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

Views and Opinions

The Other Side of the "Crisis"

BEHIND the abdication of King Edward VIII., and as the main cause of that abdication is the sinister power of the Established Church. This is the solid and pregnant truth, which was stressed in my last week's notes, the *Freethinker* being the only paper in which the facts were then stated. We are pleased to find other papers are taking up the same position. The *Evening Standard*, for instance, two days after our notes appeared, came along with the following:—

We are to lose our King for no other reason save that he wishes to marry a lady who has been a successful petitioner in the divorce court. . . . That was the one and only cause. . . . The separation of the King from the Nation has been brought about primarily by the section of public opinion which is strongly and sincerely opposed to divorce. But this body has been supported in its opposition to the marriage by others who can make no claim to sincerity.

In the *Church Times*, for December 11, there is a still stronger proof that my analysis of the situation was correct:—

The Marriage Service is a sacrament. And the Church cannot admit to its Sacraments men and women who repudiate the Church's law. We do not know what representations the Archbishop of Canterbury may have made to the Cabinet or the King. It seems to us, however, certain that it must have been made clear that no ecclesiastical dignitary would take part in the marriage of the King and Mrs. Simpson.

Finally, there are the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury (at least one of the principal agents in the "Crisis") in his broadcast of Sunday last. He finds it sad that Edward should have sought happiness

in a manner inconsistent with the principles of Christian marriage, and within a circle whose stand-

ards and ways of life are alien to the best instincts and traditions of his people.

There it is, the cat is completely out of the bag. The first reason is the real one, the last is a mere excuse. Edward's circle was the same as he had had for many years. It was that of a very large section of the fashionable society that fills the Churches. As to the traditions of Royalty, one need only go back to Edward VII., and ask whether the Archbishop ever by word or act rebuked him. And if one skips Victoria, and continues the story up to the next woman sovereign, Anne, the monarchs of England established a tradition of which the least said the better—for them. The Archbishop has shown himself an expert in Christian humbuggery and backstair manoeuvring. It was the prospect of having to give his archiepiscopal sanction to a marriage which the law of the land declares to be perfectly legal that gave rise to his burst of indignation. The Archbishop has given us an example of the dangers of a State Church and of permitting religion to govern our sense of social values.

It was not the letters received from abroad that induced Mr. Baldwin to visit the King. It was the Archbishop of Canterbury. He did not denounce the proposed marriage from the pulpit, that might have stirred up feeling and encouraged the move for disestablishment. He is no Pope Innocent and prefers more tortuous methods. He visits Mr. Baldwin, and Mr. Baldwin goes to the King, but without saying that the Archbishop is behind it all; neither does he tell the House of Commons that it is the Archbishop who has instigated his visit. He simply says that the "country" will not stand the marriage. Why if the matter had been put to the vote there would have been a huge majority in favour of the King doing as he pleased. The *King*, who has been lauded as the idol of the people, would hardly have been refused the right to select his own wife. We are used to the "Pickwickian sense" of a statement; we ought soon to have "Baldwinian truth" as a currency of speech.

* * *

Was there a Crisis?

The matter does not stop here. Mr. Baldwin chose to create what he called a "grave constitutional crisis." But, if we are to measure the conditions of a constitutional crisis, there was no such thing, until Mr. Baldwin made it so. Properly, a constitutional crisis can only arise when the King refuses to act with or on the advice of his ministers in matters that affect the Government of the country. So far as that is concerned the King does nothing, and can do nothing except by back-stair methods. But he is neither legally nor morally bound to ask his ministers for their approval of his marriage. And even on this question he refrained, in the most provocative circumstances, from public speech until, as he said, it was

"constitutionally possible for me to speak," that is, until he was able to speak for himself, and not read as his own a prepared speech. As to there being a genuine constitutional crisis the King's own words may stand:—

There has never been any constitutional difference between me and them (He was referring to his family and his Ministers) and me and Parliament. I should never have allowed such an issue to arise.

There was no genuine constitutional crisis, there was only an Archbishop-cum-Baldwin crisis, although neither had the courage nor the honesty to confess it. It served to confuse the man in the street; and politicians in both Houses of Parliament, who must have known something of what was going on, kept up the imposture for fear of rousing religious resentment when they next faced their electorates. On the question of his marriage the King is bound neither by custom nor law to consult his ministers. In marrying a woman who had divorced her husband he would have been doing what every man in the kingdom is legally entitled to do; and it is absurd to say that a marriage which would be perfectly honourable in the case of an ordinarily decent man is not tolerable in the case of the King. And a marriage to a woman who had divorced half-a-dozen husbands, and where the man and woman have a genuine love for each other, is far more a real marriage than are seventy-five per cent of royal marriages.

* * *

How it was Worked

Let us put the matter in order. There has always been a party in the Established Church that has opposed divorce as un-Christian. Defeated in making this the law the claim has been set up that while the law of the land allows it, Church law does not, and, as the *Church Times* says, a man and a woman once married in Church remain married whatever the law may say. Many of the clergy of the Established Church decline to marry divorced persons, although on this matter they are on precisely the level of a Registrar of marriages, and may be legally compelled to carry out their duties or resign. They have conscientious objections against doing what they are paid to do, but not against taking money for work they will not do. The King was the head of the Established Church, and if he had married Mrs. Simpson the Archbishop of Canterbury would have been one of the clergy to have performed the ceremony. If this had happened the fat would indeed have been in the fire. And for the King to be married in a Register Office would have been a blow at the Church, even though King Edward's religious beliefs are said to be a microscopical quantity.

So, what W. S. Gilbert called the "dignified clergy" got to work. It will be remembered that King Edward's association with Mrs. Simpson had for long been known. The number of pictures published showing them together at home and abroad proves this. In America the talk has been more open and more general. Nothing was said publicly, nothing was said by the Archbishop, nothing was said by the conscientious Mr. Baldwin. But two or three months ago American papers began to talk about the marriage of Mrs. Simpson and the King. And this aroused the Christian conscience of the Archbishop and some of the Bishops, and also brought into play what Mr. Baldwin called his "Victorian" conscience. A *liaison* was one thing. That was to be expected, and both the Christian and the Victorian conscience could watch it with a smile—and a smirk. But a *marriage* of the King and Mrs. Simpson was a very different thing, and something had to be done about it. The

King had made it quite plain that he was engaged in no vulgar *liaison*, but aimed at an honourable marriage. It was too much for the Baldwin-Archbishop combination.

It must also be noted that it was Mr. Baldwin who, at the probable instigation of the Archbishop, asked to see the King, not the King who asked to consult Mr. Baldwin. The King, to his honour, declined to budge. He had made his choice and would abide by it. Mr. Baldwin promised resignation if the King did not forego the marriage. The King offered to agree to Mrs. Simpson being his wife minus the office of Queen. This may have been at the lady's instigation; but that too was declined. It would not have met the Archbishop's objection to the Church marrying one of the parties in a divorce. It was Mr. Baldwin who turned a question that had nothing to do with the constitution into "a constitutional crisis"—he and the Archbishop. Mr. Baldwin's statement to the House of Commons was—Baldwinian. It concealed the basic facts. The late King has been sacrificed to religious intolerance and political chicanery. In his very human and moving broadcast the King showed great forbearance, and a diplomatic power of shelving awkward questions that I greatly admired. He was magnanimous in his handling of those who were driving him into exile, and showed real affection for his family. If and when he gets married I wish him every happiness. I have no greater belief in hereditary monarchs than I have in hereditary dustmen; but at the end of the broadcast I metaphorically raised my hat to the man who had shown himself greater than the King. He is the only one who has come out of this affair with his dignity untouched and his honour unsmirched.

One thing that followed immediately the abdication of Edward must have filled many decent minds with disgust. For eleven months Edward had been held up as one of the greatest Kings we have had in more than two centuries. We had been told how the people loved him, almost worshipped him, for his noble qualities of mind and character. The King is forced to abdicate, and before this abdication is made legal, crowds of men and women are waiting to see the new King and they cheer wildly on his appearance. Common decency ought to have suggested silence as the best attitude, and that the cheering might have been left to a later date. It was like dancing on a dead man's grave, or holding his dead, naked body up to execration. It almost made one feel ashamed of one's kind.

* * *

The Aftermath

As I said last week, the principle of hereditary monarchy has suffered a severe jolt. It should remove from the mind of the most ignorant the belief that the King rules the country, or that he has any hand in shaping its destinies. He has no *open* voice or influence in either making or unmaking laws. He is not permitted to make a public speech that is not written for him, on any important occasion, and if he dared openly to try and influence policy there would be a genuine "Constitutional Crisis." The influence he exerts has to be surreptitious, and his influence with the people is mainly due to the survival of feelings that belong to the time when the King caused the rain to fall, the crops to grow, and even kept the sun in the heavens. How little it matters what kind of King we have in an hereditary monarchy is shown by the fact that whether the King be wise or foolish, good or bad, he is acclaimed on his coronation, flattered during his reign, and praised on his death. We do not fear when a King dies, for we know that the next one will be as good. That is the beauty of heredity.

It has been feared that the abdication of Edward VIII. may affect the business side—political and economic—of the coronation of George VI. I doubt it. Five months of intensive, and expensive advertising of the graciousness of the Queen, the beauty of the children, the happiness of the Royal Family, and the devotion of George the Sixth to duty, will do the trick. Already the business has started. The Sunday newspapers—the encyclopedia of the unintelligent—are already at work. That philosopher of the half-witted, Mr. Beverley Nichols, has already written that he turns “with relief” from Edward the VIII.—whom he had hardly left off praising—to George VI. Journalists, with so many other opportunities of earning a dishonest living, will fill columns of ecstatic praise of the happy Royal Family, and the pictures of two little children will be everywhere exhibited to make profit from the sentimentalism of the crowd. The men who marched down Whitehall waving penny flags and shouting, “We want Edward,” will be waving the same flags and shouting “We’ve got George,” the Archbishop will be able to thank God that we have so wise and so good a King to reign over us. George VI., if he has any intelligence and any sense of values, will inwardly smile at the stupidity and the sycophancy of it all.

I have no sympathy to offer Edward VIII. If he and Mrs. Simpson are sincerely attached to each other, then the King has chosen the better path. He can be himself, careless of the tricks of politicians and the backstair-tricks of medicine-men. And if the people of this country have intelligence to read one moral of the “crisis,” it should mean bringing us a step nearer the disestablishment of the Church and the secularizing of the State.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Papal Patriarch

“The lie at the lips of the priest.”—*Swinburne*.

“Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end.”—*Carlyle*.

A NEWSPAPER paragraph stating that the Roman Pontiff is seriously ill, and forecasting a change in the Papacy, is of interest to Freethinkers. For the Pope of Rome is the biggest noise in the ecclesiastical world, and he addresses the widest congregation. Compared with the Papal position, other archbishops, such as those of the Greek Church; and of the Church of England, seem no more than petty and parochial. Using the abracadabra of his sorry profession, a pope utters words which are heard from Bolivia to Bermuda, from Stockholm to the South Seas. The rhetoric may be enfeebled and the platitudes exhausted, but the Papal patriarch still holds a shaky sceptre over the Catholic world. Once a voice at which Kings trembled and Nations shivered, to-day the Papal temporal power has dwindled to a small kingdom about the size of the principality of Monaco, and almost as powerless as the two gunboats of the Swiss navy.

The Pope’s spiritual position is different. His unique position with regard to the huge number of innocent men and women who hold their rule of faith from this most superstitious of all the Christian Churches is striking, and nothing was more remarkable than the late Pope’s attitude during the world-war. Unlike the Archbishop of Canterbury, he never made the silly mistake of including national flags cannon, and machine-guns among the most sacred emblems of the Christian religion, and he again and again deplored the awful waste of life among

Christian people. That his warning was treated with contempt by the Christians themselves was not his fault, and the Papal Patriarch was spared nothing that the energy of the militarist parties and the hypocritical indifference of the religious world could make him suffer. Publicly he stood, the King Lear of thankless and ungrateful children, shrilling his menaces, but keeping with difficulty the dignity of a paternity rejected and scoffed.

Indeed, the events of the world-war showed quite clearly the ebb-tide of the political power of the Papacy and formed bitter comment on the daring and unscrupulous diplomacy, which under Cardinal Rampolla, the Papal Secretary of State during two decades, sought untiringly for the means of restoring the Pope’s temporal power. It was Rampolla who suggested the Romish Church’s very remarkable flirtation with Republicanism and Socialism. In France the Catholic Church sought to hob-nob with the Democrats, whilst in England Cardinal Manning tried to induce the Trade Union leaders to regard his Church as their friend. But, in vain was the net set in full sight of the birds. When Pope Leo XIII. died, Rampolla would have been elected to succeed him but for the veto of the Emperor of Austria, which was communicated to the conclave by a Polish cardinal. Whilst the ecclesiastics hesitated to accept the veto, Rampolla himself accepted it, another Pope was elected, and Rampolla’s dream of glory ended. He lived thenceforward in retirement, his diplomatic combinations crumbled into nothingness, and with the outbreak of the world-war went the last hopes of the greatest and most primitive of the Christian Churches.

The paralysis of the great Roman Catholic Church has been a very slow process. There was a time when she “rode the whirlwind and directed the storm.” She could hurl Crusade after Crusade, century after century, against the Mohammedan world. So complete was Rome’s grip on her deluded followers that their only knowledge of their opponents was that they fought them. And Islam at that time represented a far higher culture than Christendom. It was Rome’s bigotry that led to her own undoing. She once had her intellectual wing, her scholars, her statesmen, her thinkers, who found her borrowed mummeries and stolen creeds susceptible of mystical interpretation. The ignorant, bigoted, evangelical party prevailed gradually over these, and exterminated them by fire and sword, rack and gibbet, leaving themselves more ignorant and more bigoted than before. By slow and very sure degrees the whole Romish Church was made over to their leprous likeness, and, in the process, doomed.

It required centuries to produce this dire result. The very triumphs of Freethought throughout Europe indirectly contributed to this end. Every Catholic who became an “Intellectual” assisted this process. The more brains that were drawn out of the Romish Church, the more did the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven and flatten down to a mere mass of intolerance and superstition. What constitutes the obstructive character of the Roman Catholic Church is the enormous abyss which to-day separates it from the highest intelligence around it; the live, alert brains of science, and the leaden, moveless stereotype of dogma. Some day, the voice of the Papal Patriarch, at which Kings once trembled, will attract no more attention than “the horns of Elfland faintly blowing.”

Curiously, as belief is fast waning in England, the imitative Anglican Church is seeking more and more to imitate the Mumbo Jumbo methods of their older Romish rivals. The Anglo-Catholics have taken part possession of the State-aided Church of England.

Maybe they have not yet done all that was dreaded by robust Nonconformists, but they rule the ecclesiastical roost, and the archbishops and bishops are henpecked and powerless. At the present hour there are covered by the banner of this Church of England men who hold the extremist doctrine of the freedom of the individual, and creatures who are willing to submit to the utmost doctrine of priestly control. How long will this battle between Romanists and Evangelists last? That a large and increasing number of the Anglican clergy were coquetting with Rome caused, some years ago, attention in the Catholic Church itself and the then Pope had some idea of reconverting England, and of reimposing the yoke which our ancestors threw off. But even popes cannot force the clock back, and the English people still, as a nation, refuse to acknowledge Papal supremacy, and bear with the lesser evil of the controlled priests of the Government form of religion.

In darkened and superstitious times the power of the Catholic Church was enormous, but it finished in this country with the red glare of the human bonfires at Smithfield and elsewhere. It was never at any time so unquestioned and unresisted as in Italy, Spain, and France. There is a wholesome obstinacy in British blood, which is cooler than that of the Latin races. It shows itself whenever the whip is cracked too loudly, as King Charles the First and King James the Second knew to their bitter cost, and as the long contest for the freedom of speech also proves.

Priestcraft can never do its worst again in this England of ours. We shall never again, as a people, permit the trick of the confessional; we shall never submit to the poisoned weapons of Priestcraft, its hypocritical affectation of celibacy, its tyranny in the home, its officiousness in public affairs, its menace and robbery at the death-bed. Priestcraft had not a safe seat on British shoulders in the darkened Ages of Faith, even before the days of the so-called Reformation. It is an impossible dream now that Free-thinkers are numbered by tens of thousands, who say to Catholic and Protestant alike: "A plague on both your houses." For religion is nothing but a trade, and its paid professors the sorriest and most dishonest of all tradesmen.

MIMNERMUS.

"Free" Churches Expect "Recognition"

THE word "Free" is often quite misunderstood by the outsider, and probably even by some "Nonconformist" church-goers. There are, of course, Free Churches, in the sense that many Congregational ("Independent") places of worship have no actual credal conditions of membership. Such churches permit the Congregation to select a pastor without demanding that he shall call himself a member of the denomination. For instance, the Congregational City Temple, London, recently chose a Methodist "divine" as pastor.

Whether such a pastor, so chosen, often himself revels in any great "freedom" is not so certain. There are bonds of tradition, even if there is no formally drawn-up creed to subscribe to. There is the "Diaconate" to study, even if the Endowment itself permits the degree of liberty already referred to. And the Trustees who administer the funds of the endowment may prove more paralysing to a minister's mental activity than even the "dead hand" of the pious founder.

In what sense then are the "Free" churches free? They have a common front in one particular and in one only. These theoretically "free" churches proclaim their "freedom" from State control and interference. In common with all citizen institutions, the free churches must, of course, obey whatever laws are passed by

Parliament. They are subject like other persons, firms, companies and clubs, to the ordinary administration of civil and criminal law.

Free churches cannot dismiss a minister without appeal if the minister thinks he has been "sacked" illegally. The perpetuation and spending of endowment trusts, etc., are similarly secured by the current decisions of judges appointed by the State.

There is nothing to prevent a church—like that of Dr. Maude Royden—from constituting itself a "free" church, while binding itself (if it so decide) to use the prayer-book, the rites and ceremonies and practices of the Church of England, to believe and teach its Articles, Creeds and Dogmas as well as its ritual. In other words, the "freedom" of a church has no connexion necessarily with its beliefs.

An individual church can possess much more freedom than, let us say, grouped churches like most of the "free" churches are. The Methodists, Presbyterians, Salvation Army and other so-called free churches have a highly centralized government, into whose rules, habits, laws, ways and beliefs all local ministers must fit on pain of dismissal.

Taking the denominations which are identified with the Federal Council of Free Churches, the "freedom" they originally aimed at was to keep clear of State "patronage." Once upon a time, these Free Churches preached Disestablishment—some of them actually advocated some kind of Disendowment. It was not an unknown phenomenon to see men like Dr. Joseph Parker and the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon supporting with Charles Bradlaugh on the same platform the Disestablishment propaganda. Dr. Clifford of Westbourne Chapel was probably the last real Radical "Dissenter" of this type.

Since those days there has been no noticeable enthusiasm on behalf of this aspect of "free" churchmanism. By obscure and often imperceptible steps, the association of "dissenters" with State and Municipal functions has grown into considerable proportions.

Most of the Nonconformist Colleges in University centres are "recognized" to a degree only just short of equality. There is reason to believe that complete equality with the Church of England Colleges is only a question of years—perhaps only months. It will not be long before an English degree of Doctor of Divinity will be available for all who want it enough to qualify for it. We are sure that Dissenters know as much about "Divinity" as any Episcopal Medicine-man.

At present—with trifling exceptions—every Dissenter who proudly (or shamefully) sports the letters "D.D.," or calls himself "Dr." So and So, has obtained his Divinity Degree with no more merit though possibly with greater expense than the present writer, whose (Hon.) "D.D." was bestowed upon him without any solicitation by the Liberal Church of America. It is usually a mere incident of a trip across the Atlantic, particularly if the traveller preaches in the church of a body authorized by American law to bestow this degree on whom it will.

Dissenters during the war built themselves into a fine share of the Army Chaplaincies and similar posts. It was a beginning. Now we see them "officiating" in Army, Navy, Insane Institutions, and Prisons. If Dissenters are sometimes excluded from jobs still held exclusively by established parsons, you may be sure it is not because of any self-denial or conscientious objection to sharing State "loaves and fishes"—some dissenters are unlucky, that's all.

We learn that, in connexion with the Coronation, a decidedly formidable front will be shown by ambitious dissent. "Spiritual" Peerages are hinted at. The Bishop of Birmingham encourages these aspirations by suggesting that General Eva Booth as well as Baptist and Methodist Medicine-Men should take an active part in the Coronation Service. This could easily be arranged says Bishop Barnes. It only needs King George to perform "quietly and unobserved" the "Communion" part of the business, and the merest Methodist might make merry with the rest of the Christian ritual.

It is a pretty prospect. Instead of eating bread and drinking the sacramental wine, all the dissenters need

do is to swallow a few loosely held "principles." Chancellor and Canon R. J. Campbell has shown how facile is the slippery slope from New Theology and Dissent to Orthodoxy and Preferment. It will be a red-letter day for cultured men like John Bevan, Campbell Morgan and Mr. Aubrey, when they can claim to have reached the high intellectual level of Bishop Winnington-Ingram. Is such "recognition" worth the candle?

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Unexploded Dynamite

A PROMINENT ecclesiastic has been informing us that the Bible is full of unexploded moral dynamite. It would appear that the godly bombs dropped in the form of a Revelation to Man, every line of which is meant for his correction and reproof, are what the uninstructed would simply dismiss as "duds." The instructed however have different ways of looking at things; as a thousand years in the Lord's sight is but a day, it is always arguable that the bombs may still explode: quite a good argument in fact, as theological arguments go.

Now the Lord not only prepared the bombs; he knew precisely where he was dropping them. He knew the quantity and quality of the charge; there was no possibility of sabotage in his spiritual armament factories. He knew the resistance to be overcome and the obstacles to be circumvented. He knew, in short, the ultimate effectiveness of his workmanship, having not some of the factors in front of him, but all the factors. But the Lord has infinite patience; the chances are that omnipotence has timed things nicely. What exactly is the kind of thrill he gets out of it all only a theologian can explain, and he can only give satisfaction in his explanations to those spiritually akin. The theologian senses with his special "faculties" that the Divine amusement with his bricks and plasticine is the Game Magnificent, part of its magnificence resting, undoubtedly, in the fact that this game requires interpretation of a special kind by a special Order of human beings.

It is puzzling though to know the definitely Christian bomb even when one sees one. What is even more puzzling is that even the specially endowed have a real difficulty in drawing up the specification, in order that one may know a definitely Christian bomb by inspection. Bombs like those from the Christian factories were dropped of identical shape, size and content, from rival armament firms long before the Christian Trinity set up business. There is no definitely Christian bomb. Holy Roman turns out a natty little affair which purports to be the genuine article, but the Orthodox Greek and dozens of other houses, make the same claim. They make their claims with some asperity, and have been known to get quite nasty about it. There is a superficial resemblance here to the methods used by commercial enterprises engaged in pushing soaps, cars and stationery, but the resemblance breaks down when we realize that the purveyor of soap does draw the line somewhere. The bomb which accounted for this handing out of the frozen mitt by one sect to another was not a failure. This dropped into the last Chapter of Mark and was through the medium of the meek and mild portion of the Trinity:—

Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

There is no doubt at all that that went off with a bang. No operative got hauled over the coals be-

cause of careless craftsmanship respecting that piece of work. One who is almost a life-long Freethinker gives praise to the deity "with difficulty," but a love of truth forces one to admit that there is moral dynamite in the Bible. It can not be denied that a high and damaging explosive was released by

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

On the occasions when witchcraft as a belief was fading (to a great extent because many people were beginning to realize that the next witches to be burnt might be themselves), it was this piece of plain evidence of what God himself thought about it that revived the belief.

Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church.

And weary, weary, wives took heart.

Slaves be obedient to your masters with fear and trembling.

So that when men felt the faint stirrings of humanity, one of God's bombs blew them into non-existence.

The poor ye have always with you.

There was poison gas in that bomb.

Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labour and do all thy work.

and bang went the People's Holiday.

"How like you Freethinkers!" hear the cleric exclaiming. "You fasten on to the doubtful things in the Bible and never put in a word for its good parts. Is that fair? Is it worthy of a person who calls himself freethinking and affects a love for truth?"

Let us get this point clear. There are good parts in the Bible, parts worth listening to, parts worth acting upon. In that sense there is moral dynamite in the Bible. But in precisely the same sense, there is moral dynamite in every religion. There is moral dynamite also in *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, *Ingersoll's Essays and Speeches*, *Æsop's Fables*, and even in the Hon. Hugh Rowley's *Sage Stuffing for Green Goslings*. If only people would sit up and take notice there is enough in anyone of these books to create a revolution, that is, if readers have ears to hear. The trouble is they haven't ears to hear. The trouble with the Christian case is that the God who sent the special revelation knew exactly the state of the human ear, for he had fashioned it himself. And what is equally important, one expects good, bad and indifferent from *Æsop*, and, because of that, becomes automatically eclectic, accepting the good and rejecting the bad. No such course is possible with the literature of a God. One cannot strike a balance in favour of omnipotence; nor can one enthuse over his purple patches. On the strength alone of *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*, the work of a God is put out of court. When it is admitted that there is no *God's Word*, when it is not given out as such in the schools of the land, when the Bible takes its place as a book amongst other books, Freethinkers will be judging it on its merits, quoting it when the occasion calls for it, as *any other book*. But that day is far distant. To call attention to *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live* is one of the means, probably the best means, to bring that day about. There is no moral dynamite that is in the Bible alone, or Freethinkers would admit its uniqueness in that respect. Most of the unexploded bombs in the Bible, will remain unexploded. We do not see mankind ever responding to the divine injunction of *Take no thought for the morrow*, and living like the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, for that way madness lies. The Freethinker will choose here, there and everywhere; he will pick what is true from any source, and face the facts with courage, knowing that

by that way and that way alone, shall we ever have men and women worthy of inhabiting a brave new world. As Man's Book, the Bible will live; as God's Book it is doomed.

T. H. ELSTON.

Ask And You Shall Receive

CHRISTIAN: "Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer?"

Sceptic: "I am not prepared to do so until it can be proved beyond doubt that the Almighty, at any time, has decided to alter the course of nature for the special benefit of his supplicants."

C.: "This is constantly being done."

S.: "How?"

C.: "By the large number of appeals for rain, fine weather, and other blessings constantly being made by Christians in all parts of the world to which the Almighty responds favourably."

S.: "Can you prove that the favours asked for would not have been accorded without the appeals?"

C.: "I cannot prove it, but it is a reasonable assumption."

S.: "I do not agree. How do you account for the untold numbers of earnest appeals to the Almighty, which are never answered?"

C.: "I can only suggest that God in his wisdom decides that it is not desirable to grant them."

S.: "If God knows everything he is aware of the desires of his people, and what is best for their welfare. Why should these special entreaties be necessary?"

C.: "He has said 'For every one that asketh receiveth.' I would refer you to Matthew vii. 7 and 8."

S.: "A promise more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The inefficacy of prayer is well illustrated by the lamented death of King George, the earnest prayers of Christendom having failed to make any impression upon the immutable law of nature."

C.: "That is merely one instance."

S.: "I can produce many others. For centuries past, the English Church has prayed regularly for unity, peace and concord among the nations. The existing international situation is the answer. It has asked, during the same period, for special protection for the King and the Royal Family. Has this been afforded? If statistics were consulted, I venture to say they would prove that the average lives of the Royal Family do not exceed those of ordinary mortals. It prays constantly to be spared pestilence, famine, battle, murder and sudden death, nevertheless these evils are always with us. It has been proved by experience that pestilence and famine can be minimised by human agency without recourse to prayer. When Christian nations wage war one with another, each prays earnestly for victory. It does not matter how clamant the respective applicants are, for victory inevitably goes to the nation best equipped for the fray, a further proof, if it were needed, that the reliance of mankind on its own unaided efforts is more efficacious than prayer."

C.: "Your arguments do not impress me. I believe that prayers to the Almighty, if offered in a devout spirit, can effect wonders."

S.: "Do you think that if prayers were made for rain in rainless districts, or for fine weather during rainy seasons in the Tropics, they would be answered? Would earthquakes cease from troubling in India, Japan and New Zealand if the Almighty were asked specially to ban them? Would prayer prevent volcanic eruptions, and the frequent disastrous inundations in America and elsewhere? No. Nature follows with unwavering certainty the law of causation, and is deaf to human entreaty."

C.: "I can only repeat that the numerous authenticated instances of favourable answers to Christian prayer convince me of its efficacy."

S.: "These alleged instances are not restricted to the prayers of Christians. Followers of religions other than Christianity claim to receive similar favours from their gods, and savages who pray to their idols do likewise, with seeming justification."

PRO REASON.

"The Scientist With a Wand"

It is unusual for established institutions to be the object of attack. It is equally unusual for a member of one of the oldest of established institutions to put forward a plea in justification of his existence, and for this to appear in the *Freethinker* is to invite comment if not criticism. In his article entitled "The Scientist with a Wand," Medicus tells us that the "doctor" (in "quotes") is a scientist, the science being the "science of healing." This kind of language is, I think, characteristic of that delightfully elusive terminology of so-called esoteric occultism. "We should not, of course, expect to find this state of things." But the fact is that we do, and this plea for esotericism can hardly go unchallenged: for the history of medicine is so full of delusion and fraud as to afford a classic example. Was it esoteric or exoteric influences which exposed the frauds and caused the discarding of so many delusions? Were not the exorcising of evil spirits, the blood-letting and the killing of malignant germs believed in by those who practised these things? Without stressing fraud, the fact of delusion is plain, and this coupled with evasive terminology calls attention to the constant difficulty of drawing a dividing line between the quack and the genuine article. Might one not even be pardoned if one were to paraphrase Hobbes, and suggest that medicine is authorized quackery, and quackery unauthorized medicine? Has the leopard changed his spots? Are we to assume that the modern medicine-man is above suspicion? A caste apart? Surely the development is a social one, contributed to by both esoteric and exoteric influences. Regarding this history from a dialectic point of view, might not one legitimately ask how much of legislation concerning medicine arises as a defence against charlatanism, and how much of the exclusiveness of the profession as a defence of inherited prestige? For, if the exoteric influence is to be debited as a cause of hypocrisy, it is also to be credited as a basis of prestige. Why should the "doctor" be considered as the "scientist?" Is he any more a scientist than the electrical engineer or mechanic, and are the microscope and test tube any more scientific than the spanner or the screw-driver? Or is it merely an old bird masquerading in borrowed plumes? One can, of course, appreciate that the care of the sick is important, but is it any more important than the provision of food, clothing, and shelter, or even of entertainment or amusement? One can, of course, appreciate the desire to "create a friendly understanding of this erstwhile magician" "in his interests—" One can also appreciate "the necessity of earning a living," but are we not all in the same boat; the teacher called upon to teach what he does not believe; the journalist to write that which he knows to be untrue; the advertiser to boom; the salesman to sell?

I would venture to suggest that the function of the *Freethinker* is not merely to help the "doctor" to lead the public, but also to obviate the possibility of his misleading.

H. PREECE.

The period of Catholic ascendancy was, on the whole, one of the most deplorable in the history of the human mind.—*Lecky: "History of European Morals."*

To present one idea in a multitude of aspects is a sign of vast intellectual resources.—*G. W. Foote.*

A STORY THAT HAS COME DOWN TO US THE WRONG WAY ROUND

CAUSE from effect can we deduce aright?
Then he was wrong, that Cana-feast reporter.
For there it was the wine of earth's delight
That Someone changed, to water.

JACK LINDSAY.

Acid Drops

If the Archbishop of Canterbury had come out into the open at the beginning of the trouble with the King, and had demanded that he gave up either Mrs. Simpson or the Crown, most people would have asked, "What right had he to interfere?" and there would have been a general outcry. But he went to work through Mr. Baldwin, and only when his end was achieved has he come out with the confession in which he speaks of himself "as one to whom he (Baldwin) has given his confidence." As Mr. Baldwin confesses that he did not consult his colleagues in the first instance, we may safely read "as one who instigated Mr. Baldwin." The use of straightforward language has never been a marked characteristic of the "dignified clergy." It is now left for the people to say whether national affairs are to be decided by an Archbishop or by an elected Parliament.

The Archbishop says that Edward "from God had received a high and sacred trust." What wisdom was there in a God who bestowed, less than a year ago, this "high and sacred trust," and who knew he was leading a kind of life which this "spokesman of God" denounces as bad? According to the Archbishop it was God's blunder that placed Edward on the throne, and if it had not been for the Archbishop that blunder would have been perpetuated.

But the Archbishop prayed for King Edward, exactly as he prayed on Saturday, December 12 for King George, and never gave a hint to the public, although he was aware that Edward was leading a life of which he disapproved, and also of his connexion with Mrs. Simpson. If the first set of prayers had so little influence for good, what guarantee have we that the second lot will have any better influence? The safest plan would have been to see how things turn out.

Most of the clergy have gone the way one would expect. As they lauded Edward, until his marriage with Mrs. Simpson seemed imminent, so they now laud George VI. Archdeacon Fleming touches the peak of absurdity when he told his Pont Street audience of Sunday last, that we trust George (before we have had time to see whether we can or not trust him) and "go forward under his leadership." That is of all sayings the most stupid. The King does *not* lead the nation, save in the cut of his clothes, or the type of his amusements, and even then he only leads those who are foolish enough to bother whether he wears one kind of a dress or another. It is part of the constitutional practice that the King shall not lead, but follow the advice of his ministers. King Edward tried to lead in giving the people a sounder, and a more moral, conception of divorce. And he has had to leave the throne because the Archbishop, and Mr. Baldwin did not like it. The King's religion is selected for him, his policy is dictated to him, he may not marry if his ministers disagree with his choice. And a parson talks of the King leading. The first King that even tried openly to lead would promptly be told that he was over-stepping the limit.

Now that the Simpson case has done the country the service of making it clear to those who needed clarity on the subject, that the oath of Members of Parliament is to the constitution and not to the King, why is not all the bother about swearing its members anew on the accession of a King, abolished? The manufactured "Crisis" ought at least have made it clear that it is, the constitution and not to any person who occupies the throne that the loyalty of members is due. It is in the name of the Constitution that Edward VIII. was forced to resign. An oath of loyalty to an individual, and to all his descendants, is, if Mr. Baldwin is correct, quite out of date. But a recognition of this is asking for too large a dose of common sense, and would threaten too many "society" and religious and other sectional interests.

Meanwhile the advertising campaign is in full swing. So far the main things discovered are that George VI. takes a keen interest in Boy's Camps, and he has his wife by his side. Could anyone ask for greater qualifications for the head of an Empire?

When will these newspaper scribblers realize that the constant harping upon the Royal Family being a happy one is either a reflection upon several millions of other British families or an unflattering comment upon Royal Families in general? We are not surprised when we learn that Father Smith, Mother Smith, and the Smith children live happily together. We expect it. We are not surprised to learn that millions of people who have special jobs to perform do their duty in a conscientious manner. We expect it. It is the unusual, not the customary that calls for comment. Would it not be better for these newspaper scribblers to take it for granted that Royal families are as good as families in general, than emphasize the fact that they reach the level attained by millions of others.

The Women's Auxiliary of the Church Union is, they tell us, "seriously concerned at the Divorce Bill now before Parliament." It considers that, if the Bill be passed, "the number of divorcees in the country would inevitably increase"!! This striking piece of wisdom is, naturally followed by the usual farrago of nonsense about the "Christian ideals of marriage"—which means, in practice, that because Jesus said something 1900 years ago on a subject about which he knew nothing whatever, a man or woman tied for life to a drunkard, a lunatic, murderer, or a confirmed maniac ought to be fully resigned to his or her unhappy state for the rest of life. It seems incredible that this ridiculous "Auxiliary" of women should have the insolence to poke its nose into other peoples' private affairs, and should imagine it was doing a public duty. Surely these little "bethels" of religious women have been exposed often enough?

The Rev. F. Harfitt, one of the secretaries of a branch of that great intellectual body, the Christian Evidence Society, is, like other Christians, shocked at the prevalent "decay of belief." He thinks this decay is due to "old-fashioned methods," which, in his opinion, should give way to "new ones." He suggests that "no section of the community should be left untouched" by these new methods. We heartily applaud this proposition, and we hope Mr. Harfitt will set to work on the new plans which is going to convert the whole of our community to the particular brand of Christian nonsense which characterizes the Christian Evidence Society. Why not try and convert the members of the N.S.S. as a start?

The question of the supremacy of Rome has always been hotly discussed by the rival factions of Christians, with the result that the Romans have invariably declared that Peter was the First Pope, and the Protestants have insisted he was never the supreme head. Dr. B. J. Kidd has added another book to the centuries' old controversy, *The Roman Primacy to A.D. 461*, which appears to hold the view that "Peter was not originally regarded as the Bishop of Rome, but as co-consecrator of the first Bishop, and that the original Roman primacy was not personal or official in the Pope, but collective in the metropolitan Christian community." Does anybody think that even if the above was mathematically proven, it would make the least difference to the Pope and his followers? As a matter of fact, one of the latter would immediately write another book showing Dr. Kidd's book was based on the falsest assumptions; and the game would go on as merrily as ever. The only way to upset both parties is to show that "true" Christianity is hopelessly untrue; and fortunately that is now quite easy to do.

There is, as usual, a spate of Christmas books—both for grown-ups and young people. One reviewer is terribly disappointed about them, however. "How much I long to recommend," he wails, "really good religious books!" Really good religious books is very good indeed. There are religious books and religious

books—but really *good* ones. . . ? The reviewer adds, "This year the batch is meagre and the standard of writing is not very high." It evidently requires more faith than modern writers have to come up even to our reviewer's standard. However, there is always the Bible to fall back upon—or *Stories* from the Bible, or a new *Life* of Jesus. That is one consolation.

The exact beliefs of Dr. Barnes, the Bishop of Birmingham are perhaps known only to himself; it is very difficult for an outsider to find out either from his published writings or his public sayings. However in instituting the Rev. P. Cowley to a living in Small Heath, it seems that Dr. Barnes "still bars Reservation and votive candles," but allows incense. The *Church Times* thinks this is "bewildering, but a sign of Grace." We wonder what the journal would have said had Dr. Barnes allowed Reservation, substituted electric lamps for the votive candles, and kicked out incense? Would he have still shown "a sign of Grace"?

The B.B.C. is still striving desperately hard to force the Christian religion down the throats—or the ears—of its listeners. No fewer than three gallant defenders of the shaken faith were allowed to broadcast on a recent Sunday. The Rev. Donald Soper, the famous annihilator of infidels on Tower Hill, insisted that "by Christianity he meant a teaching that must be accepted or rejected but never watered down," and "he urged Christians to meet their critics fairly and squarely." Although, "he had some dismal things to say about the Church as he finds it," he had—to his own satisfaction at least—no difficulty in meeting the critic "who thinks that Christianity is a childish superstition long ago disproved by science." Whether it is or is not disproved by science, one thing is clear. It can be disproved quite easily by the application of just ordinary common-sense.

The second speaker, Miss Evelyn Underhill, is the great protagonist of "spirituality," or "inward spiritual Grace,"—which has or has not a definite meaning according to whether you believe or do not believe Miss Underhill. It is far easier to get lost in the mist of this metaphysical tosh than some people think; but when you are completely lost in it, then you are a "true" Christian. The third speaker was the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was greatly concerned as to whether Christianity will spread throughout the nations. He thought that the world is still waiting for the "message of Christ to save it." The poor Archbishop is still thinking in these archaic terms—he cannot help himself. But we can settle his doubts for him. The world—as a world—has largely rejected "Christ's message"—whatever that is. The only genuine saviour is "Science."

A Roman Catholic reviewer of Mr. Noyes' book, *Voltaire*, says that the author "clears the character of Voltaire of most of the mud flung at his private morals." This is very interesting, as "most of the mud" was first flung at Voltaire by Roman Catholics. Obviously either they were mistaken or they were liars; and they would have hotly repudiated the implication that they were mistaken. The same reviewer notes that Mr. Noyes has come to the conclusion that "Voltaire was in fact a Christian, if not a Catholic." Quite possibly another Catholic writer will go a step further and categorically declare Voltaire not only was a Catholic, but as credulous and believing as Mr. Belloc or even Mr. Noyes himself. All the same, this pious reviewer feels a little uncertain about Mr. Noyes' thesis. He thinks that if all Voltaire really attacked was the hypocrisy of the Church, then "it is not clear that Voltaire's attack on hypocrisy did not aid the Atheist's attack on true religion." Anyway that is how most people feel about it; and we wish there were more Voltaires about.

Religion seems to exercise some strange power of paralyzing commonsense, and certainly of leading persons of ordinary common language into the use of unintelligible gibberish. In the *Daily Mail* and a hundred other widely circulated papers the following would be less un-

expected, but our quotation is from the current *Time and Tide*, the final lines of a review of Traherne's writings:—

His work as a whole reveals a man glowing with such a serene intense perception of Deity as Adam must have known before the Fall precipitated mankind into adolescence: a perception in which there can be no conflict between soul and senses, since they are united in wonder at the united transcendence and immanence of God.

The special supplement to the *British Weekly* consisting of sixteen pages about Palestine is quite interesting, and occasionally informing. Its aim apparently is to recommend the people of England to hang on to the Mandate at any cost. There is, we think, a case for doing so, but there is also a very genuine case for reconsidering the whole business in the light of the Arab claims to equal rights with the Jews in a country which has never been wholly Jewish. We think the *British Weekly* greatly weakens whatever case England may have by including in this "Supplement" purely sectarian claims for Christian interests. The nature of these may be gathered by the titles of the articles: "Where Jesus Walked," "Politics and Religion in the Time of Christ," "Christian Missions in Palestine," and Sir Charles Marston's fundamentalistic foolery about "when Bible characters such as Abram, Joshua or Solomon trod the soil," and "the archeological discoveries in Palestine all tend to substantiate the correctness of Old Testament history."

Dr. Herbert Farmer, in the *Christian World*, regrets that there is too great "aloofness and separation" between the two gilt figures surmounting St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Old Bailey respectively. These symbols may appear "aloof" enough as far as sympathy is concerned, but religion is responsible for an amazing amount of prison life. The Old Bailey has been the scene of some of the vilest of Christian persecutions. Mr. Foote was not exaggerating when he told Judge North (at the Old Bailey) that "your sentence is worthy of your creed." We wonder what Mr. Farmer's views are on the Blasphemy laws?

(Rev?) Mr. Ernest H. Jeffs thinks that the best thing a Christian can do is to "believe that this world of men can be saved by men." We certainly believe that any "salvation" man can attain will only be attained through the work of man. This however is not enough for Mr. Jeffs. "Man" must be "upheld by the faith that God works miracles." But "man" would be foolish indeed to attempt to compete in his finite limited way (subject to constant frustrations), with a God who can work miracles. Mr. Jeffs ought to realize that we are in our present unhappy condition mainly because the faith he alludes to has turned out a frost; the "miracles" never crystallize.

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.

We record elsewhere in this issue the death of Charles George Quinton, a very old friend of the editor and a good Freethinker. We are asked by Mrs. Quinton to express her deep appreciation of the many letters of sympathy she has received, and to beg that the writers will take this as an acknowledgement of their receipt, and of the comfort they have given her and her son. It is impossible for her to answer them individually.

- MR. A. F. BLATCHFORD writes—"Allow me to express my appreciation and congratulations on your article *re* the 'Crisis.' Much as we are used to your logical reasoning and forceful arguments, on this occasion you have surpassed yourself. Amongst much that has been written and said on this subject, yours stand alone." Perhaps the clarity and force is due to our having no axe to grind, and to have merely stated things as they are. We will assume such to be the case to avoid blushing.
- T. L.—We imagined that all our readers recognized that the responsibility for every signed article rests with the writer. Whether the editor agrees or disagrees with what is written does not arise. He has to judge of fitness only.
- R. SYERS.—Thanks for good wishes. The occasion your name is not the only one. Hope your own health continues good.
- H. CURWIN.—Your letter is far too lengthy for insertion.
- R. A. JONES.—Sorry we are unable to use lines.
- S. BERTRAM.—Mr. Cohen does not ask any of his readers to agree with him. All he asks is that they shall read him with care and, when it happens, disagree with him with understanding. The thought of whether what he writes pleases or offends does not bother him. This is the *Freethinker*.
- G. WAITE (Sydney).—Thanks for cuttings. We have to exercise some care, but otherwise are well. Hope you are the same.
- EMRYS WILLIAMS.—We are obliged for your letter with address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks with pamphlets.
- G. W. WASHBURN.—Thanks for your good wishes, and your efforts to increase sales.
- H. BERLIS.—Thanks for cutting.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen's "Views and Opinions," on what the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Baldwin converted into a "crisis," has attracted much attention, the far larger part expressing warm approval. Many old readers sent in orders for extra copies, and new ones followed suit. In consequence last week's issue was almost sold out, but there will be some returns from newsagents, and those who wish for extra copies now can be supplied from these.

Mr. Cohen returns to the subject in this week's "Views." The situation is one of interest to Freethinkers, and ought to impress upon many the importance of the disestablishment of the Church, and the abolition of the Bishops in the House of Lords. These men cannot but work for their own interests, and history teaches us that where religion is concerned nothing is too mean or too unjust. In any case the Church cannot prevent divorced persons remarrying, but it would if it could. Neither can it compel the King to believe in the religion he is compelled to profess. But it never forgives him, none the less. In earlier days the Church would have acted openly. To-day it works under cover. But it is always "The Infamous."

A recently published life of Richard Burton, "the greatest orientalist England ever had," has set several reviewers asking why so great and so talented a man has been neglected, and by the general public, forgotten. The answer is easy, and it expresses well the British attitude towards men of his type. Burton was a Freethinker, not merely in religious matters, but in everything. He fawned on neither the public, monarchs, nor millionaires. He was outspoken in his writings and courageous in his opinions. He was a great admirer of this journal, and contributed, under another name, to G. W. Foote's *Progress*. When the English newspapers were, like good, representative unclean-minded Victorians, shocked at the notes he attached to his translation of the *Arabian Nights*, he referred with appreciation to the fine stand concerning it that was taken by the *Freethinker*. He was a man from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, with a fine contempt for "Society" and the timidity so many showed lest they offended "public opinion," which, in this country, means the opinion of those least worth noting. That is why a great explorer, a great orientalist—probably one of the best of his day—a great writer, and a fine man has been so generally ignored.

The phenomenon is characteristically British. We belittle our great men while alive, and promptly bury them when dead. The commemoration of the Centenary of Bradlaugh in 1933, with so large a number of people who had personal memories of him, showed how easily and how quietly this process of extinction is accomplished. And it is still being done, in the case of others. How many among even the so-called educated classes in this country (that is, the people who leave school, or college, or university, with their minds so loaded that they are incapable of exercising a critical intelligence on life) know anything of the work of Carlyle or Hetherington, Bradlaugh, or Foote? And although the *Freethinker* is stolen from more than any other periodical in this country, when does one come across recognition of its existence in the general press? Why even the memory of Paine, one of the greatest Englishmen who ever lived, would to-day be unknown but for the continuous work of Freethinkers generation after generation. And even now few of the general public know anything about him. If ever a genuinely intellectual history of the British people is written, it will be an eye-opener to the world. But if it is written, there will be found some difficulty in finding a publisher with the courage to print it.

One volume of this history should be devoted to the manner in which British public men fool themselves as a preparation for fooling others. That has really become a fine art, and for this reason enables men who have mastered it to lie without the smallest danger of their ever discovering what kind of a humbug they are. Here is Sir Samuel (Heep) Hoare, informing the world on December 8 that "the British instinct in a crisis is silence." He was referring to the bother about whether the King should marry Mrs. Simpson or not. Ever since the King's wish to marry this lady was known the papers have been literally full of it. Everyone has expressed an opinion about it with not many saying anything sensible. The general feeling being, as usual, on the wrong side, namely, that it is quite permissible for the King to live with the lady if he and she so pleases,

but it is not right for him to do the correct thing and marry her. Full accounts have been given in the press of Mrs. Simpson, yards of pictures of her and the King have been published. Mrs. Simpson's host and hostess have been watched and photographed, and in the column beside that in which Sir Samuel Hoare's humbuggery is printed, is the important news that Mrs. Rogers went shopping and bought some cakes, flowers and a box of confectionery. But we have "an instinct for silence"! What would happen if we had an instinct for gossip? And what on earth is the meaning of instinct in this connexion? Sir Samuel Hoare raised no serious objection to the Italians murdering the Abyssinians, but he need not be in such haste to murder the English language.

Mr. Rosetti had not the best of fortune in his visit to Glasgow on Sunday last. The weather was vile, and there were a number of other important meetings in progress. In the circumstances it is not surprising that the meeting was smaller than had been anticipated. But the audience was greatly interested in Mr. Rosetti's lecture, and there was a good sale of literature, the stock of *Freethinkers* being exhausted. Mr. Hamilton, the Branch President, occupied the chair.

Mr. G. Whitehead speaks to-day (December 20) for the Bradford Branch N.S.S., in the Bradford Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, at 7 p.m., on "Dictatorships and Freethought." The hall is very comfortable, and should be well filled. Admission is free, with reserved seats at sixpence, and one shilling each. There is room in the local Branch for more members, especially those with an ambition to work, and Branch officials will be ready to receive applications at the meeting.

"Sane Democracy" (Sydney, Australia) reprints some selections from our recent discussion with Mr. Jack Lindsay on Marxism. It evidently approves Mr. Cohen's criticism, and remarks that as the discussion was between "Mr. Jack Lindsay, a prominent contributor to the *Left Review*, and Mr. Chapman Cohen, an outstanding attacker of all forms of Christian religion, it will be seen that the clash of their opinions has special interest."

Apropos. An old reader asks when Mr. Cohen is likely to pay a lecturing visit to Australia. "He would be assured of a hearty and wide-spread welcome." Mr. Cohen is afraid that a visit so far from home is not likely to occur. He has so many duties that require his attention, that much as he would like personally to meet his many Australian friends, he will have to forego the pleasure.

Our old contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker*, has changed hands with the December issue. The *Truthseeker* is the oldest Freethought journal in existence. The late editor, Mr. George Macdonald, has edited the paper for many years, and no one knows better than ourselves the constant strain of keeping a Freethought paper in existence. The *Truthseeker* was issued as a weekly until a few years ago, when Mr. Macdonald, in spite of the existence of a Sustentation Fund, was compelled to issue it as a monthly and in a reduced form. Mr. Macdonald has been editor for over forty years, and is now in his eightieth year. We wish him many years of good health and comfort. He richly deserves both, and retires having done good work for a good cause. We imagine he will still take some part in the work, for Freethought runs in the blood of the Macdonalds.

The present editor, Mr. Charles Smith, President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, is a good speaker, we hear, and an obvious fighter. He also has a very able pen, which in his new position should make the friends of superstition smart more than usual. We understand that while for a few issues the *Truthseeker* will continue as a monthly, it is likely to become a weekly in the near future. We hope it will, and in any case the new editor has our best wishes for his success. There are enough Freethinkers in the United States to make it so, and we hope they will be alive to their duty.

Obituary

CHARLES GEORGE QUINTON

THE Freethought movement has lost an old and valued supporter by the death of C. G. Quinton, at the age of 74. He had been for over forty years a member of the Society's Executive, and for nearly twenty years Treasurer to the Society. Never a very strong man, the devoted attention of his wife, who shared his opinions to the full, and was herself an active worker for many years in the movement, had watched over him with the proverbial mother's care. But for some years past his health had been failing, and the end came on Tuesday, December 8.

The cremation took place at the City of London Crematorium on December 11. There was no time to give notice in the *Freethinker*, but a number of friends were present to pay a last tribute of respect to one who had worked for so many years for the Cause.

Mr. Cohen, who had known him for over 48 years was present and gave a short address. In the course of this he said:—

To-day I feel that I am paying a price for living, a price that grows heavier as one gets older. It is that of seeing one's old and dearest friends depart, one after another, until one feels like some old tree standing in a great expanse in which the number of new shoots serves only to emphasize one's solitariness.

Charles Quinton and I have been close personal friends for more than forty-eight years, and during the whole of that period nothing has ever marred our mutual confidence and esteem. We have both spent our adult lives in the same movement, and although to me has fallen the more showy part, I have always recognized the great value of the labour of such men as the one whose loss we mourn, to the cause of human progress. The writer has his readers to give him encouragement, the speaker his hearers to give him inspiration, but the worker behind the scenes, whose work brings no public applause, and certainly no personal gain, has only his own personal devotion to a high cause to sustain him. To such unselfish labour as is put forth by this class, all reform movements owe much, and a clearer test of character is offered.

Charles Quinton was scrupulously honest in word and deed. He had an almost womanly sensitiveness where pain in others was concerned, and he felt a fierce indignation against injustice and wrong in any form. But like many sensitive natures, unless strongly moved, these feelings were apt to remain without outward manifestation. His help to those in need was prompt and unassuming. Many benefited from him without ever knowing from whom the benefits came. I had many opportunities of noting these qualities. His acquaintance with Freethought propaganda dates back to a time when conditions were much harder than they are at present, but in those days he played his part, and if conditions are easier to-day, it is to him and his kind that we must return thanks.

To the wife and son whom he leaves, there is hardly need to say that their grief at his loss should find some compensation in the thought that he was tormented by no superstitious fears on the approach of death, and while indulgence in sorrow now the wound is fresh, and the loss of a loved father and husband drowns all else, yet they must beware lest they become self-centred in their grief. The gap left by a death is great, but the memory of our dear dead is always ours, and as the days pass, that memory becomes a source of solace and of strength. In leaving this building to-day we close a chapter in the volume of his life and personality. But we also turn the first page in a new chapter, one which should contain an inspiring record of the extent to which the memory of what he was will serve as a monument to his effort for the betterment of mankind.

Charles Quinton leaves a wife and son. A more united family does not exist. A better Freethinker and a finer friend never lived.

Freak Religions

SWEDENBORGIANISM

I.

THE difficulty which faces anyone who studies the fantastic beliefs of Swedenborgians lies in the almost unique personality of Emanuel Swedenborg. That he was a great man it is impossible to deny. Whether he deserves the excessive eulogies of his more devoted followers is, of course, a matter of opinion. But there can be no doubt that in his complex personality could be found an extraordinary *mélange* of a whole-hearted devotion to practical science and an almost, if not quite, childish credulity in things "spiritual."

Swedenborg was born in 1688 and died in 1772; and in the course of this long life he produced an enormous number of works. Indeed, it is said that he never ceased writing for over seventy years. He was educated at Upsala University, and afterwards studied at Oxford, Utrecht and Paris. Moreover, he travelled extensively. In 1716 he was appointed assessor in the Royal College of Mines, and in 1719 his family was ennobled. Almost from the first his genius was recognized, and apart from advocating and promoting many public reforms, he was constantly occupied, not only with engineering and mineralogical problems, but writing long works on science and philosophy.

Herein enters one of my difficulties, for some of his followers claim for him many important discoveries, both in astronomy and medicine, anticipating many fundamental positions of modern science.

For example, the Rev. Professor Tansley, B.A., delivered a paper before the International Swedenborg Congress in 1910, in which he dealt with the claim that Swedenborg gave to the world the nebular hypothesis before Kant and Laplace. It should be pointed out, however, that the Swedish mystic would never accept the principle that matter is eternal. For him, as he insists in his *Principia*, "the ultimate course of things begins in the Infinite; what is finite, therefore, takes its origin from a cause, and as a thing limited from what is itself unlimited. . . . There must be something infinitely intelligent which not only purposes, but also executes its designs; which must be both the power which can create, and the active agent which does create all things that exist." From this position as a confirmed Theist, Swedenborg never departed.

Mr. Tansley accompanied his address with many lantern slides, showing details of the nebular hypothesis from modern astronomers, and contrasting their views and diagrams with those of Swedenborg, who had also made many diagrams; and he adds: "The correspondence between Swedenborg's conception and those reached by modern research is certainly remarkable. Working from primary origins he deduces a theory which has generally been established by the spectroscope, the telescope, and the photographic plate." Prof. Sollas, in Harmsworth's *History of the World*, gives Swedenborg priority, and there are also other authorities; and it is interesting to note that Swedenborg's *Principia* was published in 1734; Kant's *Natural History of the Heavens* in 1755; and Laplace's *Système du Monde* in 1796.

Another speaker before the same Congress, Dr. Goyder, M.D., claimed some remarkable anticipations on the Ductless Glands by Swedenborg; while still others insisted on his greatness as a philosopher. In fact, if all the claims made for him could be thoroughly substantiated, Swedenborg would be able

to take his place side by side with Leonardo da Vinci as an all-round genius.

One thing must be said in his favour, even if all the claims made for him are thought to be too extravagant, and that is, his undoubted sincerity. "I do not undertake this work," he said, "for the sake of honour or emolument, both of which I shun rather than seek, because they disquiet the mind, and because I am content with my lot, but for the sake of truth which alone is immortal."

It was after 1740 that Swedenborg's "eyes were opened" to spiritual things. He ceased to interest himself in science, and the practical applications of science and discovery to human life in the way he had done for so many years. He himself declared that, "In the year of the Lord 1743, the Lord was pleased to manifest himself to me in a personal appearance, to open to me the sight of the spiritual world, and to enable me to converse with spirits and angels; and this privilege I have enjoyed ever since. From that time I began to publish various unknown arcana, that have either been seen or heard by me, concerning God, the spiritual sense of the Scripture, the state of man after death, heaven and hell, and many important truths."

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the man who could write this, who actually believed that he had seen "the Lord"—what would he have thought of "de Lawd" in *Green Pastures*?—and spirits and angels, was also the man who had been a great scientist and thinker.

From this moment Swedenborg devoted himself almost entirely to the writing of his theological works, and they entirely overshadowed his scientific books and discoveries. They were written in Latin—itsself a remarkable feat—and they gave in detail a system of theology unique, I think, in the history of religion.

First of all, it must be noted that Swedenborg was the son of a well-known Swedish pastor, and had therefore been brought up in a pious home. This must partly account for his looking upon the Bible as God's word and all truth—when properly understood, of course. But he insisted that Bible truths included an esoteric meaning. The important words in Holy Writ had a symbolic signification known to him because his eyes were opened to spiritual truths; and it was his mission on earth to explain and discuss these meanings.

I have not gone through all Swedenborg's writings on the subject, so cannot say for certain whether he discussed the question of the *authenticity* of the Bible from the point of view of Biblical criticism, which was, especially in England, growing in intensity in his day. But from what I have read, I do not think this question troubled Swedenborg in the least. He was convinced that the Bible came from God; and those who differed from him were wrong because they did not see, as he saw, its spiritual messages and signification. The riddle of the existence of a God of the Universe was no riddle for him; it simply did not exist. The Universe must have been created, there was a Supreme Being, and a Lord Jesus Christ, and angels and spirits—he had seen them all, and conversed with them; and his exposition of spiritual truths filled volume after volume, written with a surety of purpose, and the most tremendous faith that he was right, which stagger comprehension. "The Lord had commanded me to write," he declared, when he threw up his material work, "from that day I gave up the study of all worldly science and laboured in spiritual things." He certainly laboured with proud dignity and austerity, and with an inflexible determination to write the truth as he saw it. And now, nearly two hundred years later,

we can examine what he says, we can try and understand his point of view, and judge the worth of his contribution to the "truth" of religion. I hope to be able to show that, looked at in the clear light of reason, Swedenborgianism is rightly called a freak religion.

H. CUTNER.

State Punishments and Rewards

THESE are obviously complementary. The State, acting for the welfare of its members, incidentally endorses the maxim—"Example is better than Precept." You are to be *deterred* from following the example of the man who is punished, and *encouraged* to follow that of him who is decorated.

The principle *quid pro quo* will dominate both punishments and rewards. In the case of punishments, the "deterrent" principle will also be invoked. As regards Rewards, so far so good. In the case of Punishments, we shall consider some objections to both principles.

(A)—PUNISHMENTS

The following assumptions appear to underlie our penal codes:—

(1) God has provided us with Scriptures. In these are found both a standard scheme of morality (the Ten Commandments), and many injunctions to the exercise of mercy.

(2) The State's duty is to exact laws—based upon the Scriptures—for the protection of its members from "black sheep" who break the laws.

(3) Every sane person (not being "possessed") has a free and unfettered moral option to obey or disobey the laws. Disobedience will entail punishment, inflicted on one or several of the following principles:—

Retaliative, *Quid pro Quo* or Quantitative.

Deterrent.

Moral or Qualitative.

Merciful.

Retaliative.—It is a necessary inference that the earliest human beings did not live in communities. The family was the community. It was governed by the strongest member of it—the father. Resistance to his will would entail punishment. We cannot, of course, credit him with any idealistic views, such as the duty of punishing a culprit for his good; or of maintaining "law and order." As in the case of attacks upon him by his neighbours, his instinctive reaction would take the form of *retaliation*, pure and simple. Even when families had combined to form large communities, and "Taboos" or "Commandments" had been formulated, all corporate punishments would still be assessed on a retaliative basis. Indeed, at the present day, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is the foundation-stone of most criminal codes. This principle seeks to "make the punishment fit" the *consequences* of the crime. The penalty for murder is—a life for a life; for theft, a term of imprisonment proportional to the amount stolen.

Deterrent.—Two important questions arise with reference to this principle:—

(1) It assumes the right of the State to punish A in order that B to Z may be benefited; thus subordinating the interest of the individual to those of the rest of the community; but ours is an *individualist* regime. Would not the principle—if pushed to logical extremes—land us in Communism?

(2) Is it, in practice, effectual?

The reply to the first question is in the affirmative; but it seems to be an inalienable characteristic of a

State like ours, that it does not push any principle to its logical extreme. Both questions can then be answered in the affirmative, but with reservations.

Undoubtedly, the known penalties awaiting the transgressor do help to keep many of us out of trouble. But take the crime of murder. The majority of murders are either "passional," or carefully "premeditated." In the first case, the murderer—before his emotions got the better of him—had been duly impressed by the fate awaiting murderers, and had considered it quite impossible that he should ever become one. Violent passion unhinged his mind, and he became insensible to "deterrence" of any kind. In the second case, the would-be murderer is often expertly familiar with previous murder trials. He too is undeterred; because he considers that, by his superior cunning, he can outwit the detectives every time.

Evidently, then, the practical success of the "deterrent" principle is only partial.

Moral and merciful.—The preceding principles may be regarded as belonging to the moral region dealt with by the "Old Testament." We now come to "New Testament" ideas which, it is deplored by enthusiasts, have never been adequately represented in any criminal codes. In the first place, man's will is absolutely free, and he is therefore "morally responsible" for his actions, except in so far as "possession" by evil spirits may limit his responsibility. It is true that the latter idea has dropped out of our modern codes, and the severe punishment inflicted on the evil spirits—usually costing the life of their unwilling host—is no longer administered. The doctrine of Freewill is, however, still part and parcel of our codes. Secondly, it is the *disposition and motives*, rather than the *actions*, of a man which should be taken into account. The appalling social disorder following the attempts made by Roman Catholics, Calvinists, and others to introduce this principle into criminal codes, have effectively prevented its admission to ours; except to a certain extent in the matter of *motives*. Lastly the *humanitarian principle*, really a natural growth in any community of men—but also strongly supported by injunctions to the exercise of *Mercy* both in the Old and New Testaments, and by the doctrines and practice of the Christian religion—has been powerful enough to secure a gradual mitigation of judicial severities.

Evidently, then, the practical application of this group of principles has been tentative and hesitating only. They are not the master-principle of our Codes.

Having thus, however inadequately, surveyed the principles underlying our system of punishments, let us now summarize a few practical comments on that system, before proceeding to consider the changes in principle which the new knowledge and the new psychology will inevitably introduce.

Murder.—The *quid pro quo* principle, or the nice balancing of the punishment against the amount of damage done, unquestionably has its advantages. On the *Moral* or New Testament principle, we should suffer according to the degree of our moral obliquity, i.e., for bad thoughts, intentions, etc. Yet, with what a feeling of relief do we hear the Judge say: "This is not a Court of Morals, but of Law." We cannot have it both ways, and are rightly shocked when—as in the notorious case of Mrs. Thompson, some years ago—certain legal principles were invoked to secure her execution; *not for murder*, but for desiring the death of her inoffensive husband. It was proved that she had discussed plans for his murder with her young lover, that she had rejected many such plans because she had not the courage to face

the slightest risk of discovery. It was *not* proved that she had given the slightest encouragement to her lover to commit the crime, as he did, in the public street and in her presence.

We have already shown the weakness of the contention that capital punishment is a valuable deterrent against murder. We are not opposed to the doctrine that the State has the right to impose the death penalty; but think that, on balance of the practical pros and cons, it is undesirable to exercise that right, except in certain extreme cases to which we shall presently refer.

We think that in no case should the death-penalty be imposed on the strength of "circumstantial" evidence only; and that evidence of "identification" in murder cases should be strongly confirmed before admission.

Theft.—The *quid pro quo* principle is still too much in evidence; although now-a-days much modified in practical application.

Personal Violence.—The discrepancy between the severity of punishments inflicted for theft, etc., and those for brutal acts of physical violence, is, of course, a survival from the era of "the beast," which we are supposed to be "working out." The law has not kept in step with the changes that civilization has brought about in our habits. It is an anachronism that a married woman should be told (as recently) that being periodically "spanked" by her husband is no sufficient ground for "separation." Many of us—not being boxing fans—would prefer having our purses stolen to being hit in the face by a bully. The punishment on conviction for the former offence would, of course, be almost immeasurably greater than for the latter.

We are now in a position to consider the new ideas which we ventured to prophecy would—at some future time, perhaps rather remote—entirely revolutionize our penal codes. We say "new," but it must be confessed that the first and part of the second of them are nearly as old as the hills. They are: Determinism, Evolution (the doctrines of Heredity and Environment), the new psychology.

Every observant person must be familiar with the difficulties, hesitations, and discrepancies now clearly seen in the administration of criminal justice. The judges are educated men; acquainted with, and in some cases sympathetic to, the new doctrines. They are well-accustomed to pressure from many sections of the public in favour of humanitarian sentences in certain cases. That public is however barely touched as yet by the ideas we are considering; but the judges are! We can almost hear them soliloquizing: "This man—given his psychic make-up, and his environment since, or even before, birth, never could be anything but a thief"; or, "that man—given the final unsought stimulus—never anything but a murderer." Their problem is how to adjust their sentences, within the limits set by the law, so as not to offend their own or the public conscience.

The new ideas may be briefly summarized as follows: We are what our inherited dispositions, interacting with various and varying environments, make us. Our desires, thoughts, and actions are controlled to a large extent by sub-conscious influences of which we are quite unaware. Many of us fall below the standards which are the minima for free existence in a civilized society. Under the present penal code we shall incur punishment in proportion to the amount of damage we do, or offence we give. If the new ideas gain full acceptance, what will be our fate?

The New Ideas in Practice.—1. Punishment, or the infliction of pain for purposes other than the good of the criminal or the necessities of the community, will almost—if not quite—disappear; to-

gether with the idea of unfettered moral option on which it is founded.

2. Those displaying sub-social tendencies, or acting in a manner which is intolerable by the community in which they live, will be segregated. Efforts will be persistently made to reform them. There will be no thought of inflicting pain upon them, except in so far as this may (as in the case of refractory children) be adjudged for their good. If they prove incurable, they will remain segregated; otherwise they will return to the society of their fellows.

3. Only in the very last extremity, where the offender is practically on a level with an untameable wild beast—unfortunately, there are such persons—will the penalty of the lethal chair be exacted.

G. TODHUNTER.

(To be concluded)

Correspondence

SHAKESPEARE'S "INDEBTEDNESS" TO THE BIBLE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I should like to draw the attention of Mr. George Bedborough—I read his article with interest—to a book published in 1934, and entitled, *Shakespeare and the Homilies*. This deals with a book entitled *Certain Sermons or Homilies appointed by the Kynges Maiestie to be declared, and redde by all Persons, Vicars, or Curates, every Sundaye in their Churches, where they have cure*. The first edition was 1547; there was a second edition in 1563; in 1573 one additional homily was added on disobedience and wilful rebellion in consequence of the rising under the Duke of Norfolk. The writer shows that in some cases passages in the plays are blank verse paraphrases of the moralizing of the homilies. This would familiarize church-goers with Biblical expressions. Church-going was compulsory; Bible-reading was not.

By a coincidence the current *British Weekly* has an able article entitled "The Christian Shakespeare" (by W. F. Trench, Litt.D., Dublin). J. M. Robertson, in his lectures on Shakespeare and Religion (still unpublished, I know not why), used to mention the affection of the orthodox for a passage in "Henry IV." about the "Holy Land."

"Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed
For our advantage to the bitter Cross."

Remarkably, this writer rejects the prop. "As a matter of fact the words were not Shakespeare's, but his Henry the Fourth, engaged in planning a crusade. The point is that he has just got his crown by usurpation and murder; and he will explain to his son, later on, that the projected crusade was a plan of his to keep his warriors busy abroad, because if he had them at home they would inquire into his right to the throne. If we were to say, then, what Shakespeare had in mind was to satirize the religion of the crusader, we might not have got the whole truth, but we should be nearer to it than when attributing that pious reflection to the dramatist himself."

J. M. Robertson also noted that pious speeches were seldom forthcoming even when dramatically called for, e.g., when the Duke, disguised as a friar, gives dying consolation to Claudio in *Measure for Measure*. Dr. Trench's view, of course, is "that the general outlook exhibited in Shakespeare's drama is (broadly speaking) a religious outlook, and, further, one which is fundamentally conditioned by the Christian heritage." We may compare this remark—so fitted to the *British Weekly*—with that of Taine, the great French critic, referring to Shakespeare, Marlowe and Greene. "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: for them death is the goal of life; at most a dark gulf, into which man plunges, uncertain of the issue."

I note with regret that Mr. Bedborough is of the Stratfordian faith as regards authorship of the plays. Your contributor, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith has related that when in Egypt, a Mohammedan professor discussing religion, said he was orthodox, but would not be if he looked into it! I am convinced that this is the case with most Freethinkers who accept the man of Stratford. If Mr. Bedborough denies this, he may be disposed to accept the challenge to debate thrown down by me in your issue of December 6.

W. KENT.

THE WORD RELIGION

SIR,—As an Atheist moving among Atheists I am continually coming up against the statement that religion means supernaturalism and cannot mean anything else. As I have no desire to flaunt a religious red rag before the Secularist Bull, I ask for an alternative. If there is a word in the English language which can carry, without breaking its back, the only reasonable part of the load of meaning hitherto born by the word religion I should be only too glad to adopt it. The question is really one of linguistic expediency, and should be considered in the calm light that such a question demands. What other English word carries the meanings below?

(1) Artistic and symbolical presentation and advocacy of a life-plan and ethic more sublime (or believed by its devotee to be more sublime) than even the most noble and exalted forms of current and popular morality existing in contemporary society.

(2) Organization to the end stated above.

(3) A basic faith (impossible of logical demonstration and supported only by an argument from the known to the unknown) that the human virtues, if carried to a state of development to which they never yet have been carried, would produce in augmented measure the same felicitous results that have arisen from them in their checkered and partial observance.

That the conception of sublimity of life and conduct has been in the past the saying of plenty of prayers or starving or beating oneself does not appear to me to affect the question any more than astrological fallacies affect modern astronomy. Why must we relinquish to the enemy a good English word for which there is not even an approximate equivalent? Many Secularists indulge in a hope of the reformation of men and women, and of laws and customs and of economic systems. Some are even foolish enough to think that Parliaments can be reformed. But a word can never be reformed! Lunatic must still mean one struck by the moon!

ROBERT HARDING.

ANARCHY

SIR,—In the *Freethinker* for December 6, an article by Mr. G. Todhunter, contains the best news I have seen for a long time. Says he: "Anarchy—that negation of government so strangely advocated by a large number of intelligent persons."

This admission that I am an intelligent person fills me with joy which is greatly increased by his saying that there are a large number who think as I do. I was afraid I was almost the only one left. The celebrated Scottish Presbyterian we know had his "doots about Sandy."

Mr. Todhunter however proceeds to place Anarchy in the category as Autocracy. If he will allow me to say so, this classification, even more than the advocacy of anarchy, is strange. Alas, more strangely still he thinks the strongest are the fittest. But his confusions are so common that they could hardly be corrected in a letter.

W. W. KENSSETT.

ADDRESS WANTED

SIR,—I should be obliged if you would print this request for Sean McGowan, of Paisley, who sent me some poems, via the *Freethinker*, for criticism, to write again, as my reply has been returned by the postal authorities marked "Gone Away."

JACK LINDSAY.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

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

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 6.30, Mrs. M. Saran—"Educational Problems for Freethinkers."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Debate—"Are the Principles of the British World Israel Federation Reasonable?" *Affir.*: Mr. C. A. Oliver. *Neg.*: Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Herbert Read, M.A., D.Litt.—"Art and Religion."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, H. Cutner—"Communism and Freethought."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 8.0, Saturday, December 19, Social Evening. Tickets 6d. each, including refreshments.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.30, Annual Members' Meeting. Business Important.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, Bradford): 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead (London)—"Dictatorships and Freethought."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.45, Debate—"That a Man Cannot be an Atheist." *Affir.*: Councillor Tom Maxfield. *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton. Chairman Mr. J. R. Strutt.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Mr. A. G. Senior—"Spain and Revolt."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield, G.S.S.—"The Sunset of Mankind."

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Imperial Hotel, Briggate, Leeds): 8.0, S. Elias—"Communist Attitude Toward Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. D. W. Heald, A.M., Tech.I. (Great Britain)—"Is Philosophical Theism Rational?"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, A Lecture.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, entrance Ormskirk Road): 7.15, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—A Lecture.

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

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