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

Views and Opinions

A Common Fallacy

On one of my journeys to Glasgow I fell into conversation with two young ladies. One was a Scotch girl who had just concluded her first visit to London. The other was a London girl—a friend of the other—who was paying her visit to Scotland. Casually I mentioned that I had been visiting Scotland regularly for over forty years. The English girl was interested. She enquired what I had found Scotch people like. I replied that I had never met any. She expressed surprise, and looked puzzled. I explained that I had met Scotch people who were tall or short, thick or thin, dark or fair, good-looking or ugly, honest or dishonest, truthful or liars, but I had never met anyone in Scotland who was “like” a Scot. I had met people in kilts, but they were either soldiers or Englishmen. I had met others with a pronounced Scotch accent, but found that they were often the near descendants of Irish or “foreign” ancestors. But on the whole, the people of Scotland, apart from local peculiarities of dress, or food, or accent were like the people of England, and the people of England were also “like” the people of other countries, allowing for local influences. In short my search for people who were “like” Scotchmen, or Irishmen, or Englishmen, or Frenchmen, nearly always resulted in my discovering that the greater number of people in any country are more “unlike” the “typical” (one more “blessed word”) inhabitant of that country than they are “like” him. There may be a distinct likeness in the clothes they wear, or in the food they eat, or in the houses in which they live. These things are on the surface. But in their fundamental characteristics as representatives of the *genus homo*, a type is only to be found by excluding all those who are not of that type, and the exceptions are far, far more numerous than those who conform to the rule.

A “Real” English Audience

Dame Sybil Thorndike is announced as setting out on an exploratory tour of the country with the object of discovering a “real English theatre audience.” She also is looking for a “like” type. Dame Sybil is well known to the public of London, which comprises about a seventh of the population of the country, but she is convinced that a “public which is characteristically English” is not to be found there. What she expects to find in the provinces I do not know. She will find differences, that is certain. But in the main she will find an audience in the provinces as variegated in its tastes as are audiences in London. The typical Lancashire or Cornish or Devonshire man will prove as elusive as the typical Londoner. The difference of accent is there, but that is as much an acquisition as is the Oxford accent or the parsonic intonation. There will be some difference from London in local customs, or even tastes, but one wonders why one is characteristically English and the other is not. Is Lancashire “by gum” more typically English than the London “Blimey.” or Lancashire hot-pot more thoroughly English than fish and chips? I do not see where or why.

The other day the Duke of Kent, so said the papers, hied himself to a phrenologist, privately, of course, although the usual camera-man was miraculously inspired to be waiting at Ludgate Circus to take a picture. The phrenologist promptly recorded to the world that the Duke had an “ideal English head.” That at least puts us on the track of how to acquire a typically English head. One must come from a family that is predominantly foreign, and be reared in circumstances that are peculiar to one family alone. The drawback to this recipe is that, if sound, it puts the rest of the population out of the picture. If heredity and environment counts for anything they are not likely to have “real English” heads—unless the King is, in a very large measure, “the father of his people.”

We have the same fallacy illustrated in the common expression “un-English” in the case of anything of which we disapprove. A magistrate after listening to a charge of wife-beating, or ill-treatment of children, or robbing poor people—on a small scale—ponderously remarks that such conduct is “un-English.” Well, in the name of all that is sensible, if these offences are “un-English” what are they? It is an Englishman who is accused of the offence. Is such conduct, then French? or German? or American? In France the judge would probably mark bad conduct as un-French, and in Germany at present it would be recorded as “un-Aryan.” Are such organizations as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, or the R.S.P.C.A. formed of English people to protect the country against foreigners?

I give it up. I do not know what a typical Englishman, or a typical Frenchman, or a typical Hottentot is. So far as I am able to judge there are all sorts of people in any country I select for examination. I have found some Germans greater liars than some Englishmen, and also some Englishmen greater liars than some Germans. I find that each country has laws and regulations condemning much the same actions, and I am quite sure that these laws are made with an eye on the natives, and are not passed with sole regard to foreign residents. The forms of vice and virtue may vary in their degree of development with each people, but if we were to start with an index figure and then cast up a kind of moral account, we should probably find the sum work out much the same in every case. But, as in the case of things good and bad, we mostly prefer the kind of vices we are accustomed to and denounce those that are unusual.

* * *

That "Typical" Person

A typical Englishman, or a typical Frenchman appears to be one who answers to what in our opinion a typical Englishman or Frenchman ought to be. In this way we count the hits and ignore the misses. If out of twenty-five Frenchmen we find one who in the remotest degree approaches our idea of what a Frenchman ought to look like, we agree that we have found almost a typical Frenchman. What the other twenty-four are like never enters into the heads of those capable of such muddled thinking. They are probably dismissed with the vague expression, "They don't look like Frenchmen." The typical Englishman of the Frenchman is not the Englishman that we know; he differs from the reality as much as does the "typical" Frenchman of the average Englishman. The "typical" Jew is one who lisps, although lispers are not more numerous among Jews than among other people. The easy-going person who exclaims: "He looks like a Jew," or "He behaves like a Jew," is not disturbed by the large number of Jews who neither look nor act "like a Jew." One would like to set a class of people who talk, and think, in this way the problem, "What is a Frenchman, a German, or a Jew like when he does not look like the people he is supposed to represent?" But one may reasonably question whether those who talk in the manner indicated would understand the problem sufficiently to grapple with the question.

Of course there are general resemblances among people living in the same country, under the same institutions, and subject to the same general influences. These conditions inevitably favour the growth of similar habits, similar customs, and above all a frame of mind that is still more general. We see this illustrated in groups within the nation as well as in the nation as a whole. We all recognize what is called an actor's face, a lawyer's face, a doctor's face, not that we mean by this that every actor, doctor, or parson can be recognized at once, but that taking them on the whole there is a certain psychological cast given to the face, and still more to the mental outlook, resulting from an identity of interests and occupation. Where nearly the whole of a small community follow the same pursuit and are concerned with the same interests, as in the case of miners, or agriculturists, the general likeness becomes more marked and the same habits more general.

But in all this there is no physical type developed. The children of a miner taken to a town and subjected from early years to different influences, induced to develop new habits, quickly becomes assimilated in habit, in thought, and in general outlook to those around. The children of French people brought to England at a sufficiently early age and living among

English people become English in speech and outlook. Some of the most rabidly Irish in the South of Ireland have been and are descendants of English settlers. The most rabid, and the most "typical" of Americans are the descendants of Dutch, Swedish, German and other nationalities. In this country, we have had the "true-born Englishman" developed from a mixture of Danish, Norwegians, French, Dutch, German, and others. In the case of the existing royal family we have had developed from a family in which the originals could hardly speak in English without a foreign accent, and in which within the memory of some now living German was the language of the home, something "typically" English.

* * *

Getting Down to Facts

I do not deny the existence of general habits, general ideas, and a general mental outlook, subject to innumerable exceptions. What I object to is the stupid and wholly unscientific manner of speaking of typical Englishmen, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, or Americans, as though we were dealing with a definite and fixed biological, or even psychological type. There is no such thing, and only muddled minds can entertain such a conception. The origin of any "type" that may be selected can be generally described, and given adequate knowledge would be particularly described in terms of cultural, social and institutional influences. Vary these and the people vary. We create a type, as the French have created a bluff, over-paunched, not over-intelligent individual as the "typical" Englishman, or as the English have created the mincing, somewhat effeminate, light-hearted, passionate individual as the "typical" Frenchman; or as a novelist takes certain characteristics, increases their power, and diminishes other characteristics and so gives us a typical East-ender, or a typical West-ender; or as the Communist creates his typical capitalist, or the capitalist creates his typical Communist. It is difficult to disprove the existence of these "typical" creatures to those who are without the mental acumen to detect the nature of their creations, because when one directs their attention to Englishmen, Frenchmen, Communists or Capitalists that do not comply with their typical specimen, the reply is, "Oh, well they are not 'typical' of their kind." Against such stupidity "even the Gods fight in vain."

But I hope that no one will write informing me that Frenchmen are different from Englishmen, and that the Capitalist and the Proletarian is each different in his outlook on life. I know they are. I am only trying to make plain the fact that these differences are not the result of inborn qualities. They are differences that have been created by social habits and institutions, by the sharing of a common life, that may be modified and replaced by other differences, in the course of a single generation if the situation is sufficiently changed, and in a longer period if the alteration is less drastic. I have really been insisting upon the plasticity of human nature, a fact that lies at the foundation of all successful systems of education, whether we are dealing with children or adults. Even in Germany, where the foolish theory of an Aryan race has assumed almost pathologic forms, the conception of a biologic type is given the lie by the attention which is paid to a system of education that has no significance if there actually exists a distinct Germanic, or Aryan type. Religion is not the only form taken by superstition. It flourishes in all departments of life. The greater the need for those who value sanity in social life to be always on their guard.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Fyfe's Fiery Fervour

"The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstition wise men follow fools, and arguments are fitted to practice in a reversed order."—Bacon.

"For what avail the plough or sail,
Or land, or life, if freedom fail?"—Emerson.

MR. HAMILTON FYFE is a distinguished journalist. That is to say, he is distinguished from other professional pen-pushers. Like the comedian who wishes to be a tragedian, he "wears his rue with a difference." Largely concerned with Left-Wing politics, he likes to introduce religion into his writings, sometimes with surprising results. Latterly, however, his excursions into theology have taken an hysterical tone, especially since he has found a god, or perhaps some deity has found him. Maybe, they have found each other. And the mutual recognition of two such distinguished personalities has become an event of newspaper importance, almost equal to a royal scandal. For, like so many worthy folk in similar condition, Mr. Fyfe has proceeded to make himself "a motley to the view." One of his pastimes has been to invent a purely personal and private religion, and to pretend that it is nothing else than the two-thousand-years'-old Christian Superstition, after undergoing alterations and repairs at the hands of Mr. Fyfe in person. No connexion with any other firm. Presumably, his crusading fervour has depressed his levity, for the process reminds us of how Edward Gibbon, the historian, learnt Greek "at the cost of many tears and not a little blood."

Because the Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury and the Romanist Archbishop of Westminster, and other salaried sons-of-God, have voiced a loud call for the application of Christianity to national affairs, and, incidentally, made great noises with the collecting boxes, Mr. Fyfe considers it an opportune moment to add to the din. This he has done in *Reynolds' News* (January 3, 1937), and, most certainly, he has, by his utterance, made the present confusion worse confounded. For he has the quaintest ideas concerning the Christian Religion, so unconventional, indeed, that most of his democratic readers must have felt like Alice in Wonderland.

Mr. Fyfe has a kind heart, and he permits his emotions to master him. This would not concern the world at large so much as his own friends, but he has chosen to express his emotion in print, and he must therefore expect criticism. His contention is that all good things are religious, and, as he is a Christian of some sort himself, all good things are therefore Christian. This charming piece of inexactitude is not novel, but Brother Fyfe makes novel use of it. For years and years some Christians have argued that, whenever a man makes a considerable reputation, he must owe it to Orthodoxy. They have even said that Charles Bradlaugh was a Christian all his life without realizing it, and they have suggested that, if Shelley had lived another six months, he would, inevitably, have become a Sunday-school teacher. Christians were so certain that Burton, Darwin, Huxley, Swinburne, and many others, were really Orthodox that they buried them in the sure and certain hope of a creed that they smiled at whilst living. Of course, lesser fry among Freethinkers, like you and me, were terrible beings who ate their young, murdered their mothers-in-law, and dodged income-tax.

So all-embracing is Mr. Fyfe's religious sentimentalism, that he has elaborated this urbane insolence into an oleaginous and spineless creed that he wishes to be thought true religion and undefiled. Totally

ignoring the well-known Anti-Clericalism of Soviet Russia, he actually refers to that country as "the only land where at the moment there is anything worth calling religion." And he goes on to say: "In Russia the rulers say they do not believe in God, but they are doing what all Christians must, if they accept the teaching of Jesus, admit to be God's work." He actually uses leaded type to emphasize his conclusion: "To me, the establishment of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. is by far the greatest religious event since the early Christians spread their faith."

Amid such a haze of sentimentalism it is difficult to locate Mr. Fyfe's own religious opinions, but as he refers to the "Magnificat," and speaks with respect of the "Catholic Church" and the Romish Archbishop of Westminster, it appears that he was, at some time, a Romanist or an Anglo-Catholic. If so, it will interest him to know that three Cardinals and a number of bishops of the Romish Church do not share his nebulous, topsy-turvy ideas concerning Bolshevism. In a pastoral letter read recently in churches in Germany, Bolshevism is described urbanely as:—

The denial of all religion, State Atheism, a gate of Hell, the advance troops of Anti-Christ, which is called in an Epistle of Saint Paul "the mystery of iniquity."

To me the openhated of the Romish ecclesiastics is less nauseating than the oily patronage of Mr. Fyfe, who, however well he means, has an equivocal method of approach. For his undenominational religionism has nothing whatever to do with historical Christianity, and, truth to tell, very little to do with common sense. According to Mr. Fyfe, a man's opinions count for nothing, but the only thing that counts is what he does. Why then, should he claim a man as a Christian because he is good to his own mother, or because he is kind to his fellows. I knew a Jewish race-horse owner who gave half-crowns to children and beggars. He attended Synagogue, had never set foot in a Christian church, and knew nothing of Christianity, yet Mr. Fyfe would claim him as a Christian. Mr. Fyfe contends that genuine Socialists obey the "Golden Rule"; therefore they are unconsciously religious. But Chinese Confucians revered the "Golden Rule" centuries before there was any Christian Religion, and Confucius himself never claimed to be other than a philosopher and teacher. Even Brother Fyfe cannot claim these people as Christians.

Mr. Fyfe is not always washing his hands in invisible soap and water, as Dickens expresses it. He regards the late Georges Clemenceau as a "criminal." Why? Because the great Frenchman acted in accordance with his principles, which were that Christianity was all rubbish. At any rate, Clemenceau was straightforward and a realist, which is more than can be said of his critic. After all is said, "Atheism," as Bacon reminds us, "leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to laws, to reputation; all of which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not."

It is a curious circumstance that so much drivel on religion should appear in so-called Democratic newspapers. With the solitary exception of the *Manchester Guardian*, they all seem tarred with the same brush. Mr. Fyfe's article appeared in *Reynolds' News*, which used to be more outspoken than its rivals in its treatment of religion. It is to be feared that the desire for huge circulations has led commercially-minded editors to "tickle the ears of the groundlings."

Let us be quite frank concerning this boasted Christian Religion. The Christian menu has no cor-

respondence with the meal that follows, and the price charged is far too high. A bird in the hand is worth any number in the bush. A slender chance of profit in an alleged next life does not compensate for mental slavery and robbery at the hands of priests in this life. Living by faith is an easy profession, as the dear clergy know only too well. Living on faith, however, is a very precarious business. The prophet Elijah is said to have subsisted on food brought him by god-inspired ravens, and forty thousand salaried sons-of-God to-day in this country subsist on the offerings of the pious. The afflicted people of Spain ask "God" to help them, and the answer is that they die. The inhabitants of the Black Areas in England ask "God" for help, and the answer is that they are half-starved. If there were no other indictment of the Christian superstition, the sufferings of these innocents would condemn it. No wonder that Freethinkers regard Christianity as a crumbling mummy, wrapped in its bands of dogma, incapable alike of progress or improvement. In his article, Mr. Fyfe makes play with the "Magnificat," and with Greek words in the New Testament. He does well to emphasize the association between dead languages and a dead creed. For the Christian Religion is no longer a live force, and soon the ordinary man will perceive that, whilst the priesthood circle round their idol, waving its censers and shouting its hymns, its ample draperies only partially hide from the public eye a decomposing corpse.

MIMNERMUS.

Anti-Religious Propaganda

THERE are some people who say that anti-religious propaganda is a waste of time. They usually qualify this with one or both of two assertions. The first is that such propaganda is always destructive; the second is that in attacking religion we are merely "flogging a dead horse."

Not one of these assertions is true.

Admitted that at all times and in all circumstances the world stands in need of constructive thinking and effort. Admitted that it is usually easier to be destructive than constructive. Still it remains true that, in certain circumstances, constructive action cannot begin to operate until preliminary demolition has taken place. And this is more often the case in the realm of ideas than in any other.

Ever since Christianity came to dominate European thought, we find that nearly all avenues of intellectual progress were blocked by the philosophical preconceptions of religion. For at least a thousand years (ca. 500 A.D.—1500 A.D.) almost every attempt at scientific advance was denounced as heretical. Men were imprisoned, tortured, and slain for expressing views that were regarded as contrary to Christian teaching. But truth cannot be annihilated; it can only be suppressed. And with the gradual spread of heresy, which in most cases was a closer approximation to truth, the punitive power of the Christian hierarchy inevitably dwindled. Yet even now, three or four hundred years after this power first began to collapse, when the heresies of yesterday have become the accepted truths of to-day, the self-styled representatives of God still do their utmost to impede the spread of true knowledge to all classes.

It is only within recent years that a fairly large number of persons have become aware of the extent to which a knowledge of the truth has been constantly blocked by the direct efforts and in the in-

terests of the clergy. The search for truth is no concern of religion, because the basic idea of religion is that it contains all truth. Consequently any statement or discovery which contradicts religious views must, *per se*, be untrue. But we have travelled a long way beyond that attitude of mind now. We are beginning to appreciate the contrary view, that there is little (if any) truth in religion, and that almost every kind of truth that is verifiable in experience actually contradicts religious teachings. Whatever function religion may have fulfilled in the distant past, we are nowadays beginning to realize that it is nothing more than a weapon in the hands of a privileged class, used for the purpose of maintaining privilege and power at the expense of the public.

As the essential truths embodied in the philosophies of the heretics gradually became common property, and, in proportion as it was realized that these truths contradicted religious teaching, so there developed a widespread indifference to religion in most of its aspects. But it takes more than mere indifference to wipe out the effects of centuries of false teaching. There still remains a huge residue of thought, warped by religious influences, which blinds the great majority of us to the underlying causes of our needlessly backward and unconstructive social condition. The Popes, prelates, priests, parsons, and pastors do, indeed, still stand like monstrous boulders in the path of human progress. But the more serious handicap lies in the fact that most of us are mentally crippled by the irrational modes of thought which we have inherited from their teachings.

How can we strive effectively for the welfare of humanity so long as these handicaps to right thinking and action remain? What is the use of propounding constructive measures if we know in advance that they cannot be carried into effect on account of the obstructions which exist? Is it not obvious that the obstacles must first be removed? Since the dead-weight of opposition to Atheistic views is still so heavy, what alternative have we but to remove that opposition first?

As Rationalists and Freethinkers we concede the right of everyone to express his opinions freely by word of mouth or in writing. We deny the right of anyone to prevent such expression in any way, least of all by physical force. The true interpretation of events, or the true solution to a problem, cannot be arrived at by mere dogmatic assertion. It is the free interplay and exchange of differing or opposed views which enables the human mind to balance the facts and to reach correct conclusions. So if one who is in power disagrees with my point of view, I must, if I wish my opinion to win the day, begin by persuading him that he is wrong. In no other way can I proceed to carry my constructive ideas into force. If, in doing this, I destroy my opponent's arguments or beliefs, is it fair or even reasonable to call my methods "destructive"?

Here, then, we have the complete justification for what is so glibly called the "destructive" nature of anti-religious propaganda. We may smile at the pompous antics of the bigwigs of religion. We may ignore the more frequent, if less obstructive, machinations of the lower ranks of the clergy. We may, indeed, profess to be wholly indifferent to the concerns of religion and the Churches. But, behind all these and hidden from our conscious view, there still remains that *bar sinister* across our intellects—the stultifying force of centuries of religious instruction. It is this insidious and all-pervading opposition to constructive thinking against which the propaganda of Atheism is directed. Not until this has been enormously reduced can there be much hope of carrying

into effect the constructive schemes which true Atheism has constantly in view.

We Atheists are, as a body, too few and too poor to make much of a splash in any sort of constructive action we may desire to initiate. Persuasion and education by propaganda are, for all practical purposes, the only means of constructive action open to us. But with a population already saturated with the illogical prejudices of religion, this fair and peaceful way of influencing public opinion is in constant danger of suppression. For all these disadvantages the forces of reaction and superstition cry, "Thank God!" And it is indeed God—or rather, the God-idea—that is responsible for our relative impotence, as also for the greater part of our social evils.

Is it possible to believe that the search for a solution to the problem of poverty would have been so long and so callously shelved, if it had not been for the poisonous Christian teaching about Heaven and the hereafter? Is it possible to believe that medical science would have been in its present backward state if it had not been for the stupid doctrine that disease is an infliction of God for the punishment of wickedness? Would reform in the criminal law have been so slow and unintelligent if it had not been for the religious conception of Original Sin? In these, as in many other spheres of social activity, the bias of religion has been all against progress and improvement on scientific and humanitarian lines. The battle against poverty, crime, disease, and ignorance has scarcely begun. And whichever way we turn, we invariably discover that it is the still deeply entrenched God-idea, and all that is implied in it, which constitutes the most formidable barrier to the onward march of the relieving armies of reason and right thinking.

On these grounds Atheism justly repudiates the accusation of being merely destructive. It remains to deal with the further criticism that we are "flogging a dead horse."

This metaphor implies that the victory over superstition and superstitious thinking has already been won. It implies that most of our fellow-men have rid themselves of the shackles of religion. It implies that most kinds, if not every kind, of constructive action can be advocated and carried into effect without serious opposition on the part of religious persons and religious interests. To anyone who mixes with other people and notes their opinions and their reactions to the opinions of others; to anyone who takes more than a superficial interest in the public affairs of his community or country, the suggestion that such implications are true is bound to make him smile.

It may be true that only ten per cent of the population ever goes regularly to church or chapel. It may be true that ninety-nine per cent of the population has ceased to believe in some of the palpable absurdities of religious doctrine. But non-attendance at church or chapel, combined with a disbelief in religious absurdities, does not provide an absolute guarantee against illogical thinking and action. We still live under a regime that derives its origins from religious times, and most of our public institutions are riddled with religious preconceptions. The Bishops sit in our Upper House of Parliament acting as a drag upon the legislature. Religious ideas are still taught in the schools, warping the minds of the young. The Press and the B.B.C. pour forth a spate of religious rubbish, which cannot fail to have its harmful effects upon a public which is still largely gullible and credulous. One cannot discuss religion with one's next-door neighbour without risk of rousing ill-feeling. Even amongst Atheists we may

sometimes discover remnants of illogicality, which can be traced to religious sources. There is, indeed, hardly a single sphere of human thought which is not in some measure cursed with prejudices and false preconceptions of purely religious origin.

One thing is quite certain—whatever may be one's opinion as to the value of destroying religion and the religious mentality, there can be no question as to their ubiquity and power. The "horse" we are "flogging" may be in process of vanishing under the influence of education and rational thinking, but it is far from being dead. Moreover, like the proverbial cat, it has a knack of resurrection, usually under another guise. We, who have come to realize the evil that is inherent in every religion and religious institution, cannot rest from our anti-religious labours until the last traces of their influence have been removed from society.

C. S. FRASER.

Geese and Ganders

IN *Time and Tide* (January 2), Miss E. M. Delafield gives us first-hand information as to the effect non-religious or anti-religious education is having upon the new generation in Soviet Russia. She had the good fortune, as one of an Intourist party, of "taking notes" at the catechising in school of a party of school-girls, between fourteen and eighteen years of age. The opportunity had arisen through the insistence of a German professor on obtaining facts as to the position of God in the minds of Miss (and Master) Russia. He conducted the following dialogue with the head girls:—

"Do any of you ever go to Church?"

There is a second's stupefied silence. The girls look at one another—and then they suddenly all break out, quite spontaneously, into young, merry laughter.

"They are amused," says the guide, superfluously. The head girl turns to the Professor. . . .

"We know," she explains politely, "that the Churches teach only superstition, and we cannot help laughing at the thought that we should waste our time in thinking about such things."

"What do your parents say?"

"They also know that it is superstition. It is only for the very old people, the grandparents. But we are the lucky children of the revolution."

The last phrase is a quotation. I have heard it sung by the children in the crèches and the clinics, time and again.

Miss Delafield does not care for this automatic readiness. With that point of view we have sympathy, but her objection does not appear to be confined to that. She confesses, mildly enough, that she does not like the idea of children being "brought up little heathens." "Little heathens" is one of those expressions which illumine by their very lack of precision. It carries here evidently a disagreeable significance. It is possible that what brought about this reaction in Miss Delafield's case is in exact line with that process which in Russia she deprecates.

"Have you ever, any of you, read the Bible?"

"No. It would be of no use to us."

"How can you tell that, if you've never read it?"

"We know that it is none of it true. What is false cannot be good."

"It has historical value. It has influenced the world for many thousands of years."

"It has influenced it badly. We wish to forget all that and make a new world, founded on reason and without superstition."

What is false cannot be good. We wish to forget all that and make a new world. Poor unfortunate little heathen! How much better would it be if they were telling their beads. How much better if they were repeating spiritual truths:—

The Most Holy Trinity is a profound mystery, revealed to us by God. The Catholic Church teaches that in one God there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; really distinct one from the other, and equal in eternity, power, immensity, and all other perfections; because all the three Persons have one and the same Divine nature or essence. . . .

It is a great mystery, surpassing all understanding, to be adoringly believed on earth, and to be understood only in heaven.

This is the stuff to make heathenism vanish. All will be understood in heaven. There is no repulsive nonsense about a new world here. It is a simple reminder of the old-fashioned Heaven. The Vision Splendid here is of a Mansion in the Skies; not a Materialistic one of a decent Home in this green and pleasant land. The first vision is for our charming little children; the second is fit for little heathen.

Interrogating school-children in Russia is not, however, all beer and skittles.

Then the girls, feeling, I suppose, that they have disposed very thoroughly of the whole question of religion, ask whether, in England, girls and boys still learn the Scriptures.

"Certainly. It is an important part of the history of the world, and very beautiful literature besides."

"Do they read the works of Darwin?"

"Those who wish to do so, no doubt."

"Then how," demands the head girl rhetorically, "can they believe in what the Bible says, if they have learnt about the theory of evolution?"

E.M.D. will admit, we think, that there is something not exactly parrot-like in the girl's attempt to negotiate the third leg of her syllogism. She may confess as well that the word "rhetorical" is hardly an apt descriptive word to use in the circumstances. We know it is common to dilate upon the manner in which a thing we find difficult to answer has been uttered; a little less insistence in our schools upon the Holy Ghost, and a little more stressing of logic and psychology might have done something to correct this bad habit. There is, however, one possible happy outcome from this dialogue. We can imagine these bright juveniles questioning their head at the first opportunity, and enquiring why they had been wrongly informed about the schools of England. For they had been told by a cultivated English lady that the Bible was in the schools of England because it was a History Book, and, because, be it never forgotten, it was beautiful literature. And—oh yes—Darwin would be served up to those who wanted him, no doubt.

No doubt! . . . No doubt!

Still, Miss Delafield, it must be admitted, took her first hurdle and took it with credit. She explains that listening to the girls reminded her of the Jesuits—"Give me a child until it is seven years old. . . ."

Then, however, finding herself in the open country with many of her companions disappearing from view, she senses that the chase may prove unprofitable, so gives up the hunt.

Miss Delafield has found out that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. But, says the Christian, we teach the truth, and the Reds teach Error; therein lies the difference. As this is the precise position of Soviet leaders, Miss Delafield will not consciously, we surmise, embark on that leaky galley.

That the anti-clericals in Russia have accepted (so far), and bettered the instructions of the Christian Church, accounts for the hatred poured upon them

by the Church. The tricks, they fear, look like being taken by the enemy owing to a new deal having altered the position of the trump-cards.

The Russian argument is that they find mankind already the victims of this early mishandling, and it is their plain duty to declutch the arrogant imposition of the dead hand. While the Church claim to possess Absolute Truth, eternal and irrevocable, they conceive Truth as relative, widening as experience widens, and varying as knowledge grows from more to more. With them, therefore, development is possible.

It is for the Freethinker to listen calmly and attempt to measure fairly. He walks with Miss Delafield this far; he shares her distrust of the Disease of Orthodoxy. He remembers Loyola and the Jesuits and other remarkable metamorphoses, and knows full well that the plague of orthodoxy may commence from a very pleasing germ. He sympathizes with the attempt to impart culture and impart it quickly, but to force debatable cards upon the helpless young he regards as an abomination, which from his first principles he must actively resist. He would educate by encouraging and drawing out the child's natural aptitudes, and by the inculcation of an attitude (for the greater part effected by example and suggestion) towards life and knowledge rather than by gram-phonizing a definite set of ideas. By the extent of the harvest gleaned from the personal contributions of all men to the world's store of ideas, and the extent to which these social units are prone to examine, question and add to human knowledge, the Russian educational system, along with all other educational systems, must stand or fall.

T. H. ELSTON.

Fifty Years Ago

WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK?

WHEN Abraham returned from a successful campaign, in which he defeated five kings and their armies with three hundred and eighteen raw recruits, Melchizedek came out to meet him with victuals and drink. They formed, in fact, a small mutual admiration society. Abraham, although at other times a rank coward was on this occasion a bold warrior laden with spoil; and Melchizedek besides being King of Salem, was "the priest of the most high God." As usual, however, the priest got the best of it, for the patriarch paid him tithes, which were a capital return for his compliments. Genesis is a little confused, indeed; and what Scripture is not? "And he gave him tithes of all" is not very clear.

We may depend on it that this little sentence about tithes, and perhaps the whole story that leads up to it, was got up by the priests, to give the authority of Abraham's name and the sanction of antiquity to an institution which kept them in luxury at the expense of their neighbours.

Our view of the case is supported by the fact that Melchizedek's name does not appear again in the whole of the Old Testament, except in the hundred and tenth Psalm, where somebody or other (the parsons, of course, say Christ) is called "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Paul, or whoever wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, works up this hint in fine style. It would puzzle a lunatic, or a fortune teller, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or God Almighty himself, to say what the seventh of Hebrews means. We give it up as an insoluble conundrum, and we observe that every commentator with a grain of sense and honesty does the same. But there is one luminous flash in the jumble of metaphysical darkness. Melchizedek is described as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." It will be easy to recognize a gentleman of that description when you meet him.

The Freethinker, January 23, 1887.

Acid Drops

We commend the following poignant Christmas greeting to the attention of our readers. It comes from Ethiopia, the oldest Christian nation in the world, and is addressed to their more fortunate Brothers-in-Christ:—

I hereby convey in the name of His Majesty the Emperor and the people of Ethiopia, our hearty greetings to all the Christian peoples belonging to the Western Church on the occasion of their Christmas Festival. I have specified the Western Church because the Christmas Day according to the Eastern, Orthodox or Coptic Church is celebrated fourteen days later. The explanation of this difference in the day of the festival could only be explained, if at all, by our learned theologians. However, although it is a pity that the great Festival is not celebrated on the same day by all the Christians in the world the foundation or object of the Festival being the same, namely Commemoration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we as fellow Christians warmly wish you a very happy celebration of the holy Festival and also a very happy New Year. No doubt the mention of our name will probably remind you of Ethiopia's unhappy condition, but we beg you to forget, as far as possible, our misery for a while in the happy commemoration of the birth of the Saviour of the world, the Prince of Peace, and only just remember us in your prayers of praise and thanksgiving and in your supplications for peace and justice amongst the nations of the world.

It is documents like this, and not the tendentious paragraphs of our newspapers, that will be seized upon with avidity by the historian of the future. Ignominy upon ignominy has been heaped upon the Christian Church, but this letter surely marks the utmost rung of their conceivable humiliation. Surely there are a few good men and true in the Christian Church whom it is capable of rousing to the point of throwing off, once and for all, their miserable allegiance, and saying with spirit, "I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Christian!"

Sir Charles Marston has been informing the readers of the *Daily Telegraph*, that he considers the Primate in recommending a Big Boost in Religion is making an initial error in placing too much reliance on reason. We agree with him. Sir Charles prefers to base the "drive" on the "faculty of intuition," from which he feels more results could be achieved. We agree with him. We suppose he bases his argument for the superiority of intuition, therefore, upon intuition. Here again we can satisfy him, for all our intuitions rise up in a body and satisfy us that Sir Charles Marston is wise in his generation, and knows precisely what he is about.

Sir Charles's plan, however, has its little drawbacks. That it puts on one side the Pauline injunction to "prove all things; hold fast what is good," is, of course, a minor matter, for no Christian yet has found much difficulty in rejecting a passage of Scripture not to his liking. The main trouble that has to be faced is that in the realm of intuition, one intuition is as good as another. There is no other way of composing differences, save the time-honoured one of hitting your brother on the head. An unpleasant method save for those whose intuitions urge them to shelter under the big battalions.

There is a *Matrimonial Catechism* prepared by one Roderick MacEachen, D.D., of the Catholic University of America, with a preface by His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons. It contains valuable information for the devout:—

Q. What should they do who have prayed in vain for children?

A. Those who have prayed in vain for children would do well to consult a good physician.

And in this wise do we circumvent God, who, we used to be assured, "sends the little babies."

Other times, other manners. In the good old biblical days, when ladies went to the priests, asking advice on this delicate theme, they were not told to go to the doctor. Offspring came along, we are informed, in the case of the wife of Manoah (Judges xiii.) and other cases by purely "spiritual" agencies. The first rule then appears to have been: Seek you first the Man of God—and the rest shall be added unto you.

The Rev. Wilson Leslie, D.D., is impatient when people ask irreverently, "What Is the Church Doing?" In his opinion "the Church" should not be asked to suggest any policy of any kind for the general welfare. We cannot, of course, disagree with his frank confessions about his fellow clerics:—

The Church, as represented by its clergy, has neither the economic training, the intimate knowledge of abuses, nor the authority which would be required to prescribe methods of reform.

The clergy have not the necessary equipment to formulate economic programmes. They are quite ignorant of many of the dishonest irregularities with which every business man is familiar.

When Mr. Leslie goes on to praise the work of "laymen," and to suggest that it is to laymen we must look for the only practical politics of our day he is right, if by "laymen" he means those who are not clergymen.

The Cinema Christian Council (whatever that may be) "finds various points in the film 'Green Pastures' open to criticism," but thinks it "a moving and reverent representation of a primitive conception of the Old Testament religion." (Our italics). The Council "were unanimous, however, that the film was unsuitable for children." Now, had the film been *real testament* stuff, it would have been fit for children, we presume. Certainly, a faithful scenario from the "good book" would have sent children into "fits"—of nightmare horrors.

The Roman Catholic journal, *The Universe*, said in a recent number that "Rumour has for some time been busy with the name of Mr. Aldous Huxley, with what basis we know not." This "rumour" seems to be that the review by Mr. Desmond MacCarthy of Mr. Huxley's latest volume, *The Olive Tree*, shows that "Mr. Huxley seems to be fairly set upon the path that brought Mr. Arnold Lunn into the Church." One can, of course, understand Mr. Lunn accepting all the credulous tomfoolery which characterizes the Roman Catholic Church, but surely a grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley—who, whatever his faults, was always a most uncompromising opponent of Roman Catholicism in particular, and Christianity in general—should pause before taking such a step—if he is contemplating it? Surely there can be no hesitation where Rome or Reason is concerned?

Efforts are constantly made to establish a fixed Easter—the present movable one proving, in many ways, very inconvenient. Of course, there may be a *principal* reason—and that is, that an Easter which has to be calculated each year, seems clearly to point out its connexion with sun or moon worship. As a matter of fact, that is precisely what a movable Easter does prove, a Pagan festival with a fertility motive—the sun bringing forth the new year's flowers and fruits, and all nature rejoicing in the coming of spring. This even includes the young man whose "fancy lightly turns to thought of love." At all events, even the "Holy See" is not altogether adverse to a fixed Easter. Perhaps the Pope—like Joseph Smith—will get a special revelation on the matter.

Christians are everywhere rejoicing at the "crushing" defeat of the resolution opposing the teaching of religion in State Schools, at the meeting at Nottingham recently, of the Council of the Association of Secondary School Assistant Masters. We are not surprised, for Secular Education will have to be fought for, teachers will have to be educated on the question, there must be

no victimization on the part of school managers, in fact, no one who understands the difficulties can imagine for a moment that the religious authorities are going to give up church influence without a terrible struggle. Apathy has done more to retard a favourable issue on Secular Education than anything else.

It may be true that "simple" Bible teaching is all that the victorious teachers are out for. But the *Church Times* is not at all content with this. "Why not teach the boys," it cries, "that the mission of the Bible is to make clear to the world that Our Lord was God Incarnate?" And, of course, following from this, the Bible must be God's Holy Word, miracles actually took place, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the Ascension are literally true, and therefore, Christianity is a Divine Religion and must be believed in, with Hell and Eternal Damnation as the penalty for unbelief. We could soon be back to the Ages of Faith. What a fearful prospect! Fortunately, in spite of the great "victory" for religious instruction in schools, the mass of the people are becoming less and less religious—and don't the Archbishops know it!

A Conference of the Student Christian Movement took place at the beginning of the year. The usual fatuous nonsense was shouted by a number of religious gentlemen which would deserve no notice but for the grandiose titles given to the speeches. These people who call themselves "men of God," naturally speak for God. Their themes were, "God speaks to this generation," "God's Good News," "God speaks through the World," and so on. It is difficult to imagine that even men of God really believe that they know anything whatever about God, or what he thinks or says, or whether he speaks to the world, or does not. Yet hundreds of people will listen with open-mouthed wonder at the usual hopeless imbecilities about "Christ enthroned in men's hearts." "Christ as the sovereign Lord, the Judge, the God on the Cross," and similar gibberish, as proof of God's undying love for the world, and the way in which he "speaks" to it. The Conference was packed with missionaries, most of whom are beginning to see that their jobs are not quite so safe as similar jobs used to be in the days of faith. Perhaps that is why they were so terribly anxious to impress upon their audience what God was doing for the world. Will anyone be the wiser or the happier for all this holy trash?

From the *Melbourne Herald* we learn that Mrs. Evan Rees, President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, has been expressing herself in that city with clarity:—

A Sunday morning in the city is no longer like the Sabbath. We should not, as Christian people, allow this to go on.

Temperance and Christianity never did go together. If people apply themselves to the game of life they soon find that they have to devise rules of accommodation so as to make existence tolerable, but once convince them that they have a God on their side and they acquire an itch for interfering with other people, and they make of this detestable characteristic a holy thing. What would the world do without Christianity?

There has been what is described as "great tension" amongst the congregation at St. Mary's Cathedral, Kumbakonam. We are informed that several Catholic Harijans entered the Church and insisted on sitting amongst the caste Catholics, instead of occupying that portion of the church set apart for them. Whereupon each caste Catholic left his or her pew (Pugh!) and ceased to worship his maker under such deplorably democratic conditions. The Bishop advised the "direct actionists" to act reasonably and not to wound other people's feelings. There is no record of his having advised the devotees of caste that all men are equal in the sight of God, and to be careful not to wound other people's feelings. So the Harijans are still agitating for a "united front" considering, in spite of their

Christian education, that they are as good as their neighbours. These heathens, evidently, must be larnt their lesson, but the good Bishop can be trusted.

The *Literary Digest* of New York reports the rapid decline of religion in U.S.A. as illustrated by the fact that over 21,000 churches have been abandoned or closed recently. The excuse given by the denomination is that motor cars take away the congregations who apparently prefer a spin in the country to a snooze in God's house. Who can blame them?

Experiments in economizing places of worship are being made in New York State, says the *Literary Digest*. Mr. Owen D. Young proposes to get rid of five out of seven ministers in the area of his experiment. He imagines that a sort of high-pressure gospel salesmanship would do bigger business for Christ than letting things rip in the old gospel out-of-date way. We imagine that reducing the number of pious parasites is a step in the right direction, but it is a great mistake to leave two out of every seven—why not sack the lot?

The Age of Reason

We believe that most of our readers will be as pleased to read as we are to write the information of the immediate success of our edition of the *Age of Reason*. Orders are coming in rapidly, and as we expected, a great many are taking extra copies for distribution among their Christian friends. Many have sent for dozens, some for more, and a few have gone so far as a hundred copies. The cloth copies are also being ordered.

The price, of course, is phenomenal. Fourpence for a well printed volume of 250 pages establishes a record. In the ordinary way Mr. Cohen's Introduction could not have been issued under sixpence. It is certain that the edition cannot be reprinted at the price—unless someone is willing to foot the bill for printing. The cloth copies, at 1s. 6d. are also being liberally ordered.

We have had printed a supply of show cards, which are not too large for the ordinary shop window. Will our friends help in getting these placed?

The most successful propagandist pamphlet of recent times was our little pamphlet on *The Church in Spain*. The war in Spain was the occasion, but a statement of the ruin of Spain by the Church opened the eyes of large numbers of people to the real influence of "the Infamous." It is possible to make this edition of the *Age of Reason* equally serviceable to Freethought. We want everyone to get to work.

Meanwhile we must ask those who have ordered copies to exercise a little patience. Orders will be discharged in the order of receipt, but we could not begin until the 18th. By the end of a week all orders will have been fulfilled, at least up to date. Thomas Paine is still very much alive, as Christians have reason to know, and in spite of the attempts to kill him by slander and a cowardly policy of silence. It would be rather interesting if the circulation of this edition led to another Paine revival.

One enthusiastic friend asks if we could see our way clear to issuing a similar edition of the *Rights of Man*. We should like to, but out of our present deficit we do not see a margin for further losses. If that millionaire will come along—?

Meanwhile the Secular Society Limited is issuing, almost immediately, Colonel Ingersoll's wonderful *Oration on Thomas Paine*, with coloured wrapper, at twopence. We anticipate a brisk demand for this very striking pamphlet.

Make 1937 a year for Free

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- C. CLAYTON DOVE.—Sorry to learn that you have been suffering from the common complaint of rheumatism. Hope you will soon be better, but there are few of us who manage to escape it altogether. Paine volumes are being sent.
- W.D.M.—We cannot understand anyone worthy the name of a Freethinker championing Fascism. If Freethought is not opposed to that, it is about time Freethought as a movement was dead and buried. But one has to make allowances for freedom of opinion, and one has to listen to much that would be better unsaid. We have tried to lay down in these columns what we believe is the attitude of a real Freethinker to such questions, and also the Society's attitude towards general subjects such as Communism and other social theories.
- S. S. GERSON.—You do not give your full address or we should have written you. But we are sorry we cannot insert your letter. We have no concern whatever with what a contributor to these columns may say in the course of an address he was delivering. The matter lies between him, his audience, and those who arrange the meeting. We are however, pleased to learn that you have derived so much pleasure and profit from reading this journal.
- S. MARTIN.—More *Pamphlets for the People* will appear, but Mr. Cohen has been very, very busy of late, and some things have had to be postponed. He is doing now more than he ought to do, but some matters are very pressing.
- O. TOWNSEND.—We do not know that anyone pays the least attention to anything that Lord Alfred Douglas says on the subject. There is a deal of truth in your remark that often "Elevated to the peerage," might read "Descended to the peerage." Many men such as Mill and Spencer have declined all titles, so have many eminent politicians who knew from the inside what getting a peerage meant.
- G. F. LAWES.—Thanks for reference. The talk of the Bible as being a mine of English, and of its having exerted a commanding influence over English literature, is just nonsense. The surprising thing is the hasty manner in which some Freethinkers, who ought to know better, repeat as true, statements that have no foundation other than Christian propaganda.
- R. WATSON.—Pleased to learn that our notes on "Losing God" helped to cheer you while unwell in bed. Copies are being sent.
- J. T. BRIGHTON.—Sorry to hear of your accident. We note that you are as busy as ever, and, to hand, we have some excellent reports of your work.
- FOR Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—S. Dacre £1; R. Horrocks, 5s.
- S. DACRE.—Your order for 100 copies of the *Age of Reason* is a very practical way of showing your appreciation of the issue.
- A NUMBER of replies to correspondents are held over until next week.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

There is just time to remind those coming to the Paine Memorial Dinner that a plan of the tables indicating the position of each person will be exhibited in the reception room. Dinner will be served promptly at 6.45.

Next week's issue of the *Freethinker* will be a special Thomas Paine issue. There will be a portrait of Paine—taken from an exceptionally fine impression of Sharpe's engraving of Romney's painting; and the full length sketch of Paine by Mr. Cohen will cover a deal of ground not touched in his Introduction to the *Age of Reason*. There will be no increase in price, but those who require extra copies will oblige by placing their orders with newsagents without delay. It will guide us as to our printing order. The number will serve excellently for introducing the paper to likely new readers.

Over 140 years ago Thomas Paine laid out a scheme that included a maternity benefit. We are glad to say that the present Government has not lost sight of the need for a provision for the bringing-up of children. In the new civil list £25,000 a year is to be set aside for the maintenance of the young Princess Elizabeth. The rest of her cost is to be borne by the proper parties—her parents. It is well that the responsibilities of parentage should be recognized.

The *Christian World* offers its congratulations to Sir Halley Stewart on his achieving the anniversary of his ninety ninth birthday. We join in the congratulations. The *Christian World* also remarks that "no living man more splendidly represents the Free Church tradition." We also agree with this, but we also know that one of Sir Halley Stewart's lamentations, to us, as well as to others, is that Free Churchmen have so readily deserted their principles when it paid them to do so. The teaching of religion by the State was one of the cases to which he referred. The *Christian World* overlooked this fact. It is too much of a Free Church paper to remember it. But we should feel greatly obliged if it would inform us of the difference between the State teaching religion to children and teaching it to adults, and also the distinction between the State Church receiving what are substantially State grants of money, and Free Churchmen getting it in exactly the same proportion. We do not anticipate an answer to so simple a question. We feel sure that Sir Halley Stewart would be interested in the answer.

On the evening of January 16, Professor J. B. S. Haldane and a Mr. E. H. Keeling were allowed to broadcast their personal experiences in Spain. Professor Haldane, who had spent his time with the Government forces in Madrid, was asked by the B.B.C. :—

Not to comment on the British Government's policy. Mr. Keeling, who spent his time with Franco's forces (which did not prevent him from illuminating the British Public as to what was happening in Madrid) concluded his remarks by giving his whole-hearted approval to the British Government's policy of non-intervention. It is said that a people get the Government they deserve. Certainly if the British public will submit to this kind of spoon-feeding, they will richly deserve being treated as puppets, and any rods that are about to be applied to their backs.

Gerald Bullett, we learn from *Time and Tide*, on turning over the pages of an old common-place book which had been in the possession of his family for some three generations, came across the following lines :—

Thought and the "Freethinker"

My Lord Archbishop, what a scold you are!
 And when your man is down how bold you are!
 Of charity how oddly scant you are!
 O Lord how Lang, how full of Cantuar!

This is a better example of prophecy than any we have been able to find in the Christian Scriptures.

Bearing in mind the backing the Roman Catholic Church has given Mussolini in his deliberate murder of women and children in Abyssinia, with the tacit assistance of the British and French Governments, the following from the *Church Times* is worth noting:—

A suggestive statement by Cardinal Tisserand in a recent interview in an Italian newspaper is quoted in the *International Review of Missions*. His Eminence is reported to have said: "With the conquest of the Empire a vast field is open to Catholic missions, whose work has hitherto been hampered in Abyssinia by the unyielding opposition of the monophysite clergy (i.e., of the ancient Abyssinian Church). The work of the Catholic missionary will nobly go hand in hand with the civilizing actions which Italy, under the Fascist government, has already begun to restore to the people the civilization of Rome, and, with it, social well-being." Could anything more completely justify all that has been written of the inevitable and lamentable result of the Abyssinian war? The priest is to follow the Fascist into a land that possessed one of the most ancient of Christian Churches, and its hierarchy now implicitly approve the aeroplane bombs that have destroyed the influence of "the monophysite clergy," and opened the way for the Roman missionary. The close association of the Roman Church and the Italian Government is evident throughout the Near East, and is one of the complications in Palestine.

An aggressive imperialism and Christian missions have usually run well together. The Papacy in this matter was running true to form.

From the *Star*:—

Clergy attending Islington Clerical Conference at Westminster to-day applauded when the President, the Rev. J. M. Hewitt said, "We rejoice that we have a King and Queen who make open acknowledgment of God by their attendance with their children at public worship each Lord's Day."

The Clergy applauded. There's nothing like leather!

The *Daily Mirror* prints the following from the *Christian Herald*:—

Some have noted, and it is certainly not without significance, that on the very day that the film "Green Pastures" was first shown to the public the Crystal Palace was burnt down.

and asks the *Christian Herald* to explain "why the poor old Crystal Palace caught it in the neck rather than the cinema that was showing the film." It says much for the abjectness of the *Herald's* type of superstition when the *Daily Mirror* thinks it can be smiled at with impunity.

The *Freethinker* for 1936, strongly bound in cloth, gilt-lettered and with title-page, will be ready in a few days. As for some years now the available copies have been rapidly exhausted, those who require the volume should send their order without delay, particularly as, judging from the heavy sale of many issues, owing to the matters dealt with being of unusual interest, there is likely to be a greater demand than usual. Orders will be executed in rotation. The price is 17s. 6d., plus 1s. postage.

The North London Branch N.S.S. was unfortunate in having a breakdown in the organization of its second session of indoor meetings through the shortcomings of an official. Mr. Ebury promptly came to the rescue, although in ill-health, and has arranged a full syllabus of Sunday evening meetings in the Primrose Restaurant, 66 Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3. Local saints should see that Mr. Ebury's enterprise and enthusiasm are rewarded by a full house at each meeting. Lectures begin at 7.30.

The Dark Deeds of the Literary Censor

THE invention of the printing press proved one of the most outstanding achievements of the human race. With the appearance of the printed page, knowledge previously confined to the priestly and legal castes was extended to a constantly increasing circle. As time went on, causes previously decided by a privileged minority were gradually subjected to scrutiny and discussion by an ever-growing reading public, until the pen became the most potent instrument of education and propaganda in the civilized globe.

With the publication and sale of books in which ideas were expressed of a novel nature, the clericals became gravely alarmed. A dread of heresy and deep concern at any invasion of their long-enjoyed monopoly induced the clergy to curb the press. In the very city of Gutenberg, the celebrated pioneer printer, the first edict for the licensing of books was issued by the Archbishop of Mainz, in 1485. A little later, the Pope and the fifth Lateran Council decreed a Papal censorship for the whole of Christendom. In our own island, Cardinal Wolsey, in 1526, compiled the first list of forbidden books to safeguard Romanism from Lutheran contagion, while a further list was drawn up in the Netherlands by Imperial sanction in 1546.

Not to seem negligent, the Council of Trent hastened to prohibit the printing of anonymous writings, or works bearing on theology. In 1557, the Papal Inquisition prepared a lengthy catalogue of volumes to be consigned to the flames, and this document was the parent of the many Indices of Prohibited Books subsequently issued, although the earliest publication with the title of *Index* did not appear until 1559. The former document classified forbidden books as follows: there were those of authors completely condemned; those of writers who erred occasionally; and those of anonymous scribes. This proving ineffective, Pius IV., in 1562, promulgated a more far-reaching Index, in which the laity were forbidden on pain of excommunication to peruse any writing condemned by Councils or Popes in past times, or to study unauthorized versions of Scripture, heretical books or any of a pornographic or magical character.

The Church was determined that her mandates should be obeyed, and booksellers who contravened her commands were subjected to severe penalties by the Inquisition. Works utterly repugnant to the sacerdotalists were listed in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, and these the people were forbidden to read, but those mentioned in the *Index Expurgatorius* could be consulted when their pages were purged of all matter deemed dangerous. As a result, all Protestant and other heretical writings, which included those of the Jansenists, were banned. The array of illustrious writers, whose works were either entirely prohibited or only allowed after expurgation is astounding. It included Descartes, Spinoza, Dante, Bacon, Bruno, Selden, Montaigne, Grotius, Scaliger, Milton, Sir Thomas More and many others. "It is instructive to notice," observes the Professor of History at Cornell University, "that Dante was expurgated for his reflections on the Papacy contained in the *Monarchia* and in the *Divine Comedy*, and that Boccaccio was expurgated not chiefly for his indecency, but for his satire on the clergy. Thus his tale of the seduction of an abbess was rendered acceptable by changing the nun into a countess; and the story of the priest who led a woman

astray by impersonating the angel Gabriel was altered merely by turning the priest into a layman masquerading as a fairy king."

"This tampering with, and falsification of, literary masterpieces was naturally annoying to men of science and letters. No wonder that Sarpi denounced the censorship as a dagger drawn against authors, or that Milton scathingly declared that the "expurgating indexes rake through the entrails of many an old, good author, with a violation worse than any that could be offered to his tomb."

Priest-infested Spain prepared an Index in addition to that of Rome. The Spanish Inquisition claimed and exercised the power to condemn heretical writings, and also issued licences, while the Crown protected clerical interests by condemning to death with confiscation of property, all who sold or even possessed any book which the Inquisition disapproved. Moreover, the mere circulation of a manuscript not submitted beforehand to the authorities was made a capital crime, and this atrocious act was not repealed until the end of the eighteenth century.

The censorship in France was as severe as that of Spain and Italy, although it was entirely controlled by the secular power. The printing or importation of unorthodox publications incurred the death penalty under Francis I. and his successor. In 1609 the drama was placed under strict supervision, and the official censor guarded the interests of both Church and State. In 1630, a decree which regulated the Parisian book-market was issued, which announced that experience had taught French rulers "how prejudicial to the State is the liberty of the press." Yet, during the discords of the Fronde, the censorship was largely disregarded, and numerous unlicensed pamphlets appeared. So, in 1649, the Parlement of Paris prohibited all unlicensed publications under very severe penalties, and later, from 1660 to 1665, the State ruthlessly suppressed every news-sheet save two that were consistently loyal both to Church and State. In the Spanish Netherlands, likewise, barbarous sentences were inflicted on "those who should sell, or even read or possess, heretical and scandalous literature."

Despite the opposition of the theologians, the intrepid Dutch who had liberated their country from the blighting tyranny of Spain had gained a modicum of freedom of expression. Here as elsewhere, however, heresy and Freethought aroused bitter hatred. The Synod of Dort would have strengthened the hand of the censor yet, save in seasons of popular frenzy, the censorship became so slightly exercised that Amsterdam and Leyden grew into cities of refuge, and developed into centres for the publication of the sceptical writings of every European land. Descartes, Galileo, Locke and many other foreign authors found in Holland a freedom denied them in their native land. So numerous were the French periodicals that were printed in Holland for the French reader at home, that in the seventeenth century the usual designation in France for a news-sheet was *Gazette de Hollande*. Also, the earliest English newspapers were set up by Dutch printers.

In Germany, owing to the weakened authority of the rulers of her many distracted States, there emerged a relative freedom from restraint. In the Catholic communities heretical writings were sternly suppressed, and, as a rule, Protestant principalities forbade books deemed doubtful or treasonable. Still, it became possible in the various free cities to find publishers for works of enlightenment, and Frankfurt evolved into the leading centre of printers and book-

dealers. It is thought that the opulence of the book-dealers inclined the authorities to permit more liberal press laws, and it is significant that from the time of Gutenberg until the terrible Thirty Years' War of religion, more important books were printed in Germany than in any other country.

The early press legislation in England was very repressive, and the publication of heretical, seditious and blasphemous writings was punished by the early Tudors as a serious offence. The later Tudors, however, relied less on criminal proceedings than on the powers conferred on the Stationers' Company incorporated under Mary in 1557. The Company was able to monopolize and completely control the publishing industry. Orders issued under Elizabeth prohibited the publication of books unless licensed by bishops, archdeacons, privy councillors or university officials, and these instructions were strengthened by an Act of 1581. Under this enactment an offending publisher was put to death in 1584.

The Star Chamber participated in these coercive measures and issued ordinances in 1585 and 1637. The first of these limited the printing trade to a few typographers resident in London and at Oxford and Cambridge, and a licence was required for every book issued (save those printed for the Government) from two chief justices, the chief baron or the Primate or the Bishop of London. The second ordinance augmented the first by protecting copyright and preventing the importation of unauthorized foreign books.

During the conflict between the Crown and Parliament, public interest in politics and religion led to the appearance of countless polemical pamphlets and periodicals. Earlier, and in the time of James I., the first English newspaper was circulated—the *Weekly Newes*. May tells us in his *Constitutional History*, that this paper was first published in 1623, and that: "More than 30,000 political pamphlets and newspapers were issued from the press during the twenty years from 1640 to the Restoration. They may be seen in the British Museum, bound in 2,000 volumes."

The Long Parliament tried to curtail, if it could not eliminate, what it termed, "the late great abuses and frequent disorders in printing many false, forged, scandalous, seditious, libellous, and unlicensed papers, pamphlets and books." But Parliament's repressive proceedings caused Milton to compose the most eloquent and persuasive plea in European literature for the liberty of the press. In his pamphlet, the famous *Areopagitica*, Milton conceded that some supervision is essential to the welfare of the community, for books "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are. . . . A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured upon purpose to a life beyond life."

The history of the censorship proves that it is unwise to divorce people from knowledge of false or even immoral doctrines. Evidently, Milton shared Shakespeare's conviction that there is no darkness but ignorance. And he splendidly proceeds: "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never seeks out and sees her adversary, but shrinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. . . . That virtue which knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure."

Needless to say, those in authority were quite impervious to sound reasoning such as this.

T. F. PALMER.

Fundamentalist attacks Modernist

THE Christian Loyalist Foundation has issued a lengthy volume (mainly vituperative) called *The Heart of Modernism or the Morals of a Modernist*. The *Freethinker* has often told the truth (or some of it) as opposed to Modernist mistiness. Readers of Mr. Chapman Cohen's "Letter to Bishop Barnes" will be familiar with the general attitude of Freethinkers as shown in that answer to a typical leader of the Modernist school.

Our opposition to Modernism is simply a part of our opposition to religions of every sort. If Modernism were as common as Fundamentalism, we should concentrate more of our critical warfare on the Modernist entrenchments. The fact, of course, is that Modernism is numerically insignificant. Its chief claim to attention is that in the world of theology to-day, where scholarship and intellectuality are obviously in eclipse, some Modernists shine by their comparative wealth in both.

For Fundamentalism as such we have neither respect nor friendliness. In the case of honest Fundamentalism, the natural superstitions of unsophisticated fanaticism, we may regard the believer hopefully as one who needs nothing but education to lead him aright. Sometimes we realize that the "education" is going to last a long time and cover a large field!

There are, however, precious few Fundamentalists who do not make gestures of word-twisting, aiming at different ends, but otherwise indistinguishable from the Modernist faults to which this book refers. The Roman Catholics maintain a great number of Fundamentalist dogmas, which are also held by the Anglo-Catholics. There are differences between Catholic and Protestant Christians (particularly as to church government and ritual), but their disagreements about doctrine are built on varied interpretations of an accepted Bible, and not on any rational or individual judgment.

The Christian Fundamentalists of all schools agree in accepting authority—either of the Pope, the Church, or the Bible. Of the different sections of Fundamentalists we cannot specify as most fully Fundamentalist the "Evangelical Protestants." Whatever name they go by "Four-Square Gospelers," "Literal Inspirationists," "Particular Baptists" and what not, we find them alike picking and choosing Bible texts to make plausible or "divinely intended" those things they happen to find in their creeds. They ignore vast areas of Bible texts which seem to contradict the texts on which their creeds are based, and they have a genius for believing the silliest, most brutal and least humane of even their "inspired Holy Bible Truths."

The Christian Loyalist Foundation attack on Modernism declares its bitterest enmity to any attempt to destroy belief in:—

- (1) Jesus the Saviour God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.
- (2) The Blood of the Cross shed for our salvation.
- (3) The Bible with its Supernatural Salvation.
- (4) The Creeds of the Church.

We note that Christian hatred can only be fired by absurd differences about idiotic trifles. Policies of state involving war, economic wars causing poverty, or any other social practice concerned with the life health and happiness of mankind, continue to cry aloud for consideration—they simply do not interest theologians.

The volume is crowded with a virulent abuse impossible except to religious "brethren," who delight

to substitute for argument such phrases as "Traitor," "Fool," and "Liar." ("They lie and keep on lying" is one of the minor criticisms in the book). Even "Atheistic Communism of the gutter and the slums" is stated to be preferable to the innate wickedness of the Modernist Tweedledum who disagrees with some moot fundamentalism of Tweedledee.

Poor Dean Inge will be shocked to learn that he is in favour of "the Orphic Orgiastic worship." Indeed, the Modern Church Union as a body is said to worship "Deified Sex, sexual desire," and worse still, "Self-worship lies at the heart of present-day Modernism."

Naturally, reference is frequently made to the "dishonesty" of priests who accept payment from a church to preach one particular creed, and who clearly do not preach it. This is a social rather than a theological opinion. Freethinkers have a right to express citizen views on this point. In any case it covers only some professional stipendiaries; it does not touch the Modernist layman; and we doubt if Fundamentalists could enter a court with clean hands if this point were raised.

Christianity to-day is what it has been throughout the ages—essentially fraudulent. The fraud is shared by all sections with few exceptions. Fundamentalists disagree amongst themselves. But they all agree to accept ten thousand benefits of a science their creeds have always aimed to prevent or destroy. If the Modern Churchman's Union opposes some aspects of the Church of England creed, the orthodox side repudiates others. When a real fight on principle occurs, as in the recent scurvy treatment of Edward VIII., it is the orthodox Archbishop who won. His "orthodoxy" refused to tolerate a law made by the Parliament which governs his church and without which Parliamentary connexion his office and emoluments might easily become no longer his.

"Consistent" Fundamentalists protested when in 1862 the Privy Council—under Lord Westbury—"dismissed Hell with costs, and took away from members of the Church of England their last hope of everlasting damnation." There were 11,000 Church clergy who signed the Pusey Petition expressing continued belief in the hellish dogma thus declared unnecessary to salvation. Of these 11,000 Fundamentalist professionals, how many were consistent enough to resign from *their* jobs? History does not record a single such sacrifice. It is time the Fundamentalists ceased to talk of "the gross immorality of personal conduct" on the part solely of Modernist priests, who dare not resign fat (or other) "livings" in these circumstances.

If G. K. Chesterton was right, "Christianity has been found difficult and not tried," and all Christians are equally guilty in flying false colours. In the last book by Dr. Percy Dearmer—*Christianity as a New Religion*—he positively insisted that Christianity has been non-Christian for about 18 centuries and that

the only point upon which all the churches and all the theologies have been agreed is that Christianity must be something other than the religion of our Lord.

We do not expect to see even Fundamentalists possessing the tiny grain of faith sufficient to "remove mountains," or to let them "drink all manner of poisons" harmlessly. We are accustomed to see them "taking thought for the morrow," "resisting evil," and living mostly like the unbeliever without more than a verbal reference to God, Christ, Bible or Day of Judgment. The Modernist at least thinks the world moves. The Fundamentalist moves too, even if he shouts, as he moves, "The Bible is true, Darwin is dead."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The 'Apostle of Liberty

THE publication of a new edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* will once again call attention not merely to a great book, but to a great man. Numberless editions have already been published, and it is an extraordinary fact that they are almost always bought up. One can buy odd copies in second-hand bookshops, but Paine's *Age of Reason* was bought and read—unlike the world's so-called best-seller, the Bible. There are few homes without a Bible, but one does not meet many people really familiar with its contents. The *Age of Reason* was boycotted from the first, but its sale must have been phenomenal. The new edition advertised in these columns, is sold for *fourpence*, and it is, beyond doubt, the cheapest work ever produced from the Freethought press. It has, also, some additional features which put it nearly in a class by itself. It is beautifully printed, unlike so many of the older editions which, produced under great difficulty, often under threats of imprisonment, with poor type, were trying to the eyes. And there is a masterly exposition of Paine and his work from the pen of Mr. Chapman Cohen. Whether one has a copy or not of the *Age of Reason*, this edition should be on every Freethinker's bookshelf; and if it is some years since the book was read, it can, with very great profit, be read again.

Paine was perhaps the greatest pamphleteer of his age. Even Sir Leslie Stephen, that respectable Agnostic who was so terribly shocked at Paine's forcible language, was obliged to concede that "This singular power of clear, vigorous exposition made him unequalled as a pamphleteer," are his words. And in 1909, the centenary year of Paine's death, the *Times* said:—

Paine was the greatest of pamphleteers; more potent in influence on affairs than Swift, Beaumarchais, or Courier, more varied in his activity than any of them; his words influencing the actors in two of the chief political revolutions of the world, and prime movers in a religious revolution scarcely less important.

There are pregnant words; and one must feel a little grateful that they came from such a rock of British respectability as the *Times*. One can perhaps understand this journal referring with such eulogy to the political revolution caused by Paine's words; but to refer, and in the same way, to the religious revolution proves how opinion has advanced in favour of Thomas Paine, in spite of the efforts of Christians to blacken his memory and perpetuate their hatred of the man who so successfully attacked their religion.

The *Manchester Guardian* has always had a reputation a little different from that of the *Times*; but it also gave its measure of praise in 1909, and some of its words are worth recording to-day:—

Paine and his works became the great influence which set up everywhere constitutional societies, and encouraged political and religious freedom of thought. He became their interpreter to England of the principles of the Revolutions, and his words and ideas leavened speculations among the masses of the English people, and still leaven them to-day. We may forget him or remember him avry, but the very stuff of our brains is woven in the loom of his devising.

Compare this with the kind of thing which was said of Paine elsewhere. For example, in a new edition of Leland's once famous work, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers* (it was first written in 1754), which appeared in 1837, there is an Introduction by Cyrus R. Edmonds. He says: "Paine's style was perspicuous and pointed, abounding with wit, and rendered still more influential by the circum-

stances into which he was introduced by the American War and the French Revolution." But he adds: "He was eminently qualified to influence the mind of the vulgar." This, at least, is a shade better than the opinion of good Sir Leslie Stephen, who did his best to damn Paine once for all in his book, the *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. Stephen thought the word "vulgar" was not clear enough, so he wrote, "Paine [in the *Age of Reason*] is appealing to the mob. . . . His ignorance was vast and his language brutal." But even he, Sir Leslie, was forced to admit that Paine "had the power of wielding a fine vigorous English," though, once again thinking this looked too much like praise, he added "a fit vehicle for fanatical passion." Mr. Edmonds, however, was a thorough-going Christian, and like nearly all Christians who preach love, proceeded to give his opinion of Paine; as thus:—

His aversion to the Christian religion was undisguised and unbounded; and perhaps there are few men who have met with such melancholy success in their attempts to seduce mankind from the enjoyments and prospects of religion, to the chill and dreary shades of infidelity. . . . His ignorance of his principal subject, theology, and of the Bible in particular, was the most gross and contemptible that it is possible to imagine. His virulence and bitterness of spirit against everything related to religion clearly showed that his opposition was not that of philosophy, but of prejudice; while the cowardice of his nature, and the impurity of his morals, to which the absolute filthiness of his person was a tolerable faithful index proved that his infidelity grew out of his fears, and that, like the miserable Rochester, he knew, in fact, no objection to the Bible, but a bad life.

It need hardly be said that if the world wanted an unadulterated example of a Christian liar, Mr. Edmonds would easily take the first prize. Paine's courage in the American Revolution was as great as that of any of his contemporaries; while in the French Revolution, as a Deputy in the Convention, his name stands out gloriously. It required something more than courage to be one of the few who could defy Robespierre and Marat, then at the height of their power and influence. That is what Thomas Paine did when he voted against the execution of Louis XVI.—"Not the Monarch," he cried, "but the Monarchy which ought to die." For this, he was thrown into prison, and only by the merest chance did he survive the Reign of Terror. In prison he won the hearts of his companions by his unflinching courage, his love, his magnanimity, and his calmness. There he wrote the Second Part of his *Age of Reason*, expecting at any moment to share the fate of so many of his friends—Danton, Herault, and crowds of others.

Paine's "filthiness" need not be discussed. The reference is just a genuine Christian lie refuted a thousand times, but constantly invoked as a "reply" to the *Age of Reason*.

The *Age of Reason* was one of the first attempts to bring clear Biblical criticism home to the people; as Elbert Hubbard, who included Paine in his well known *Little Journeys*, said, "Upon this theological treatise is founded all modern biblical criticism."

It is to the fighting Freethinkers of the past, many of whom died "unsung and unhonoured" that his memory and his reputation owe so much. For they, in the teeth of obloquy and imprisonment, championed and honoured the great apostle of Liberty. In an age when Liberty is threatened as it has never been for many a long year, may the principles of Thomas Paine still be our guiding star.

H. CUTNER.

Correspondence

SWEDENBORGIANISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. Mongredien would have made his criticism of my articles much more effective had he given chapter and verse for the statement that they were a "travesty of Swedenborg's teachings." Every word I quoted came from the writings of Swedenborg, and Mr. Mongredien knows this as well as I—indeed, he admits as much. The "underlying principle" of Swedenborg's religion is *not* "the life you lead," or "goodness," or "service to others"—these things are claimed for dozens of other "religions." The "underlying principle" of Swedenborg's religion is a credulous belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is as mythical as Osiris and other Pagan gods; in devils, angels, heaven and hell; and in a ridiculous "explanation" of the Bible based on hopeless ignorance of the meaning of mythology—as Gerald Massey has pointed out.

I have always admired Swedenborg the man, but his nonsensical accounts of talks with people living on other planets—we should have had conversations reported with the inhabitants of Uranus and Neptune, only these planets had not been discovered in Swedenborg's time—put him in the same category as other religious freaks with their visions, dreams, ecstasies, and mystical humbug.

H. CUTNER.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JANUARY 14, 1937

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Tuson, Ebury, Preece, Sandys, Elstob, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary. A number of apologies for unavoidable absence were noted.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. The Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Glasgow, Liverpool, Birkenhead, Edinburgh, West London, South London Branches, and the Parent Society. Progress towards the erection of the Thomas Paine statue in Paris was reported. Invitations for the Annual Conference for 1937 were received from Liverpool and Glasgow, and instructions issued for Branch votes to be obtained. Matter concerning the Plymouth Branch, adjourned from the previous meeting, was dealt with, and the Secretary instructed. Birmingham Branch was granted two speakers from London. The Executive very gratefully accepted the gift of the writing desk belonging to Charles Bradlaugh. The death of Mr. F. Schaller and Mr. A. J. Mathie was reported, and the meeting expressed its appreciation of the long years of active, loyal, and useful service to the Freethought movement under the flag of the N.S.S. put in by both. Progress in arrangements for the Annual Dinner was reported and final suggestions made. It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Executive on Thursday, February 18, and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

Obituary

WILLIAM WALTER PHELPS

ON Thursday, January 14, the remains of William Walter Phelps were cremated at the City of London Crematorium, Manor Park, London, E. Death took place from Influenza on January 11, at 51 years of age. A reader of the *Freethinker* for many years, his outlook upon life and society was entirely from a Freethought standpoint. A sturdy humanitarian, he demonstrated his courage and conviction by becoming a conscientious objector

during the war, and he never missed an opportunity for a little propaganda in his modest way. His wish for cremation and a Secular Service was loyally carried out before a number of relatives and friends. To his widow, daughter and relatives we offer sincere sympathy in their great loss.

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place): 7.0, A Lecture.

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

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

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Primrose Restaurant, 66, Heath Street, Hampstead, N.W.3, one minute from Hampstead Underground Station): 7.30 Debate—"Is the Moral Teaching of Christianity Good?" *Affir.*: B. Fuller (Christian Evidence Society). *Neg.*: L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground): 7.30, Miss H. Pocock (Eugenics Society)—"The Future of Our Population."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Miss Alison Neilans—"The New Family Code in Soviet Russia."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Thursday, January 21, Annual General Meeting. Members only. Sunday, January 24, J. H. Van Bieck—"The After-math of Apathy."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, W. Fletcher—"The Case Against Christianity."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance via passage facing Burtons): 7.15, Mr. Arthur Haigh (Leeds University)—"Religion and Russia."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"The Talking Mongoose."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 7.0, Mr. R. Poulis—"Burns."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. John Laurie, G.S.S.—"An Atheist Views Burns."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, entrance in Christian Street, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, J. Wingate (Perth)—"Harvest Thanksgiving."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Labour Hall, Newport Road): 7.15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Clergy and the New Year."

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, entrance in Ormskirk Road): 7.15, Mr. H. Turner (Burnley)—A Lecture.

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

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