is a very unpleasant menace to Orthodoxy. It defies the authority and prestige of all the priests of Christendom. It also challenges the old familiar and evasive clerical argument that the surgeon's knife cannot find man's immortal soul. For, in a very real sense, the cult of Spiritualism does try to find the "soul" with the surgeon's knife, that is, with scientific and material means. It professes to get as good evidence for the existence of Thomas Atkins after death, as it had for the existence of Mr. Atkins before his dissolution. The supposed bogey of Atkins is required to prove his posthumous existence and presence by making himself audible, by showing that he remembers his aunt or his grandmother, or even by having his photograph taken.

There is another point well worth attention. Life after death is not painted by these Spiritualists as being horrific. Unlike the clergy, they have no wish to paralyse reason with the clutch of fear. On the contrary, human survival is portrayed as a continuation of life upon earth, such as Shelley's sarcastic description of hell as a city "much like London." The Spiritualists will have nothing to do with the old theological theories of heaven, hell, and purgatory. Unconsciously, their ideas on this subject are becoming more and more secularized. These ideas may be childish and even inconclusive, but it is gratifying to find that they are more humane than the barbarous views of the priests. There is an enormous difference between Sir Oliver Lodge's fanciful views of a future existence, and the tragic and terrible views of Orthodox Christians. Recall, for example, Spurgeon's words that the majority of mankind were destined to eternal torture in full view of their deity:—

In fire, exactly like that which we have on earth to-day, will lie, asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed—every nerve a string on which the Devil shall for ever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament.

These unfortunate people will:—

look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written "For Ever." When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torment they shall say, "For Ever." When they howl, echo cries, "For Ever."

Spurgeon, be it remembered, was the most popular Christian preacher of the nineteenth century, and his sermons and publications were "best sellers." Similar brutal ideas are still preached to-day by Romish priests, the Salvation Army, and itinerant evangelists. The gospel of Spiritualism may be preached by a medium with a tambourine between his

toes, but that is no worse than the blatantly blood-thirsty message of the older theologians.

This struggle between the old Oriental Orthodoxy and the newer Spiritualist superstition must bring home the growth and change of ideas. Knowledge has widened, and is still widening, in so many ways never dreamt of in the old-world Eastern theology of the Christian Religion. New tones have grown into human sentiment. All the lights and shadows of life have shifted, and its whole surface has been dyed in different colours. Naturally and inevitably, we are progressing beyond the reach of the old larlarous ideals. They voice different views which men are outgrowing, and at their note their minds and feelings rouse to little movement except amazement. Slowly, the conscience of the race is rising above the old savage Orthodox dogmas. The present trend towards Spookism may be a halt at a half-way house, but the ultimate goal is Secularism, which means that man will be freed from the dominance and tyranny of Priestcraft in all its forms and manifestations. For it is better that man should walk alone than that he should consult dubious oracles bent on his exploitation.

MIMNERMUS.

William Schwenck Gilbert

ONE hundred years ago, Gilbert was born. He was not cast in heroic mould, his weaknesses were many, and some of his peculiarities were irritating, but all save the hero-worshipper take things of this kind as a matter of course. The fact remains that his mark has been made; it is clear and distinct. When the amount of useful work accomplished receives a fair assessment, it will be considered great; the quality of the work will be adjudged admirable. In merry guise he forced upon the public unpleasant truths, and coming into the picture at the right moment and with the assistance undoubtedly of Sullivan's exquisite musical setting, their acceptance became more general than could have been anticipated. Gilbert hated poses and posing. He attacked every sham, not from a definite social philosophy, but because he didn't like them. That his shafts got home so frequently is a tribute to his thoughtfulness. Many a reformer fails to collect the full returns from his labours by a failure to consider the human medium in which he works. Gilbert made no such error. He dealt his blows with precision, to a great extent because he put thought into the job of getting under his opponent's guard. He laughed at every form of conventional humbug. A problem that has beset many of Gilbert's admirers is: How is it that his frontal attack on the glories of the Victorian era was apparently greeted with general enthusiasm? The answer is that the enthusiasm was not so general as it appeared. To the hide-bound upholder of the conventions, he was anathema. His audience always laughed. It was when they got home that they began to wonder whether they should have laughed. But by then the mischief had been done; laughter had entered their souls.

An old chess-playing friend of mine told me years ago that he had been taken when a young man by his "guvnor," an old-fashioned typical family lawyer, along with the rest of the staff, to see *Trial by Jury* on a ceremonial occasion. Very early in the play they discovered he had disappeared, not to return. One of the staff had, however, noticed the details of his departure. The irreverent handling of the Swearing-in of the Jury had intensely upset him. He got

bluer and bluer in the face, and not wishing to upset the rest of the party, he quietly fled.

The expected resentment in certain quarters did then materialize. The conventionalist with a modicum of brains knew he was hit and didn't like it. He was submerged by the majority, and found it easier to pretend that he was amused. For the fact remains that the only correct word that can be applied to Gilbert's attitude towards the hallowed objects of Victorian veneration is that he was a *scoffer*. You will not find the word used in the whole of the Gilbertian literature, yet it is the nearest to correctness.

At the time when English Society was enjoying the luxury of terming Gladstone the Grand Old Humbug it was actually applauding "When Britain really ruled the waves" in *Iolanthe*, and laughing at such dialogue between two peers as, "Mind you, George, I have the greatest respect for brains. I often wish I had some myself." Even in the rare periods of the nineteenth century when Victoria was popular, Gilbert could dare to put over such a scene as that in the *Pirates of Penzance*, when the Pirates had the Policemen at their mercy, swords at throat. Inspired, the police played their trump-card: "We bid you yield—in Queen Victoria's name." The pirates know themselves foiled, for "With all our faults we love our Queen." The song in *Ruddigore* about the merciful Revenue sloop that had spared more French frigates than any craft afloat, because:—

To fight a French fal-lal—it's like hittin' of a gal—
It's a lubberly thing for to do;
For we, with all our faults,
Why, we're sturdy British salts,
While she's only a Parley-voo

was a killing piece of work. So terrible was it, in fact, that the thick-heads in the audience couldn't believe it, and the opera was even subjected to a period of censorship "because of its insults to the French people." This, however, was probably only a pretended reason. And one refuses to believe that Colonel Blimp sat unconcernedly, and grinned, when the now well-known lines in *Pinafore* came over the footlights:—

He is an Englishman.
For he himself has said it,
And it's greatly to his credit,
That he is an Englishman!
For he might have been a Roosian,
A French, or Turk, or Proosian,
Or perhaps Italian
But in spite of all temptations,
To belong to other nations,
He remains an Englishman.

None of our revered institutions escaped the lash. The law, "The true embodiment of everything that's excellent" was pleasantly but nonetheless, severely satirized in *Iolanthe*. In *Princess Ida* the soldier has his quarter-hour:—

We are warriors three
Sons of Gama, Rex,
Like most sons are we,
Masculine in sex,
Politics we bar,
They are not our bent;
On the whole we are
Not intelligent.

Bold, and fierce, and strong, ha! ha!
For a war we burn,
With its right or wrong, ha! ha!
We have no concern.
Order comes to fight, ha! ha!
Order is obeyed,
We are men of might, ha! ha!
Fighting is our trade.

The party politician is flayed in *Ruddigore* (and elsewhere):—

Ye supple M.P.'s who go down on your knees,
Your precious identity sinking,
And vote black or white as your leaders indite
(Which saves you the trouble of thinking).

"Society" has its turn in the *Gondoliers*. Says the Duchess:—

I recommend acres
Of clumsy dressmakers—
Their fit and their finishing touches—
A sum in addition
They pay for permission
To say that they make for the Duchess.

Says the Duke:—

I sit, by selection,
Upon the direction
Of several Companies' bubble—
As soon as they're floated
I'm freely bank-noted,
I'm pretty well paid for my trouble!

And so throughout. If any imagine that Gilbert had prejudices which would save them from their share of the lash, they are badly in error, for:—

Hearts just as pure and fair
May beat in Belgrave Square,
As in the lowly air
Of Seven Dials.

And when the two Republicans in the *Gondoliers* have explained that

Republicans, heart and soul, we hold all men to be equal. As we abhor oppression, we abhor kings; as we detest vain-glory, we detest rank; as we despise effeminacy, we despise wealth.

they are informed that "unfortunately" one of them is a King. Quickly one of them explains that there are Kings and Kings; whilst the other conceives a King who is positively unobjectionable.

One has had it explained that Gilbert never launched his shafts at Religion. Gilbert could not resist smiting humbug when he saw it, and it is not likely that religion escaped. Attention has already been called to the Swearing-in scene in *Trial by Jury*. What about the Pale Young Curate in *The Sorcerer* which affected Lewis Carroll so much that he designated it "simply painful"?

Time was when maidens of the noblest station,
Forsaking even military men,
Would gaze upon me, rapt in adoration.
Ah me! I was a fair young curate then!

We also happen to know that Lewis Carroll (Rev. C. Dodgson) was one of those "who went off the deep end" at Gilbert's outrageous liberties in *Pinafore*, when Capt. Corcoran relieves himself by saying "Damme, its too bad!"

Carroll wrote in the *Theatre*:—

No matter whether you believe in Hell or not; millions do; and those pure young lips thus sporting with its horrors—and then find what fun in it you can. How Mr. Gilbert could have stooped to write, or Sir Arthur Sullivan could have prostituted his noble art to set to music, such vile trash, it passes my skill to understand.

This reaction of the author of *Alice in Wonderland* is useful to chronicle, for it puts Gilbert's work into its proper time and place, a thing always liable to be forgotten as the years roll by. It certainly does not decrease our valuation of Gilbert's social usefulness.

The religious person as well will get small comfort from *The Bab Ballads*. We suspect that Carroll himself would have had to resort to so-called profanity adequately to describe *The Rival Curates*:—

List while the poet trols,
Of Mr. Clayton Hooper,
Who had a cure of souls,
At Spiff-ton-extra-Soo-per.

He lived on curds and whey,
And daily sang their praises,
And then he'd go and play
With buttercups and daisies.

Wild croquet Hooper banned,
And all the sports of Mammon,
He warred with cribbage, and
He exorcised backgammon.

When *The Gondoliers* was presented by command at Windsor Castle before Victoria, "authority had decided that Gilbert did not exist." His name was omitted from the programme whilst the name of the wig-maker was printed in bold type. Victoria is one of the finest examples extant of the purely "class" reaction. Victoria knew unerringly, what the Gilbertian libretti were directed against, and took a characteristic revenge. Gilbert got in the last blow, however, for in *Utopia Limited* he mocked the court itself, openly and barefacedly. Victoria's efforts to wean Sullivan away from the Savoy Opera collaboration by flattery and patronage, form amusing reading at this time of day.

Gilbert's work was, for the very great part, healthy and effective. The man who said that "Deerstalking would be a very fine sport if only the deer had a gun" one knows to have been not only human but humane. He who wrote

Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall
That Death, whene'er he call,
Must call too soon.

has helped to make life substantially more tolerable for hundreds of thousands. Memories of a hundred nights come back to me as I write, nights on many occasions with precious companions, when it was essential for one's spiritual sustenance that the entertainment should match one's company. Sullivan never failed; Gilbert never failed. And for this boon, much thanks!

T. H. ELSTON.

The Literature of Theology

EVERYBODY knows that, as a rule, one cannot give away theological works, much less sell them. Outside most second-hand booksellers' shops is a "penny" or "tuppenny" box which is almost always full of books on religion. Very rarely, indeed, can a real find be made among them, for there are precious few worth preserving. Yet to the service of Christianity have many able men and women devoted their lives spending years of arduous work and research in the cause they thought the greatest in the world. They could have made but little profit from their work, as books are never cheap to produce; and only a few could be ranked as "best sellers."

English literature can boast of a fair number of theological works worthy of a better resting-place than the penny box. The immense labour of Bishop Colenso on the Pentateuch, which did wonderful work in its day, is perhaps unknown to the present generation. He spent ten years on his exhaustive analysis and examination of part of the "sacred writ," and pulverized its authenticity. Yet there are millions of Christians all over the world who believe that every word of the five books of Moses is divinely inspired, a large majority have never heard of Colenso, and who, even if they had, would not be allowed to read him by the Church to which they owe allegiance.

Paley once reigned supreme in the theological world. His famous *Evidences of Christianity* (which, by the way, was largely cribbed without acknowledgment) was, to most pious people, an unanswerable vindication of Christian truth, and it formed the principle class-book for budding clergymen for over a century. There is hardly a penny box in which a copy cannot be found nowadays, for even the most ardent believers are not now quite so sure that Paley is so unanswerable. Paley is not, however, in the same class with Colenso.

In the eighteenth century, the greatest English theologians were mostly occupied answering the despised Deists. They were almost invariably scornful of the learning and classical knowledge of these old Free-thinkers, but they were moved to put forward their greatest powers in answering the "infidel" objections to their religion. Blount, Collins, Toland, Tindal, and of course, Woolston, brought forth an immense number of books some of which do not even deserve the penny box, while others undoubtedly are very capable defences of difficult positions. Does anybody read them these days? Is, for example, Sherlock's *Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* ever quoted now by believers? Who knows the work of the Rev. Samuel Chandler, once so famous for his *Life of David*, and his *Vindication of the Christian Religion*; or even Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, which once was proclaimed as annihilating the Deistic position?

Then look at the work of the great Jeremy Taylor, undoubtedly a master of English prose. Is it not, except for the curious, as dead as the proverbial door-nail? Is it ever quoted in defence of Christianity? Could that well-known Aunt Sally, the "man-in-the-street" even give us the name of *one* of his works, off-hand? The nineteenth century saw the rise of a number of famous Christian writers—men like the two Newmans, Bishop Lightfoot, Maurice and Kingsley, Bishops Westcott and Ellicott, and a host of others whose books are stamped with passionate sincerity and misplaced learning. What has become of the Christianity they so eloquently defended? Does the mass of our people care two hoots for their work? Those who believe rarely read them; they are content to believe without troubling about the subtle defence of theological points which mark so many religious books. They go to Church, not because they have read Lightfoot, but because their friends go. The Church is a social centre; there *must* be something at the back of the Universe, and it is better and safer to believe something, if ever so little, than nothing at all; and after all it is only a little time spent on Sunday, so what does it matter?

One would think that the sorry fate of theological works in the past would deter, even in a little measure, other religious writers from giving to the world similar pious effusions. Not a bit of it; for one cannot pick up a religious journal without finding that religious books are turned out unceasingly and in increasing numbers. Who buys these books? Who reads them?

I pick up the current number of the *Church Times* and find its advertisement pages crowded with notices of forthcoming or newly published masterpieces. It seems incredible that these have a public thirsting for further religious enlightenment. Is there really something new to say—from the religious standpoint—on Jesus, or Paul, for example?

Well, here is Mr. Ralph Waldo Trine, whose *In Tune with the Infinite* was, in the past, a "best seller," with a new life of Jesus. So successful is it that the publisher has already produced a *second*

edition "before publication"—which perhaps has a definite meaning for those engaged in the publishing world. Mr. Trine's book is, we are told, the first he has written for many years, and his new "life" contains "a beautiful, fresh, clear, retelling of the story of the life of Jesus and a new, simple interpretation of his teaching as applied to the problems of our daily lives."

Jesus seems to be a veritable gold-mine for authors, publishers, and booksellers. The number of lives of Jesus, all written because the gospels prove quite inadequate—according to these modern authors—to show what a marvellous god he is, must be immense. Almost anybody who can write a little, and with a modicum of imagination, could write a new life of Jesus, and interpret his "teaching" to cover anything—from vegetarianism to Spiritualism. I am almost sure that an enthusiastic philatelist would have little difficulty in proving that Jesus was the greatest stamp collector the world has ever seen, or an amateur conjuror fervently maintain that Jesus was the world's most eminent prestidigitator. Nowadays, Jesus is invoked to solve the world's most difficult problems. It is amazing to me to see men and women, quite intelligent, solemnly assure us that all the world needs is Jesus, that if only everybody would do exactly as he taught, all our troubles would end. The question of our food supply, of the pressure of population, of housing, of land reform, of machinery displacing labour, of divorce reform, and a hundred other things which have sprung up in our complex civilization—all will be solved, and easily solved, through the simple words of Jesus! If ever optimism has run mad it is here.

Mr. Ralph Waldo Trine's book was written to show how his "new simple interpretation" of the teaching of Jesus can be applied to our problems. It would be funny were it not tragic.

Those who can afford 21s. can buy a work by Dr. P. N. Harrison, on Polycarp's two *Épistles* to the Philippians. Here is a learned gentleman putting in an immense amount of labour to convince people that "the document we call the *Épistle* of Polycarp really consists of two letters"; and even if he proves it, what then? What does it matter what a stupid credulous fool like Polycarp really thought or wrote? Nobody seems to know anything of this person, his death being any date between 161 A.D. to 178 A.D.—if he ever lived at all. When Polycarp was "martyred," a voice came from heaven, saying, "Be of good cheer, Polycarp, and play the man." The flames couldn't burn him, so he was charged with a lance, the blood gushing forth to such a degree that it put out the flames. This is the kind of Christian history that is gravely discussed by our learned men. In any case, fancy paying 21s. for a book discussing anything Polycarp is supposed to have written!

Then Mr. C. H. Dodd has a book called *The Present Task in New Testament Studies*, and Dr. C. A. A. Scott one on the *Living Issues in the New Testament*. To find our "present task" as well as "living issues" in the New Testament, shows what a mine of wonderful information and knowledge is contained in that slim volume; and in addition, Dr. Scott has another book on *New Testament Ethics*. These four books are sponsored by the Cambridge University Press, a guarantee, if ever there was one, that they are worth reading. But are they? Can anything really *new* be said about the New Testament? Would any of these books convert a Free-thinker?

That devotional works of this sort are in demand is evident; otherwise money would not be spent on their production, whether by publisher or author. But I repeat, who reads

them? Friends of their authors, or people who are desirous of having their faith strengthened? That there is a vastly increased reading public can be shown by the large number of "twopenny" libraries found in every district, as well as by the increase in public libraries. But their subscribers prefer novels or exciting murder mysteries. Very rarely are theological works in demand. And yet they seem to be published year in and year out, as if the whole population's spiritual nourishment could be fed on nothing else. Perhaps it is due to the tardy recognition that Christianity is slowly but surely dying, and that a desperate sortie, however vain, will put off the fatal day of complete surrender.

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops

Colonel Allen, M.P., for West Birkenhead, is to raise the question of legislation for repatriating coloured seamen, and to forbid marriage between coloured and white people. So much for the brotherhood of man in so Christian a gentleman as Colonel Allen, and in so Christian a place as Birkenhead. All men are equal in the sight of God, but not in the sight of Colonel Allen. All men are brothers, but brothers cannot marry sisters—when their skins are of a different tint. Bond and free are alike in the light of the gospel, but not in the light of Christian feeling. Colonel Allen believes that in such marriages as those between white and coloured folk each side looks down on the other. We agree, but Colonel Allen ought to realize that this feeling is entirely the growth of Christian times. It is the Christian peoples that have inflicted such gigantic injustices on the coloured ones, and no wonder that the white looks down on the coloured man as someone beneath him. From one point of view that is a rationalizing of the injustice done, and from the point of view of those injured it is a consequence of those among them who possess the greatest self-respect. Surely Christianity offers the world the greatest exhibition of humbug and hypocrisy the world has ever known.

Lord Halifax, in opening new buildings belonging to Beverley Grammar School, said that "more and more people were coming to think more of the old Christian laws of trying to love God and to love their neighbours." Hear! hear! And they are expressing it by each preparing to slaughter each other as the only means of preventing actual warfare. That is what they call "practical" as distinguished from theoretical Christianity. But we are left wondering what the world would have been like without these "old Christian laws"? Not worse than it is, surely!

On November 13 a man was summoned at Croydon for the alleged desertion of his wife. The wife said they were happy together until her husband went to a mission hall, and devoted himself wholly to it. He was living apart from his wife, but explained that if his wife had taken her place by his side, there would be no room for anyone else. But she came after the mission because the things of God came first. The summons was dismissed. Probably the magistrate had remembered that Christ said men must desert their fathers and mothers and wives and follow him, and one cannot expect a really sincere Christian to put his wife before God and the salvation of his own soul. But if the wife will go to the mission regularly it will be all right.

The following, reprinted from our columns of just over a year ago seems appropriate to existing circumstances:—

No one has yet adequately examined and exposed the hypnotizing influence of a uniform—not merely on others, but also on the wearer himself. The fondness of

most men for a uniform is easily observable. It begins with early childhood. Children love to "dress up" to play at soldiers or sailors, or to strut around in some quite distinctive dress. And the child is continued in the adult with badges and a special dress of this or that order. Boy Scouts and Girl Guides follow on, the chief attraction here being again a distinctive dress. Court ceremonials owe their chief attractiveness to the uniform of this or that order, or to a dress distinct from that of ordinary life, worn with a simple pride strongly reminiscent of the mentality of the "untutored savage." Knights of the Garter and members of the Order of Buffaloes; Monarchs in their robes and members of the Ku-klux-klan in their winding sheets, the savage in his war-paint and the modern major-general in his uniform, all feel a childish delight in being separated from others by a distinctive dress.

A volume could be written without completely exhausting the significance of the uniform in life. Only one or two features can be noted here. The first and perhaps the greatest thing a uniform does is to separate the wearer from his fellows. It marks him as something distinct from those around him, and to most lovers of a uniform to be distinct is the equivalent of being distinguished. Unimportant within, he feels visibly important from without. He impresses himself and he impresses others. If Al Capone had developed the sense to dress all his followers in uniform he might easily have gathered round him a measure of respectability and social distinction he was never able otherwise to obtain. But he made the mistake of dressing as did other folk, and permitting his followers to follow his example. And the end was prison. A uniform might have meant a different end. Criminality goes a long way towards legality once it is dressed up in uniform. Absurdity becomes almost reasonable by the same method. Black shirts and brown shirts, green shirts and red shirts, and old school ties are more than articles of dress, they are the eternal witnesses to the shallowness of the average human mentality, evidence that the adult is not often far removed from the child, the civilized person very near to the savage. The day that soldiers are despoiled of their uniforms, armies will crumble into nothingness. When the pantomimic ceremonial of a court assembly is dispensed with, a more intelligent standard of human worth will be nearer establishment.

The B.B.C. had arranged to broadcast a selection from the negro play "Green Pastures," but at the last moment has cancelled the arrangement. We can hardly blame them. It is quite certain that "Gawd" in the play would not carry on his conversation with Gabriel with the proper B.B.C. pronunciation. Besides for the ordinary listener hearing God Almighty talk about Biblical events in everyday language would rob them, and him, of all their sacred value. The vast majority of Christians quite believe that when God and the angels talk they "thee" and "thou" each other, with all the accompaniments of archaic English. It is the setting that make these primitive beliefs impressive. If the King went to his coronation dressed in an ordinary suit of morning clothes with a soft hat, the ceremony would lose nearly all its interest and quite all its impressiveness. All these things impress because people are lifted out of the influence of current life and thought.

We are constantly being told that many of the types of Christian we attack are "museum specimens." The New Zealand Baptists, we are sure, would resent this description. They are very annoyed at the moment at the presence of an atheistic lecturer on their island. "Are these Atheists fooling themselves," they ask, "with the idea that when they have crucified Spanish monks and outraged Spanish nuns . . . there will arise from the wreckage a brave new world?" "Chilly Atheists" or "mangy Atheists" rob the world of its charm and deny its dignity. We are also told that "the world is soaked in thought." Well, if there is so much thought abroad, why don't the New Zealand Baptists try to make a little use of it?

They will find, if they look around, that the "chilly Atheist" has all that the world offers in the way of warmth, and that he has besides visions of a brave new world that meditation on the divine will never give him.

Also they will find without much difficulty that the Free-thought message of freedom of thought and intellectual hospitality is the one message that cannot lead to the mildest of persecutions for opinion's sake. And perhaps they may find that the operation of taking a phrase from an author because it fits in with one's prejudices, is not thinking, but just self-gratification. Carlyle who is made use of in this way, it is well known, upset his spleen over anybody or everything, if the whim seized him. "Mangy Atheism" suits the bigots' book, but "God does nothing," does not. Nor does Carlyle's sober reference to the fact that more blood was spilt in one day during the massacre of St. Bartholomew than during the entire "Reign of Terror."

Meredith is also quoted by the same publication. When G. W. Foote was experiencing Christian courtesy in gaol because of his "chilly Atheism," it was Meredith who sent him a volume of his poems to while the hours away. It was Meredith who described the work of this uncompromising Atheist as "the best of causes." A little thinking might convince the New Zealand Baptists that what impressed Meredith in such a movement was not its insistence on the crucifixion of Spanish monks and outraging of Spanish nuns. Meredith may have been right or wrong in his assessment, but whether he was or not can only be found out in one way, and that is by doing a little thinking on one's own. We commend this advice to the New Zealand Baptists, for the prospect is chilly indeed if they, and those like them, are for ever going to kneel at the old shrines worshipping the dead gods and refusing to be animated by decent human aspirations.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, who has, like the Pope and his Cardinals, to justify his position every now and then, made two speeches in Brighton the other day. How stupendously original they were can be seen by the remark that "Christianity was never more needed than it was to-day; the existence and power of Christianity was at stake." He added that "there was in the hearts of the English people the instinct of religion," and, of course, that religion should be Christianity. The Bishop of Chichester added his quota by pointing out that in the new housing areas in the district, "there was a population of 150,000," and for them "the right religion was Christianity." And "if they did not get the right religion, they would get the wrong one." The Archbishop and the Bishop seem to have missed their true vocation. They should have been commercial travellers.

A "religious" census has been organized by the Bishop of Rochester. He and his assistants have been going round one of the new housing districts, and they managed to interview the inmates of 1,834 houses out of 2,556. About 19 per cent could be roughly classed as Church of England; 11 per cent were Nonconformist; 6 per cent were Roman Catholic; while in only 1 per cent "was definite hostility or opposition to all religion shown." Most of this opposition came from Communists, for only "in one or two cases a clear Materialist Atheism was the cause." The census showed, in fact, that "the general attitude towards religion was one of friendly interest."

We do not doubt it for an instant. This particular new area was inhabited mainly by artisans and clerks with a sprinkling of labourers, and anyone who has mixed with similar people know that, as a rule, they take the Church or Chapel for granted. It is an institution, solid as a rock, founded by Christ somewhere in the dim past, never to be shaken by cranks like Atheists. Moreover, a church or chapel is a social centre; one gets to know one's neighbours there much more easily than by talking to them over the garden wall. This difficulty of making friends in a new district is artfully played upon by the Church. A whist drive or a dance got up by the vicar's wife introduces people to one another, attending a Sunday service follows as a matter of course, and before long, a new church is being built right in the

heart of the new district. It requires rare courage to fight a lone hand, but Atheists have had to do it in the past, and the way was never easy.

One point should be noted. Hostility to religion need not mean hostility to one's neighbours. It takes a crowd of people to make a world, and they are never likely to agree on everything. The very essence of Freethought is tolerance, and if that is borne in mind, the social amenities need not be always the prerogative of Christians. And the work of Freethought should be making other Freethinkers. That can be done in a new district as well as in an old one.

Mr. Collie Knox, who is the B.B.C. critic on that typical Christian paper, the *Daily Mail*, is quite perturbed over the way in which the Rev. W. H. Elliott's mid-week services have been curtailed. Hundreds of readers have already written imploring him to make the B.B.C. change its mind. They have received such wonderful comfort, it seemed like Heaven listening to the rev. gentleman's parson-like voice, and now all they get is "a little organ, a little choir, no congregation, a very dull lot of reading . . . and an empty service." Alas, alas! To think Mr. Elliott's absence—for which thousands of other listeners must fervently say, Thank God—would make all that difference.

It is quite probable that the B.B.C. is beginning to feel the force of a large number of protests against its using the broadcasting machinery for religious propaganda, but it is a poor way of repentance to dock Mr. Elliott's time. We have over and over again advised our readers to listen to Mr. Elliott, for while the other parsons are, for the most part, merely stupid, Mr. Elliott is amusingly so. He is as good a representative of the comic Music-Hall parson as anyone we know. We vote for Mr. Elliott having more time, and to take all the time, if possible, given to religious services. With reference to religion "on the air," Mr. Elliott reminds us of the policy of the Spartans who made their slaves drunk in order to impress on their children the virtue of sobriety.

There seems little trust in God nowadays. Once upon a time Mr. Muller boasted that he never advertised—he only prayed. But probably he too was like a Hammer-smith Church which occupies a whole page in the *Methodist Recorder* in order to state that "Rivercourt is praying for ten thousand pounds." It reminds us of the tiny tot who prayed in loudest shouts for God to send him a new toy-engine. "Why shout," asked his mother, "God isn't deaf!" "No," said junior, "but Uncle is."

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.

E. A. LASSEN.—Thanks for interesting letter. We admit the justice of your criticism, but it is, I think, one of the attractions of the *Freethinker*, that it contains so many different points of view, which in turn has penalties attaching. Faults might be obviated with a larger staff than we possess. We might have that if the paper had the circulation it deserves.

J. H. THOMPSON (Pittsburg).—Thanks for cuttings, always welcome and useful.

PLUMSTEAD.—*Ten Medieval Studies*, by G. G. Coulton, is published by the Cambridge University Studies, price 25s.

W. WILLIAMS.—Obliged for sending name of a likely new subscriber.

T. RADFORD.—We had a request for an article from the paper named, but we are too busy with other things just now to comply. The time required for research would have been too great. You must bear in mind that the work which appears in these columns represent only a part of what we have to do. And for the time being we are warned that we must go as slowly as possible.

D. MAPP AND J.D. (Ireland).—The report is useful and will be filed for future reference.

J. BRIGHTON.—It is always good work making the position of the N.S.S. quite clear on matters of wide-spread public interest.

G. S. SPEED.—You must bear in mind that Mr. Herbert Morrison when he touches religion always has his eye on the elections. His nonsense about "true religion" has no other reason for its existence.

LADY MAUD SIMON.—Next week. Crowded out this issue.

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

To-day (November 22) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester, at 7.0, on "Aspects of Life and Death." Admission will be free, but there will be a number of reserved seats at 6d., and 1s. each. Doors open at 6.30.

November 28, the date of the Social and Dance arranged by the Executive of the N.S.S., for Caxton Hall, Westminster, London, is now very near, and those who have not yet sent for tickets should do so without delay. The

hall provides first-class accommodation, and the programme of dances, vocal and instrumental items, and a few words from the President, should ensure an enjoyable evening to all present. Tickets, 2s. 6d. each, including refreshments, from the General Secretary, or the Pioneer Press. The Social provides an excellent occasion for introducing friends to the movement.

Press Parade, by Hamilton Fyfe (Watts & Co., 2s. 6d.) is a very depressing book—to an intelligent reader, that is. To the majority it will probably not be found depressing, but only and merely interesting. The book hardly lives up to the publisher's advertisement that it "outlines the secret history of the Press," because all that is said is fairly well-known. The real secret history (the bribery on a colossal scale that takes place, the praise of books for payment in the shape of advertisements, the handling of public companies, which may amount to practical blackmail on the one side, or silence (on the other) if published would land a writer or publisher in an expensive series of very troublesome libel actions. Mr. Fyfe, as a working journalist for many years, writes out of the fullness of his experience, and although most of what he has said has been said from time to time in these columns, yet the bringing together of the truth about the conduct of the newspapers of today, forms an interesting disclosure.

It is the truth of the book that makes it depressing. For it exhibits a vast reading, fundamentally unintelligent public, craving for excitement, developing a staggering interest in the inane jottings of Lord This or Viscount That, who is handing the fact that he saw the Duchess of — wearing a new hat, or he passed Lady — in Piccadilly, and noted that she was looking extremely well, or can be fobbed off serious news by page after page of gossip about film stars, or gossip about murderer's hobbies, or that the King is wearing a new style of trousers. All this has developed into easy meat for papers of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* type, and the more the public read them, the less able they are to understand the affairs that are going on around them. It is not that the public is unaware of the lies they are being told, or that news is suppressed or garbled, or manufactured. They are well aware of it, but they like to have their disordered palate tickled by rubbish that an intelligent boy or girl would be ashamed to swallow. Mr. Fyfe writes of what he knows; he has been one of them; he gained his position by playing the game, and one is inclined to take his indictment of the press as the confessions of, if not a "justified sinner," at least one who has enough decency in his composition to feel ashamed of his occupation. There are many ways of getting a dishonest living, but to write with one eye on their editor and another on a credulous public, to suppress because it would offend some people, or fail to please others, to write to order and to prostitute whatever talents one has by asking what is wanted and then trying to satisfy the want, is surely a method of gaining a livelihood that out-does in degradation that of picking pockets, or straightforward swindling. Mr. Fyfe's book is a terrible indictment of a generally known and widely recognized evil. Whether it will put self-respect into writers and editors, and arouse indignation in readers for being served with the rubbish that fills the "national papers," we very much doubt.

Mr. G. Bedborough will lecture in the Beecheroff Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead, this evening (November 22), on "Modernism: God up-to-date." The local N.S.S. Branch has the arrangements in hand, and as Mr. Bedborough has been there before, a full hall is expected. The lecture begins at 7 o'clock, and the lecturer is hoping to renew his acquaintance with Birkenhead friends.

The West London Branch N.S.S. will have Mr. R. H. Rosetti as the speaker this evening (November 22). The lecture will be held in the "Laurie Arms," Crawford

Place, Edgware Road, W., at 7.30, on "A Search for God." The subject should be helpful to Freethinkers in the area, in persuading orthodox friends to come along to the meeting.

The *Sunday Graphic* spreads enlightenment:—

Since "Gef," "the talking mongoose," was mentioned in Mr. Richard Lambert's slander suit, Mr. Irving has been inundated with letters of advice and criticism. He is taking no notice of them. All he wants, he says, is the end of "Gef." "But I am open to advice from anyone who can really help." "Gef," said Mr. Irving, "cannot be supernatural, because I have put down food for him and seen his shadow on the wall eating with a spoon. He has been photographed scores of times by my daughter Voirrey. I have had people here who have tried to exorcise the evil spirit, but Gef said afterwards: They'll never get me out that way. I know more than they do."

Once I put down rat poison and traps. The traps were flung across the room, and for three nights we dare not go to bed before midnight, because if we did, he hammered on the walls until the place shook.

Each of the family testifies to having heard "Gef" speak when both or one of the others have been absent. "How," I asked, "did you learn he is a mongoose, and that it is he who speaks?" "He told us himself," said Mr. Irving. "I didn't know what a mongoose was until he told me."

We feel impelled to preserve a delicious expression in the editorial of the *Observer* of Sunday last. The editor commends to his readers the "frank open manner" of Mussolini. Next week we are looking forward to a eulogy of the gentle Goering and the high-minded truthful Hitler.

A very interesting and instructive evening was spent last Sunday at the North London Branch N.S.S. meeting at the Primrose Cafe, 66 Heath Street, Hampstead. Mr. G. Bedborough was the speaker, his address being closely followed and bringing out some interesting questions. Meetings are held there every Sunday evening, and there should be no question as to the success of the effort. Local friends can help materially by making these meetings a matter of personal advertising. Syllabus of lectures may be had from Mr. L. Ellis, 28 Denning Road, Hampstead, N.W.3, or from Branch members.

Adverse opinions are always interesting, and tend to keep one's head within normal limits. Someone has sent Mr. J. Sallond, of Hucknall, Notts., two copies of the *Freethinker*. After reading them "intelligently, I hope," Mr. Sallond does not want any more copies, because, "Heaven help civilization if views such as yours become generally accepted." Mr. Sallond's concern for civilization is touching, but whether his disapproval will affect its course, we do not know. He is doing his best by not reading things with which he is not in agreement. "Civilization" should be proud of Mr. Sallond.

The streets are full of human toys,
Wound up for threescore years;
Their springs are hunger, hopes and joys,
And jealousies and fears.

They move their eyes, their lips, their hands;
They are marvellously dressed;
And here my body stirs or stands
A plaything like the rest.

The toys are played with till they fall,
Worn out and thrown away.
Why were they even made at all?
Who sits to watch the play?

Robert Louis Stevenson.

The Scientist With a Wand

(Concluded from page 724)

IN order to understand how science is kept back, let us take a very brief glance at how it moves forward. We have only space to mention the mere skeleton of its method.

Science is more than mere knowledge. It is knowledge organized in a particular way. What happens is this. First the scientist collects his facts from various sources. This simple collection of facts is called *observation*. Then he arranges them into groups so that they begin to take on some semblance of order. This is called *classification*. Then he sits down to study this array of classified facts with the object of finding some principle of causation running through them. When he has tumbled to this he is able to see the precise play of cause and effect in the particular set of facts he is dealing with, and can therefore interfere with causes and produce various effects according to what is desirable. This perception of a principle, a general truth, running through a medley of facts is called *induction*. Thus science proceeds by observation, classification and induction. But there is one more function to be mentioned. It is *experiment*. Experiment is merely a special sort of observation. When it is too difficult or too tedious for the scientist to wait for certain processes, which he wants to observe, to occur in nature, he creates them artificially, by various devices, in his laboratory, and thus observation is immeasurably speeded up. That is all we mean by experiment, and one can see how it has become an indispensable part of scientific research.

Now we are in a position to return to medical science in particular, and review the reasons why it has not advanced as rapidly as other branches. In the first place medical research met with the greatest obstruction in its early days, and the blame for this must once again be laid at the door of superstition. The anatomical researches of the doctors were regarded popularly with horror and disgust, and those who thus affronted the sanctity of death were execrated. The highest anatomist in the land, who might to-day be knighted for his eminence, would at that time have been branded with the odious name of "body snatcher," and in fact pursued his studies at his peril. So much for the encouragement offered to *observation* in the young science of medicine. To-day the difficulties in the way of observation are of a different kind. The battle over anatomy has been won, but that is only a small part of the territory to be explored by the doctor. Physiology, which is the study of the processes that go on in the body rather than the mere structure of it, labours under at least one colossal difficulty. Most of the processes to be studied are going on *inside* the body, and only while the owner is alive. The doctor is thus faced with the dilemma that if he keeps his patient alive he can't see what is going on, and if he takes a look to see what is going on he can't keep the patient alive. The surgeon gives us a peep now and again, but he has to be in and out rather too quickly for our purposes. The result is that most of our knowledge of physiology has been obtained indirectly, by means of ingenious tricks, and you may guess that these have been elaborated only after long and tedious labours.

But even here the difficulties of observation do not cease. Yet a third avenue of enquiry is through the symptoms of the patient which he alone can tell us; and it is here that the human element enters to queer the pitch. Patients are proverbially vague and misleading about their feelings, and there is hardly a symptom that cannot be exactly imitated by the dis-

case hysteria, the great impersonator which can disguise itself successfully as almost any disease under the sun. When we add to this that patients are often deliberately reticent about their ailments from the mistaken notion, again derived from a more primitive stage of thought, that a stigma attaches to sickness, we have an array of obstacles which might well have defeated an army of scientific workers.

We cannot leave the subject of observation without mentioning the post mortem examination. Here the tale is still one of difficulty. What used to be a superstitious fear has passed, in most cases, into a barrier of sentiment with which we can sympathize. Be it one or other cause, the result is a widespread horror of the P.M. It has been suggested that this examination should be compulsory where there is a real scientific need for it, but in Britain we have taken the view, and I think rightly, that people's private sensibilities in this matter must be respected. Where criminal law is involved there is, of course, an obligation that cannot be escaped. The effect of this situation is that the doctor cannot get to know about disease in just those cases where he most needs to—namely cases where the disease is fatal and its nature obscure. The disease that matters is the one you die of, and that is why the P.M. is of such importance.

If, then, medical science is so hard put to it for the observation of disease, it might occur to us that the investigator would turn with a new hope towards experiment. But here we are in a worse case than before. Medicine is just the one branch of study in which experiment is practically impossible. Here it is not superstition that defeats us, but the more deserving cause of humanitarianism. We cannot go about experimenting on human beings and, despite the popular fancy about doctors, we never do. The nearest the doctor ever gets to experimenting on patients is when he tries a remedy that will either have no effect at all or do them good. The suggestion that condemned criminals should be used for experimental purposes has, and again I think rightly, met with the firm veto of public sentiment; and the field of experimentation on animals is a proverbial battle-ground where, even at the best, the results are often of dubious value.

You can see, then, that the causes which impede the progress of medical science are deep-rooted. In the first place the relation between the public and the doctor makes it difficult for him to struggle out of a pre-scientific atmosphere: and secondly, even if he succeeds in doing this he finds that the prime factors of all scientific research, observation and experiment, meet with the most formidable obstacles when applied to the study of disease.

Now, dear reader, I trust I have thrown some light on the task that lies before the scientist with the wand, as also I hope to have created in you a friendly understanding of this erstwhile magician. In his interests as well as your own help him, in every way you can, to throw away his wand. Use your influence where you may to raise public opinion to a level at which it will as soon ask for magic as for a flint axe or a cross-bow. Once the doctor has struggled completely out of the shadow of superstition, carrying his public with him into the daylight of scientific thinking, the whole study and practice of medicine will have received an impetus long overdue. A more sympathetic understanding between doctor and public would surely follow the general enlightenment, and this in itself could not fail to nourish and quicken the growth of medical knowledge. It is pleasant to think that some of you who read may yet play some part however small or indirect, in the great work of furthering the science of healing.

MEDICUS.

Nationality and Internationalism

IV.

BEYOND the temperamental and ethological manifestation of developed nationalism is the sense of a historic tradition, of creative institutions that embody that tradition, of origination in numerous phases of thought and action, which together make up a distinct achievement in the general field of civilization and culture; in the arts of life, invention and enterprise. With Britain that tradition embodies a reach after freedom, or moderation of arbitrary government through the process of Law and a representative Parliament; on the part of the Crown, the promotion of a national policy during the Middle Ages as against the claims of local and sectional interest. So was the ground prepared for subsequent experiment in the arts of industry; for mercantile enterprise, colonial expansion and settlement in lands overseas. Later we have the affirmation of a principle of free inquiry challenging the old exclusive theocracy and its Biblical tenets, opening up the pursuit of science, and the incipient formulation of a Libertarian social philosophy still in the making.*

British expansion abroad has brought a large part of the habitable globe suited to white settlement under its control; and a considerable proportion of mankind of all creeds and colours under the ægis of a tolerant power. Thus a veritable "world-state" obtains through the existing British Commonwealth of Nations and its Dependencies. Together with the anglicized culture of North America and the U.S.A., these powers are now the foremost protagonists of free institutions in the current stress of movement towards fresh exercises in autocracy.

France during the last two centuries has followed along her own lines a similar course; adding much of value to invention and illumination. Through catastrophic changes she has attained to and upheld the Republic, under which there has been created a great Colonial dominion. Each summation carries with it peculiar interests and problems.

Organic nationalism in Europe during the last century was enhanced by the repercussions of the Napoleonic era and its aftermath. The Napoleonic empire was too short-lived to leave a permanent impression on subsequent action, but it had a disintegrating effect on feudal survivals in the Kingdoms it temporarily displaced. In the struggle for its overthrow the "Dynasts" had to appeal to their peoples in an effort that was ultimately successful. But they were not content to accept the subordinate place they held in the pre-Revolution comity; and there followed a general revolt for political freedom in some guise, particularly during the mid-century. Here the influence of the Italian, Mazzini, was of great import—an outstanding European figure, largely overlooked today in the temporary boosting of "Marxism" by the "advanced," but one to which we may return.

* There is an expression much in vogue—the "inferiority-complex"—as indicating a phase of political feeling. To that may be added a "superiority-complex." The pioneers of Libertarianism as a principle of being—Milton, Sydney, Locke, Mill, Grote, were all deeply affected by the classic tradition of European freedom as it comes from the thinkers of Greece and Rome, the pages of Plutarch, and exhibited in tentative shape through Greek and Roman republican institutions. If it failed to materialize successfully in the antique world, its spirit survived. Developed along the lines of English Constitutionalism, it lives anew in this guise. The function of "Rationalism," therefore, in the English polity is two-fold. One lies in the consolidation of freedom in its institutional adaptations as the foundation of all material effort. The other is to bring the spirit of science and humanism to the solution of manifold problems arising out of its world domain.

While it met with discomfiture it led to a desire for unification among the numerous States of the German World, and of Italy. If these efforts failed of effect along popular lines, unification was accomplished in Germany by methods that belong to history through Bismarck; and in Italy, by the masterly statesmanship and combinations of Cavour. Austria, isolated from Germany, came to an agreement with Hungary in the shape in which the Austro-Hungarian Empire stood in 1914. Thus Europe was grouped between several large empires, which embraced various minor nationalities, and a number of smaller States, each of a general ethnical character. Also experiments were in progress in all these States with popular or parliamentary institutions, varying in their authority as regards control over the Executive Government. Even Russia was essaying something of the kind when the crash came. Had the greater States been content to follow a peaceful and liberal policy, within this framework, genuine advance in European freedom and enlightenment might have been realized.

The nemesis of force pursued these consummations; and what had been reached thereby gave an incentive to "power-politics" as a means to further ends, and to commercial and industrial enterprise and extra-territorial ambitions as its material support. Technical science and mechanical resource are essentials of power in its latter-day sense. Invention has made the products of the tropics more necessary to industry and even to lethal appliances, creating a demand for "colonies," access to or control of raw material, and for strategical positions in the reach after "world power." To prevent these new forces coming to a clash, recourse was had by the "old diplomacy" to such expedients as the "Concert of Europe," the "Balance of Power" through groupings of the stronger nations. Notwithstanding which, ambition and circumstance became stressed at these restraints. At length an assassin's pistol fired a train of explosive material.

Thus we come to the world-drama as it develops after the War and the Peace.

When that vast conflict had worked itself out, the Peace-framers began the task of mending the broken remains of the European structure; and in the belief that with such a lesson of futile bloodshed and destruction before them, the peoples would be shut of its repetition for generations to come. In their sapience they allowed a number of "ethnical" States endowed with free institutions to emerge out of the composite elements of the old order. And added thereto a Covenant of a League of Nations to observe regard for each other's rights, and to submit causes of dispute and friction to arbitrament and conference. So the foundations would be laid for a new "world-order," wherein means of peaceful co-operation would be available to all in a manner heretofore unknown. These hopes are far from being fulfilled; and recent events set up fresh menace to international concord. The causes are complex, and here we can but touch upon those germane to the present appraisalment.

The League of Nations was handicapped at the outset in that the U.S.A. refused to honour the proposals of their President, and it was left without their support, though a few S. American States joined in. The Peace Treaties were drawn under circumstances that negated any ideal settlement. It was rather a matter of satisfying the wants, or fears, of clamant "Allies," of whom some had been a liability rather than an asset to the Cause. In creating a number of separate States out of the old empires, historic antipathies of their respective peoples were loosened at

the same time. Through the scattered nature of "tribalism" no purely ethnical nation can well be defined, so discontented "minorities" remain, as with the Hungarians in Roumania, set on re-union with their motherland. States like Austria and Hungary are left with few resources to carry on compared with their position under the Monarchy. Croatia, semi-independent under Hungary, was joined to Serbia, mainly of another Communion, to form a great Slav State or Nation. She has not been happy over the marriage, and certain compatriots have won notoriety by the murder of their Serbian King. In most of the new States, as in several of the old, free institutions have failed to function satisfactorily in face of the post-war difficulties by which they are all beset.

The immediate effect of these changes and anti-nomies has been an increment of obstacles in the path towards recovery. Yet the principle under review in its general manifestation is the basis of social cohesion the world over, co-ordinate with two or three organic functions or agencies. Whether in a simple or "cultured" setting; whether shown by a wandering tribe like the gypsies who foregather for an annual festival of re-union near Marseilles, or by the strident "Aryanism" of Nazi Germany; whether making for strife or good will, it springs from a sense of unity in a "society" amid the amorphous horde of mankind, constituted as we saw at the outset. A centre of provisional security in that concourse of accidents, fortuitous happenings, adventitious combinations that sums up the action of mankind in its totality, in its ceaseless struggle for maintenance and welfare. A few dubious records of the doings here and there of its countless millions is what we call history. And "philosophers" presume to discover some law or laws of "becoming" and "development" in this confused chronicle!

In all attempts or proposals to minimize sources of antagonism, to widen the horizons, sympathies, and means of co-operation for a larger good between the separate peoples, the recognition of this entity in human affairs at its full value is the beginning of wisdom. It is not to be dismissed in the manner of H. G. Wells as an egoistic aberration from the path of pure reason, to be duly corrected under the application of a sufficiency of this prophylactic, in a grandiose scheme of "world-planning."

Examination of any such endeavour conceived in the above light would take us into a separate study. Here we have been dealing throughout with the statics of the situation. There are, however, contemporary phenomena closely connected with its dynamical treatment that may be noted for a lead to this emprise.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

A Happy Atheist

If you've been "done brown,"
And are feeling down,
Things gone from bad to worse;
Don't be downcast,
It will not last,
If you just say this verse—

I live my life as I go along,
I whistle a tune and sing a song,
And if dark clouds should cross my sky
I whistle on and they all pass by!
Yes, they all pass by as I whistle on,
For when I look up, by God, they're gone!

A. HANSON.

Correspondence

INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I wish to thank Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner for his letter on my articles. I wrote my first long article before the Prague Conference of Freethinkers, or I should have written in different terms. I am quite willing to agree that I did not make the best of my case. The reason for this was that I, unavoidably, had a dual purpose: firstly, to attack the extraordinary ignorance of Dialectical Materialism among Rationalists and Freethinkers; secondly, to urge a Common Front against Fascism and Fascistic ideas. Unfortunately, of course, the two purposes got entangled in my attempts to compress what I had to say.

Now, on the first issue, I had to give some hard knocks, but I was quite ready to take them back. I said some harsh things about J. M. Robertson and Julian Huxley, both men for whom I have a lot of admiration. This was my personal part of the polemic.

On the other side the attack on Sir Arthur Keith was part of the anti-Fascist plea. One can no more collaborate with a war-monger like Keith than with Hitler himself.

I think that my arguments would have been far more successful if I had written in two definitely divided sections. First, the polemic against the complacent ignorance of so many Rationalists towards Marxism. Secondly, the statement of the basis on which all progressives can unite against Fascism.

But in fact this latter part had already been done adequately by the Prague Congress of Freethinkers, at Easter, and the meeting of the Executive of the World Union of Freethinkers at Paris on August 17-18. I am sorry that the important conclusions of these bodies was not fully reported in the *Freethinker*. One cannot imagine anything of greater interest and significance for the Freethinking movement. The Executive fully stated the need to amalgamate anti-Fascist and anti-clerical propaganda. Even more important:—

"Another task is the development of popular scientific enlightenment work in all countries, with the close collaboration of progressive scientists, with the aid of people's colleges and by means of public lectures on questions of cultural and scientific progress. In carrying out this work the Freethought movement proceeds from the recognition that it is not enough to refute theoretically the Fascist and clerical theories; it is of the utmost importance to awaken in the toiling masses the desire for positive cultural activity and to raise their cultural level. . . ."

"The Freethinkers declare their readiness to fight at any time with the workers of any religious creed, against Fascism and the threatening war danger, in defence of the democratic rights of the people and of liberty of conscience. But at the same time they will combat with equal resolution all the reactionary endeavours of the princes of the Church to exploit their religious mass influence in favour of Fascism, of social and cultural reaction.

"An especially gratifying success of the Executive meeting was the unanimous rejection of the party-political attacks made against the united Freethought movement, emanating for the most part from the Committee of the Czech Social-Democratic Party. . . ." (*Imprecorr.* September 19, 1936).

There were many other important matters dealt with by the Committee. For instance: "the rapprochement of the two German Freethought organizations, who numbered approximately three-quarters of a million adherents before Hitler came into power, and are to-day under the most difficult conditions carrying on an heroic struggle against the Fascist war on all culture. . . ."

I think that much more space should be given in the *Freethinker* to these matters. For instance, why did it not print the rousing appeal for action against Fascism that the Congress set forth?

JACK LINDSAY.

THE KING AND HIS OATH

SIR,—Your "leader" last week, gives one "furiously to think"; but is there not a very practical difficulty? Can the principle be applied unless religion is ruled out altogether? Most religionists pay homage to some "confused idea," e.g., Spirit-Voices, Mahatmas, Mrs. Eddy; but there is *one* religion which is captained not by a "confused idea," but by a very material body of astute international politicians—the Pope and his agents. You rightly urge that in this country Catholics are freely entrusted with high administrative office, and that no harm results. Surely that is because—like most of us—the Catholics have "confused ideas," and do not insist—as they should do—on "the Church first, last, and all the time."

Could we risk a King "Blondin," treading this tight-rope?
G. TODHUNTER.

THE LITERARY MERITS OF THE BIBLE

SIR,—I am really sorry to trouble you again in this matter, but it seemed to me that some comment on your comment was called for, especially as you have requested me to prove things which I explicitly excluded in my previous letter. You say, for instance, that one of the points at issue is "whether the English of the Bible was even an English that was written and spoken by the English people." If you will read my previous letter again you will see that this is *not* what I was arguing about—in fact, I wrote: "As to whether it is Elizabethan language I do not care." To that position I still adhere.

That there is much in the Bible which would be regarded as magnificent literature if it were in any other book, without the association, for or against, which we inevitably feel with regard to the "sacred book" of any religion, is my contention, and it was because I felt that the merits of the Authorized Version as literature were neglected by Freethinkers that I wrote originally; not, as you seem to imply, because I wish to "defend the Bible."

I think that I could, if it were not wildly irrelevant from the issue which I have raised, comment on the questions you put, but I must be content with having had my say. I might point out, however, on the question of the influence of Biblical style on English literature throughout the ages, that this continues to the present day—if one reads such an individual writer as T. F. Powys, for instance, the Biblical influence is immediately obvious, though transmuted in its passage through a highly original mind.

One last word: does not your suggestion that the finest extracts from the Bible may be paralleled by passages in Shakespeare, in the writers of Greek and Roman antiquity, and in the other admitted masters of literary art, virtually concede my case—that when we consider the *literary* merits of the Bible, as irrespective from its religious demerits, we can see passages of real magnificence?
JOHN ROWLAND.

[There is no ground whatever for Mr. Rowland's fear that the merits of the Authorized Bible as a *form* of English may be neglected by Freethinkers. They have, on the other hand, in many instances too blindly followed the interested lead set them by Christians and some "respectable" heretics. Any book that has appeared, and which is to any extent whatever a source book, needs to be studied, because it has been used by later writers. My case is that the English of the Bible is neither Elizabethan nor any other period English, that the greatness of the Authorized Version has been vastly over-praised, since its best qualities can be found in preceding translations, that its influence on writers has been, for interested reasons, tremendously over-valued, that the course of development taken by English literature has little to do with the Bible, that it is to English literature that the Bible owes the qualities of translation, that, while simple poetry is in the Bible, "great" or "magnificent" poetry is not. I don't see that Mr. Rowland has done more than repeat what he previously said, plus the fear that Freethinkers may pay too little attention to the literary qualities of the Bible. My concern is that they, in following a Christian lead, pay too much. However, the interest of many readers in the topic has encouraged me to return to the subject of the influence of the Bible, and I will deal with it in several articles.—C.C.]

Obituary

EZRA HALE

WITH the deepest regret we have learned of the death of a very old Freethinker and valued friend in the person of Ezra Hale, of Glasgow. Nearly the whole of his life he had been associated with the Freethought movement, and never had Freethought possessed a more faithful follower. Free from self-seeking, loyal in both speech and action, he was a man of whom any movement might feel proud. A man who might, had he been otherwise built, have held honoured public positions, he was content to ally himself with a movement that could bring him nothing but the consolation of intellectual self-respect. In connexion with the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S., he worked for many years, filling the post of President for some time, and also serving as a member of Committee. His ripe judgment must have been of great service in both capacities. He was a familiar figure at all our meetings in Glasgow, until failing health made his attendance uncertain. Had it been possible, we should have had the melancholy satisfaction of being present at his cremation to say a word of farewell to a gallant fighter in the army of human liberation.

Mr. Hale had been in ill-health for some time, and died on November 8. He was cremated at the Maryhill Crematorium on November 12, in the presence of many friends and members of the Glasgow Branch. He leaves a widow and daughter, the former a member of one of the oldest Freethinking families in the West of Scotland, and the latter well calculated to carry on the tradition of her family. We offer both of them our sincerest sympathy. We are paying the price of living on by noting one after another, our oldest friends leaving the common scene.—C.C.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

The following letter is taken from the *Yorkshire Evening Post* for August 4:—

SIR,—H. L. Gee's *Graveyard Pilgrimage in Yorkshire* was interesting. I send you the inscription on the monument at Silkstone:—

This monument was erected to perpetuate the Remembrance of an awful visitation of the Almighty which took place in this parish on the 4th day of July, 1838.

On that day the Lord sent forth His thunder, lightning, hail and rain, carrying devastation before them, and by a sudden eruption of water into the coals-pits of R. C. Clarke, Esq., 26 human beings, whose names are recorded here, were summoned to appear before their Maker.

Reader remember! Every neglected call of God will appear against thee at the Day of Judgment. Let this solemn warning then sink deep into thy heart and so prepare thee that the Lord, when he cometh, may find thee watching.

The mortal remains of the females are deposited in the graves at the feet of the males as undernamed:

First grave beginning at south end—Catherine Garnett, age 11 years; Hannah Webster, age 13 yrs.; Elizabeth Cave, age 13 yrs.; Ann Moss, age 9 yrs.

Second grave—Elizabeth Holling, age 15 yrs.; Ellen Parker, age 15 yrs.; Hannah Taylor, age 17 yrs.

Third grave—May Sellors, age 10 yrs.; Elizabeth Clarkson, age 11 yrs. (she lies at the foot of her brother, James Clarkson); Sarah Newton, age 8 yrs.; Sarah Jakes, age 10 yrs.

The mortal remains are deposited in the grave as undermentioned:—

First grave, beginning at the north end—George Birkinshaw, age 10 yrs.; Joseph Birkinshaw, age 7 yrs.; brothers; Isaac Wright, age 12 yrs.; Abraham Wright, age 8 yrs., brothers.

Second grave—James Clarkson, age 16 yrs.; Francis Hoyland, age 13 yrs.; William Attack, age 12 yrs.; Samuel Horne, age 10 yrs.

Third grave—Eli Hutchinson, age 9 yrs.; George Garnet, age 9 yrs.; John Simpson, age 19 yrs.

Fourth grave—George Lank, age 8 years.; William Womersley, age 8 yrs.; James Tartin, age 10 yrs.; John Gothard, age 8 yrs.

There is but a step between me and death—1 Sam. xx. 3.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow—Prov. xxvii. 1.

Therefore be ye also ready—Matthew xxiv. 44.

Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.—Mark xiii. 33.

MARTIN WALSH.

It must be very comforting to believe in a God who pays such "Awful visitation," but also a little depressing to think that the human race could ever believe in anything quite so monstrous. It reads like a heavenly version of Hitlerism.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. A. F. Davon, B.A., M.Sc.—"Liberty in Religion, Morals and Politics."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Mr. F. A. Ridley—"The Religious Crisis of the Twentieth Century."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0 Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton—"Toleration."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"A Search for God."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, G. Bedborough (London)—"Modernism: God-up-to-date."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Livery Street): 7.0, Mr. C. H. Smith—"The Evolution of Life."

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Labour Hall, John Brown Street, Bolton): 7.30, Debate—"Is the Bible the Outcome of Superstition?" *Affir.*: Horace Hankin, N.S.S. *Neg.*: William Hobson, Christadelphian. Admission 3d.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance via passage facing Burton's): 7.15, Mr. R. Day—"The Devil Amongst the Atheists."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley, 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"What are the Churches For?")

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freemasons' Hall, Picardy Place): 7.0, Mrs. Bridges—"How I Found Salvation."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. S. G. Service, G.S.S.—"A Secular Bridge from the 'Real' to the 'Ideal.'" Illustrated with diagram.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Imperial Hotel, Briggate, Leeds): 8.0, Mr. Dutton—"A Revaluation of Obscenity."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner—"Freethought's Fight for Existence in Europe."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, A. Jackson—"Prophets Ltd."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"Aspects of Life and Death."

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, entrance Ormskirk Road): Mr. Jenkinson (Preston)—"Struggle Between Science and Religion."

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

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