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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
English History and the Bible—The Editor	769
ts and the People—Mimnermus	771
An Interview with the New Yogi—C. S. Fraser	772
Shakespeare's "Indebtedness" to the Bible— George Bedborough	773
China—Life in a Puritan Home—J. T. Lloyd	774
The Penny Pamphlet—H. Cutner	775
Democracy—G. Todhunter	779
Patal Depravity—Ignotus	780
Caxton Hall Social—C-de-B.	781

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

Views and Opinions

English History and the Bible

A WRITER or speaker in this country is on quite safe ground when he dwells on the powerful influence for good exerted by the Bible. Self-interest, lack of reliable knowledge, and automatic reaction to familiar phrases, combine to produce an unintelligent assent. The thesis we have been testing in previous articles offers unmistakable evidence in favour of the truth of this. It is one of those instances in which all kinds of interests combine to pass an assertion as unquestionable and only a single consideration—and that not the most powerful—the love of truth, urges to dissent. It is in the light of these facts that one has to read the statement of John Richard Green (*Short History of the English People*, c. 8), that dating from the middle of the reign of Elizabeth to the middle of the seventeenth century, "England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." In support of this, Green gives as an explanation that:—

So far as the nation at large was concerned, no romance, hardly any poetry, save the little known verse of Chaucer, existed in the English tongue when the Bible was ordered to be set up in Churches. . . . Its perpetual use made it from the instant of its appearance the standard of our language. . . . It formed the whole literature which was practically accessible to ordinary Englishmen. . . . The mass of picturesque allusion and illustration which we borrow from a thousand books our fathers were forced to borrow from one. . . . The whole moral effect which is produced now-a-days by the religious newspaper, the tract, the essay, the lecture, the missionary report, the sermon, was then produced by the Bible alone.

Here we have in a brief compass the praise that has been lavished by so many on the Bible. It is quite without foundation, but its reception has been very general. This fact need not surprise one. From the case of Magna Carta, which has been, since the seven-

teenth century, hailed as the charter of English freedom, but which in reality did little more than convert into legal rights that which had been held by the barons as mere privileges, down to the sedulously circulated story of Queen Victoria proclaiming the Bible as the "secret of England's greatness," history bristles with myths. These myths flourish because it lies in the interests of those in power to keep them alive, and it takes some little courage strenuously to oppose them. The debunking of history is a troublesome and personally unprofitable process; the debunking of a religious myth is more so.

It will be noted that it was not to the thirst for the Bible that Green traces its alleged nation-wide influence, but because of the accident of there being nothing else for the people to read. In the absence of the Bible Æsop's fables might have done equally well. I think the matter is worth a careful examination.

* * *

The Test of Fact

Green dates the beginning of this wonderful influence of the English Bible from the time when Bishop Bonner set up the Bible to be read to the people, about the middle of the sixteenth century. We will call it 1550, and take this as a starting point. Is it true, then, that a literary-famished people, sucked up the Bible because there was nothing else for them to read? In considering this it must be remembered that this influence, if it ever existed, must have taken some time to develop. Men could not hear the Bible read one week, and produce a literature showing its influence the week after. Green dates the beginning of this absorption of the English people in the Bible from the middle of Elizabeth's reign. I will take the beginning of her reign, 1558, which gives him the advantage of some years.

Morality plays had been common for several generations, although at this time they were declining. They provided a popular amusement, and while largely concerned with religious subjects, were not always so, and in any case the enjoyment for the people did not lie in their religious teaching. But other forms of entertainment were common. England was then "merrie England" and pageants on a large scale were common; so were numerous companies of strolling players. There were already in existence very many translations into English of plays and poems and novels from the Italian. The famous Roger Ascham, died in 1568. He had been writing-master to Elizabeth, and was author of a number of works, the best known of which to-day is his famous *Scholemaster*. He writes of the growing vogue of translations into English of foreign works, mostly Italian, and which he says, are "sold in every shop in London."

There bec moe of these ungratious bookes set out in Printe wythin these few monthes, than have been sene in England many score yeares before. . . .

(People) have in more reverence the triumphes of Petrarche than the Genesis of Moses. They make more account of Tullies offices than St. Pauls epistles; of a tale in Bocace than a storie of the Bible.

This looks as though there were other things for reading beside the Bible.

George Puttenham, born 1530, wrote a number of works, of which only two or three are known to-day. One is the famous *Arte of Poesie*. He is obviously in no wise dependent upon the Bible for either his ideas, his matter, or its form. What he does say is that in the latter end of Henry the Eighth's reign there sprang up:—

a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two Cheiftains, who having travelled into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and statlie measures and stile of Italian Poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schooles of Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie from that it had been before, and for this cause may justly be said to be the first reformers of our English stile.

Surrey was beheaded in 1547; Wyatt died in 1542. There is no evidence whatever of either of these men being indebted to their Bible, nor is there any question among historians of English literature that the impetus which gave birth to the outburst of "Elizabethan" literature came from the continent, chiefly from Italy, and in a smaller measure from France. And these were Catholic, not Protestant countries. We still have to find the people who had nothing to read but the Bible, and very much definite evidence might be added to what we have given. But we are writing an article, not compiling an encyclopedia. Still, we may note that the plays of Heywood, of Nicholas Udall, the translations of Thomas Hoby, Morley's translations of Petrarch, the poems of Skelton, and very many other books, were in existence before the Elizabethan period. As a matter of fact the early part of the sixteenth century saw a very rapid growth of English printing. Wynkin de Worde alone issued over 500 books between the years 1500 and 1534. There were presses established in various places, and a statute of Henry VIII., specially notes that "divers persons . . . bring from beyond the sea great plenty of printed books, not only in the Latin tongue, but also in our maternal English, some bound in boards, some in leather, and some in parchment, and sell them by retail."

There does not seem much evidence for the existence of an English people famishing for reading matter, and becoming absorbed in the Bible because there was nothing else to satisfy their appetites.

One further piece of evidence. The Stationer's Company was formed by royal charter in 1557. One may safely assume that it would not have been formed had it not been thought necessary to regulate the output of books, and unless there were a number of books to regulate. Between 1570 and 1580 there were numerous volumes of sermons of Luther and others issued that had been translated into English. The paraphrase of the New Testament by Erasmus had also appeared. Three editions of *Piers Plowman* had been issued by one press during this period. In 1849 Mr. J. Payne Collier compiled a list of Ballads, Broad-sides, Romances, Plays, etc., issued and entered for publication on the Company's books from 1570 to 1587. *The work extends to two volumes, printed in double column.* A regulation passed in 1587 limited any one edition of a book to 1,250 or 1,500 copies—proof of the existence of a very considerable body of readers. Almanacs, herbals, books on hunting were plentiful, and as regards lighter literature, such as

ballads, these were so plentiful it was said that, "scarce a cat can look out of a gutter, but presently a proper new ballad is indited." How numerous this form of writing was, may be gathered from the fact that publishers entered them on the books of the company in batches of thirty and forty. To the home publications in English that were printed abroad, for politic reasons. Later, in 1618, Taylor, the Water Poet, on the strength of his subscribers' list, printed no less than 4,500 copies of his *The Penniless Pilgrimage*. Masson, in his life of Milton, noted that after the rise of Puritanism to power there was a falling off in the number of books printed.

* * *

How Far the Bible?

Where then is the evidence that the people of England became a people of a book, nourished on the Bible, speaking its English, delighting in its phraseology, and finding in it all that we find in the newspaper, the sermon, etc., etc? It is an interested superstition, set going by Christians of a later period, adopted by writers who have never taken the trouble critically to examine the facts, and, unfortunately, repeated by non-Christians who have not yet learned the lesson that any claim made by a Christian on behalf of his religion must be carefully tested, because in nearly all cases the claim is unwarranted. So far as the spirit of Elizabethan literature is concerned the judgment of a foreign observer on this topic of religion is likely to be more impartial than that of an English writer. M. Taine, in his *History of English Literature*, points out that the prevailing spirit of Elizabethan literature is not Christian and is hardly religious. Even with Shakespeare "the idea of God scarcely makes its appearance. They see in our poor short human life only a dream, and beyond it the long sad sleep. . . . Their heroes have human, not religious virtues; against crime they rely on honour and the love of the beautiful, not on piety and fear of God. If others, at intervals, like Sidney and Spencer, catch a glimpse of the divine, it is a vague ideal light, a sublime Platonic phantom, which has no resemblance to a personal God."

Continental students of English life and literature do not find the Bible a vital force in English life and letters. It was used, of course. Its phrases were cited, but not in a greater proportion to phrases cited from non-Christian works, while no great literature can be traced to its influence. That the Bible did affect people is undeniable, it would have been miraculous if it had not done so. But that it was not a potent influence on English life, is tolerably clear. So far I hope that I have managed to make plain the ridiculous nature of the praise that has been lavished upon the Bible as a source of literary inspiration. And if, above all, I can induce a certain type of Freethinker to be more cautious in adopting Christian positions without the most careful examination, I shall rest content. Christianity has made its way in the world on the strength of forged testimonials and unwarranted claims. Freethinkers should be the first to recognize this, and also the first to warn others against being misled. I shall return to the subject next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The manner in which one single ray of light, one single precious hint, will clarify and energise the whole mental life of him who receives it, is among the most wonderful and heavenly of intellectual phenomena. Some men search for that light and never find it. But most men never search for it.—Arnold Bennett.

Priests and the People

It is an absolute crime that you should sanction the instilling into the minds of children statements which are not true, and which the instruction they receive a few years later will infallibly upset.—T. H. Huxley.

The inimitable Bishop of London, in one of his outbursts of emotional rhetoric, once described his fellow paid-workers in the Lord's Vineyard as belonging to "a rotten profession." This was not quite so blunt as Dean Swift's declaration that religion is "nothing but a trade," but it served to raise a storm in a teacup. So upset were some of the Bishop of London's professional colleagues that his lordship was constrained to explain later that on the occasion of his speech he was thinking only of the purely material point of view, and was not at that moment concerned with other and perhaps graver aspects of the case.

It is only fair to add that the Bishop of London was speaking in aid of the East London Church Fund when he strayed into this emotional outburst, and that if he dwelt upon the subject of the poverty of the clergy it was probably done with the fervent hope that it would loosen the purse-strings of his immediate hearers.

Even so, his plaintive periods concerning the alleged poverty of the wretched clergy were largely a matter of heated rhetoric. Let us for a few moments look at some very pertinent facts. The dear Bishop himself is a bachelor with an income of £200 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep forty working-class families in comfort. In addition, he has the use of Fulham Palace and a palatial town-house in the West End. Nor do the Bishop's own colleagues, like King Nebuchadnezzar in the old record, eat grass. Forty bishops receive £182,700 yearly, with emoluments in the shape of palaces and palatial residences. They are styled "my lords," and most of them have seats in the Upper House of Parliament. There are also hundreds of other bishops, suffragan bishops, and higher ecclesiastics, whose salaries and emoluments run into four figures annually. A goodly number of the less important clergy have their bread well buttered, and are better off than their neighbours. Within the narrow confines of the City of London proper, £50,000 is spent each year in ministering to the spiritual needs of a small resident population of caretakers and policemen and Jewish people. The latter, who form the overwhelming majority of the total, never trouble the Christian pew-openers, but attend their own Synagogues. As an index that these reverend gentlemen are not overworked, the summary of confirmations for one year 1919-20 shows that in the East City 62 candidates were confirmed, and in the West City 90 were similarly received into the State Church. Nor is this all, for the Ecclesiastical Authorities have admitted the soft impeachment of redundancy by ear-marking no less than nineteen out of the forty-eight churches as derelict, and proposing to sell them and use the money in other directions. Indeed, this Anglican Church is by no means penniless, for it possesses property in this City of London proper worth £4,000,000, without counting large estates in other parts of the Metropolis.

These are not isolated examples, for the clergy all through have nicely feathered their own nests. Indeed, there is so much waste of man-power in this State-supported religious body that it may truly be said to be the Church of the priests rather than that of the people. There are no less than 1,877 parishes with a population under 200; and 4,802 with a population under 500. Some of the bishops have jobs that business men dream of, but which always vanish with the daylight. Think of the English Bishop of

North and Central Europe. The inhabitants of those vast tracts are, in all probability, unaware of his sacred existence. His arduous duties consist of flitting all over the Continent from pleasure-resort to pleasure-resort wherever there are English colonies.

In all his forty years' cadging for money for this Church of England, the Bishop of London appears to have quite overlooked the enormous resources of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Queen Anne's Bounty, and other sources of clerical income. Tithe, the wickedest of all impositions on human food, and for which priests have just netted £70,000,000 in redemption, ground-rents, coal-royalties, properties, all swell a grand total which resembles that of a small country, rather than that of a vested interest of priests, whose sole stock-in-trade is impudence.

The clergy themselves are not nearer any poverty-line than millions of their countrymen. It is absurd to pretend otherwise. In many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage too often is a miniature reproduction of the bishop in a palace too large for him and the times in which we now live. The late Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at the London Mansion House seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk, costing then about £40. He added that he actually saw those figures, and he was told that the amount was every year about the same. It is one of life's ironies that this same Mansion House should also have been the stage-setting of the dear Bishop of London's heartfelt complaint of the starvation of the wretched Church of England clergy.

From a purely material point of view, this Anglican Church cannot in common fairness be described as "a rotten profession." It is, however, a very sorry trade when judged by ethical and intellectual standards. The many thousands of clergy of this Church of England actually subscribe in the most solemn manner known to themselves to the "Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion," and these precious articles make the most curious reading in the twentieth century. They include the quaint belief that Christ went bodily to Hell; that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that "Adam" and "Eve" were the first man and woman, both starting life at full age, and that they ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which the majority of the entire human race is damned to everlasting torture; that Roman Catholicism, and all other religions, are vain inventions of men; that the Christian Bible alone among the Sacred Books of the World is the actual word of Omnipotence; and that the present tenant of Buckingham Palace is the head of the real and unmistakable Church of God.

To these extraordinary Articles of Faith, among many others as quaint, every Church of England priest solemnly subscribes, from His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury to the youngest and most innocent curate. We know that great numbers of clergy do not believe in them, or observe them; and that they are, therefore, taking money by false pretences. Their main reason for remaining in this Church of the Middle Ages is nothing more nor less than "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former dean of St. Paul's Cathedral expressed it. The right to appoint these sacred servants of "God" to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or iron, or an old suit of clothes. The Houses of Parliament, be it noted, make the religion, and the landlords appoint its professors, or barter the appointment to the highest bidder. Is it not a sorry trade?

This Church of England is mischievous, for it sets citizen against citizen. The ecclesiastical canons are

still in force, except they conflict with the present laws of the land, and the Law Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy themselves. The first dozen canons are aimed precisely at Nonconformists, and all but one end with a curse, a distinguishing mark of vertebrate Christianity. If you deny the royal supremacy in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that this State Church teaches the real doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you say that the Church of England Prayer-Book is out of harmony with the Gospels you are again cursed. And so on, and so forth; the curses being levelled in the true and historic spirit of the Christian Religion. But for the fact that the law of the land overrides these preposterous canons, everybody who refused to attend Church of England places of worship would be accursed, and their names read out in churches. Is it not a sorry trade?

It is a bitter and a grievous thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant men, should be taught such mischievous nonsense in language which leads them to believe, and is craftily calculated to that end, that millions of their fellow countrymen are wicked and outcast. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest, who claims to be a sacred person. Unless a man accepts these priests and their petty dogmas, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. That is the Church of England's teaching for the working man and woman, tempered with polite evasions and reservations for the upper classes. Is it not "a rotten profession"? And is it not high time that the average citizen should dissociate this Black Army from the sphere of Government?

MIMNERMUS.

An Interview With The New Yogi

Earnest Interviewer: Tell me, Mr. Yogi, did you undertake your visit to this country with any special purpose in view?

Yogi: Oh, definitely. I came to verify in person the reports I heard concerning the extremely backward state of your philosophy, not to mention your civilization.

E.I.: And do you find us backward in either?

Y.: Positively—in both. I should describe them as crude in the extreme. Nothing esoteric, no ultra-mundanity, not a trace of that eternal flow from the all to the nothing—if you follow me.

E.I.: You mean we lack spirituality?

Y.: Spirituality be blowed! That's mere superstition. Another proof that you are all on the wrong tack. No, no—I mean that everything is so practical, so uselessly useful. Look at me, for example. I sit on a bed of nails all day with my whole ego concentrated upon the pit of my stomach.

E.I.: And what good does that do you?

Y.: None whatever. That's just the beauty of it. The only sensation I get is the feeling that I am an utter worm. Soon I hope to attain to no sensation at all. I almost reached that beatific state yesterday. Indeed, I am sure that I would have reached it—if it hadn't been for one of these confounded nails.

E.I.: I was going to ask you, what exactly is the significance of that form of self-inflicted pain?

Y.: Self-inflicted? Don't be absurd! I don't hurt myself. It's the nails that hurt me—sometimes. The point is (I mean the argument, not the nails) that if I didn't sit on nails I wouldn't be so holy—if you see what I mean.

E.I.: But tell me something of your philosophy, and in what respects it transcends our own.

Y.: Well, to begin with, I never wash.

E.I.: I hardly see the connexion between washing and philosophy.

Y.: You astonish me! Or perhaps I have been misinformed concerning some of your most highly venerated saints. What about that dirty blighter St. Simeon Stylites, not to mention St. Flavor of Semolina and the rest.

E.I.: But nowadays we have come to see that "cleanliness is next to godliness."

Y.: Precisely my point. You emphasize cleanliness at the expense of godliness. Moreover, I'll bet you think that saying comes from the Bible. It doesn't. It's the invention of a schismatic—John Wesley.

E.I.: I see that you are well acquainted with our literature.

Y.: Too well—especially your Bible. What a book, what a book!

E.I.: Yes, indeed. I am glad to see that you admire it.

Y.: You are absolutely right. As the most marvellous conglomeration of unadulterated tripe it has no equal. It is superlatively admirable.

E.I.: But you can't really admire the Bible if that is what you think of it.

Y.: Why not? Are not your two books *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking-glass* both widely read and admired? And are they not perfect nonsense? I think nonsense is one of the most sensible things to admire. But excuse me for a moment. I see that it is exactly seven minutes past seven o'clock. Just be quiet for a minute and listen to me.

E.I.: Certainly.

Y. (folding his arms over his chest and closing his eyes, mumbles loudly): AUM! AUM! OOMPA-AUM! (Then softly.) Aum! Aum! Oompa-aum! (And so on for a minute.)

E.I.: May I, without seeming inquisitive, ask what those words mean?

Y.: Of course you may. They mean nothing at all. They aren't even words. They're just an incantation.

E.I. (bewildered): What is the purpose of them, then?

Y.: Why must you always be seeking purposes? Really, your philosophy is too childish. It isn't everything that has a purpose—surely you realize that. If, for example, I made ten thousand pencils and then destroyed nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine of them—what purpose would there be in that?

E.I.: None whatever, that I can see.

Y.: Wrong again. The only pencil that was any good was the one that I did not destroy. The rest had no lead in them; so I destroyed them.

E.I.: Then why did you make them in the first instance?

Y.: Because I'm not quite right in the head. A little crazy, you know.

E.I.: You almost persuade me.

Y.: Excellent! But, mark you, I didn't actually make the pencils. I only said, "If I made them." On the other hand—and please note this carefully—God *did* make humanity.

E.I.: I fear that your argument sounds blasphemous to me.

Y.: Naturally, naturally. If I did what God does, I'd be put in the bug-house. But so long as God does the craziest things, you build enormous cathedrals and churches at great expense and worship him. You will forgive me if I regard you as just a weeny bit more batty than myself.

E.I.: I don't think this interview is going just as I would have wished. You must allow me to put the questions in the way I think most suitable for my paper.

Y.: By all means. Go ahead. But on behalf of what paper are you interviewing me?

E.I.: The *Daily Scream*. . . . Dash it, there you go again—asking me questions. Can't you shut up? . . . Beg pardon, Mr. Yogi, but really you must forgive my irritation. Now, tell me, have you many followers?

(The Yogi, whose eyes are closed, does not answer. The E.I. repeats his question in vain. Then, thinking that the Yogi is mute because he is offended, the E.I. becomes profusely apologetic. The Yogi, however remains silent for a while longer and then suddenly wakes up.)

Y.: There now! That was perfect! I have just returned from Infinite Nothingness. What a revelation! I was in touch with the All—the All or the Nothing. I saw, I saw, I. . . . Oh! I beg your pardon. Did you say something?

E.I.: I asked whether you have many followers.

Y.: Millions! Billions! Wherever I go—or rather, wherever I am carried—in public, people follow me by the thousand. They love mystery, you see. And they seem to find it mysterious that I should choose to sit on nails and let my hair grow. My bearers edit the mystery as much as they can, because they are very religious. You see, religion without mystery is—well—it isn't religion.

E.I.: How do you mean—your bearers edit the mystery?

Y.: Oh, they simply do what all the old priests, prophets, saints and other editors of religious writings used to do with such success. They add a little here and subtract a little there. For example, they say that I am a hundred and seventy-six years old, and that I will never die. As a matter of fact, I am fifty-two and feel like pegging out any minute. They also say that I had no human father. Needless to add, I don't encourage that belief. But, best of all, they claim that I can perform almost any sort of miracle. Frankly, though, my best trick—next to exorcising demons—is to make a coin vanish. Let me show you.

E.I.: Thanks, but I think I can do that one myself.

Y.: Well, then, let me exorcize a demon for you. It's worth at least the price of a cinema ticket.

E.I.: All right, let's see you do it

Y.: May I have your half-crown first, please?

E.I.: But surely you don't charge money for performing a miracle?

Y.: No, no! I merely pass the plate. (The Yogi claps his hands.) Abdulla! Hi! Abdulla! Pass the plate round the congregation.

E.I.: Never mind the plate. Here's your half-crown. Now let's have the miracle.

Y.: All right. But first I must have a demon. Have you a demon about you somewhere? No? That's too bad. Perhaps you wouldn't mind going out and fetching one? No? Very well, I'll have to do something else. I tell you what—I'll forgive you your sins. There's a bargain! What? You don't want to be forgiven? Tut, tut! I am so sorry.

E.I.: I'd like my money back.

Y.: But you gave it to me! Allow me at least to use it for converting the heathen, your own countrymen.

E.I.: I want my money back.

Y.: Surely you'll let me say a hundred masses for your soul? It's cheap at the price as compared with . . .

E.I.: Give me my money back, you impostor!

Y.: Dear, dear. Is that the way you behave after you have paid your contribution to the church collection? Most unseemly! But don't excite yourself, pray. I have just performed my best miracle. Feel in the left pocket of your waistcoat and you'll see that I am no impostor.

E.I. (fishes a half-crown out of the pocket indicated) Oh, good-bye!

C. S. FRASER.

Shakespeare's "Indebtedness" to the Bible

THE Rev. T. R. Eaton's *Shakespeare and the Bible* is not a new book. It was published by Blackwoods. The undated edition before me is the "third thousand." Herein, let us assume, is the best that can be said for the identification of Shakespeare's language with Bible phraseology.

Mr. Eaton doubtless intended to show that we should have had no Shakespeare at all unless the great dramatist had had the Bible before him and had constantly consulted it before venturing on literary work of any kind.

It is delightful to find that parts of the Bible "must have had an irresistible charm to one of Shakespeare's peculiar bent"—an unctuous phrase of unconscious but unforgettable humour. We are also astonished at the author's moderation. We should have imagined that if the Bible is, as Mr. Eaton says it is: "a sufficient and infallible rule both of faith and conduct," Shakespeare might have contented himself with a mere paraphrase of the Book of Books.

Think for a moment of the effect of Shakespeare, instead of a parcel of Bishops, issuing HIS "version" of the old book! Even the tiresome New Testament pages of *Genealogies*—which Dr. Moffat calls "the birth roll," and the Twentieth Century Bible calls "the Ancestors of Jesus"—might have enjoyed a realistic rendering under the genuinely "inspired" treatment of our greatest writer.

Mr. Eaton is hardly fair to his own case when he quotes from King James's version, which was not published until Shakespeare had completed his last play. "It is pleasant," says Mr. Eaton, "to fancy the delight with which young Shakespeare must have feasted upon these and like divine lessons."

Perhaps Mr. Eaton thinks Shakespeare studied what Archdeacon Storr has the audacity to call "the originals," and, of course, Luther's German, and Tyndale and Coverdale's English versions may have been familiar enough. But we have only Mr. Eaton's authority for believing that young Shakespeare "in storing his mind, went to the word of God."

Shakespeare, says Mr. Eaton, "perpetually reminds us of the Bible," but Mr. Eaton means that Mr. Eaton is perpetually thinking about the sacred book, not that Shakespeare was. There are "passages which rise in our thoughts" (Mr. Eaton's thoughts, of course) "which must belong either to the Bible or Shakespeare." This is a mere confusion from which many semi-literate people suffer. It has nothing whatever to do with actuality.

For over two hundred pages Mr. Eaton "rubs it in," quoting many Bible texts prefaced by what he considers "parallel passages" from Shakespeare's Plays. Let us add that Mr. Eaton makes no quotations of "parallel passages" from "Venus and Adonis," "The Rape of Lucrece," or any other Shakespearean poem. We wonder why?

Of course Mr. Eaton's "parallels" are banal in the extreme. In "King John" Cain is mentioned as "the first male child," much as we talk of the "daughters of Eve." The fact that Faulconbridge uses the word "thorns" is enough to prove that Shakespeare is indebted to Proverbs xxii. 5, although not another word in the context is common to the two references. A trifle more comic perhaps is the "coincidence" that in the same play ("King John") Shakespeare refers to a "tempest" and 1 Kings xviii. mentions the word "rain."

Hamlet yields six pages of verbal allusiveness, the greatest "catch" of all being in the Gravedigger's Scene, where the First Clown points a joke with the words: "The Scripture says Adam digged; could he dig without arms?" Mr. Eaton finds a "parallel" to these words in Gen. iii. 23, italicizing the words: "TILL the ground"! Mr. Eaton confides to us where Hamlet learnt about "Cain's Jawbone"; "Cain TALKED with Abel," quotes this clerical funny-man. The "jawbone of an ass," indeed.

"Richard III.," Act 1, Sc. 4 and Deut. xxvii. 25, both refer to "slaying the innocent." Shakespeare talks of "snow in harvest," and alludes to "Pilate," who "washed his hands." Mr. Eaton says nothing of "Jove's thunderbolts," of "Cerberus at the Thracian poet's feet."

"Macbeth" contains the words "Golgotha," "Beelzebub," "The Lord's Anointed," and even "the hand of God." But Mr. Eaton is more reasonable when he says that Macbeth resembled Ahab; and Lady Macbeth: Jezebel. Jezebel gave Ahab a vineyard; and Lady Macbeth gave her husband a kingdom. Anyhow, Ahab and Macbeth were a pair of sanctimonious scoundrels; and any wilful murderer resembles other wilful murderers.

It can safely be said that all attempts fail to discover any literary indebtedness of Shakespeare to the language of the English Bible. It is preposterous to pretend that there is any "copying" where oft-told tales are mentioned by an author, mainly because they are already familiar to his readers. For instance, we say anything is "like the curate's egg," without approval or even quotation, using common knowledge of the story as a mere adjective, meaning that it is "good in parts."

Mr. Eaton at most proves that both Shakespeare and the Bible used words which people knew, and that stories like that of Samson might have been known to Englishmen for a thousand years. Shakespeare does not owe a single sentence to the Bible. In the rare instances where Shakespeare goes farther than merely to use a Bible name or phrase, Mr. Eaton's claim is instantaneously and strikingly disproved. Let us give some fair illustrations:—

SHAKESPEARE

"For pleasure and revenge
Have ears more deaf than adders."
Troilus and Cressida.

"Who can call him his friend
That dips in the same dish."
Timon of Athens.

THE BIBLE

They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear.
Psalms lvi. 1.

He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.—*Matt. xvi. 23.*

Mr. Eaton set out to find "parallel passages." He has signally failed.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Child-Life in a Puritan Home

SURELY no man in his senses would ever dream of pronouncing an unqualified and extravagant eulogium on Puritanism. That it possessed several wholly admirable and fascinating qualities cannot be denied; but it is equally clear that, as a scheme and philosophy of human life, it was deplorably one-sided and utterly misleading. Thinking only of its courageous insistence on, and inflexible adherence to, Righteousness, Carlyle and Ruskin deeply loved and loudly praised it, declaring with mournful pride that they were the last surviving exponents of it in England; but, thinking chiefly of its unlovely and repellent attributes, I am tempted to denounce it in the bitterest and most vehement terms at my command. My blood boils and rushes furiously through my veins, as I look back upon my childhood and youth, and realize how sadly and completely they were

darkened and blighted by the grim, black shadow and cruel tyranny of Puritanism. I thankfully admit, that in my parents were abundantly exemplified the brighter and nobler features of the darksome system. My father and mother were living incarnations of honour, honesty, truth, and righteousness, and their love for their children knew no bounds. In my references to them, I hope I shall not employ a single disrespectful or disloyal word. I am convinced that their affection for me never wavered, and that, to secure what they believed to be my highest good, they would have cheerfully made all necessary sacrifices. But while fully admitting the integrity and sublimity of their character, as well as the purity and nobleness of their motives, I cannot close my eyes to the mournful fact, that they were the means of utterly spoiling my child-life, and of woefully handicapping my whole future. Their conception of life and character was fundamentally mistaken. They looked upon the world through coloured spectacles, and never saw it in its true light and beauty.

The first formative heresy instilled into my impressionable mind was, that life on earth is a series of disciplinary experiences, the sole object of which is to prepare us for the perfect life in heaven. Heaven was an ineffably happy realm, in which the inhabitants incessantly sang psalms and hymns, to the accompaniment of golden harps, while earth was the abode of griefs and groans, with interludes of heart-breaking and spirit-crushing dirges and threnodies. All amusement was said to be of the devil, and should be forcibly suppressed. All music had to be severely in the minor key. Laughter deserved hottest denunciation, while, on Sunday, not even a smile could be tolerated. Pleasure of all kinds was ruthlessly excluded. Once I laughed out over some humorous passages in the Bible, for which I received such an emphatic castigation from my father, that I have not been able to forget it to this day. At this moment, I can still see the old man's grandly wrathful face, and hear his stern rebuke: "Your stupid levity over God's own Book, my boy, is rank blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, for which the Great Judge may, any minute, strike you down dead." I trembled with fear, and repressed my merriment, but failed to understand *why* it was wrong for a little boy to laugh at ludicrous things. People of the world could eat and drink and be merry, singing bright, joyous songs; but they were on the high road to hell, in which they would have to weep and gnash their teeth to all eternity. And yet, I remember that whenever I passed an inn or tavern, and heard light-hearted, merry singing, I would stand still, strangely thrilled and attracted: there was something in me which, in spite of all my training and strong convictions, irresistibly responded to the stirring strains. But I was quickly brought to my senses by the reflection, that my enjoyment of such things was another proof of the existence of original sin in my soul, and of the fact that as yet I had not been born again.

(Reprinted, 1902.)

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be concluded)

The darkest pages in the history of Christianity are those which record the persecution of the Jews; and the pretensions of modern communities to civilization are measurable by the meed of justice awarded to Hebrew citizens. Can we imagine a more amazing spectacle than Christianity appropriating the sacred literature of a Semitic tribe, adopting it to a new religion, and then persecuting and massacring its owners for proving faithful to their ancestral creed!

C. Gill in the "Evolution of Christianity."

Acid Drops

The writer on "Beyond the Headlines," in the *News-Chronicle*, expresses surprise at the "fuss" being made over the film production, "Green Pastures," a play in book form, that was noted in these columns on its first appearance. He says the bother would have made our forefathers stare. They thought nothing of a miracle play which presented Mrs. Noah arriving late at the door of the Ark and being pushed through before the rain came. We could provide him with more striking examples from the old miracle plays. There was the creation of light, and the separation of light from darkness by God, an elderly gentleman, wandering on to the stage with a big lantern, and pushing a black curtain aside in order to let the light be seen. There was the presentation of the creation of Adam and Eve, both naked; and the donning of the fig-leaves was quite an interesting sight for the audience. And in the songs that were sung there was one in which Mary asks Joseph, just before the birth of Jesus, for some grapes, and is met with the curt retort—a quite natural one—that she ask the father of her child to get them.

The real moral of the row over "Green Pastures," the writer of "Headlines" either does not see, or dare not mention. There was nothing wrong in depicting God as an elderly gentleman or His bandying words with men, because the picture answered to the belief. It was a pictorial representation of the belief. When the American negro—that is, the more ignorant and the most religious negro—has God presented to him as an elderly man smoking ten cent cigars, it answers to his idea of God. But when this kind of thing is presented to the more sophisticated white, he is having presented to him the real nature of his belief, and he cannot stand it. After all, the form of belief presented in "Green Pastures," is the Christian religion as it was believed by an overwhelming majority of Christians before modern thought sapped their faith. Now he can only believe so long as he is not brought up against the actual nature of his faith. He can go on fooling himself, just so long as he is not reminded that he is doing so. That is the condition of the persistence of religious faith in all civilized countries. It is the function of modern religious teachers to so present religion that no one, except the Freethinker, is quite sure what he means.

Germany has taken another step towards turning the country into what it calls a perfect Democracy. There is now to be no art criticism in Germany. Writers may only describe; they must not criticize. This seems rather a wise rule on the whole. Criticizing is what one may call an eruptive habit. If one is permitted to criticize art, one may next advance to literature, then perhaps to politics—and who can tell where it may stop? And as there is no criticism in any of the papers that are permitted to be published in Germany, and as people are compelled to keep their wireless sets going when Hitler is speaking, and must not listen to any wireless stations abroad, it seems only proper they should not be allowed to criticize art. One reflects that for any intelligence at all to exist in Germany proves it to be an indestructible quality of human nature. But Mr. Beverley Nichols quite approves of the German method.

The Archbishop of York remarked recently that "a great deal of our religious instruction has given many people the impression that God was very active in one part of the world at one time—namely in Palestine—but that He has never been anywhere else or done anything much since." Well, is that not true? Has God been anywhere or done anything since he was so active in person—according to the Bible—in Palestine? Is it not one of the Freethought counts against the Deity that he never does or says anything anywhere—and for that matter that he never did or said anything in Palestine either? The Archbishop provided no answer to his own statement.

Professor G. T. Thomson, speaking at Edinburgh, said:—

"Dogmatics is not a theory but the expression of a living relationship. As a result of the study of doctrine . . . we find the unity of faith, the incontrovertible authority of God." So vital is this matter of dogmatics that, "If the Church eschews theology, she will invite her own dissolution."

This is rather hard lines on a church which exists solely because it preaches and teaches theological dogmas. What other use has any church? And yet nearly every church nowadays runs away half its time from its own basic "justification." Tea-fights, mothers' meetings, boy-scout and similar organizations occupy a tremendous space in church work. "Get back to your dogmas," says Prof. Thomson. Well, the churches have never dropped any dogmas, in fact they still figure in all their creeds. But adherents and church-goers want entertainment, so the dogmas hide themselves and the "social side" serves as a convenient screen behind which the dogmas still flourish.

What a fuss people made about the silly lie that Bradlaugh took out his watch and allowed God five minutes in which to manifest Himself. Here is the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, at the City Temple pulpit declaiming with all an actor's art, the line of Walter de la Mare, asking: "Is there anybody there?" Now as it happens God most certainly did not offer the minister the slightest sign that HE was "there." If Mr. Weatherhead had been talking through a public telephone, he would have been justified in "touching button B." His twopence would have been returned. But faith rises high above common-sense. Mr. Weatherhead admitted it was hard to believe that God is there when:—

Calamity upon calamity happened in the world; good men went bankrupt, saintly women developed cancer, two hundred men lost their lives in a coal mine, two thousand were swept away in a typhoon, disaster followed disaster, and man lost faith and said: "I don't think there can be Anyone there."

In connexion with the "Sermon on the Mount," Professor Findlay claims in the *British Weekly*, that it was intended not for the public but only for those already converted. It seems silly to preach to the converted, and although Matthew's gospel is consistent with the idea that Christ addressed Himself solely to an audience of disciples, the account in Luke of the same discourse is that it was not on a mountain at all, but "in the plain," and that it was addressed to "a great multitude." Dr. Findlay straightforwardly repudiates the view that morality has anything to do with Christianity, or to give his own words:—

Defending Christianity by recommending the ethic of the teaching of Jesus has been a mistake, for the most ideal goodness will not save this lost world.

Mr. Thomas Magnay, M.P., writes on "The Religious Basis of English Freedom." His point of view can be gauged by his summary of the wickedness of the Fascists consisting of bullying and terrorizing but—here comes their worst offence, "their massed mobilization particularly on the Lord's Day." He contrasts English liberty (as well he might) with the horrors of dictatorships, but imagine the "history" of a man—an M.P. too—who believes that "England avoided" the "debased and corrupted" example of Greek democracy "by the preaching of the Church." He claims that "the seedbed of modern democracy is the religious doctrine of the infinite value of the individual soul." Mr. Magnay might with advantage study Mr. Cohen's *Christianity and Slavery* about the very low finite valuation religion has put on the *bodies* of slaves, serfs and workers, except as exploitable chattels.

Lord Merivale, a former President of the Divorce Court, has an article in the *Sunday Chronicle* on "Marriage or Divorce." The quality of the article can be gathered from the muddle-headedness of the title. Lord

Merivale knows all that there is to be known about special pleading. It is therefore all the more inexcusable in an article to write as a barrister when his public will naturally expect him in virtue of his position to write as a judge. "Marriage," we are told, "was no evolutionary development or organized outcome of human progress. It is founded on words of Divine authority spoken nineteen centuries ago with a certainty quite unmistakable."

What Jesus said about marriage is neither here nor there, but it is pertinent to ask the judicial Merivale: What and where are these words? They do not exist. Jesus did not even take the trouble to marry and give the already existing institution the benefit of his practical support. He did little, if anything, to support it; certainly it is clear that he and the other New Testament writers considered matrimony inferior to celibacy. Paul said, "It is better to marry than to burn," which Lord Merivale can consider high praise if he likes. The Church marriage ceremony is anxious to show some connexion between matrimony and Jesus, so drags in the fact of his presence at the Marriage at Cana. All that is emphasized by that incident is that Jesus considered that no limit should be set to the drinking facilities on that occasion, with which sentiment he would have had a warm supporter in Robbie Burns. All the same, monogamy has more to be said for it than Jesus, the Apostles, or the early Christians, ever said.

What Lord Merivale intends to show by this article is that he is going to oppose the Bill for the extension of facilities for Divorce now before Parliament (the humanity and justice of which cannot be questioned) and that he is not going to be too particular in his methods. As a religious man he is going to fight for the indissolubility of the "cat and dog" life, with all the misery, pain, and moral filth that it involves. At the same time he hints, Christian-like, at the inferior morality of those who think differently. Lord Merivale might have been a better man (to retort in kind), were he not a Christian. This article of his will disfigure, as long as he is remembered, any reputation that he manages to collect.

The Vicar of Earls Barton, near Wellingborough, is endeavouring to outrival Houdini as an escapologist; he gets out of handcuffs with the greatest of ease. He will not find it so easy to get out of some of the quandaries into which church teaching has led him.

People will be able to practise any religion they like in the next world, says the Rev. W. A. Reid. Well if that is the case it means that many of the religious are not going to Heaven, for, should they arrive there, they would soon put a stop to that nonsense. Fancy a Catholic in Heaven having to put up with the society of members of the Plymouth Brethren and Lady Huntingdon's Connexion. True Religion would never stand for that.

"Did God create negroes?" asks a correspondent in the *Daily Mirror*. We like a radical question and this one certainly should have the effect of making even the creator of Heaven and Earth sit up and do a little thinking. Why did he not do the obvious thing to make all the inhabitants of the British Isles thoroughly comfortable? Why didn't he make all mankind of the pattern turned out in London, Wigan and Burnham-on-Crouch. But black men, and yellow men, and coffee-coloured men! The hand of the potter shook badly when it experimented in colour.

Hitler at one time seemed certain that God had made one respectable type only, the Hitler type, but circumstances are now forcing him to look amiably upon coloured reinforcements. We warn the President of the Immortals that when the racial maniacs begin to be well represented in Heaven that at any moment a *coup d'état* will be likely, and one of the objectives will be the immediate internment of the Ancient of Days in a concentration camp. The God who makes black men is asking for trouble.

We hate to multiply instances, but once again the organ of Anglo-Catholicism, the *Church Times*, proves how very far from "unity" are the Catholic members of the Christian Faith. Here is what it recently said:—

We are getting a little weary of the pretensions of English Roman Catholics that they and everything connected with them are sacrosanct. Domestic infallibility does not render them immune from public criticism.

It is a pity that the *Church Times* does not remember Burns' "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us to see ourselves as ithers see us!"

In any case the *pros* and *cons* for "unity" are still being discussed in the same journal, where some of the writers are pointing out how "Rome can never budge an inch, nay, not even a millimetre from her position," others are pointing with pride to the thousand Anglican clergymen who recently pledged themselves "to have no dealings with Modernism," while still others would like to go bodily over and thus settle the matter once for all. In fact, we also are getting a little weary of all this tiresome twaddle. One thing does stand out, however, in the discussion. The struggle must eventually be between "true," that is, "fundamental" Christianity and Free-thought. There can be no half-way house. And Free-thought must win.

The Rev. Austin Lee calls attention to the "simple mockery of Almighty God," when Christians are asked to sing in church on Sundays:—

Sufficient in Thine arm alone
And our defence is sure.

On weekdays the same Christians help to build up huge armaments. As he says, "We either trust in God or we do not." Hear, hear! But most Christian nations believe that a better trust in God, and the power of his arm alone, would be in helping him with thousands of bombing aeroplanes as well as submarines, battleships, big guns, and gas-bombs. In this way the enemy Christian nations would be far more suitably impressed, and the peaceful character of Christianity once again be definitely proved.

Mr. Lee does not like all this, however. He thinks if we can't trust "God alone" with our defence, then "the Cross is a sham and Christianity an old wife's tale." But that is just what they are in any case. The questions of war and peace have little to do with the matter, really. The falsity of Christianity has been shown in many other ways.

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.

R. HARDING.—The question of the use of the word religion has been often argued in these columns. Of course anyone is at liberty to define religion in any way he pleases, but is it conducive to clear and useful thinking to use a word in one sense, while the majority of people use and understand it in another? Why use that particular word? A letter on these points would be inserted, provided it is not of inordinate length.

ALAN TYNDAL.—A good and discriminating biography of Gilbert is contained in *Gilbert and Sullivan*, by Hesketh Pearson.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

The National Secular Society has a Benevolent Fund which is administered without any cost whatever, and is devoted to giving what small help it can to Freethinkers who find themselves in need. We are asked by the Benevolent Fund Committee to call attention to the fact that it is in need of funds. It is actually in debt to the General Fund of the Society, since no deserving case is ever refused, whether there is money in this particular Fund or not. Still, it is well for the Committee to have enough money at its disposal to meet the demands made upon it. We hope that some of our readers will take the hint.

It is a great pity that Freethinkers when writing do not choose their words so that misleading impressions may be avoided. Professor H. Levy is well able to express himself clearly and in precise terms and it is regrettable that in an article in *Reynolds* for November 29, dealing with "Morals in the Modern World," he should say:—

When the Bishop of Birmingham stated, the other day, that Russia was now the most Christian nation, he spoke more truly than he perhaps realized.

We are quite sure that what the Bishop meant, and what Professor Levy understands, by such expressions as "Christian morals," are different things, and it is ridiculous to assume that the two are identical. It is also not

likely that Professor Levy believes that Russia accepts the Christian values in morality, when we interpret Christianity so as to agree with Bishop Barnes. The one certain thing is that so long as Christianity means what it has always historically and doctrinally meant, Russia is not Christian, nor is any healthy Freethinking morality Christian either. We repeat, it is a pity that Freethinkers when writing for the public should give Christians the impression that we are mere hangers-on to the Christian conception of either morals or social life.

In this country it is very difficult indeed to get a dead Atheist treated with ordinary justice. If he happens to be a blackguard, and Christianity cannot reasonably hope to have a complete monopoly of them, his Atheism is shouted from the housetops, either because he ought to have known better, or because the Atheist has dared to poach on Christian preserves. If he is a decent sort of a man then his Atheism is quietly ignored. Here, for example, is no less a person than Sir John Squire, who ought to know better, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* October 26 (we have just come across it), of the late A. E. Housman, as follows:—

His philosophy was not everyman's but he was utterly honest, anguished because "men unloved kindness," and unable, though a naturally Christian soul, to find consolation.

Housman writes himself an Atheist, his brother said he was an Atheist. Sir John Squire says he was a "naturally Christian soul," which is a Christian way of telling a deliberate lie about a dead man, and shielding himself behind an ambiguity. It is simply disgraceful, and a cowardly insult to a dead man. Sir John probably has some Freethinking acquaintances. We hope some of them will let him know what opinion they have of such contemptible conduct.

We wonder what is meant by Housman being unable to find consolation. Probably he means that had Housman been a Christian, he would have found consolation by drawing his cloak round him and saying, "Things are very hard, they hurt my sensitive soul, but presently I shall be in heaven and shan't care a damn about anything." That seems to be the attitude that Sir John Squire would have appreciated. It is pitiful for a man of Sir John Squire's standing not to be able to deal with such as Housman with a little more consideration.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner will take place at the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday, January 23. In view of the Bi-centenary of the birth of Thomas Paine (January 29), the function will be converted into a Thomas Paine Commemoration Dinner. There will be special arrangements made with regard to speakers, etc., in view of this occasion. We are introducing the matter thus early, because the number of tickets will have to be limited in view of the larger number of members and friends who wish to be present. For that reason early application for tickets is advised to those who wish to be present. Tickets will be 8s. each. Further information regarding this special occasion will be published later.

The *Church Times* says that if Mr. A. P. Herbert's Marriage Bill becomes law Christian marriage will have disappeared. The *Church Times* forgets two rather important things. The first is that the only legal marriage in this country is the marriage that is sanctioned by the State. For the performance of this the clergyman is exactly on the same level as any Registrar of Marriages. He is a person licensed by the State to perform marriages, and can perform them only so long as he follows the rules laid down by the State. If those getting married require some further performance, such as putting on a ring, or repeating some religious formulæ, the State raises no objection whatever any more than it objects to a man wear-

ing a green hat and red trousers every time he comes to register the birth of a baby. It is the secular part of the marriage, in terms laid down by the State, that is of importance, and which is essential. Anything else is mere trimmings.

The second point is that if anyone wishes to maintain what the *Church Times* calls the Christian marriage, that is marriage which forbids divorce, there is nothing in the new Bill or in any Bill that can prevent their doing so. The new Bill does not say that if two people are divorced one or both of them must marry again, it does not say that they must apply for a divorce when one offends in such a way as to warrant it. That is entirely a matter for each individual to settle for himself or herself. What the Bill does is to enable two people who have made a mess of their marriage to end it in a proper and cleanly manner, without condemning either to perpetual celibacy. What the *Church Times* is really asking is that certain Christians shall not only regulate their own marriage lives as they please, but that they shall compel others to manage theirs in the same way. And the conclusion is really an argument for Mr. Herbert's Bill. It implies that Christians feel that if the law does not force even professing Christians to keep the "Christian marriage," they will not do so.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Cutner had a very good meeting at Leicester on Sunday last. The lecture was a provocative one, and roused a very keen discussion, which had unfortunately to be curtailed owing to the lecturer having to leave for London. But the evening appears to have been a quite interesting one. To-day (December 6), Mr. Cutner lectures for the North London Branch of the N.S.S. at the Primrose Restaurant, 66 Heath Street, Hampstead. The lecture commences at 7.30 p.m.

On Thursday, December 10, the West London Branch N.S.S. will hold a Social at the Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, London W., commencing with a reception at 7.30 p.m. Members and friends of other Branches are invited, and tickets, one shilling each, may be had from Mr. C. Tuson, 14 Portland Road, Holland Park, London, W.11. The West London Branch is strong and active, and there should be a good muster of saints on this occasion.

The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will have another visit from Mr. George Bedborough to-day (December 6). He will speak in the Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Livery Street, at 7 p.m., on "Christ's Sermon on the Mount." Christians usually fall back upon the Sermon when retreating, and as there are still some Christians left in Birmingham, Branch members should get busy and bring as many as possible to hear Mr. Bedborough.

Blackburn Freethinkers are asked to note that the local N.S.S. Branch is to be found every Saturday and Sunday evenings at the Cobden Hall, Cort Street, and an invitation is extended to all. Literature may be bought, and contact made with the Branch officials and other friends of the movement in Blackburn.

The Secretary of the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. writes that the Branch intends to hold a social function prior to the visit of London speakers. The first one takes place on Saturday, December 12, at 7 p.m., and consists of a supper in Cranstons, Renfield Street, and a visit to the Empire Theatre. The guest of the evening will be Mr. Rosetti. We are anticipating a large turn out of members and friends. The price of the entire function is only 3s. 6d. Tickets may be had on application from the Secretary, Mrs. Whitesfield, 351 Castlemilk Road. We hope to hear of a good attendance as a prelude to Mr. Rosetti's lecture on the Sunday. The Glasgow Branch needs all the help that local friends can give it, and we trust that that help will be forthcoming.

The Penny Pamphlet

It is almost impossible to compute the tremendous influence exercised by the humble pamphlet in the propagation of certain opinions. Almost from the time when printing presses were first being erected, and side by side with the production of ponderous volumes, came the slim broadsheet, expanded later to a few pages, in which the author could put his point of view tersely and strongly, without padding, a point of view that had, because of its very limitations, to be conveyed hot and strong and direct in a simple and often provocative way. In a pamphlet the author was unable to beat about the bush; here was his message once for all; take it or leave it.

The pamphlet became almost from its very inception the vehicle for polemic. It was the cheapest and easiest way of getting to the people. Those who—fortunately—could read, could master its contents in an hour or so; and those who could not, could have it read to them over a tankard of ale or a cup of coffee. The man with ideas in the early years of printing found in the pamphlet almost the only way in which he could disseminate those views often thought, or called, subversive by the authorities.

Thousands of pamphlets followed the religious controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants after the Reformation. Almost every point of difference between the two factions was discussed in a pamphlet and all over Germany, France, Switzerland and England the debate continued for centuries—and, for that matter, continues to-day. The risks were often great in publishing a pamphlet against both the religious and secular authorities, but they were bravely, and many times, cheerfully, taken by these courageous pamphleteers who fought for their right to say what they wished, whose views frequently made for much needed reforms, and who were determined that their point of view should strike home.

It would make a fascinating story to trace the history of the printed pamphlet, though similar writings were in circulation long before the press made it possible to multiply the number of copies sent out. One could devote, for instance, a whole volume to the discussion of the pamphlets which were the direct result of Luther's revolt against the Church of Rome. In England the Reformation caused almost as much controversy; but perhaps it was the war between Charles I. and the Parliament which produced the greatest crop of pamphlets. I think—I am speaking from memory—that there is a collection of at least 20,000 dealing with the Civil War in its many aspects.

Of course, a good many of these early pamphlets have lost their sting; the things discussed have no longer any point or interest. Moreover, their old-fashioned and often tortuous phraseology makes them difficult to follow. Only when we get a pamphlet by a Defoe or a Swift or some similar genius are we aroused—perhaps because almost anything they wrote about would be sure to have that spark of immortal fire which is possessed by the few.

However fiercely controversial have been—and are—pamphlets written in defence of certain political reforms or systems—for example, the famous *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels—or on such subjects as anti-vaccination and vegetarianism, it is in the field of religion that there will be found some of the most interesting and most vigorous of polemical literature. Both the eighteenth and nineteenth century must have produced literally tens of thousands of pamphlets on various aspects of theology and religion. And in this controversy Freethinkers have stood out brilliantly.

Almost from the very first—that is, as soon as

there was a chance of getting the pamphlet circulated without being hanged for it the next day—Freethinkers were busy criticizing current beliefs, and attacking credulity and superstition. The works of many of the early Deists were first published in pamphlet form. Voltaire, perhaps more than any other Freethinker, must have distributed thousands upon thousands of his writings against religion in this way—he repeated himself a great deal, but it was the only method by which it was possible to ram his message home in those terrible days when imprisonment, torture and death were so often the penalties awaiting these brave old pioneers of Freethought. By living just outside France and sending out his pamphlets anonymously Voltaire achieved a reputation second to none as the greatest enemy the Church ever had to face. If to us moderns, his attacks seem often on the mild side, it must not be forgotten that he achieved his purpose, and that *autre temps, autre mœurs*. We can fight with different weapons and perhaps in the next century, if religion still persists, critics will consider our own methods to have been similarly mild.

Our own golden age was the nineteenth century. Here the fight waged by the eighteenth century Deists for the right of publishing arguments against religion bore fruit, and with Thomas Paine, Richard Carlile, Robert Taylor, James Watson, Charles Southwell, George Jacob and Austin Holyoake, Charles Watts, G. W. Foote, Charles Bradlaugh and Robert Ingersoll as their authors, the number of anti-religious pamphlets must have had millions of readers. Nothing that the authorities did could stop their circulation. The Churches fulminated against these "infidel" productions, they prepared innumerable "replies," the controversy waxed hot and strong, but still the pamphlets poured out unceasingly from the press.

In my own opinion, it was these, more than the longer and higher priced publications, which were responsible for the spread of Freethought in England. Paine's *Age of Reason* did more to damage the Bible as a divine revelation than dozens of those bigger books which went minutely into the question of the literal accuracy of certain passages with a scholarship Paine did not possess. The patient analysis of Bradlaugh, the sardonic wit of Foote, the fiery eloquence of Ingersoll, sent their pamphlets into thousands of homes where the devastating criticism of Colenso in his many volumes on the Pentateuch was quite unknown. Pamphlets were handed round to one's friends. They could be easily carried in the pocket, and read at odd moments, and they did their work with astonishing results. They were boycotted by the "respectable" booksellers—as, indeed, they are now; but the loss has always been theirs; for it is not easy to stop the circulation of any pamphlet which has something to say—witness the way in which, dealing with a subject about which everybody wants to know something, Chapman Colen's *Spain and the Church* has sold and is still selling.

Pamphlets rapidly become scarce. They are read by many people, the frail binding loosens, they get thumb-marked and ear-marked, and then somehow or other they disappear. I once saw for sale, bound in a slender volume, Foote's pamphlets against Theosophy, marked 3s. It is probable that they are now quite scarce, as they have never been reprinted; they were read and re-read, and like so much polemical literature, they quietly disappeared when they had done their work. How many copies remain of Charles Southwell's pamphlets? How many people have that very rare one, his *Confessions*? It is a fact that there must still be in existence some pamphlets worth far more than their weight in gold—though these need not necessarily be the anti-religious ones.

At the moment, the reader can aid in buying and distributing the new series of *Pamphlets for the People*, of which two have been published, and many more are to follow. They deal with fundamental subjects by a writer—this is his journal, and I am not allowed to go more fully into his qualifications—who has spent about 50 years as a fighter for Freethought. These pamphlets are as necessary to-day as those of Foote, Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were in their day. Religion is making a desperate fight for existence, but it is a great mistake to imagine that it is beaten yet. It is not; and while it is still alive and kicking, the need for some brief and vigorous restatements of Freethought must be obvious. No better series than these *Pamphlets for the People* could be devised.

H. CUTNER.

Democracy

On a historic occasion Disraeli startled the Mother of Parliaments by the declaration: "Democracy is on its trial." Happily the future keeps its secrets. Anything may happen: but few of us can contemplate with equanimity the restoration of an Autocracy. We recall with a shudder the exploits of a William I., a Cromwell, a Napoleon; the fatal futility of a George III. We cast furtive glances at Mussolini and Hitler; well, we think we should prefer to "bear the ills we have."

Nevertheless it is incontrovertible that a wise and beneficent autocracy is the best form of Government known to man. The difficulty is to get hold of the right man for the job. Those "right men" who appear on the page of history can almost be counted on the fingers; and the just inference is that, of the autocrats who may hereafter appear, only a minute percentage will be wise and beneficent.

Let us glance at the careers of three benevolent autocrats of the past:—

(1) Asoka (B.C. 264), ruled over a huge area from Afghanistan to Madras. When he ascended the throne, he continued the conquest of India which had been left unfinished by his predecessors; but the horrors and cruelties of war disgusted him. He became an enthusiastic disciple of the Buddha, and renounced war and conquest altogether. Mr. H. G. Wells says: "His reign for 28 years was one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind. He organized a great digging of wells in India, and the planting of trees for shade. He founded hospitals and public gardens for the growing of medicinal herbs. He created a Ministry for the care of the aborigines and subject races of India. He made provision for the education of women."

(2) Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.), the Stoic Roman Emperor whose *Meditations* read like a Christian manual of devotion. This wise and lofty-minded man governed for 20 years the greater part of Europe and large areas in Africa and Asia, in such a manner as to win the love and admiration not only of the men of his own time, but also of all subsequent ages.

(3) Alfred (end of ninth century A.D.), did for England all that a wise and kindly man, untiring organizer and eager scholar, could do for such a country in such an age.

Granted that these three examples of wise and benevolent autocracy do not complete the list that could be compiled. It does not matter. For every one of this complexion, a thousand of the other could readily be cited. The volume of history bulges with the crimes of tyrants of every variety; from ferocious

types like Alexander and Attila, to able but vulgar-minded adventurers like Napoleon, or half-crazy megalomaniacs like the ex-Kaiser. The result is the same whether you turn to the records of Asiatic Empires, Popes, Roman Emperors, Jewish or Christian Kings. Of these some were predominantly blood-thirsty, some only cruel, some abnormally lascivious, some just commonplace thieves and liars.

With a few exceptions, they made use of their exalted positions for purely selfish ends, ignoring the welfare—and often compassing the ruin—of their subjects.

Strange that such an incalculable amount of human suffering should have accompanied, or resulted from, the determination of "dawn-men" to find on earth a divine Commissioner—someone to wield the sceptre of the God! Or was it the powerful and cunning usurper who hit upon the idea of a divine Commission to bolster his authority? Either way, we get the legacy of a "Divine Right" of Kings and Popes, and the spectacle of twentieth-century Englishmen making themselves supremely ridiculous over the execution of Charles I. We find millions to-day for whom the Pope's word is law; millions more ready to give their lives to set up again some humpty-dumpty Emperor, King or Dictator, of the type that has reddened the page of history throughout the ages.

As for us here in Great Britain, by the time that George III. had alienated America, we had had enough of the "Lord's Anointed." We quickly reverted to the ancient expedient of Democracy. Dearly as we might love to be governed by an Asoka, a Marcus Aurelius, or a King Alfred, we have learned that the odds are heavy against our getting an autocrat of this calibre. Good fruit does not grow on every apple-tree, and we cannot risk getting a crab-apple instead of a Cox's Pippin.

If it be objected that the undesirable type of autocrat usually inherited or usurped the throne, and that there is a very good case for the voluntary selection—by puzzled voters in the huge human conglomerates known as nations—of a Dictator; we can only reply by pointing to the risk. Who, for example, can foretell the results of the crop of Dictatorships lately sown in Europe? Is it safe to entrust the destinies of a nation to any one man "such as the earth now produces"? Have we ever quite forgiven the Puritan usurpation in England, and can we think without a shudder of the Italy, Germany, or Russia of to-day?

For the reasons given, Autocracy must be regarded as an undesirable form of government. In the same category we place without hesitation Anarchy—that negation of government so strangely advocated by a large number of intelligent persons. For Anarchy must mean the free play of individual wills—that is to say, there is a fair field for the operation of the law of survival of the "fittest" or strongest. The result of the struggle is self-evident. The "fittest" obtains and maintains his supremacy by the destruction or suppression of his rivals.

Almost in the twinkling of an eye, we are back in Autocracy—probably in one of those undesirable forms with which history has made us sadly familiar.

There remains only Democracy, with its fatally defective critical faculties, its ignorance and superstition, its "herd-instinct," and alarming susceptibility to rhetorical clap-trap or chop-logic. To this sadly imperfect form of government we are forced, not by its merits, but by the demerits of its rivals—to adhere.

To sum up. We find that Anarchy leads inevitably to Autocracy; Autocracy would be the most desirable form of government if we could rely upon securing the right man. We find that the odds

against the right man are thousands to one; and conclude that we must at all hazards cling to Democracy, resisting alike the blandishments of Anarchists, Monarchists (Absolute) and Fascists.

G. TODD HUNTER.

Pre-Natal Depravity

"I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

THESE two scriptural texts are placed in juxtaposition to illustrate the state in which every man is regarded by believers to be on account of original sin, and their prescription of his deliverance from it. But we do not find much insistence upon the first quoted text in the present day. One would be interested to hear a sermon by an Archbishop or the Scottish Moderator on that text, which in the view of the Freethinker came from the pen of a corrupted wretch, who could go so far as to slander his own mother. However bad man may feel himself to be, he adds to his vileness, and proves himself an unutterable cad by the beastly method of ascribing his state to the mother who bore him.

Incidentally it is to be noted that favour with God through belief in Christ is declared to secure for the believer everlasting life; while the unbeliever is left to the wrath of God and everlasting death, which, paradoxically, he can never die. The faith is demonstrably a mass of jumbled contradictions.

The suggestion in the first-quoted text is not merely applicable to one individual case. It is proclaimed to be applicable to every one who is born into this world alive. Every innocent and prattling babe, if not baptized, is destined to everlasting death and the pains of Hell for ever. The Modernists cannot tone this down. The fundamentalists are the true exponents of the will of God.

The earliest Christian teachers did nothing new in providing their God with an only begotten son by a virgin. They simply stole this method from Paganism, which furnishes numerous historical instances of sons of gods by human females, each of which sons went through experiences practically the same as those gone through by Jesus Christ.

It is a notable fact that supernatural systems—Pagan or Christian—regard the mass of ordinary human beings as vicious and depraved, until they have subjected themselves to the saving Grace, Authority and Power of a supernatural being or beings. And the chief concern of man has been to placate, propitiate and conciliate his god or gods. When any human being, by the exercise of his mental faculties, found himself unable to swallow the priestly prescriptions and said so, his number was up. And if he tried to influence others to share his opinion he was burned. There have been many martyrs of Freethought; but as Time passed the clerical big-wigs resorted to a policy of boycott once Secular legislation forbade the stake and the rack, which had the effect of advertising and calling public attention to the martyrs and their views. But to the extent of their opportunities, all Christian clerics still feel amply justified in using any means to purge the world of unbelieving rebels. Freethinkers owe nothing to the Churches for the comparative freedom they now have to state their opinions. On the contrary, their predecessors in the Freethought movement themselves against tremendous odds won this freedom

for us at tremendous sacrifice, and eternal vigilance is necessary still to preserve it.

It is only a negligible percentage of church-going people that now read the Bible with any serious attention. But of those who do, it is refreshing to find that quite a number are revolted by the implications of the damnatory Christian creed, and are, like the Modernists, prepared to throw overboard quite a lot of the Gospel ship's cargo, once cherished and regarded as indispensable verities. All this—the indifference of the majority of lay Christians; and the results of excavation by the minority; emasculating it, and making its life blood. The faith's greatest foes may yet prove to be those of its own household! For the more the fundamentals of the Christian Faith are exposed to the Light of Reason and common sense, the more false and futile do they appear, and it is not many steps from doubt to complete repudiation and rejection.

But there are several ways in which the Christian layman, though well advised of the falsity of his faith, often seeks to justify himself in resisting the appeal of Ascertained Truth. He says religion in itself is all right; but it is hampered by clericalism and professional theology. Well, take away Clericalism and Professional Theology and what is left? People deceive themselves by regarding religion purely as an instrument of humanitarianism. In all ages religion, clericalism and professional theology have been inevitably and indissolubly linked and interwoven together. They are all of a piece. They are inextricably identified with one another. If one goes, all must go.

The greatest essential in Christian teaching—to justify its main scheme—is the postulate that every human being born into the world is a bad lot. "Holy men" of God have always existed to rub in this teaching; and they have been well paid by wealthy constituents to keep on doing so; for it has proved effective as a means of "ruling the mob and keeping it under." The fear of hell is still the hangman's whip, "tae haud the wretch to order."

One is always suspicious of the individual who keeps saying, "Oh wretched man that I am who will deliver me?" "What must I do to be saved?" There is much affectation in the pose of humility, and the declaration that one is the greatest of sinners. Paul, that prototype of all Christian missionaries—himself miraculously converted in a moment by a supernatural vision, which we have only his own word for—was a gifted advertiser, and knew the right note of appeal to strike. He proclaimed himself to be the "Chief of Sinners"—though an examination of his Epistles hardly suggests he believed it—and bewailed his early persecution of the Christian Church. There is the melodramatic touch! All Paul's life was a melodrama—from the converting flash of lightning and Divine voice; to his shipwreck, to his appearances before the Courts, right on to Rome. He was always speaking about "the body of this death" in a very self-depressing fashion. Evidently he was one of those unsound persons (few in number it is to be hoped) who say that they were shapen in iniquity, and that in sin did their mother conceive them! And now Christians have the assurance and effrontery to say that the teaching of Freethought is morbid, depressing and hopeless! Yea, "what a faith" they have in Jesus!

IGNOTUS.

That which violence wins for us to-day, another act of violence may wrest from us to-morrow.

Francisco Ferrer.

The Caxton Hall Social

AN IMPRESSION

CAXTON HALL is an admirable building containing spacious rooms displaying all the arts and crafts of human ingenuity and skill. The annual gathering of Freethinkers, to enable them to meet and chat and pass pleasant hours together, was an event this year marked with good taste, together with unostentatious arrangements for the comfort and happiness of friends. Music from a band more of quality than of quantity was supplied, and old and young alike danced through the intricacies of modernity, at the same time enjoying the old dances vaguely reminiscent of the old song, "Dance with your Uncle Joe"—to be precise, I mean the polka. A violinist in the band seemed to me to like the giving of pleasure as much as those who accepted it joyfully and gratefully. A singer who sang with the ease of a blackbird (which bird I have particularly in mind as being guilty of eating the only three cherries of this year's garden produce!) charmed us with delightful renderings of old and new songs, and even Martin Luther would have enjoyed her enchanting voice, and he was no small critic of song. "No, I have not got a wireless," to Madame who was talking, "and do not particularly want one." "But," Madame rejoined, "how nice it would be to be able to use the telephone or other scientific communications to speak to those we love, if the world was not so wicked." Although those she loves live in her heart, distance is a fact, and she is separated from them by some thousands of miles. Everyone appeared to enjoy the evening, and we left at 11 o'clock with music still being made. At twenty past twelve, walking across a Common where moonlight and mist had made fanciful and beautiful pictures of hedges and trees, music again met us coming from a room near a country pub, where, on the other side of the golden light through the windows we could hear a party singing, and with a loyal love for old songs it was pleasant to hear Chirgwin's favourite song, "My fiddle is my sweetheart." This was far off and in the past; one might hope, that to all youngsters, the present will be the happy past, for there is no other past worth having. It had been my pleasure to have met the white-eyed Kaffir, and in some vague and tentative manner, here was as much evidence of immortality as one may be lucky to find in this world, and this reminder, together with the pleasant memories of Caxton Hall, a little over an hour ago ended a happy day. For this much thanks to Miss Thelma Tuson, for her delightful singing, to Miss Somerville, for her exquisite violin solos, to Mr. Kit Keen for his inimitable humour and character studies, to Messrs. A. C. and R. V. Rosetti and Clifton as M.C.'s, and to all those kind and cheerful people who helped behind the scenes.

C-DE-B.

Correspondence

THE CORONATION OATH

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I am sure you would not wish inaccuracies, however unintentional, to creep into your paper, and I therefore venture to point out that the Catholic Evidence Guild has by no means a reputation for sprinting far and quickly away from opposition, but rather the contrary. I cannot, of course, speak for the other bodies of which you know.

BRIAN FOX.

SHAKESPEAREAN FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—If any Branch of the N.S.S. is interested in the question of the Shakespearean authorship, I should be pleased to give a lecture or, if an opponent can be found, to debate with any of the Stratford faith. In the case of London there need be no expense whatever; in the provinces only the fare.

W. KENT.

WHY ARE MEN POOR?

[Reprinted from the *National Reformer* of August 31, 1861.]

“No house hast thou, no food, no fire;
None bow to thee, alas!
A beggar? Yet nor lord nor squire
Say how comes this to pass.”—Elliott.

Men do not elect to be born in garrets, cellars, hovels. Children do not make choice of rags, wretchedness, and starvation. The masses do not select much toil and little pay. No man inclines voluntarily to want, squalor, disease, and crime. Why, then, are so many poor? Why in our agricultural districts have we labourers' cottages full of mouths and void of food? Why in our manufacturing north-country towns have we strikes and starvation? What is the cause of poverty, and can we find a cure? The Bible does say that “the poor shall never cease out of the land”; but the Bible is not the Bible for the people, at least not for the poor people. It can never be true that any good power has ordained an eternity of poverty for human kind. Poor men are of necessity ignorant men; for while men strive so sorely for the bare right to live, they have little opportunity for aught else. This poverty is the mother of ignorance, with whom crime and misery are ever found twin sisters. Is there no means of removing poverty from the world? Poor laws are not enough. Temperance societies are not enough; for the wretchedness of poverty—more eloquent with its foul and loathsome mouth than any teetotal orator—drives man to the gin-palaces from his squalid home. Churches and chapels mock at the evil by saying: “Blessed be ye poor.” Co-operative societies mitigate the evil, but they do not cure it; they lop at the branches, but do not strike at the root. Ebenezer Elliott struck the right keynote when he said:—

“That twelve rats starve where three rats thrive
When fifteen rats are caged alive
With food for nine and three.”

Too many people, too little produce, and the last equally divided. These words represent the state of society at the present moment. Is it not worth while to strive to find some solution of this problem of poverty? If we get rid of poverty, by lessening crime we reduce our expenses for police, lawyers, magistrates, gaols, gaolers, convict establishments, etc. If we get rid of poverty we remove the need for workhouses, heavy poor rates, and poor law guardians. If we get rid of poverty we remove from the threshold of life a gaunt fiend, whose icy breath freezes the blood of the new-born babe, and whose iron grip marks it *Pariah* because poor. Before the magistrate the poor man finds that honest poverty is a crime; and he is sent to gaol as a rogue and a vagabond, when he is no rogue, and only a wanderer; because the poor man's “home” is too often a mockery of that name. The poor man, if wronged, has little or no redress; justice must be paid for. With all these sad facts staring us in the face, we entreat you men and women to find out for yourselves why men are poor. Find out why it is that the eaters muster quicker than their food. Find out why it is that wherever men are crowded together there are lanes in which criminals hide and in which poor men, poor women, and wretched children starve to death. Do not say that *you* are not poor, and that it is not your business. It is. Your children and your children's children, and theirs again—their destiny lies in your hands, and in the name of our common humanity we entreat you to consider what is the cause of poverty, and whether or not we can work its cure.

Charles Bradlaugh.

I do not fear death for I know how to die. I assure you that if I knew this night was to be my last, I would raise my hands, and say, “God be praised!” The case would be far different if I had ever caused the misery of any of his creatures.—Kant.

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

MODERN CULTURE INSTITUTE (Caxton Hall): 8 p.m., Dr. Har Dayal will speak on Friday, December 11, on “Develop Your Personality—HOW?”

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30, H. Cutner—“What is the Bible?”

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, R. B. Kerr (Editor of *New Generation*)—A Lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Har Dayal, M.A., Ph. D.—“The Case for and against Pacifism.”

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs M. Saran—“Education Problems for Freethinkers.”

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BEDLINGTON (Co-operative Hall) 7.0, Thursday, December 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton—“Man—God or Evolution?”

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Rabbi Raphael R. Levine, B.A., LL.B. (Liverpool Jewish Congregation)—“The Jew and Palestine.”

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, near Livery Street): 7.0, Mr. G. Redborough—“Christ's Crudities: The Sermon on the Mount.”

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Impromptu Debate—“The Evolution of Mind.” Literature for sale.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance via passage facing Burton's): 7.15, Mr. J. Backhouse (Workers' Educational Centre)—“Psycho-Analysis.”

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—“Life.”

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 8.0, Prof. V. G. Childe “Organic Evolution and Human Progress.”

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. A. Copland, G.S.S.—“Old Wine in New Bootles.”

HETTON (Club Hall): 7.30, Tuesday, December 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton—“Materialism made Easy.”

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Imperial Hotel, Briggate, Leeds): 8.0, Mr. P. Williams (Yorkshire Organizer, I.L.P. Council)—“Religion and the Workers' Movement.”

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. F. W. Leeman, B.A.—“Dialectical Materialism and Modern Science.”

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, J. Byrne (Booth Branch Communist Party)—“The Future of Religion.”

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, entrance in Ormskirk Road): 7.30, Mr. Newbold—“Christianity and Communism.”

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—“Faith, Freethought and Future.”

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