

THE
FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVI.—No. 52

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1936

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Christian Marriage—The Editor</i> - - - -	817
<i>Christmas Without Christianity.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	819
<i>An Interview with the Author of a New "Life of Jesus"—C. S. Fraser</i> - - - -	820
<i>The Blight of Superstition—T. F. Palmer</i> - - -	821
<i>All Correct—T. H. Elstob</i> - - - -	826
<i>Freak Religions—H. Cutner</i> - - - -	827
<i>State Punishments and Rewards—G. Todhunter</i> - -	828

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

Views and Opinions

Christian Marriage

"THE chief spokesman of God to his fellow countrymen." (The Archbishop's own description of himself), has, thanks to his friend, Mr. Baldwin, been saved from criticism of his cowardly attack on Edward VIII.; and those who have the wit to see it will have had a lesson in the way religious bigotry may dominate secular policy. The trickery of the French Church with regard to the Dreyfus scandal led to the disestablishment of the Church in France, but it would be too much to expect the English public to act with the same sense of logic with regard to "the infamous" and the case of Edward VIII.

All the same, I do not think the Archbishop should be permitted to get away with his assertion that it was Edward's rejection of the "Christian principles of marriage" that made it impossible for him to remain on the throne. The implication that the Christian conception of marriage is of a higher nature than other conceptions is an insult to many thousands of men and women who have been divorced because one found the other to be unfaithful to the marriage bond, and to other thousands of high-minded individuals who have been divorced, by arrangement, because they were of the same opinion as John Milton that "where love is not marriage hath no being." The Archbishop, who thinks of marriage mainly in terms of animality, camouflaged with much talk about "spiritual blessing," etc., has little sympathy with Milton's view. I do not deny that there is a view of marriage that can properly be called "Christian." On the contrary, I affirm it. No movement that hopes to dominate life can ignore marriage. No movement has ever done so, although men of the Archbishop's type said that Soviet Russia wished to abolish marriage. It has always been a question of what form of marriage was advocated. There is a distinctly Christian conception of marriage, and in these notes I will indicate briefly what it was and is.

The Persistence of the Primitive

Two fundamental currents are, to the scientific student, clear in the Christian conception of marriage. The first is the primitive conception of the sexual functions of woman as being a manifestation of the "supernatural" power with which she is charged. This is responsible for such a practice as the "churching" of a woman after marriage, originally designed to make "clean" the woman, and so protect the man from the danger to which he would otherwise be exposed on resuming sexual relations. The second is the socialization and moralization of this idea of the supernatural quality adhering to woman, as such, which ends in the Christian assertion of her political and social inferiority. In its contact with the more civilized conception of woman, from the first century down to the present the clash of the primitive idea of woman's nature and function and the later social ideas can be seen. Even to-day there is quite common, in very religious circles, the notion of the superior "purity" of a "virgin" over a married woman. In sex matters, and in orthodox Christian marriage, a "pure" woman is an unmarried one. The religious superiority of the celibate state over the married one has been asserted by the Roman Church, and assumed by other churches. St. Paul's reason for allowing marriage was that while it was better to remain single, yet if men and women will not "It is better to marry than to burn." I do not believe that any of even the first four Georges could have had a lower conception of marriage than that. And in the Church of England Book of Homilies, the idea of marriage is reduced to its lowest forms. One of the greatest preachers of the early centuries, St. Chrysostom, summed up the nature of woman by saying that she was "a necessary evil, a desirable calamity, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill."

But the Christians were faced with the problem of how to perpetuate themselves if children were not born by the method of the mating of men and women? So long as it was expected that the promise of Jesus to return early and wind up the terrestrial business would be fulfilled, it was urged by some of the Fathers that strict continence should be practised. But in the main the church had to compromise with the normal, and "unclean," method of procreation. Marriage was winked at rather than encouraged; the ideal was the celibate monk or nun with the consequent hardening of character and coarsening of nature that this involved. Dean Milman put to the credit of the early and medieval conception of the married state the brutalizing of character that followed the fall of the Roman Empire. "It was not until the Reformation of the sixteenth century," says the Rev. W. M. Foley, in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "that any serious attempt was made to vindicate the claims of healthy home life and happy marriage to a position of equality

with the virgin state." Savages believed and believe still that women were different from men, and that her supernatural influence might rob him of his strength, or his weapons of their power; it was left for the Christian Church to rationalize this by a religious devaluation of women, and affirm she was lower than man. One of the most powerful of the early Christian writers described wives as "women of the second degree of modesty who have fallen into matrimony." Naturally, and characteristically our Christian Archbishop remembered these things when he cursed the King he had previously blessed, and damned the character of one whom he had previously praised.

* * *

Sects and Sects

I agree that so long as a man is not convinced that marriage should consist in a real union of two equals in which each asserts and respects the independence of the other, he may find all sorts of gratification in "Christian" marriage. For that has varied from promiscuity at the one extreme to a monogamous adultery on the other. Bingham, in the eighth volume of his well known and authoritative *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, will give the enquirer much information on Christian marriage which our saintly Archbishop would rather we were without. Bingham points out that "upon the first plantation of the Gospel some Christians set themselves to vilify or condemn marriage, either by openly condemning it as a thing unlawful under the Gospel, or by granting licence for community of wives and promiscuous fornication." Simon Magus, a Christian of power in his day, and a character whose history deserves rescuing from the orthodox interpretation of him, held that men were allowed to do "whatever they listed, because they were to be saved by grace and not by works." He is said to have made promiscuity a part of his teaching. Saturnius asserted that "marriage was a doctrine and work of the devil." The sect of the Nicolaitans also taught the doctrine of promiscuous intercourse. The sect of the Adamites followed the same line. This kind of thing existed at one extreme of the Christian host; at the other extreme were the Severians, the Eucratians and others who asserted that marriage was fornication, and that men ought to abstain from it. Bingham shows that he has faith in the substance of the charges by saying that it was owing to "the vile practices of the sects," that the Heathens charged the Christians with immoral practices. As a matter of fact these curious instances of sexual aberration have been constantly recurring phenomena in Christian history right to our own time. I fancy that not even George the Fourth would have been able to teach the early Christians anything concerning sexual extravagance.

* * *

An Excellent Phrase!

I really like that phrase of the Archbishop because the historic Christian conception of marriage deserves to be remembered. On historic grounds he might object to a man being divorced, or being divorced to his being married again, but he would have no solid ground on which to object to a man solving the problem by marrying as many wives as he chose. Polygamy and concubinage are both Bible institutions, although some form of the latter appeared in Greece. In both Rome and Greece polygamy was unknown. None of the early Christian writers opposed polygamy, although they did oppose Digamy, or second marriages. Nearly all God's favourites in the Old Bible were polygamists, and God says to David, "I gave thee . . . thy master's wives unto thy bosom." The—for a time—powerful

Anabaptist movement had polygamy for one of its chief tenets; Luther and Melancthon both upheld the Christian character of polygamy. Milton said that if one condemned polygamy one condemned the Bible and the patriarchs, and concluded that it was "sufficiently established that polygamy is allowed by the law of God"; and the great Bishop Burnet in a "Dissertation" (my edition is dated 1731) decides that Polygamy "is not contrary to the law and nature of marriage: and an express condemnation of it is nowhere to be found in scripture." He also decided that "polygamy is allowed by the law of God." So far as Protestantism is concerned it was just a "toss-up" whether polygamy became part of the movement or not. Sir William Hamilton says:—

Polygamy awaited only the permission of the civil ruler to be promulgated . . . and had not this permission been significantly refused it would not have been the fault of the fathers of the Reformation if Christian liberty had remained less ample than Christian licence.

Many solved the problem, as a witty modern Mohammedan diplomatist said by having one legal marriage and half a dozen illegal ones. The Archbishop, it must be noted, shows no great anger at this practice. Bigamy and trigamy are also known. It is the re-marriage of a divorced person that rouses ire—perhaps, also, the fact of a King having little or no religion and not hiding the fact, fans the flame.

Decidedly there is a Christian conception of marriage. There is also a Christian conception of woman, and the two are complementary. The Rev. Principal Donaldson pointed out that what the early Church did for woman was to ignore the "male" in its consideration of man, and to ignore the "human" in its consideration of woman. And that coarsened man, degraded woman, and reduced marriage to a tolerated practice inevitable for "unspiritualized" men. Socially, when single, woman was the property of her father—married, the property of her husband. A law, fashioned under the influence of the Church, made her, when married, a non-legal entity. Until the other day she was, when married, unable to hold property. The law gave her no rights when married, custom and religious belief gave her little individuality when single. When Petruccio sums up the state of a married woman thus:—

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my anything.

he was drawing a picture of woman in the true Christian home. And if all Christian wives were not so regarded, this was because people were so often better than Christianity taught, and human feelings often proved themselves stronger than doctrinal teachings. There is a "Christian Marriage." The fight for the rights of women would otherwise never have existed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The idea of God stands for the possible attempt at an impossible conception. We know nothing about the nature of God.—*Edgar Allan Poe.*

The noblest literature of the world will be its Bible—Love and Labour its Holy Sacraments, and instead of worshipping one Saviour we will gladly build an altar in the heart for everyone who has suffered for humanity.

Emerson.

Christmas Without Christianity

"Europe is semi-barbarous at the present hour."
Landor.

"Mythology contains many things which are both insulting and injurious."—J. A. Froude.

THE Christian Religion, like so many other forms of superstition, is a thing of shreds and patches. The more you examine it in detail, the more you notice its indebtedness to other and older forms of faith. And nowhere is this borrowing more marked than in the case of the yearly festival known as Christmas, or Yuletide. Volumes could be written on such a subject, but a few very striking resemblances will show that there is neither originality, nor even common honesty, in the priestly presentation of the central "truth" of their Christian Superstition.

Take, for example, "the old, old story" of Jesus as portrayed in the four Gospels. Many of the salient features were absolute commonplaces of ancient theology before the Gospel scribes put stylus to papyrus. In addition, the story bristles with improbabilities and contradictions. The idea of the virgin-birth, and other details, were no novelty, for they were as well known to priests as the story of Cinderella is to school-children. Mithra was a redeemer, Zoroaster was born of a virgin. Persephone descended into hell. Osiris rose from the dead, Gotama Buddha was tempted by the devil. Moses was transfigured. Elijah ascended into heaven. Krishna died nailed to a tree by arrows.

Nor is this all. The overrated teaching ascribed to Jesus is no more novel than the borrowed story woven around his name. The Beatitudes are to be found in the Buddhist scriptures, whilst the "Golden Rule" goes as far back as the Rabbis and Laotse and Confucius, and was old even at that most distant date. A point well worth attention is that the gospels are written in Greek, whilst, if Christ lived, he must have spoken a dialect of Aramaic, or else his hearers would have failed to understand him. These Greek productions are ascribed to "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke" and "John," who knew no Greek. And one might ask, of what evidential value are these short stories? The alleged writers met Jesus as a grown man of thirty years of age. Of what value is their evidence regarding his reputed mother's actions thirty-one years earlier? And why should unlettered men compose lengthy genealogies, like a College of Heralds?

It was two hundred years before these alleged Gospel stories were definite. Those paraded to-day as "the truth, and nothing but the truth," are but the residuum of a large collection of similar novellettes. Attributed to each of the twelve disciples, indifferently, one was ascribed to Judas Iscariot, the villain of the piece. There was a Gospel to the Hebrews, another to the Egyptians. There were evangelists of Childhood, of Perfection and of the Virgin Mary. In the last analysis it was nothing but priestly tale-telling for the glory of their religion. The theology of that time was just as fanciful and just as imaginative as the Gospels. Irenæus reasoned, in spite of the known numerous versions of the Gospels, that there had to be four, and could be only four, for the ridiculous reason that there were four seasons, and there were four revelations of "Adam," "Noah," "Moses" and "Jesus." At least three of these characters were almost entirely legendary. Yet, outside of what are called the Gospels, canonical and apocryphal, written no one knows where, no one knows when, no one knows by whom, there is no corroboration of this most astounding and imaginative of all careers. A reference attributed to the

Jewish historian, Josephus, has been recognized as the interpolation of a later, and less trustworthy hand. So far as sober historians are concerned, "the rest is silence." Is not the Gospel legend "such stuff as dreams are made of"?

The birth of Jesus is said to have happened in December. It was not, however, in that month, even according to the fanciful legends. For shepherds do not watch their flocks by night in that most unromantic time of the year. Why, then, are these tremendous events said to have happened on the twenty-fifth day of December? The answer plucks the heart out of the Christian superstition concerning Christmas. It also throws a searchlight on the devious methods of Christian evidence and the honesty of priests.

Paganism is everywhere interwoven with the Christian festival. It was because of its competition with the Roman feast of Saturnalia, an important Pagan festival, that Christmas Day had its date fixed in December. The anniversary of Saturn and his wife was held from December 17 to 20 and the Emperor Caligula generously added a fifth day of rejoicing. On these five festal days of Old Rome, the schools were closed; no punishment was inflicted; the toga was replaced by an informal, undress garment; distinctions of rank were laid aside; servants sat at table with their employers; all classes exchanged gifts. Custom makes cowards of all. The propensity of converts from the older Paganism to cling to custom proved invincible. If the apostates were to be retained in the new religion it became necessary to incorporate the old familiar features under the mask of the new. The struggle for survival has also incorporated other features. In the far-off centuries white-robed Druid priests cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, and chanted their hymns to the frosty air. These features were absorbed also; the mistletoe and carol-singing still play their minor parts in the celebration of the birth of the Christian God.

Thus it is that "God's birthday" is associated with feasting, merriment, and laughter. Why God, who is described as eternal, should have a birthday, is a matter for Christians to settle among themselves. Non-Christians regard Jesus as a purely mythical personage, like all the other saviours and sun-gods of antiquity, who were generally born miraculously of virgin mothers, and whose careers, like that of Jesus, were marked from the cradle to the grave by marvellous happenings. Whether there ever was a man called Jesus, who lived and taught in Galilee, is a matter of microscopic importance. Christians worship the supernatural and superhuman figure depicted in the New Testament, and not a mere Galilean carpenter, and have done so for a score of centuries.

So bewildering, indeed, is this sacred Salmagundi of Ancient Superstitions, that even professed believers do not attempt to follow its teaching. "Peace and goodwill amongst men" proclaim the sacred oracles, but the very priests bless regimental colours, Christian battleships, and act as army chaplains. The nations which profess to worship an alleged "Prince of Peace" act as if they worshipped Mars, the god of war. From Moscow to Madrid, from the Seine to the Neva, Europe is an armed camp, bristling with bayonets, and resounding to the roar of air-bombers. To such a pass, after so many weary centuries of superstition upon superstition, have the priests led the Western world down the slope to degradation and despair.

It all reads like a work of bitter irony. The Christmas festival itself, with all its hypocritical and superstitious associations, is far too largely a matter

of pretence and make-believe, instead of being just a holiday. This priestly tradition has features which go back through the centuries to the Bronze Age, and many of these savage survivals haunt us still. It is largely a priestly imposition, perpetuated with the idea of keeping the salaried-sons-of-God a caste apart, and enabling them to continue to exploit their fellow-men. The priestly conception of Christmas does not fit into the modern life of the twentieth century. It is an organized hypocrisy, a fitting celebration of events that never happened, and the sooner the annual holiday is shorn of sham and sentimentalism the better. "Laughter, holding both his sides" is a far better exponent of Yuletide than the imaginary figure of a "man of sorrows" foisted on humanity by a greedy crowd of self-seeking priests getting rich on the tears of humanity.

MIMNERMUS.

An Interview with the Author of a New "Life of Jesus"

INTERVIEWER: How do you do, sir. I am pleased to make the acquaintance of one who is acclaimed by his publishers as having written the most outstanding work on Our Lord that has been published in recent times.

Author: My publishers have put it too mildly. My *Life of Jesus* is the only one so far which gives a full, accurate and straightforward account of Our Lord's life.

I.: But surely the Gospels. . . .

A.: The Gospels! No use at all. We should be better without them. All that they have ever done is to provide material for wrangling. "What did Jesus mean when he said this or that?" "What would Jesus have done if this or that circumstance had arisen?" And so on and so forth. Take it from me, the Gospels are a back-number.

I.: Then what of all the other *Lives of Jesus* published before yours?

A.: They prove my point. If the Gospels had been all that they are cracked up to be, what could be the purpose of trying to improve on them by adding more *Lives of Jesus*?

I.: Presumably they were commentaries on the Gospel story, written because their authors had discovered other sources of information which threw new light on disputed passages.

A.: Then you do agree that, regarded as an unambiguous narrative, the Gospel yarn is a wash-out. Well, so far, so good. But when you suggest that new light was thrown on it by these commentaries, you make me smile. They are about as much in agreement with each other as a pack of dogs in a cage full of cats.

I.: How does your book deal with the problems?

A.: It doesn't. My book, being the only true life of Jesus, leaves no room for dispute. Everyone is bound to admit it.

I.: You seem very confident.

A.: Why should I not be?

I.: Have you then been the fortunate discoverer of some hitherto unknown Gospel which clears away all difficulties?

A.: What a hope! Besides, surely you realize by now that every fresh discovery relating to the Gospels merely adds proof to the theory that the whole Jesus yarn is nothing but a thundering taradiddle.

I.: Then what do you rely on?

A.: Inspiration—direct inspiration from on high.

I.: Your claim astounds me. How can you substantiate it?

A.: Simple as pie. If the Bible is inspired, then so is my book. Listen to this from the Introduction. (*He picks up a copy and reads*): "Then was I led up of the spirit into the wilderness. And when I had fasted fourteen days and fourteen nights, I was afterward an hungered." . . . I should explain, in parentheses, that "the wilderness" is a metaphor for Hyde Park. Also note that I am careful to avoid exaggeration. People nowadays simply won't swallow forty days and nights.

I.: But where does your proof of inspiration come in?

A.: Well, you see, I was so hungry that I actually tried to consume a bath-bun which I had purloined from a station refreshment-room. But, alas; although I chewed it well, the only result was that I fell into a sort of reverie or stupor, as you might say.

I.: Yes, yes, I quite understand. But where does. . . .

A.: Don't rush me—here it is (*He continues reading*). "And behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto me, saying, Bill, thou Son of a Gun, fear not; the power of the highest shall overshadow thee. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, I am the Law and the Prophets: I am he that doth command and is obeyed. Write the things I shall command thee, and blessed are they that shall believe."

I.: Is that all?

A.: Not exactly. I came to my senses in Vine Street Police Station. Witnesses of the miracle declared that a constable had run me in. Alas! what spiritual blindness was theirs! They even said that I was drunk. Such is the persecution which we evangelists have to suffer. But "blessed are ye when men shall revile you," and all the rest of it. Anyhow, you must now admit that my *Life of Jesus* was written as the direct result of spiritual inspiration.

I.: I am not convinced.

A. (*sighing heavily*): Is it not strange how many people say the same thing about the alleged inspiration of the Bible? The sin of unbelief is sadly widespread.

I.: Perhaps. But to return to your book. In what respects, if any, do you profess to throw new light on Our Lord's life?

A.: Ah! Now you're asking me. And my best answer is to quote from my book again. Take this passage, for instance. As you will note, the situation is again a hungry one. Listen to this: "Now Jesus was an hungered. And seeing a fig-tree afar off, he came to it, if haply he might find any fruit thereon. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it (though the tree had not uttered a word): Verily, I say unto thee, no man shall eat fruit of thee hereafter. And presently the fig-tree withered away. Then spake one of his disciples and said: Lord, we are still hungry. Wherefore didst thou not command the tree to bear fruit? And Jesus rebuked him saying: Who cares a fig for figs anyway? Give me champagne and oysters. And it came to pass even as he had said. And they did eat and drink and were filled. And they took up of the fragments that were left twelve baskets full of broken bottles and oyster shells." . . . Well now, don't you think that sounds more logical than the Gospel version?

I.: It sounds rank blasphemy to me.

A.: Blasphemy indeed! Tut, tut! Do you insinuate that Jesus could *not* have created champagne? What about the first miracle he ever performed, when he turned water into wine? If you

doubt my story, sir, you cast aspersions upon the Bible! I almost believe that you are an Atheist!

I.: God forbid!

A.: Very well, I forgive you. Besides, I was an Atheist myself once.

I.: Indeed! That is very interesting. What made you realize the error of your beliefs?

A.: I was led of the spirit.

I.: What—drunk again?

A.: No, sir, merely uplifted. It was one Armistice night. I was so overcome with emotion that I could remember nothing about it until I recovered my equilibrium in—yes, oddly enough, it was Vine Street again. From that moment until my release upon payment of a heavy fine, I became more and more impressed with the advantages of religion. Being an Atheist so prejudiced everyone, including the magistrate, that I decided there and then to become a convert to Anglicanism. You have no idea how it simplifies matters. My fines haven't been half so heavy since.

I.: Did your conversion cure you of your addiction to liquor?

A.: I am not *addicted* to liquor. I drink wine exclusively. You see, I take St. Paul's advice to Timothy: "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. And I can assure you that my infirmities are very often. Moreover, like St. Paul, I glory in them.

I.: Your attitude strikes me as most immoral.

A.: There you go again! First I am blasphemous, then I am immoral. What next? Don't you know that Jesus said: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Your ignorance of the Bible is truly abysmal. You must be a Christian after all.

I.: We seem to be getting away from the subject of your book. I must confess that I fail to understand the eulogies of your publishers.

A.: Oh, that's easily explained. They want to make a profit, so they boost the book in advance. How many copies of the Bible would be sold, do you think, if it hadn't been so successfully boosted in the past?

I.: The Bible is read because of its merits.

A. Well, well! That proves you can't have read it. As I always maintain, no one reads the Bible nowadays, except Atheists and Rationalists—the low-minded scum! Why, even the clergy are becoming ashamed of it. But since they dare not bowdlerize the Bible itself, they are trying to cut the purple passages out of their Prayer Book instead. I'll wager that if the Bible were to be published as a new book to-day, the Censor would condemn it out of hand.

I.: Will your book pass the Censorship?

A.: I have my doubts—it is so much like the Bible, you see.

I.: Then why publish it?

A.: Dash it! *Somebody* must put a stop to all this squabbling about Jesus. Besides, I am obeying a Divine command.

I. (*rising to take his leave*): I am afraid I can't believe that. You must be suffering under a delusion.

A.: The authors of the various books in the Bible were, of course, *not* suffering under a delusion—is that your view?

I.: Certainly . . . and now I must be going. Good-day.

A.: Just one question before you go. How do you know that the authors of the Bible books were not deluded?

I.: The Christian religion is living proof of the fact.

A.: Which Christian religion—the Roman Catholic, the Greek, the Anglican, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Baptist, the Methodist, the Wesleyan, the Pres-

byterian, the Quaker, the Christadelphian, the Seventh Day Adventist, the Lady Huntingdon's Connection, the Doukhobors, the Christian Scientists the . . .

(*But the Interviewer has already disappeared before the Author has half finished his list.*)

C. S. FRASER.

The Blight of Superstition

It is appalling to contemplate the sum of human sacrifice on the altars of superstition. And, as that sterling sceptic, Thomas Hobbes, so trenchantly remarked: "Fear of power invisible feigned by the mind or imagined from tales, publicly allowed, is religion; not allowed, superstition." In all ages orthodoxy and idle tales are closely linked, and in times of transition theological obscurantists have ever enlisted the ignorance and credulity of the populace when persecuting the pioneers of a brighter day.

That the spring season of modern science and culture was also a period of the direst superstition is one of the outstanding anomalies of history. Not the motley multitude alone, but the majority of instructed men in the capitals of European countries were the victims of an epidemic of superstition which raged for two hundred years.

Certainly, isolated thinkers expressed doubt concerning the truth of long-treasured beliefs. Elves and fairies had become creatures of the imagination, and alchemy, in its grosser aspects was largely discredited. Many disdained the astrologer's art although it retained very zealous adherents. The great Milton cherished the belief both in *Paradise Lost*, and in his essay on *Christian Doctrine*, and cites the Star of Bethlehem as evidence of its truth. Kepler, the astronomer, cast horoscopes, while that eminent mathematician, Cardan, defended astrology. Prof. Preserved Smith, in his *History of Modern Culture*, notes that this forerunner of Eddington and Jeans "proved that the whole career of Luther could be deduced from his horoscope though he got the date of the heresiarch's birth wrong. He predicted for Edward VI., a long and glorious reign, a few months before the child's death; and his horoscope of Jesus sent him to the dungeons of the Inquisition. Another famous star-gazer, John Dee, enjoyed a high reputation until his discovery that the stars ordained that one of his disciples should change wives with him cast some doubts on his good faith."

The progress of astronomy rendered astrology an ill-service. Yet, while surrendering its grosser aspects, men of standing retained the view that the stars influenced human destiny. Scientists were increasingly sceptical while prophecies of disaster to the State were deemed dangerous. So measures were directed against them under Edward VI. and Elizabeth in England, while in France the publication of calendars containing predictions, save those concerning the weather, the lunar phases and eclipses were made illegal in 1628. Also, the Church frowned on the pretensions of astrologers as she wished to monopolize miracles and special providences herself. Salamanca was a leading centre of astrology, but the Spanish Inquisition in 1582 restricted the University's astrological instruction to mundane affairs such as the influence of the stars on the crops and navigation. This proving ineffectual, Pope Sixtus V. declared all forecastings deceptions of the Devil, and bishops and inquisitors were directed to proceed against all practisers of heretical and illicit devices such as divinations and the casting of horoscopes.

Later, however, in 1631, it became necessary to promulgate a Bull "decreeing excommunication, death, and confiscation of goods for astrologers foretelling the death of the Pope or of his kinsmen."

But philosophers like Montaigne and Bacon were inspired by loftier motives in undermining astrological credulity. Montaigne derided the prophetic almanacs of the time as mendacities and impostures, while Bacon's pregnant essay on *Prophecy* accounted for the apparent fulfilment of prognostications by the fact "that men mark when they hit, but never mark when they miss." He also argued that many prophecies are only reasonable anticipations, and "that almost all of them, being infinite in number, have been impostures by idle and crafty brains merely contrived and feigned after the event passed." In France, Molière ridiculed the theory that men's lives were shapen by stars in remote space, while La Fontaine declared that in a universe subject to law, astrologers should be discarded as charlatans.

While other superstitions waned, demonology in the sixteenth century greatly augmented its powers until it grew to a positive mania. Professor Smith concludes that: "In all the chronicles of mankind there is no page so black as that recording the mania of delusion, of horror and of cruelty which, in an age of science and culture swept over the most civilized portion of the earth like a dreadful disease. To irrational manias man is periodically subject because of the high suggestibility to herd opinion implanted in the gregarious instinct. Once in full swing reason can do little to guide or check them. The few rational men who can still see the nature of their contemporaries' folly are mocked and persecuted, while any fanatical fool adding fuel to the flames of current passion is listened to, rewarded, and followed."

The belief in demonology pervaded Jewish and Christian thought from the earliest times. Its marked revival in the sixteenth century is, however, traceable to the activities of the Inquisition in preceding generations when that malevolent body smelt out an alleged cult of devil-adoring heretics who were accused of inflicting appalling evils on good Christians by means of sorcery and witchcraft. The rites of this diabolical sect were celebrated, it was said, in lonely places at a witches' carnival called the Sabbath. There the weird fraternity assembled from far and near, riding to their revels on broomsticks or on demons in the semblance of animals. At these gatherings they impiously mimicked the mass, trod on the Host, renounced their Christian baptism, and worshipped Satan with disgusting and blasphemous ceremonies. Then the whole gathering wallowed in loathsome orgies of lust.

That part of the ceremony which dispelled the effects of baptism was the chief rite of devil worship as this made every participant an apostate. The Devil himself was supposed to scratch out the baptismal chrism, thus leaving on the apostate's body a spot which the judges in the trials of witches immediately identified as Satan's mark. After their renunciation of Christ, the Devil re-baptized his adherents in his own wicked name or smeared them with a magic ointment which gave them the power to ride through the air. The unholy compact was sometimes signed with the satellite's blood, and to make amends for their sacrifice of salvation Satan's clients became gifted with supernormal powers seriously inimical to their Christian neighbours. When revered divines declared that a witch was able "to provoke illicit love, to cause barrenness, to blast crops, to raise tempests, and to smite men and animals with disease," it is not surprising that the ignorant were immensely perturbed.

Women were thought to be far more susceptible to Satan's blandishments than men, and greatly outnumbered the sterner sex in the trials and executions for these imaginary crimes. Not old crones only, but beautiful women in flowering maidenhood and the prime of life, not to mention little children, were all victims of the witch delusion. Prof. Smith notes the sorry part which sexual depravity played in these monstrous proceedings. That eminent historian asserts that "the prurient gloatings of Escobar and Sanchez hardly equal the mass of obscenity found in the protocols of the trials for witchcraft. Old women, young wives, maidens and children of four or five were compelled to confess and describe wild orgies of lust, and filthy rites of devil worship. Nor were the torturers and inquisitors satisfied with listening. The witch was stripped and indecently examined to be sure that she had no charm about her. . . . The judges, not ashamed to record their deeds in the torture chamber, have told how women who did not quail before the pain would pitifully beg for a garment to protect their modesty."

Popular passion was kept at white heat by the clergy whose main desire was to stamp out the heresy and apostasy attributed to dabblers in the occult. Anyone harbouring jealousy or dislike for another could urge the charge of witchcraft, and every denunciation was eagerly entertained. Then after a mere mockery of a trial the suspect was found guilty and put to a shameful death.

The instruments of torture employed in these inquisitions were masterpieces of ingenious cruelty. Apparently, women endured torture more unflinchingly than men, but an induced hysteria, and even insanity almost invariably shattered the courage and exacted confession from the hardest. Unspeakably shocking to any human mind as it appears, the naming of others as the alleged participants in witchcraft was a constant accompaniment of each victim's confession. Those thus implicated were at once arrested and the same revolting procedure was repeated until multitudes of innocent people were involved.

The Reformation in itself did nothing to alleviate these judicial crimes. Protestants who pinned their faith to the Bible pointed to the Witch of Endor, the demonology of the New Testament and the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" as proof positive of the reality of witches and their diabolical arts.

Germany suffered most severely from this epidemic of insanity. Protestant pastor and Catholic priest were equally pitiless in their persecution of witches. In hamlets near Trier 306 people perished for this imaginary offence between 1589 and 1593, and many executions occurred in other parts of the country. At Würzburg infants of three or four were compelled to admit sexual connexion with demons. Children aged nine or ten were burnt alive and, in all, 900 guiltless suspects were done to death in the diocese of Würzburg during the years 1623-29.

Many of the details of these disgraceful trials are quite unprintable. At last reason was restored, but only after heartrending outbursts of witch-madness in England, France, Sweden and elsewhere. Influenced by the advancing tide of rationalism the Papal Inquisition moderated its policy. Yet, in sober truth the infamous Bull promulgated in 1484 by Pope Innocent VIII. initiated the wave of unreason which disgraced the sixteenth century. Even in Spain the Inquisition seemed to repent of its protracted crimes. Montaigne and other sceptics served to weaken the belief in sorcery. The Kentish squire, Reginald Scot, Harvey and other intellectuals ultimately overcame the antagonism of the clergy, and by the opening of the eighteenth century few educated men cherished the superstition.

T. F. PALMER.

Acid Drops

Assuming that some of our newspapers take the hint given last week, and cease to cast a reflection on the fact that a Royal Family sometimes reaches the level attained by the families of millions of ordinary folk, they might go a step further in the same direction. The fashion now is to chortle that we must have an hereditary King because he is the symbol that holds the people of this country and the Empire, together. What he is, who he is—except that he must be either the son of his father or a relative of his—how much intelligence he possesses, these things are of no consequence. He is a symbol, and the one thing that holds the Empire together.

If that means anything at all, it means either that British institutions are so bad that they must be camouflaged by a mere symbol that may be of no consequence in itself, or that the British people are so stupid that they cannot see that their institutions and mode of life are worth preserving in themselves. We do not like this deliberate—even if implied—insult to either British intelligence or British institutions. It means either that the first is a minus quantity or the latter are worthless. After all, the United States and the French Republic do manage to exist without fooling themselves in the way in which the class to whom we refer say the British people must fool themselves in order to exist. Besides symbols are derived from things, things are not derived from symbols.

In all seriousness, the *Christian World*, in a leading article says:—

If we were a less loyal people, we should find it easier than we do to transfer our warm affection from one King to another at a moment's notice.

How does loyalty to an institution—the monarchy—enable a man to transfer his affection from a King he has lost by death or abdication, to another King for whom he had previously no affection? Imagine a man saying to his wife, "My dear, it is because I have been very loyal to our marriage that so soon as you are dead I can easily transfer my affection to Mary Jones, who lives in the next street." What would one think of that man's affection for his wife or her successor? Affection is not something that can be transferred from one person to another by decree. Loyalty is one thing, affection is another. We may be loyal when we have made a bargain, and stick to it whether it is good or bad. We have affection for a person when we believe him or her worthy of it. The *Christian World* outrages a fact in the interests of a superstition. Why not be honest and say, "We have lost one King and we have another. In terms of our constitution one King is as good as another. And we know the new King is a good one because he was selected to reign over us by some very wise people about two hundred and twenty years before he was born?" The psychology and the sense of the *Christian World* appears to be that of the man, who having brought his little son out to Epping Forest for a day's holiday thus addressed him:—

Look here! I've spent two shillings on you for you to enjoy yourself, and if you don't run about and enjoy yourself I'll break every bone in your blasted body.

At a time when Connie Gilchrist was the most famous burlesque actress on the English stage, with her name on every hoarding, and in the mouth of all the young—and old—"bloods" of the day, at that time there was a Judge who, when the name of this actress was mentioned, convulsed London by enquiring "Who is Connie Gilchrist?". Deputy Judge Rees, of Willesden County Court, must be an incarnation of the other Judge. In a case in which Vicar and Curate quarrelled about salary, Judge Rees said it was

a most amazing and painful situation that a vicar should say—it may be truthfully—that a curate should come into the witness box, and on oath, swear lies.

Amazing! Who is Connie Gilchrist? Who is Mr Baldwin? Is Hitler the name of a fungus or a man? Who is Mrs. Simpson? The Garden of Eden may be a myth, but the innocence of its fabled residents is illustrated on the judicial bench of to-day.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool has established a "League of Prayer" for the purpose of fighting Communism and the "enemies of God." We assume that the Archbishop would accuse us of as being one of the enemies of God, but we can assure him that he is quite mistaken. One cannot be an enemy of nothing at all; the Archbishop must exist before we can either hate him or love him—or be amused by him. Why we have always said that if there is a God we do not believe he is guilty of any of the crimes with which men like Archbishop Downey charges him. We say he does not cause a tempest, or blight the crops, or strike men dead, or afflict them with disease, nor is he responsible for Archbishop Downey. Call you that being his enemy? We declare him guiltless of all these afflictions. The Archbishop differs. He says that he does all these things! That is why he worships him, and calls him good! Perhaps Dr. Downey is just "kidding."

And why a League to pray to God to protect himself from his enemies? Will he not do that without being advised? If he will not or cannot, the wisest plan would be to pray to God to prevent his enemies coming into existence? Or why a new League? What is the Church but a great league for this purpose? And now the regular troops have been defeated, the Archbishop is trying to raise a legion of volunteers to do what the Church has hitherto failed to do. But we do not imagine for a moment that the overwhelming proportion of the Archbishop's followers will have wit enough to see these obvious things.

The *Times Literary Supplement* is getting quite bold, and in another hundred years it may pluck up courage to face the fact that its religious supporters are by no means so significant as to render it necessary to be mealy-mouthed. Full marks to it, then, for letting in a little light from an ancient philosopher; the *Supplement* in noticing *Aftermath*, the latest work of Sir James Frazer, records: "He, on the contrary is more inclined to side with those, who, from Petronius downwards, have insisted that religion originates in a craven fear." Frazer, in his preface to the above book, makes the following admission after setting out to explain a single rule of an ancient Italian priesthood:—

I was beguiled, as by some subtle enchanter, into inditing what I cannot but regard as a dark, a tragic chronicle of human error and folly, of fruitless endeavour, wasted time, and blighted hopes.

And that covers all the religions that have ever existed.

The *Star* has been publishing "Rush Hour" stories, and there is one that is mildly humorous and worth recording about one of those individuals who work on the one day of the week when others rest. Here it is:—

While we queued patiently, a curate, no doubt in ignorance, strolled across the leading file in an attempt to board the bus.

Instantly came a loud voice from the rear, "Give us a chance, guv'nor. You've got till Sunday."

For what it is worth as a newspaper report, we are told that in Germany people have been sent to prison for community listening-in to Soviet propaganda. Moscow has been out of the tuning-in charts and this together with the information that 25,000 members of the regular German army have been disembarked at Cadiz, makes one inclined to agree with Voltaire, who stated that this world was used by all the other planets as a place for their mad. Perhaps the first step to sanity would be to read *Choose a Bright Morning*.

There is a rumour about that Baldwin made more Republicans in a day than Garibaldi made during the whole of the Italian's life-time. Also that the shade of Swinburne has expressed the wish to alter his famous line to "Thou hast conquered O pale hypocrisy."

And still another book on Jesus. This time it is by the Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead, who calls it, *It Happened in Palestine*, and in it, "the author," we are told, "describes and analyses episodes in the life of our Lord." Following the modern trend, which prefers a laugh to a cry, Mr. Weatherhead refuses to see in his hero a "man of sorrows." Jesus is full of laughter, he jokes, his eyes twinkle with humour, and so on. As a specimen of the way in which Mr. Weatherhead throws 'overboard "inspiration," take that striking episode, once so thoroughly believed in, the finding by Peter of money in the head of a fish. He claims that the "original" story "possibly" ended when Jesus told Peter that he would so find the money. It "was a piece of pure fun on the part of Jesus. The rest may have been solemnly written later."

The calm way in which Mr. Weatherhead suggests the Inspired Writer "solemnly" adding something which never happened, or, in other words, deliberately falsifying the "Holy Record," proves how deeply Free-thought has penetrated into even the most orthodox circles. Needless to say, by this method Mr. Weatherhead believes just what he likes, and no more. He can always show the Holy Apostles "possibly" adding something, and if Mr. Weatherhead does not like it, then it never happened. If he does, then it "possibly" was never understood rightly until he came along and expounded it, or explained it, or whittled it away. And surely the idea of the "Man of Sorrows" as an original humorist is so funny as to be in itself a joke!

In spite of Ireland being the Pope's Precious Jewel and God's Green Isle, it seems that Catholic books are sold less in Ireland than anywhere else. That is what Mr. Sheed, a Catholic publisher, claimed in a broadcast the other day. He added that "Catholic publications do not suffer from over-production, but from 'stuff' that is not worth publishing." And he claimed that "until Catholics can produce their own writers there will not be a real Catholic literary revival." If there is any moral to these dismal words, it is that "Our Lord" seems to have deserted Catholic writers in favour of such more or less unbelievers as H. G. Wells, G. B. Shaw, Aldous Huxley, Somerset Maugham, and dozens of other moderns. Why, the Lord only knows; but Mr. Sheed should have told us.

What a marvellous opportunity was lost by mediums and astrologers before Edward VIII. abdicated—at least, none said publicly a few months ago that there would be an abdication. Now that it has happened, we shall find quite a number of them really did predict it, and only shyness, or some other excuse, prevented any of them from letting the world know that their spirit guides, or their ruling stars, knew perfectly well what was going to happen.

But the pet astrologer of the *Daily Express*, sensing that the public may see something in the event, and the claims made by astrology not favourable to the cause, calmly tells his readers in the issue of December 14, that he knew there was going to be a crisis in King Edward's life. This crisis, it seems, was shown by "his sun having been recently in square aspect with Herschel, the planet of surprises. This aspect is recognized by astrologers as being an extremely disruptive influence." The trouble is that the King had not made himself "square" with the Archbishop.

However, the stars are almost, but not quite, in the ascendant in favour of the new King and Queen. "Jupiter was in transit over the position at birth of our new King's sun"—a very happy augury in case some of us

do not know it; and there is also a "progressed" ascendant with the moon—"a sure sign that the public will extend a warm welcome to the King and Queen." And this kind of drivel is swallowed by millions of people. Or is it?

"Why," asks a "refresher" course in the catechism for Catholics, "does the Catholic Church show great devotion to the Blessed Virgin? The answer is very simple. God the Son took his human nature from her. He was flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood. In fact, the writer of the answer, not content with this, became more and more eloquent. As thus:—

He, God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, Maker of all, dwelt within her womb for nine months. . . . She was the Mother of her Creator, the Mother of her God. . . . The Blessed Virgin is mother of God because Jesus Christ, her Son, who was born of her as man, is not only man, but is also truly God.

If this is not absolutely convincing—as science, history, logic, and certain truth—then, alas, we give it up. The unbeliever simply must go to Hell.

Although the famous "Lourdes" is known to most people, there are other shrines wherever plenty of credulous Catholics are found. Sometimes, even they are ashamed of the silly stories swallowed by believers; which accounts for the fact that the light of publicity is not thrown too strongly upon them. For example, there is an Austrian Lourdes at Mariazell. It is visited every year by 150,000 pilgrims, and it has now "been elevated to an independent abbey." It was founded by an old monk in 1157, and—of course—contains an old statue of Mary. Quite possibly the statue has spoken more than once, or cured people in a flash, of incurable diseases. Now that Mariazell—that, is Mary's cell—is an Abbey, and has the Pope's blessing, we shall expect a few miracles to take place there every year. They will be quite as authentic as those credited to the better known Lourdes.

Two Glasgow gangs clashed the other day—the Savoy Arcadians and the Billy Boys—and the result was the death of one of them. The victim was murdered by four men, who hit him with a hatchet and stabbed him with some glass. One of the witnesses, in court later, was asked what the gangs fought about, and the answer was, "Religion"! And he insisted that this was his idea of religion. And this after many centuries of compulsory *Christian* teaching. "What is religion?" Pilate should have asked.

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.

MR. G. V. BURNHAM.—You suggest that we might issue a Diary giving an appropriate passage for each day in the year, with useful information for Freethinkers. We are afraid that a diary, which would have to be issued yearly, would mean a very heavy loss in view of the likely sales. But a Year Book might be attempted. We will bear it in mind for next year.

E. MACDONALD.—Thanks for your appreciation of the articles on the "crisis," also for your suggestions. Certainly a pamphlet on the work of the Bishops and of the Church, with regard to the betterment of life, would be useful.

J. MCKENNA.—We note your "congratulations," on "views," but there is no necessary contradiction between what we and others in the paper said. Even if there were, each writer is responsible for his own views, and there is usually more than one way of treating a subject.

MR F. HOBDAY, in sending for an extra supply of last week's *Freethinker*, writes, "Allow me to thank you for your notes on the 'Crisis.' For sane reasoning and common-sense they excel anything I have read on the subject." It must be because we have no axe to grind, and write neither with the desire to please nor with the fear of giving offence. Given this condition the rest is very easy. If it were not so, a large number of people would not have taken it so seriously.

G. WALLACE.—Will try and get it in next week.

H. MURPHY.—Much obliged for cuttings.

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—A.B., £1; D. E. Young, 2s. 6d.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A.B., £1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

Applications are coming in for tickets for the Paine Commemoration Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday, January 23. We again remind all concerned that the applications are likely to be more numerous than is usual for the N.S.S. Dinner, and the number is limited to 250. We advise those who intend coming to secure tickets early—particularly those who are coming from the Provinces.

We hope to have the new edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* on sale early in January. It is a complete reprint, with a lengthy critical introduction by Mr. Cohen. It will extend to 260 closely packed pages, with a coloured stiff paper cover, and the price will be fourpence, postage about twopence extra. Nothing like it has ever been issued in the history of the Freethought movement. There will be copies strongly bound in cloth, with portrait of Paine on plate paper at one shilling and sixpence. We ask the help of readers to get this work well into circulation.

With the kindly co-operation of Mr. Baldwin the Archbishop has been able to block any discussion of his broadcast attack on Edward VIII., made in safety after Edward had left the country. We doubt whether, even if the question had been permitted, many members would have had the courage to push home the criticism. But the question was disallowed on the ground that it was not in order for the Commons to criticize a speech made by a member of the "other House." We question whether even this ruling is sound, but in any case the speech was not made while the cowardly and scheming Archbishop was in the other house, and therefore the rule did not apply. It was made in a public place. And the only person mentioned of the "circle" attacked was one who could not then answer back. So the Archbishop will continue to hob-nob with members of the circle, as usual.

But the new King is not making the mistake of openly neglecting church attendance. The first Court Circular for Sunday duly chronicled that George VI. attended divine service on Sunday morning. The next thing is for him to take the Bible that his father is said to have read every day for twenty-five years, and which remained "almost as new" at the end of that time, and leave it to be announced that he reads a chapter every night of this miraculously preserved volume. The Archbishop will forgive him if he does not believe in the Church so long as he acts as though he did. Honesty in this matter would set a very dangerous example.

Time and Tide, discussing the recent "Constitutional Crisis," says, "it is no longer possible to assume that any member of the State, even its ruler, must in the nature of things adhere to the doctrines and practices of religion. It ought not to be possible any longer to identify the Head of the State with the head of the Church." It ought not to be, but events have shown that given a crafty, and not over scrupulous Archbishop, given also a Prime Minister who is the Archbishop's friend, given also a King who has on non-ceremonial occasions made the tenacity of his religion pretty plain, and given a House of Parliament in which the majority of members where religion is concerned is as timid as a rabbit in a lion's cage, and a great many things may happen that ought not to occur. It is more than stupid nowadays, it is an impertinence to command that the King shall swear to defend a religion which is that of only a small proportion of his subjects, and an insult to the man himself to order what religion he shall profess. The present conditions on which a man becomes King are an insult to the occupant of the throne, and an impertinence towards the people.

We have received a letter from the Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, *apropos* of a paragraph which appeared in "Acid Drops" last week, saying that he would be happy to criticize some of the articles which appear in this journal. Subject to the criticisms being pertinent and brief, we are always ready to insert them. We hope this will satisfy the Rev. F. H. E. Harfitt.

The *Methodist Recorder* reports that the central "Conference Committee have wisely arranged for a variety of approaches to God." It sounds like an echo of Franco's siege of Madrid. God is being approached from all sides. If he is deaf in one ear he is bawled at in the other one. If he can't hear, there will be a visible assault. If he tries to retreat he will find every path blocked. We suggest a handbook with the title of *How to Capture God*.

Long ago we came to the conclusion that one of the great needs of the world was a sense of humour. Not mere love of clowning, but a sense of humour. Anyone may be funny, nature is very bountiful in this direction, but a sense of humour, which must embody wit and sense, is one of nature's greatest gifts to man. If all the people who will be decked out in coloured robes and panto-

minic hats, and sham swords and pantomimic robes at the coming coronation had a keen sense of humour, the whole ceremony would stand a chance of dissolving in a roar of laughter. The airs assumed by the Archbishops, the solemn greasing—annointing—with oil, of the King to indicate that God is taking part in the ceremony, the struggle of grown-up men to hold the King's hand, or his arm, or to carry a mace, with the other things that go to make up a coronation, could not survive a universal and strong sense of humour. But those who have it are so few, and they keep a straight face for the sake of the many who don't possess it. And so the game goes on.

Here is an illustration. The authorities of Westminster Abbey are presenting a petition to the King asking for a supplementary charter. One of the things the Charter is to do is to give certain officials of the Abbey the "sack" when the authorities think it is time they retired. They object to anyone being appointed for life. Ye gods! The big-wigs of the Abbey are asking for the abolition of a life appointment from a King who is not merely where he is without any appointment at all, but is there because he is the son of his father. And the joke is that it is highly probable that the King who is King because he is the son of his father and the grandson of his grandfather, and the great grandson of his great grandmother, will probably agree that the affairs of the Abbey will be the better if officials are appointed because they are thought fit for the job, and "resigned" when it is thought some one else will do the job better. It is said of Edward VIII. that he objected to the abolition of an hereditary House of Lords, because he said he didn't want to be the only hereditary institution in the country. George VI. might well reply to the Abbey authorities in the same way. But we do not expect he will.

All Correct

An old and revered institution is this birthday of the Gods. On *Christmas Day*, in countless churches in this isle, thousands of devotees will raise their voices and sing to us some "beautiful words" from the Church Hymnal appropriate to the occasion. They could be suitably entitled *LEST THOU FORGET* :—

Remember, O Creator Lord,
That in the Virgin's sacred womb
Thou wast conceived, and of her flesh
Our very nature didst assume.

This ever blest recurring Day
Its witness bears, that all alone
From thine own Father's bosom Thou
To save a sinful world cam'st down.

To this great Day, the seas and sky,
Earth, Heaven itself, glad welcome sing
The Day which healed our misery,
And brought on earth salvation's King.

Criticism of these lines is unnecessary. The job could be left, with confidence, to many a fifteen-year-old schoolboy. But God's Birthday suggests aspects which are rarely, if ever, commented upon.

It is generally assumed that it is a matter for congratulation that the Third Person of the Trinity did not, to quote the Hymnal again, "abhor the Virgin's womb." We will admit, for the sake of getting along, that this was condescension indeed. We will say we are glad that Jesus, in spite of his high lineage (his family going back quite a long way), and in spite of mixing with the Heavenly Hosts and being "by highest Heaven adored," did not lose the common touch. We must admit, however, that the sycophantic dogma of the Immaculate Conception

points to rather extensive precautions being taken to see that the human clay thus honoured was subjected to a special divine process to purge it from all sin, and thereby making it much less "human," before it was fit for divine habitation. But it is not the divine condescension that gives one to think. What is much more impressive in the method chosen is the calm determination of Jesus to avoid, at any cost, striking a blow at the time-honoured traditions associated with Saviour Gods. In spite of all temptations to make an unworthy use of his extensive abilities by doing something histrionic, Jesus trod the common path of the Saviour God with fidelity and exactitude. No old belief or institution was weakened by his advent. Behold in him a rare and exemplary reverence for the past, which many people, even including some of high station, rate high amongst the virtues.

Jesus, from the width of his resources, might have done hundreds of things. He might have done anything. He might, for instance, have come down from Olympus on a fire-escape; he might have been unearthed by some Essex gardener near the roots of a gooseberry bush. Blasphemy, you may say. If you will. Yet were either of these ways intrinsically more objectionable than the one chosen? Even a good Christian, should he be honest, will know that if, say, the gooseberry-bush method had been favoured, learned divines would at this moment, he seeing nothing derogatory in the idea. On the contrary they would be expatiating on the homely Figure of the Gooseberry Bush. They would be explaining how wonderful were the Gooseberries owing to Divine emanations. Christmas, to our press, would have been considered the Big Gooseberry season. And what rare and refreshing fruit would have resulted. There would have been the handsome berries of Love and Charity—and Peace, the biggest and most beautiful berry of all. The waste-paper baskets of theological erudition would have been ransacked for Figures, Types and Allegories; midnight oil would have been consumed in writing up theological tomes; and the Daniels and the St. Johns would have had an entirely new set of nightmares.

Now novelty might have commended itself to a god with a swollen head, possessed with a desire to be exceptional. But Jesus was not that kind of God. What was good enough for his predecessors was good enough for him. He was determined to give mankind no pain by thrusting upon them a new idea; he was determined to hurt no-one's feelings. First and foremost he was a gentleman. So he followed reverently in the footsteps of the Gods with a respect for precedent that was gratifying indeed.

So it came to pass that he recalled (without the help of a secretariat) the records of all the best gods who had gone before and went and did likewise. He found the path well-trod and easy going. Scorning all temptations to take a road of his own and be a Deity-de-luxe, in modesty and meekness he ambled along the way of his kind. Like Baal and Astarte, Isis and Osiris, Attis, Mithra, Krishna, Hercules, Apollo, he agreed to take the same birthday. He made use of a virgin for a mother, as they did, though by some carelessness in picking his vehicle, he failed (rather strangely) to avoid a triangle situation, choosing another man's sweetheart. Or was this deliberate, also? He was called Saviour, Deliverer, Mediator, as they were; he was vanquished by evil forces. He descended into Hell, rose again from the dead bringing Immortality to light—as they did. Likewise, he founded a Church by the members of which he was consumed at intervals and in small portions.

Just put oneself in the place of Jesus and try in one's futile way to realize his position. Think of the

power that lies in omnipotence and the wisdom that is included in omniscience. And then marvel at the fact that he would have nothing to do with starting a new line in Gods. Without wet towels, he could have out-reached, out-topped, out-classed all others. He could have accomplished this so palpably that if he had, at any time, cared to question Robinson of Widnes or Alfonso de Bourbon: *And who do you say that I am?* he would have been answered by both in the same way and without hesitation. The course he adopted led, unfortunately, to Robinson and the rest being more than a little muddled over the whole business. But, fortunately, it had important advantages. He left the Holy Traditions unimpaired. This may mean little to some; to many it is all important. Listen to our Sir John Simon in a "crisis," if you doubt this, and learn how important it is that the old institutions remain the same for ever and ever. Do not blame Sir John too readily, for if one were to take Quintuplets, surround them from birth by Sir John's influences, subject them to the same training, exert the same pressure; when eventually a "crisis" came it would be highly probable that each of the five would rise and say with solemnity, "There is Beauty even in Balderdash." . . . So Jesus did the correct thing. He placed each foot carefully in the old footprints and, by so doing, became The Great Exemplar.

As our hymn reminds us, this blessed day keeps recurring and although The Day seems to have sealed rather than healed most of our troubles, yet one must be thankful in these restless times that Jesus in all essentials acted as every Saviour God had done, possessed of a proper pride in his job. He was not moved by ambition; he was not even actuated by jealousy. The latter fact is surprising considering his parentage, his father being a jealous God—and proud of it too. Luckily for us of humble clay, we are not supposed slavishly to imitate the Gods. We can celebrate the God's birthday in any way we please. We can call into requisition on the occasion, if we care, some of the homespun virtues, poor things but our own, born of human experience, and calculated to bring joy into the lives of those about us. We can forget all about our souls, and can instead, if we choose, exercise kindness, forbearance and understanding, and have as our inestimable reward, a brightening eye from the person who clasps our hand. The happiness of a few others this day of the year may depend quite a little even on you and me. And there are three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

T. H. ELSTOB.

Freak Religions

SWEDENBORGIANISM

II.

MILLIONS of people still believe in the literal interpretation of Bible narratives. Upon this Fundamentalist position, both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are almost at one. Their followers are taught that the Bible stories of Noah or Abraham, of Moses or Joshua, of Ezekiel or Jeremiah, of Jesus or John the Baptist, of Mary or the Devil, actually happened exactly as told, with truth in every line, nay, in every word and letter. If the Bible talks about a Flood, it means a real Flood. If it talks about stopping the sun, it means an actual stoppage. If it talks about flying to heaven in a fiery chariot, then that journey actually took place. That is what the Blessed Word said; that is what the Blessed Word meant. Whether Swedenborg, once he had his

spiritual vision opened, believed this also, is not quite apparent. For almost at once he set to work to clear out of the way Bible literalness, and to substitute his own definitions for Bible words, thus making nonsense of Bible narratives as literal history.

It was, of course, no new thing to read in Bible "history" merely a special kind of symbolism. One of the greatest of the early Church Fathers, Origen, insisted that behind this "history" was an esoteric meaning. So did the great Maimonides who, talking about Genesis, said, "Understood literally, this work presenteth us with ideas of the deity which are most ridiculously absurd." And they were followed by many eminent Hebraists and Kabbalists.

Swedenborg commenced by defining Bible words. He contended that the six days of creation were so many "successive states of man's regeneration"; and he gives details. The first state, before creation, the Biblical *void or darkness*, is the state of man before regeneration. The second state is "a division between those things which are the Lord's and those that are man's own." The third state is a state of repentance—this is proven by the Biblical account of the herb yielding seed. The fourth state is that of the two luminaries which are "enkindled in the internal man." The fifth state, based on the creation of the birds in heaven and the fishes in the sea, is "that man talks from faith, and confirms himself thereby in truth and good." The sixth state is when "he utters truth and does good deeds from faith." This is gathered from the Biblical "living scul and beast." Very few people, however, reached the seventh state, when God rested.

To arrive at these astonishing "truths," Swedenborg had to have his spiritual eyes "opened." One can only say that the plain narrative of the creation reads more convincingly than Swedenborg's explanation. If ever symbolism went mad or freakish it is here.

When one reads that "Enoch walked with God," this does not mean a literal promenade in a park or on some seaside front. It simply means "to teach and live according to the doctrine of faith." And "He was not for God took him," signifies that "the doctrine was preserved for the use of posterity." Could anything be more simple? Holy Writ, when seen through spiritual eyes, becomes something quite different from what appears on the surface; but whether Swedenborg's explanation is any better, is surely a matter of opinion. "Sons of God" means "doctrinal truths of faith," while "daughters of men" signifies "lusts"—which shows that even the great Swede could not disassociate women from sex in true Biblical style. When Jehovah repents that he made man, "repents" here means "mercy"; and by "the flood" is meant "an inundation of evil and falsity." When the high mountains were covered by the flood, the real meaning is that "goods of charity" were extinguished. And the rainbow after the flood means "the state of the regenerate spiritual man."

When "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses," you get really "clemency"; and the frogs in the Ten Plagues simply mean "falsities." Swedenborg dismisses in an equally intelligent manner the stupid story of the sun stopping at the command of Joshua. All this means is that "the church was entirely devastated as to all good and truth." And as for those people who take Matthew seriously when he says that "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer ye shall receive," Swedenborg says they are quite wrong. All it means is that "those who are in the Lord desire nothing and so ask nothing but from the Lord."

From all this can be seen how marvellously Swedenborg's eyes were opened to things spiritual; and

though he often goes to great lengths to explain his explanation of Biblical terms and phrases, it is not difficult to see why the man-in-the-street, Protestant or Catholic, found it easier to believe the Bible in the natural sense rather than in the "spiritual" sense. Besides, all the romance of adventure or the thrill of miracles was whittled away by giving certain terms meanings which in themselves seemed to want elucidating. The way in which Swedenborg managed to find spiritual meanings to the insane drivel of a good part of Revelations must compel admiration; though very often the new meaning is even more insane than the old.

Heaven and Hell occupied Swedenborg immensely. It is quite impossible in a short article to give even a *précis* of his extraordinary ideas about these two famous abodes; but one must note that he insists that Heaven is divided into two Kingdoms—the Celestial and the Spiritual. Angels inhabit the Celestial regions as well as the Spiritual ones—but Swedenborg points out that they are not on speaking terms; though they could be, if necessary, as the Lord has provided "intermediate angels for communication and conjunction." There are really three Heavens since the Lord's advent, and in each are innumerable societies with special angels at hand; the angels are, of course, fully clothed, and it all depends on an angel's intelligence as to whether he is well or ill-clothed. However, "the angels in the utmost heaven are naked," which simply means, spiritually, innocence. There are, literally, hundreds and thousands of angels under a government of mutual love. This "love" business appears to me to be almost continually dragged into his writings, especially when Swedenborg seems unable to give any other explanation. He also liberally besprinkles all his exposition with Faith, Hope, and Charity, as well as "the Lord Jesus Christ." Needless to say, angels can write and read, and books are printed in heaven—though Swedenborg pathetically admits that he was not allowed to take more than an idea or two from the printed books. He does claim, however, that "a little paper was once sent to him from heaven" with Hebrew characters thereon.

As for Hell, Swedenborg claims that "the love of self and the love of the world constitute Hell." He talked the matter over with some angels, and he discovered that angels governed Hell as they did Heaven. "The spirits in Hell," he says, "appear in the form of their evil,"—and all these forms differ from each other. And just as angels are packed with wisdom and intelligence, so "there is wickedness and cunning among infernal spirits."

Swedenborg has a tremendous lot to say about the Last Judgment, though he claims that both the earth and the human race will last for ever. He was "permitted" to visit other planets and to converse with their inhabitants—though over and over again he insists that what he saw was not with his bodily eyes but "with the eyes of my spirit."

Space forbids me to deal as fully as I should like on other aspects of his teaching; but I hope sufficient has been said to justify my contention that Swedenborgianism is essentially a freak religion. There is nothing else like it in history; for which one may be truly thankful.

Swedenborg was, as can be expected, unmercifully criticized—John Wesley being one of his severest critics. He claimed, in fact, that Swedenborg's theological views and spiritual revelations were due "to a peculiar species of insanity," inspired by the Devil. But Wesley was extremely prejudiced, and a good many of his own views look to me also like a "peculiar form of insanity."

How one can reconcile Swedenborg the scientist with Swedenborg the theologian is a puzzle I cannot solve—any more than I can solve the puzzle of eminent professors of science being convinced believers in spiritualism. Professors of science, apart from their special work, seem just as gullible as other people—perhaps even more so. And Swedenborg appears to be a melancholy example of his early religious upbringing which convinced him of the truth of the Bible. From that conviction arose his peculiar—and religious—aberrations.

H. CUTNER.

State Punishments and Rewards

(Concluded from page 813)

(B)—REWARDS

WE anticipate something like general acceptance for the propositions that meritorious service for the benefit of the community should be encouraged, and that in outstanding cases the State should give Rewards for it; consisting of Titles (non-hereditary), Decorations, Life Pensions, etc. It is a common-place of history that the most revolting abuses have at all times been associated with this practice. "Favourites," Kings Mistresses, military supporters of Royal, or would-be Royal Ruffians and Usurpers, together with all their families, friends, and retainers, have been ennobled and enriched from the public funds to an extent which was often not only unjust, but indecent. Politicians, too—not always "nice" or scrupulous in their methods and aims—have shared heavily in the plunder. Even in our own times, we are unpleasantly familiar with the practice of rewarding with a hereditary title the man who contributes a large sum of money to the funds of a political party. This counts as public service.

Hereditary Titles.—We believe that these were invented and maintained mainly through a misunderstanding of the laws of heredity. It was confidently assumed that the outstanding characteristics of the man to be ennobled would infallibly re-appear in his son, and in his descendants throughout the lifetime of the "family." The Mendelian hypothesis, which now regulates the work of stock-breeders throughout the world, had they been available to our shrewd forefathers, would surely have weakened their confidence in the Noble Family system upon which they staked their whole political future. This system is undoubtedly the nursery of the Hereditary Monarchy. It is widely held that they stand or fall together. We are not of that opinion. We hold that the time has now come for the State to ignore the Peerage, and to abandon the practice of awarding hereditary titles. On the other hand, in view of the very substantial advantages to the community accruing from the maintenance of a Royal Family such as we are fortunate enough to possess, we hold that it should be retained; subject only to such modifications as the "debunking" of the Peerage might entail.

Services to be Rewarded.—These must first be subdivided into two groups: (a) those which practically all members of the community can understand and appreciate. Examples are:—

- Military, Naval, Air.
- Diplomacy.
- Government.
- Economic.
- Educational.
- Philanthropic.
- Heroic (Adventure and Sport).

(b) Those which can only be understood and appreciated by persons of a certain degree of culture and breadth of outlook. Examples are:—

Literary.

Musical and Artistic.

Scientific (Exposition and Demonstration, Research, Discovery, Invention, etc.).

Titles to indicate nature of Service.—It is impossible within the limits of this paper to discuss in detail either the nature or amount of the Reward which ought to be given for each Service, or description of Service; but we should like to emphasize the value of the principle of restricting each kind of Reward to one particular group of Service. In the case of non-hereditary titles, this restriction would be an invaluable check upon abuses. The title would immediately inform the public for what description of Service it had been conferred.

Summary.—We are now in a position to formulate the rules which we hold should regulate the distribution of State Rewards:—

1. Each Reward to be bestowed only on the person who has earned it. (No hereditary titles or perpetual pensions, etc.).

2. Notable Services eligible for Reward to be scheduled in two classes: (a) Those deemed likely to meet with the approval of a substantial majority of the electors. (b) Those deemed likely to meet with the approval of a substantial majority of electors competent to form an opinion on the matter.

(3) One particular form of Reward to be assigned to each description of Service scheduled as in (2). The result to be made generally known to the public; so that each title or decoration shall automatically indicate the specific type of Service for which it has been awarded.

We do not propose to place either religious or party-political activities on the Schedule of Services eligible for Reward. Should they, however, be shown to be admissible under (2), they would be entitled to inclusion in the Schedule. Under one pretext or another, Wealth has in the past been only too successful in securing State Rewards; but the acquisition of wealth has often been at the expense of—not for the benefit of—the community. Whether “captains of industry,” organizers of great commercial undertakings, great employers of labour, and their like, should or should not be admitted to the Schedule, is a question upon which we pronounce no opinion.

We have said that the limits of this paper preclude a discussion of the actual titles, etc., which should be assigned as Rewards for specific Services. No doubt it would be impracticable to make use in every case of the existing hereditary titles, and new ones would have to be devised. The title of “Knight” seems essentially to belong to the military. The title “Count of the Holy Roman Empire,” strikes us personally as suitable only to comic opera. We therefore suggest that if it should be decided—as it well might be—that heroes of the Stage and Cinema should be admitted to the Schedule, the title “Count” would be a suitable one to allot to them. Count Charlie Chaplin! Similar suitable titles—such as “Canon Lindrum”—for the heroes of sport, will no doubt readily occur to our readers.

G. TODHUNTER.

The man who will not investigate both sides of a question is dishonest.—*Lincoln.*

The religious history of several centuries is little more than a history of the rapacity of priests.—*Hallam.*

Correspondence

“THE SCIENTIST WITH A WAND”

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER”

SIR,—I trust Mr. Preece will not take it unkindly if I say that his criticism, in your issue of December 20, of my articles entitled “The Scientist with a Wand,” is chiefly notable for its sustained irrelevancy.

The articles are described as a “plea for the justification of my existence,” and again as a “plea for esotericism.” I am at a loss to see the least connexion between what I wrote and Mr. Preece’s interpretation of it. Perhaps the general spirit and message of the articles are best indicated by two quotations, which I now place side by side:—

The bedside gives us . . . no shortage of criticism, but it is criticism of the wrong sort because it is uninformed and unscientific. Neither patient nor relative has an understanding of medical matters because such has never been implied in the relationship between the doctor and the public.

Once the doctor has struggled out of the shadow of superstition, carrying his public with him into the daylight of scientific thinking, the whole study and practice of medicine will have received an impetus long overdue.

This seems to me, as indeed it was intended to be, the precise reverse of a “plea for esotericism.” As for a justification of the doctor’s existence, the articles seem to me to present an effort at constructive criticism of that existence.

With regard to the use of the expressions “scientist” and “science of healing,” I can only say that the label “Medical Science” came into current use before I was born, so that I am unable to take the responsibility for it. When Mr. Preece thinks of the word “scientist,” it may be that he confuses it with an evaluation of one’s individual eminence or function in a particular science. But that is just a popular confusion. All who have become versed in an authentic branch of science are thereby scientists. They may be good or bad, clever or stupid, eminent or obscure scientists; that is another matter. The engineer is a scientist if he has mastered the science of engineering, the mechanic if he has done likewise. But most often, as we know, this has not been done, so that they remain technicians.

But perhaps I feel no compunction about this simple use of the word “scientist,” because I have never made a religion of science, nor a god of the scientist.

MEDICUS.

“DEMOCRACY”

SIR.—Parts of Mr. Todhunter’s article make strange reading. “It is incontrovertible,” he declares, “that a wise and beneficent autocracy is the best form of government.” On the contrary, it is incontrovertible that autocracy is the worst form. The many are subordinate to the predominant one. The degree to which this evil may be offset by “wise and beneficent” enactments is but of trivial and temporary import.

Mr. Todhunter’s remarks on Anarchy must be set aside. He believes he writes of Anarchism, whereas he evidently has ochlocracy in mind. Incidentally, his statement that Anarchy provides “a fair field for the operation of the law of survival of the fittest” is gratuitous. In common with every form of society it can do no other. Thus, under autocracy, the fittest to survive are the dastard, the lickspittle, and the hypocrite, since the qualities of courage, independence and sincerity, being subversive, must be suppressed.

To Mr. Todhunter the tag “Democracy” is an accurate description. Actually it is merely a convenient label. Democracy has not yet emerged. It is still in the process of becoming. His statement that we must cling to Democracy can therefore be taken to mean that we must strive to secure continuance of the evolution of democratic government. This requires us to recognize that fallacious views of autocracy, being reversionary in tendency, are pernicious.

Failure to define terms and to correlate forms of government with stages in man's development have robbed Mr. Todhunter's views of all value. These two errors have resulted in mischievous matter that could not be permitted to pass.

GOTH.

NATIONALITY

SIR,—Austen Verney, in his article (December 13) "Nationality and Internationalism," seems, to me, to use his space to unfairly attack the U.S.S.R. and Marxism.

He states that "a band of fanatical Marxists led by Lenin. . . ." The adjective is merely a term of abuse, and could be used in a similar way in an attack upon Freethought—"a band of fanatical Freethinkers led by Cohen. . . ."

Mr. Verney writes, "On the theory that the interests of the "workers" of all countries are at one. . . . "There is, of course, no such solidarity of interest." The "of course" leaves the reader no option, but to accept this statement, of course. Can Mr. Verney explain to readers of the *Freethinker* in what way the interests of the workers of all countries are not at one?

Further on we find "They (Germany and Italy) agree with the 'Soviet' in the suppression of any counter opinion to the leading Idea, just as their attendant respective brutalities are on all fours." To say that the brutalities committed in the U.S.S.R. are on all fours with what has taken place, and still takes place in Germany and Italy is, in my opinion, not true.

Continuing, we read, "Before these inimical circumstances (the hostility of Germany and Italy) it now appeals to its own youth on grounds of "national" feeling." Surely the U.S.S.R. has been appealing to its own youth, and to the youth of all lands, not just now, but for nearly twenty years, and not on grounds of "national" feeling, but on the grounds that Socialism, which would enable the workers of all lands to lose their chains would be attacked (as it was attacked), and defence would be necessary.

The tenor of the article seems, to me, to show the U.S.S.R. in a more unfavourable light than Germany and Italy. It is very biased, and so loses its value as a scientific study. I submit the position is not as painted by Mr. Verney.

A. STEPHENSON.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD DECEMBER 17, 1936

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Clifton, Saphin, Tuson, Easterbrook, Ebury, Preece, Elstob, Mrs. Quinton, Junr. and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Bradford, Liverpool, North London, West London Branches and Parent Society. The General Secretary's report re Plymouth Branch was discussed and adjourned. Mr. H. R. Clifton reported details of The National Peace Council Conference, which he attended as delegate. Correspondence was dealt with from South London, Bethnal Green, Edinburgh, Blackburn Branches, and from Thetford, New York, etc. A report of the Social at Caxton Hall was presented, and a vote of thanks passed to all those who helped in the arrangements. Progress in arrangements for the Annual Dinner was reported, and the necessity for an early application of tickets advised. The President made a statement concerning the proposed statue of Thomas Paine, to be erected in Paris in January, and promised further consideration to the matter.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, January 14, 1937, and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

To Dr. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury

YOUR Christian Church, ever the bitter foe
Of all the beauty and the joy of life,
Now comes between King Edward and his wife,
And drives him forth, the Church's power to show.
Your Church, which brings this much-loved monarch
low,
Was born in ignorance and lives by strife;
Where charity should dwell rancour is rife;
To Love and Life your Creed still answers, No!

Yet not for ever shall this infamy
Darken the aspirations of mankind,
And turn the milk of human kindness sour;
The poet and the prophet both foresee
The downfall of the Church's leaders blind,
When Life and Love return to rule and power.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

14 xii. 1936.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Annual General Meeting. Branch Members only.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Ten minutes' talks from various speakers; and questions.

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Social Evening.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

Price 2s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

SELECTED HERESIES

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth Gilt 3s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

THE REVENUES OF RELIGION

BY

ALAN HANDSACRE

Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 3d. Paper 1s. 6d. Postage 2d.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

By

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL

Price 2d.

Postage ½d.

A list of Ingersoll's pamphlets published by
The Pioneer Press

<i>About the Holy Bible</i>	- -	3d.
<i>Rome or Reason?</i>	- -	3d.
<i>What is Religion?</i>	- -	1d.
<i>What is it Worth?</i>	- -	1d.
<i>Household of Faith</i>	- -	1d.
<i>Mistakes of Moses</i>	- -	2d.

The above will be sent post free 1s. 3d.

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus

BY

W. A. CAMPBELL

Cloth 2s.

Postage 2d.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington
SECOND EDITION

Paper 2s. Postage 2d.

Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no
UNWANTED Children.

An Abridged List (16 pages) of Birth Control Requisites
and Books sent post free for a 1½d. stamp.

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY

CREED AND CHARACTER

CHAPMAN COHEN

1. Religion and Race Survival
2. Christianity and Social Life
3. The Case of the Jew
4. A Lesson from Spain

Price 4d.

Postage 1d.

Paganism in Christian Festivals

BY

J. M. WHEELER

Price 1s.

Postage 1½d.

A Grammar of Freethought.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Cloth Bound 5s.

Postage 3d

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ

BY

GERALD MASSEY

Price 6d.

Postage 1d.

Letters To a Country Vicar

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

Paper 1s. Postage 2d. Cloth, gilt 2s. Postage 3d.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Cloth Bound **THREE SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE**
Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

BRITISH
LIBRARY

For Christmas and the New Year

CHAPMAN COHEN

Opinions

Random Reflections and Wayside Sayings.
With portrait of the Author. Calf 5s. Cloth
Gilt 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

Selected Heresies

An Anthology. Cloth Gilt 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

Gramophone Record

Gold Label Edison Bell—"The Meaning and
Value of Freethought." Price 2s. By post
2s. 9d. Foreign and Colonial orders 1s. extra.

Shakespeare and other Literary Essays

By G. W. Foote. With preface by Chapman
Cohen. 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science

BY

Prof. J. W. DRAPER

Price 2s.

Postage 4½d.

Infidel Death-Beds

BY

G. W. Foote and A. D. McLaren

Price 2s.

Postage 3d.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR GREETING CARDS

The National Secular Society
has prepared two suitable cards
for the season

With verse by Thomas Hardy 1d. each 12 for 9d.

With floral design and quotation from Ingersoll
2d. each 7 for 1s.

ARMS AND THE CLERGY

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Price 1s. By post 1s. 3d. Cloth, gilt, by post 2s. 3d.

The Pioneer Press,
61 Farringdon Street, London,
E.C.4

MOTHER OF GOD

BY

G. W. FOOTE

Post Free

2½d.

ROME OR REASON

BY

R. G. INGERSOLL

Price 3d.

Postage 4d.

SOME CHRISTIAN TYPES

by

CRITICUS

Price 4d.

By post 5d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4

220 pages of Wit and Wisdom

BIBLE ROMANCES

By G. W. Foote

The *Bible Romances* is an illustration of G. W. Foote at his best. It is profound without being dull, witty without being shallow; and is as indispensable to the Freethinker as is the *Bible Handbook*.

Price 2/6 Postage 3d.

Well printed and well bound.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.