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

Views and Opinions

A Lesson From Life

SOME time ago a well-known medical man applied to have his name removed from the medical register. He gave as his reason that he has ceased to practise and wished to devote his remaining years to the popularization of preventive medicine, and this would involve an amount of personal publicity that might come under the head of "unprofessional practice." Apart from this the decision was well in line with the best traditions of the medical profession. The cure of disease is a great work; it has called forth greater heroism than any other walk of life and, I think, on the whole, develops a stronger and clearer sense of duty. In these respects it leaves both the army and the church in the rear, while politics hardly comes into the count. What the medical profession has lacked is good publicity agents. The army has been well-attended to in this matter. War-mongers have naturally exalted the very ordinary kind of courage necessary to a soldier; and the poor quality of our national education, and the place it has given to the soldier in history, have given the military life a quite unwarranted place in the public estimation. Moreover, the glitter of a uniform to the majority of adults has all the attraction that a travelling circus has to children, and a people that only yesterday gave up cock-fighting and bull-baiting, and with whom to go out and kill something is still chronicled in "high society" as a "good day's sport," may well be expected to find some fascination in a battlefield.

The Church also has always its methods of publicity and at its service a whole army of publicity agents. Every priest is one of these, and they have been backed by a multitude of laymen. A man or woman who has suffered "martyrdom" on account of his or her religion, often because of the religion of someone else, can depend upon having the "sacrifice" well advertised. With all the assiduity of the professional tipster advertising the number of winners he has given, or the quack medicine vendor the number of cures he has effected, the Church has taken care

that the exhibition of the most ordinary human qualities shall be counted with religious people to the credit of the Church. The parson who visits the sick, who takes food or clothing to the needy, has it all advertised as due to his religion. Thousands of laymen do all these things, but no one pays very marked attention to them, nor is it expected people should. The world knows little or nothing of them, and only in their immediate circle are they casually referred to as a "good sort." Their good deeds are not performed professionally; those of the soldier and the parson are. "Yer can't let the poor blighter starve" is the language of the slums. "I do this for Christ's sake" is the language of the Church. "I do this for love of country," is the language of the soldier. Poor human nature suffers in both these latter cases.

* * *

The Priest And The Doctor

The cases of the doctor and the priest challenge a further comparison. I need not bother with the fanciful distinction that the doctor is concerned only with the body, while the parson is concerned with the mind; for, as a matter of fact, every doctor is, or ought to be, very largely concerned with the mental state of his patients. A man's whims and humours, his hopes and fears, are things that a doctor can only neglect at the cost of his own reputation and of his patient's well-being. But every doctor sees more, and every understanding doctor *knows* more of the people he visits than does a parson. The doctor sees human nature in the raw, the parson sees it mainly in its go-to-meeting-clothes. Suffering tears off the mask; petitioning adopts a conventional disguise. But the priest has his good deeds trumpeted by his fellow parsons, the colleagues of the doctor take what he does as a part of his job, and any engineered publicity would be "unprofessional practice." And in cash terms the fees received by the doctor represent a far smaller proportion of the patient's annual income than that which is paid over to the priest.

In one respect the methods of the doctor and the parson sharply contrast. After a time the doctor will say to his patient, cheerfully, and with some pride, "Well, I shall not need to come again," and the patient will reply, quite heartily, "I hope not," and each parts with mutual satisfaction. But once get into the hands of the priest and his song is, "Now you must come regularly for ministration. The longer I am with you, the greater will be your need of me." The doctor aims at filling one with a feeling of strength and efficiency. He finds you sick and he leaves you well. The priest finds you in an unguarded moment, he makes you spiritually sick, and the sicker you get the more satisfactory you are. He finds you temporarily sick and leaves you permanently so. Health, from the medical point of view, is resistance to attack. Health from the religious point of

view spells weakness, a feeling of self-inefficiency, a conviction of absolute dependence upon some one else. Sickness and health in medicine and in religion are terms that have different and contradictory meanings.

* * *

Faith And Fact

It is just common sense to say that it is far better to prevent disease than to cure it. Not since the days of Hippocrates has medical science—and before then there was really no science of medicine—left this point of view unrecognized. The Greek philosophy, which did so much to establish a scientific view of medicine, was replaced by the Hoodooism of Christianity. All disease was born of gods or devils, they were to be countered by prayer and miracle. God gave and God took away, was the case with diseases and with health. The world grew sick, mentally, morally, and physically, and the priests looked round and said "All is well." Doctors worked only by permission of the Church, and by such methods as the Church did not forbid. Medical science was more or less suspect, and the maxim, "Three doctors, two Atheists," was born. Our prayer-book still retains evidence of this primitive animism in the plain assertion that whatever disease we may have we may rest certain that it is God's visitation. It is also evident in the persistence of faith-healing campaigns and cures, in which hysteria is exploited by cunning, and ignorance is exalted as the purest form of piety. The Roman Church does a roaring trade in this way, although it will not countenance unlicensed practitioners. The Protestant Churches, less authoritative through the influence of forces they cannot control, have to be content with a feeble bleat against the inadvisability of too complete a trust in this free and easy method of curing disease. But medical science and complete faith in the Bible and the Church are very uncongenial companions. Christians dare not trust wholly to the "prayer of faith" to cure the sick, or the race would be decimated and incomes would fall. If nothing else, then, the collection plates argue in favour of a maintained population. And the cry of the Churches is for quantity, not quality.

* * *

Cause And Effect

But there is one feature about disease, whether it be social or individual, bodily or mental, that is worth noting. A disease that kills nearly all whom it attacks presents the apparent paradox of being a better disease than the one that merely maims. In the long run it leaves a healthier type master of the situation. But a disease that becomes endemic, which comes season after season, renewing its attack upon those that it has before attacked, and securing new victims, which kills but a few, and leaves the survivors as walking evidence of its mastery, is the worst form of disease that can afflict a people. It means a steady weakening of physical resistance, and usually a weakening of the mental qualities. It is this that gives preventive medicine its greatest significance.

The Christian Church offers a very striking example of what one may call reversed preventive practice. It has never done anything to make the race healthier, but it has consistently and persistently done what it could to prevent the growth of a mentally healthy race. It began its career by strangling the definite approach to a scientific medicine that existed in the pre-Christian world. And it followed this by the fostering of a mental type that made a sound social life next to an impossibility. Greek and Roman culture saw in social life the field of a series of experiments in the art of living. The Church took

a social state as something divinely appointed and which it was a crime against God to disturb. If it attacked a State already in existence it did so only to establish a "City of God." Morality, from being a social fact, became a divinely given series of commands. Neither Greeks nor Romans ever dreamed of placing any serious embargo on freedom of thought and discussion. The Church made freedom of thought the first and greatest of crimes. It not only held this in theory, it backed up theory by practice. For hundreds of years it worked among the nations of Europe as an epidemic works. It selected for its victims, not the foolish, the knavish, the men of poor character. It said to these "Flourish and multiply," It selected the clearest thinking, the men and women of marked independence of mind and character, and condemned them to death or imprisonment. When the Church was not able altogether to check the development of independence of thought and speech by imprisonment or killing, the weapons of boycott—social, political, and commercial—played their part. To some extent, and in many directions, these checks on mental courage and honesty are still in operation.

All this meant, in sum, exactly what occurs when an epidemic attacks a people and wounds without killing. Just as in the one case there is a steady weakening in the fibre of a people exposed in this way, so the Church created a social environment which placed a premium upon the poorest type of character and a tax upon the better one. It was the principle of preventive medicine applied to the purpose of individual and social weakening instead of the securing of personal and social health. The injury to the life of the race has not been committed by the number the Church killed, but rather by the type of character it kept alive. It made men first afraid to think independently, and then left them without any desire to do so. It avowedly separated the people into sheep and goats, and encouraged only the sheep to perpetuate their kind. The Church may have made men fit for heaven. That is a pure speculation. The certain thing is that it made them less fitted to become members of a civilized and progressive society.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Malady of Moody

"This mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."—Dean Swift.

"We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star."
Emerson.

The British newspaper press, which paid some attention to the Bi-Centenary of Thomas Paine, a real reformer, has lately been printing hysterical eulogies of a half-forgotten American evangelist, named Moody. As there is a very strong family likeness in these laudatory notices in the press, it looks as if they form the puff preliminary to a fresh evangelical campaign, and are being paid for at the usual advertisement rates. Be that as it may, the name of Moody means precious little to the present generation, and it might be worth while to remind the organizers of a fresh revivalist campaign that "you cannot turn the mill with the water that has passed."

In the later Victorian era Moody did make a sensation, but his showmanship was inferior to that of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, who came to this country on a trial-trip and stayed twenty-three years, and, even then, were only routed by the popularity of the music-halls, who lured the minstrels' star-artists by offering fabulous salaries. Moody was himself a loud-mouthed spell-binder, with a throat made of

leather and lungs of brass. He blared and bullied like a Tammany candidate for Congress, which was then an unfamiliar figure in England, particularly on religious platforms. But the real star-turn was his partner, Sankey, who, with a resonant voice, sang hymns set to the tunes of popular songs imported from the United States. It was all as exhilarating and as exciting as when the entire company of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels used to sing:—

"O dem golden slippers,
O dem slippers I'm going to wear,
To walk de golden streets."

According to our most unveracious newspaper press, this Moody "cheated Hell of a million souls." As "Hell" is a purely imaginary place, this was an astonishingly easy piece of charlatany. But who told the reporters this fairy-tale? It was the boosters who run the Moody revivalist centenary campaign in the newspaper press. The glaring falsity of the figures is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." And the boosters convict themselves out of their own mouths. The statement is that Moody made a million converts. According to the Committee which organized his crusade, London then had about a million "habitual neglectors of public worship." Therefore, when Moody had converted his millioneth backslider, London was a city where practically everyone attended a church, chapel, or tin tabernacle. Which was not the truth in the "seventies" of the last century, and is very much further from the truth to-day. It will be noticed that sobriety in speech is by no means associated with religious revivalism, even in the case of a balance-sheet. And these folks are still "telling the tale." Advertising the recent Lyceum Theatre revivalist meetings, the *News-Chronicle* (January 26) mentioned that one of the speakers "was at one time a leader of the Anti-God movement in the East End." The editor of the *Freethinker*, who is also President of the National Secular Society, should have something to say about this, for he is himself the most distinguished Freethinker associated with the East-End of London since the death of Charles Bradlaugh. And the conversion of such an "Intellectual" would be a tremendous victory for any Christian church.

It is all sheer claptrap and charlatanism. The Moody and Sankey mission was a passing sensation, largely because it emptied the surrounding churches and chapels wherever it went on tour. It never reached beyond the bounds of Orthodoxy, and its so-called "converts" came from other places of worship. The easy familiarity of the audiences with the routine of public worship proved it beyond cavil and dispute. Even people who "sat under" Spurgeon, the Boanerges of the Newington Tabernacle, forsook their idol for a few Sundays whilst Moody was thundering and Bible-banging at neighbouring Camberwell Green.

The whole thing passed like the snows of yesteryear, leaving behind a litter of hymn-books. Every attempt to imitate this showmanship, which excited the innocent Victorian religionists, has failed utterly. The Torrey-Alexander Combination was as dismal a failure as the Aimee McPherson crusade. By the time the lady-evangelist had shaken the dust of England from her dainty shoes the census of churchgoing had fallen in London to one in nineteen of the population, and was still falling. As Wackford Squeers said: "There's richness for you!"

Moody's trump card was fear. He shook sinners over the flames of an imaginary Hell, and he collected the insurance money. Plenty of it, too! He made a

very comfortable living, and possessed a paunch like a City of London Alderman of those days. The organizers of his meetings also made money, and the publishers of the hymn-books made fortunes. Financially, it was as good a racket as Barnum's Circus, and not nearly so honest. It was a very paying proposition in mass hysteria. The audience rather liked it all, for the Victorians wallowed naked in the sentimental. The Moore and Burgess Minstrels sang, "Draw the curtains, Willie's dead," and Moody's audiences sang, "There is a fountain filled with blood," or similar nonsense. And the worldly-minded had a taste for "two pennyworth of gin," and "East Lynne," a play in which a little child is supposed to die on a big bed in full view of the audience, whilst two limelights focussed the horror on the stage.

Someone dubbed Moody "The Abbot of Unreason," and the epithet stuck. His life-work, in the last analysis, was but the exploitation of ignorance. It is the noisome life-work of all priests of all religions. For religion itself is the result of the misinterpretation of natural forces by primitive man, whose mind was as naked as his body. The psychological process can be seen to-day. The song "Ol' Man River" is a personification of the Mississippi, that gigantic waterway that often brings death and disaster in its wake. The child-like mind of the negro moves along the plane of personifying elemental forces, and our remote ancestors were equally childish. That explains why our distant forefathers prayed to scorpions, worshipped crocodiles, sang hymns to scarabs, coaxed the jackal with psalms, placated the ibis with dances. The bulk of the population in those days were slaves and mongrels. Education was reserved for the select few. And then priests began their work of exploiting this ignorance, and the mere fact that to-day Priestcraft possesses wealth "beyond the dreams of avarice" shows how they succeeded at their sorry task. Twenty-five lawn-sleeved charlatans in the House of Lords is not a tribute to the intellectuality of the English people, nor a help to their statesmanship. And things are by no means improved by the lick-spittle flunkeyism of the newspaper press of the entire country, which treats priests with respect solely because they are a vested interest, and for no other reason.

Historic Christianity, such as is exemplified by the Greek and Romish Churches, and the younger Anglican Communion, has a veneer of decorousness. But this Moody and Sankey Mission, like the Torrey-Alexander, the Billy Sunday Crusades, and others, amply prove the association of this Christian Religion, not only with hysteria and showmanship, but with something dangerously near neurosis. What is far worse, these evangelical boosters gauged their audiences to a hair's breadth. Their public was, perhaps, better dressed and better schooled than the flotsam and jetsam who listen spellbound to the trombones, tambourines, and tarradiddles of the Church and Salvation Armies, but they wallowed in the most rank and fulsome sentimentality. "O the pity of it!" So many Christian congregations seem utterly unable to distinguish between gold and tinsel, pathos and bathos, truth and falsehood, and are as easily led by the nose as asses are. Singing their delirious nonsense, they are intellectually on a level with barbarians. Savages do this one way, and the countrymen of Gipsy Smith and the Bishop of London another, but the nature of the act, and the dire results, are much the same in both instances. Coleridge once said to Charles Lamb: "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" "My dear Sam," replied Lamb, "I never heard you do anything else." So, with Moody. From first to last he was nothing but a talking-machine in the service of an out-of-date super-

stition. And he was a paid agitator into the bargain, noisy and noisome alike. The present effort to raise such a man to the dignity of sainthood is the bitterest comment on Christian culture.

MIMNERMUS.

God and His Book

THERE are two things in particular which are bewailed by the leaders of the Church. The first is the growing lack of reverence for God. The second is the failure on the part of laymen to read the Bible with attention. It is doubtless true that nowadays the only people who read the Bible with care are theological students and Atheists. The majority of laymen hardly ever read it at all. It may do duty as a family register of births, marriages and deaths. But, in most cases, it finds no special place of honour in the home as the reverends claim it should. As for reverence for God, which is the outcome of religious mysticism, a great many people are coming to realize that that has become a perennial cover and excuse for neglect of the rights of man, and for the privation and degradation in which so many human beings are left by the operation of economic laws enacted by a favoured and wealthy minority and sanctioned by the Church. To veil the partiality of such laws, clerics are seeking to draw attention from them by insisting more and more upon the immanence of the divine in everything and everybody. In doing this they derive some support from the superstitious outpourings of several "believing" nature poets. "God" is to be seen in every tree, every flower, every leaf; in the sun, the clouds, the storm; in the rivers and mountains; in all beings sentient too. This fanciful animism was exploded long ago; but "God" is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever—the source of life, beauty, joy and all-goodness. Accordingly the Devil must be a source of death, ugliness, pain and all badness. It is so simple! But what about the challenging questions of truth? Clerics stand by the "Truth as it is in Jesus." We note the qualification. But 'Truth cannot suffer any qualification, modification or limitation. We might as readily speak of the "Truth as it is in Socrates," or the "Truth as it is in Plato."

Now this insistence upon the immanence of God inevitably goes a long way to make reasonable belief in God as a distinct person impossible. The effect is to make God merely a quality—an abstraction. And necessarily it raises vital questions as to the authorship of the "Sacred Books" of the Christians, which have so long been advertised as being of divine origin; as being the actual words of a personal Creator. If the implications of all this insistence on divine immanence be fully understood and accepted, it can only be concluded that the Bible is the production of human authorship. What was regarded as divine inspiration must be classified as human impulses, ideas, thoughts and emotions. The idea of God as a personality is dissipated into such an extensive array of phenomena that the Early God of the Bible becomes inconceivable. And finally philosophers are driven to believe that all philosophies, religions, political and economic systems, books and poems are human productions alone. The phenomena of nature, trees, flowers, rivers, mountains, beasts and birds remain to-day as they did from the beginning of known time—a continuing and entrancing pageant; but nevertheless real and appreciable actualities. As for God? Well he has had numerous predecessors and contemporaries; and he may have successors; but that is now open to serious doubt.

For one thing, modern thought and culture are frankly revolted by much that is advanced in "Holy Writ" to illustrate the character of God. The Old Testament in itself could stand a lot of expurgating. If several stories of the Old Testament were withdrawn from their context, and with changed names were printed, published and offered for sale, they would be liable to be suppressed by law as obscene productions. Yet they remain parts of the "Word of God"! Is it not clear that the cleaner minds of our time are disgusted by these ancient filthy narratives; and that humanistic morality is far in advance of, and much higher than, the morality of the Bible? Moreover, humanistic conceptions of morality as a social influence are much more systematized while the so-called moral teaching of God's Book is represented by a jumbled collection of tales and parables and fables which are not merely often self-contradictory in their interpretations; but are largely irreconcilable with common sense. With the fuller information made available by scientific research and discoveries, and a more general exercise of the intellectual faculties of man, these Biblical stories, with God as the story-teller, become more and more unacceptable by Reason. But to those who do not use their intellects, the traditions of former days remain sacrosanct. Still we go moving on, getting nearer and nearer the Light of Truth. Men like Spencer, Darwin and Bradlaugh did not live in vain! But superstition takes an unconscionably long time in dying!

IGNOTUS.

Southcottianism

It may be argued by the unthinking that there is a vast difference between what is called "true" religion and one of those "break-away" sects which is only distinguished by a sort of wild individualism. The truth is that there is very little difference between what people call "true" religion and one of its sects. The parent tree contains almost everything which eventually appears in its branches, and must be held responsible for all its vagaries. After all, when one considers the dogmas and propositions put forward by the "original" and "true" religion, and compares them with those put forward by one of the despised sects, little can be found to choose between them. Millions of people in all ages have honestly believed that the Virgin Mary was the Mother of God, and had actually given birth to him. But if any lady were to appear nowadays and publicly broadcast that she was going to be the Mother of God, who would be born on a certain day, she would immediately be considered a poor soul, as suffering from religious mania. If she found a number of followers who implicitly believed in her, and if thereby, she was hailed as a new religious leader, her religion would be considered by "orthodox" believers as quite mad, or, at least, as one of those freak sects which, alas, most unaccountably spring from "true" Christianity. In fact, one of the heaviest crosses "genuine" religion has to bear comes from these "freak" sects. Yet surely there is no actual difference between the claims put forward on her behalf, by Christians, for Mary, and the lady who, at the beginning of last century, proclaimed at the age of 65, she was going to give birth again to the Messiah. A virgin birth is inherently as silly as an old-age birth, and certainly if the old lady is also a virgin.

Whether any followers of Joanna Southcott are still about, I do not know. I met one of them many years ago in Hyde Park. It was his long silvery locks which attracted me to him, and for the first time, I learnt all

about the famous Black Box which the stupid Bishops of the Church of England would not open. I was also solemnly rebuked for the levity of my subsequent questions, and advised to read the truth about the much-maligned Johanna Southcott. And here is a very brief resumé of what I found.

She was born in Devon in 1750, and one of her biographers points out that no extraordinary wonders of stars falling or tempestuous storms shaking the heavens accompanied her birth. Later on, however, she proclaimed that "the angels rejoiced at her birth."

Her parents were humble but very religious Protestants, which perhaps accounts for her turning to religion and celibacy later. She was considered by people who knew her at work as of "a very serious turn of mind." Later, she felt she was above her work as a shopwoman, and began to take a great part in religious discussion. She also began vividly to dream, and insisted that God appeared to her in these dreams.

In 1792 she made one of her first public declarations, that "her Lord had visited her, who promised to enter into an everlasting covenant with her, and told her that a vision would be shown to her in the night."

She then convened a meeting at which fifty-eight people attended, and declared to them that she was "the Lamb's wife," "the Bride," "the Woman clothed with Sun," etc. She also was empowered to write and to prophesy; and, though it would be difficult to believe of anybody else, a number of very religious people decided to follow her and pay for her keep. They even bought "beatitudes" from her from twelve shillings to one guinea per head. Which only shows how, as in the case of "true" Christianity, it is difficult to separate cash from religion.

About the same time, Joanna tried to impress "several dignitaries of the Church of England" with her remarkable mission but they were not impressed. In fact, one of them actually said that her mission "came from the Devil"—which is not surprising. She wrote quite a lot in the way of prophecies and also some verse; and most amusing are both. Here is a sample of the latter:—

If they believe that hell below
Such language e'er can speak;
But back their footsteps all will trace,
And marvel what they've done,
And wonder that they could not go
In things that were so plain.

The Lord may have inspired Joanna with religion, but he seems to have made a holy mess of her poetry.

Joanna tried her utmost to enlist the sympathy—and probably the cash—of more "dignitaries" of the Church but without success. Even her verses failed to arouse any enthusiasm, and she wrote:—

Since godly men decay, O Lord,
Do thou my cause defend
For scarce these wretched times afford,
One just and faithful friend.

The Lord answered her:—

Since godly men do so decay,
And thou dost sore complain,
Then the good shepherd shall appear,
The sheep for to redeem;
For faithful labourers now shall come,
And in my vineyard go;
My harvest it is hastening on
Which every soul shall know.

The result of all this was that Joanna became convinced of the Second Coming of Christ, and the Day of Judgment, when the Seven Thousand Years are ended, and she prophesied more than ever. But only her own immediate followers believed her, the Church "Dignitaries" obstinately refusing to take her mission seriously, though she constantly warned them

that the "eleventh hour" was coming with other miraculous wonders. I must give another specimen of the kind of thing which the Lord directed her to publish:—

Quench not the spirit; despise not prophecy; for the time is come, that your women shall prophecy, young men shall dream dreams, your old men shall see visions; for the day of the Lord is at hand. The day is nigh at hand, that shall burn like an oven; and all the wicked shall be burnt up as stubble; whose fan is in his hand; I will thoroughly purge the floor; I will gather my wheat into his garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Awake them that sleep! arise from the dead, and Christ will give them life.

Whatever one may say of this divine drivel, it does read to me suspiciously like a good deal of what are called Christian mystical writings. There seems little difference in this way between the best and the worst of Christian mystics.

Needless to say, the Devil did appear on occasions to Joanna. She was very angry at these visits and "her passions grew high," she tells us. But she always rebuked him in true Biblical language. Once she "continued with Satan for ten days. His answer and blasphemy was too shocking to pen; till I was worn with rage and malice against him, I could not bear myself."

Like other Christians she believed firmly in Revelations and expounded all sorts of incoherent rubbish from its "message." Eventually, she was "ordered THE BOX, where the WRITINGS were placed, but not to be opened till thou (Joanna) has brought in a little child in thy arms, which was Poley's son." This child "was the first type of the CHILD standing alone." Other types were to follow later. By this time, she managed to get quite a number of men and women to follow her—including the great engraver, William Sharp, famous for his fine engraving of Romney's portrait of Thomas Paine. At all events, he advised Joanna to come to London, where, for some reason or other, Satan became very frightened at her success. Joanna dreamt a good deal about him, and seems to have terrible battles with him when he came in the shape of a pig. She skinned his face with her nails in a terrific battle, and "finally, dreamt that she had positively dispatched him!"

She was also always Sealing her writings, and Sealing other people, that is, the elect who followed her; making them believe, of course, that they would be some of the 144,000 who would fly to Heaven when the proper time occurred.

At last, a heavenly figure appeared to her in her dreams, her dear, dying Saviour, very clearly described by Joanna, whose description is too long to copy here. He was the Heavenly Father of the child she was to bear, and which was destined to become the Second Messiah. It was in 1813 that she separated herself from her friends and awaited the happy event. God told her it was coming in 1814, in the 65th year of her age. She called in some medical men to examine her, and some diagnosed a pregnant condition. So did some practical midwives. And the faithful waited in anxious expectation of the Happy Event.

Unfortunately Joanna Southcott died in 1814, possibly of dropsy or some disease of the kidneys, and the medical examination showed no signs of pregnancy whatever. Her followers, though sadly disturbed by the news, expected her return or Second Coming; but so far she has not reappeared. She left a Black Box, full of advice and prophecies, which is said to have been really opened and found to contain a few bits of paper and a hare's foot or similar rubbish. But it is contested whether the Box which was opened, was the genuine one. Be that as it may, Joanna South-

cott's name is still brought up in troublous times; and there must still be people who imagine therefore that "there may be something in it." Yet can anyone say seriously that her visions, her prophecies, her belief in the "overshadowing" of the Lord, her struggles with Satan, are much different from the same kind of thing associated with "true" Christianity?

H. CUTNER.

Acid Drops

Writing to the *Spectator* from Amsterdam, Professor Nies furnishes some interesting figures concerning the drift away from religion in Holland. The census figures appear every ten years. These show a steady increase in the number of those who have ceased to be connected with any Church. In 1879 the number who did not belong to a Church were 15 out of every 1,000; in 1899, 23 per 1,000, 50 in 1910, 78 in 1920, and in 1931, 144 per 1,000. In 1920 the churchless formed seven and a half per cent of the population; in 1931, the number had increased to fourteen and a half per cent. In North Holland the percentage of those who have severed connexion with all churches amounts to 285 per 1,000 of the population. In the whole of the country, over seventy per cent of the marriages were not followed by a religious ceremony. In Holland the essential ceremony is the civil one. On the other side it has to be noted that the Government has abolished the one hour per month use of the radio given to Freethinkers. The soul of Sir John Reith and his religious committee must rejoice at that move in the wrong direction.

After the large number of press notices of the bi-centenary of Thomas Paine, we hope that the education of the controllers of the B.B.C. has been enlarged by the knowledge that a man named Thomas Paine *did* exist, and that he really was somebody.

Meanwhile, the B.B.C. pursues its course of insisting that before broadcasting, speakers shall submit what they have to say to its Censorship Committee. The latest example is the case of Caradoc Evans, the well-known writer on Welsh life and manners. Mr. Evans submitted his manuscript, but it was so mauled that he "indignantly" declined to speak. Mr. Evans' indignation was rather belated. In submitting his manuscript he accepted the censorship. He must have known what was implied in his so doing, and it is too late to get indignant because censors have acted as censors will. There is only one policy that will bring the B.B.C. to its senses, and that is for all public men who are really opposed to a censorship to decline to speak for the B.B.C. under such conditions. Then if these men see to it that their names are made known, the general public will be able to separate the rabbits from the rest, and to realize that there are some men and women in the country who count their self-respect as of more account than a fee or publicity. It is no use first agreeing to a censorship by submitting a manuscript, and then complaining that it has been cut. Of course it has, that is what the censorship exists for. The refusal to permit a few minutes' talk on Paine, is one other example of the way in which the B.B.C. supplies the public with official dope.

There is likely to be a storm (in a teacup) over providing an income for the Duke of Windsor. The *Evening Standard* calls it a "squalid controversy." But why? Is it a squalid controversy to wish to know what is the present value of the possessions of the Duke of Windsor before burdening the country with a large sum of money for his maintenance? It is said that the rest of the Royal Family is willing to subscribe between them £300,000 to provide a trust for him. And why not? The "Means Test" is one that the Government has insisted on in the case of out-of-work men and women. Is there

any reason why something of the same kind should not be admitted in the case of the Duke of Windsor? After all, the fact of the offer being made is evidence of the family being able to provide the sum offered. The Royal Family is said to be enormously wealthy. We do not know with what truth this is said, since royal wills are not accessible to the public. But Queen Victoria was said to be the richest woman in Europe, and it is certain that the allowances to the Royal Family cannot be expended in the ordinary course of living. And when twenty-five thousand a year is given for the upkeep of a little girl, we think the public ought to have the facts of this case before another large sum is donated. What exactly is the present income of the Duke of Windsor? After all, it is not to be expected that he failed to benefit from the will of George V. At any rate, when the public is asked to vote another large sum of money, it should not be voted in the dark.

We have recollections of the efforts that were made in Victoria's time to get a return of the money allowed the monarch for distribution in charity, with a suggestion that the unexpended portion should be returned to the treasury. But that was always killed, and most members of the public are even unaware that such amount is included for the purpose of "charity" in the civil list. Is it "squalid" to ask if money given for a specific purpose is so expended?

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, the new minister of the City Temple, thinks it hard to believe that there is nothing in astrology, in view of the many eminent men who have believed in it. Mr. Weatherhead has to go back a long way for his eminent men, with the exception of Emerson, and we feel sure he is wrong in that instance. Mr. Weatherhead says he now believes many impossible things that he could not believe when he was young, which is a backhanded compliment to the value of his own development, as he then had a "lusty scepticism" about certain doctrines such as the divinity of Christ. But we can quite understand his desire that people should examine astrology with sympathy. Superstitions have a habit of hanging together, and the man who can accept astrology need not jib at the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. And it is told in the New Testament that it was through watching the heavens by night, that certain men discovered a wonderful star that led them across country, and then hung stationary over a village inn. It has puzzled astronomers from that day to this to work out the probable parallax of that star.

Archbishop O'Doherty addressing the Eucharistic Congress at Manila, said that the present age is one of "brazen infidelity." Why brazen? We take it that the Archbishop really means open or honest, and what the Church has always said in practice is, "If you think our religion is a lie, we shall not mind so much if you will not say it, and we may even love you if you will pretend to believe it." In practice the Church has always preferred the hypocrite to the honest man. There is an old saw that begins with "Birds of a feather—."

Archbishop O'Doherty also laments that "minor scientists" are now explaining man and all phenomena by evolution. We do not know why the scientists who do this are called "minor," perhaps he means they are not Catholics. But there really is no other explanation of the development of life than that of evolution. It is not only the generally accepted hypothesis of development; it is the only one before the world. Special creation is not an explanation, it is pure verbiage. To say God did it, is just a useless expenditure of breath. One is as wise after it is said, as one was before hand.

The fuss that has been made about the centenary of the evangelist Moody is not, we think, unconnected with the campaign of the "Recall to God" that is being engineered. Moody was a very ignorant man, preaching a very ignorant form of Christianity, and most educated Christians would to-day be ashamed to stand on the same

platform with him. And as to his converts, well, they were of the usual kind both as regards quality and permanence. But if the people can be made to believe that this man was one who did incalculable good, and that there were "giants in those days," the fact that his theology is now repudiated by ninety-five per cent of educated Christians will pass unnoticed. It is curious to note the way in which modern Christians openly repudiate the teachings of their predecessors, and quietly annex those of their opponents. If Moody came back, we imagine he would refuse to stand on the same platform with many of those who are now applauding him.

The Bishop of London has just published a thirtieth volume of Lenten Sermons. The first twenty-nine were written by others at his request. He has written the thirtieth volume himself. It is called "Everyman's Problems and Difficulties," with an introduction by the Archbishop of Canterbury. We have not read the book, but the Archbishop says it is not written for scholars or scientists, but for the ordinary man. We hope that this ordinary man is not so super-ordinary as the Bishop of London usually implies in his sermons.

Professor Gabriel Lucie, of the Mexican Education Council, says that since the Government has "put religion in its proper place," there are now almost as many teachers in Mexico as there are soldiers. The number of teachers is 53,000; soldiers, 58,000. The increase in the number of teachers has gone along with better education, the provision of meals for children, and free education. But there are fewer priests, and the Church has less power, hence the lamentations of the Papacy.

Superstitions of any kind die hard, and the truth of this has been illustrated in the dramatic shudder of horror caused by the Church Convocation deciding that it may be a Christian duty to kill. Perhaps these shocked gentlemen, many of them unbelievers in Christianity, will tell us when and where Christianity has not furnished a justification for killing, or what Church the world has seen has been responsible for more killing? During the whole of the nineteenth century this country was lauded, by ourselves, as a Christian country, and during the whole of the century there was not ten years in which we were not engaged in war in some part of the globe. For killing, for brutal killing, for unnecessary killing, and for finding a full and complete justification for it, no Church has equalled the Christian Church. We cannot expect Christians to give up their superstitions, as that would mean that they must give up their Christianity; but we should like to see non-Christians give up the stupid cant that killing is against either the spirit or the practice of Christianity.

We remember that when an unsophisticated customer at the grocer's shop was assured that the bacon offered him was "cured in Wiltshire," he said he would prefer bacon "which had never been sick." A much-advertised book is called *Christ in the Modern Hospital*. We are not told the nature of the complaint, but we have some idea of what would happen to an inmate of a modern hospital who claimed to see visions of God, and to have conflicts with the devil.

Dr. Herbert H. Farmer is an "idealist." He writes—in the *Christian World*—explaining how it happens that sometimes even he, with all his sanctimonious perfection, is occasionally not quite sure that there is a God. It is when he is misbehaving himself, or, as he puts it, "my doubts and scepticisms about God tend to grow in force and frequency as my personal life for one reason or another drops to a lower level. . . . when I have not been loyal to the demands of conscience but have prevaricated, compromised, indulged myself, then the positive affirmation of God grows more difficult." Mr. Farmer may just as well say what most of his kind claim, namely that good people all believe in God, and all who don't believe in God are vicious and vile. That is just Christian Charity.

The *Catholic Filipinas* issued in Brisbane has been publishing an article on the Churches of the Philippines.

No ordinary Churches we are assured: "Churches—tall, imposing with majestic grandeur! Churches—small and simple, large and ornate; Churches still standing as they have stood for centuries." For (oh most blessed combination) "Where the Spanish sword went, there also went the Cross of Christ."

The history of some of these buildings is interesting. The Roman Catholic Cathedral at Manila is the fifth building to rise from the site, the other four having been destroyed by earthquakes and typhoons. The Church of San Augustin has, however, withstood five earthquakes "whilst all the others were toppling down in thunderous crashes." The Church of St. Domingo was destroyed in 1589, as well as the two buildings that followed it. The Church of Santa Anna has, "like all the Manila Churches," suffered from earthquakes.

The Church of the Recoletos is the third to rise from the same site. The Church of San Sebastian has had nearly fifty years of peaceful existence, but all previous attempts were "repeatedly hauled by earthquakes." The Church of Our Lady of Antipolo has been twice destroyed by earthquakes. The Church of Quiapo was recently destroyed by fire but God, in his loving kindness, saw to it that one of the revered images was left untouched. At the Franciscan Church the statue of San Francisco de Lagrimas during one of the earthquakes was observed to be shedding tears. This is almost believable. The plain discouragement of God to following up the good work of the Spanish Sword by building Churches would bring tears even to a stone.

Of ex-Dean Inge it may be truly said that as a master of polite sarcasm he has few equals. In the *Evening Standard* he makes great fun of the pretence that all sorts of medieval tortures were defied by Christians merely repeating a few pious "charms":—

The old tortures—the Roman *eculeus*, *fidicula*, *pix lammina*, *flagellum*; the French *brodequin*, *estrapade*, *chevalet*; the Scottish *cachelaws*, rack and boot; the *cordelas* and *strappado* of the Inquisition—have all been defied, sometimes with the help of charms, of which the words, "*Jesus autem transiens*" were the most potent.

But, says Dean Inge with biting irony, to-day there is no remedy against thirst and lack of sleep.

The Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick is half-ashamed of the obvious intolerance of the words: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Mr. Fosdick says these words are only applicable to "some forms of Atheism, dogmatic and intolerant." If to be a dogmatist is to be a fool, the epithet if ever applicable would surely apply equally to all who possess any dogmas. If only the intolerant are fools then it is intolerance not Atheism that should be denounced. Intolerance is not a part of or essential to Atheism, and the phrase as it stands, with Mr. Fosdick's explanation, is equivalent to cursing the game of football because you object to "fouls," or that you should denounce the gentle art of angling when you only intended to protest against exaggerating the size of your "catch."

The Rev. Father Bernard McGrade has been visiting Ireland and has gratifying news to report:—

The people of Ireland have a wonderful reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. They seem to know all the places where Our Eucharistic Lord resides. Say you are travelling in a tramcar, not once, but many times during the journey, men will raise their hats, the tram conductors, policemen, soldiers included, and women will make the sign of the Cross whenever they pass a church or chapel. Sometimes you will look out to see where is the church—perhaps you cannot see one—but the tram will be passing some convent, hospital or orphanage. You don't know, but the other passengers do know that they are passing Him, and a silent prayer goes up from their hearts.

I almost feared I should have had muscular rheumatism in my right arm from returning all the salutes one receives as a priest in all parts of Ireland—even in the North—where, evidently, Catholics are not ashamed of

their faith. Men of all classes in Dublin must pass scores of priests in their day's walk, but they never get tired; they are most particular with the salute. Even the little boys not wearing caps will give the forelock of their hair an upward twig with a "God bless you, Father," and they will assist their younger brothers and sisters to do the same. May God bless these little men and women of Ireland.

"God bless you, Father!" "God bless you, my children!" All's well!

The old Firm is still up to its tricks in Australia. What you have got to do is to fill in a ticket to "My Dear Jesus," tell him what you want, and don't forget the five shilling postal order. No money no results. According to the Catholic *Filipinas*, this is a sample of the results:—

I wish to record having passed my two law examinations through the intercession of St. Therese of Lisieux, Saint Anthony of Padua and St. Yves, the patron saint of lawyers, to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I had a Votive Lamp burned for Nine Days preceding and including my examination days, and only the experienced can appreciate and realize that faith can move mountains.

If this bright young man thinks he passed his examination that way, we can see, in the still stormier days to come, an almost continuous stream of postal orders from him for Votive Lamps. We can also see them being intercepted on their road to My Dear Jesus by Holy Men. And may St. Therese, Saint Anthony and St. Yves pity his poor clients!

Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge, writing in *Time and Tide*, appears to think that religion is the only hope of the world. We say "appears," because we imagine that Tolstoy was religious enough in all conscience, but Mr. Muggeridge "hopefully" tells us that "Tolstoy, when he first became obsessed with Eternity, had to hide away a piece of rope for fear that, his eye falling on it, he should hang himself." But we must not cite Mr. Muggeridge as a man of hope, as hope is usually understood, as witness his plaintive moan: "Oh how many times man has become free at last, and how many times enslaved for ever!" And the remedy? Mr. Muggeridge refers us to "the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians." Does he mean the 11th verse of 1 Cor. 13, which says, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child . . ."

"Things one would have put otherwise!" The *Methodist Recorder* reports a speech made by the Rev. E. C. Urwin, who reminds the world: "In the very week in which the Great War broke out, nearly a hundred men were meeting in Constance from eleven different countries to think out how the Christian Churches of the world might unite in the sacred cause of peace." Of course we all know it. One of these hundred men, Dr. John Clifford, has told us himself that he had prepared a great speech against war, but on his arrival in England and after he learnt that England too was declaring war, Dr. Clifford tore up his pacifist oration and succumbed to the mob spirit.

The Rev. W. H. Cock has written a book called *Animals and a Future Life*. He says: "We cannot deny an embryonic sense of religion to animals, and maybe they are as precious in the Creator's sight as man himself." While utterly unscriptural this view is perfectly logical. The old saying which ought to read: "The more I see of some men the more I love some animals," hits the nail on the head. Many Freethinkers have said in various words, that either all—animals and man alike—have immortality, or none has it at all. Supernaturalists have yet to tell us at what stage in his development man attained the gift of immortality. Mr. Cock admits that "animals possess the elements of mind and spirit and many of the fundamentals of man." Man, of course, is not a "fallen angel," he is a developing animal. We doubt if "the blessed hope of eternal life" for men is greatly encouraged by the belief that mosquitoes and fleas have also a hope of survival.

If, in New Zealand, for spiritual, business or any other reason, you find it advisable to become a Christian, there is a busy day before you, little man. If you are seriously concerned about the destination of your immortal soul, there is nothing else to do but to rummage amongst the lucubrations of about a hundred and fifty distinct types of Christian. Finding the pea under the thimble seems to be an easy business compared with this task. From the enumeration of the sects given by the last Census returns, we notice particularly: the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of God, the Believer, the Baptized Believer, the Dipper, Full Gospel, Morrisonian, Russelite, Church of Elings, Church of England, Follower of Te Whit, Holy Jumper, Holy Roller, Southcottian, Reformer Reformist, Pantheistic Pelagian, Spiritual Faithist, Canopist, John 3-16, Danielite, Jacobite, and the Holy Order of Restful Souls. Prayer, Study and Meditation have brought converts to all these houses, as well as to another 130 odd sects—many of them extremely odd. If you are a sportsman, we suggest cutting out the cackle and plumping straight away—from reasons of euphony—for the Holy Order of Restful Souls. And damn the consequences!

What columns of Welsh names have been added to Crockford's Clerical Directory within recent years! That by the way. The Rev. N. E. Field Jones, curate of St. Peter's Parish Church, Morden, is mourning the passing of its Boys' Club. Yet it was a great success on weekdays, with boxing, cricket, football, and table-tennis. But, come Sundays—alas! Three Sundays ago four boys attended the Bible Class; two Sundays ago, one; and last Sunday (January 31, as we write) none. The boys were given a chance to "save their club by attending bible classes," but—laments the curate, "they came to me and said: 'We are not interested.'" It is a healthy outlook for Manhood's future when to "catch 'em young" is, nowadays, not sufficient to guarantee that the stultification of natural growth shall continue.

Fifty Years Ago

We will assume that there is an hereafter. In what respect has the Christian an advantage? The Freethinker's unbelief will not abolish his immortality, if it is a fact. The Christian may reply that his faith will affect his future condition. But the adherents of every religion on earth will say the same. How does the Christian know that his belief is the true one? A hundred different religions prescribe a hundred different roads to glory. The Christian takes one of them, and fancies he is safe. Every other religionist takes another road with the same certitude. The Freethinker walks his own way, and if there be a heaven in the universe he is quite as likely to reach it as a theologian who chooses among a hundred roads, only one of which can be right, and all of which may be wrong.

Besides, religion tells us of hell as well as of heaven. The Christian may feel he is on the safe side if he has a through ticket for heaven. But suppose he is mistaken? Suppose he has a through ticket for hell; or suppose his celestial ticket is cancelled by his having committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. How is he on the safe side then? We are also taught that the road to heaven is narrow and uphill, while the road to hell is broad and descending. Many go into the everlasting fire, and few go into everlasting life. According to the law of averages, therefore, no believer in Christianity can feel safe. The chances of damnation are great, the chances of salvation are small. It is over a hundred to one that every Christian is going to hell. Those who get to heaven will only be the salvage from the fire.

The whole question may be put in a nutshell. If there be a God, he is either just or unjust. If God be just, he will never punish an honest man for exercising the intelligence with which he gifted him, and living according to the best light he could acquire. If God be unjust, nobody knows what he will do, and all men have the same reason for apprehension.

The Freethinker, February 20, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- E. WYMAN.—You are quite right, the mistake was ours. Peter Annet was 68 years of age when he was placed in the pillory for blasphemy.
- S. LAMB.—We should like to follow up the *Age of Reason* with other very cheap editions of Freethought writings. We must see what the future brings forth. And we have other rather ambitious plans in mind. How many of them we realize time must decide.
- "ESTHER."—There is no address attached to MSS. we have received.
- "A.S."—We cannot deal with correspondence unless name and address accompanies it. The name and address is not of necessity for publication.
- L. BAGIONI.—Your copies of the *Freethinker* were sent on as usual. Extra copies have now been sent. We are obliged by your telling us of the non-receipt of the paper.
- J. A. THORPE.—We are obliged, and will bear the matter in mind. *The Age of Reason* is good work. Many book-sellers are displaying it who usually fight shy of Freethought stuff.
- G. M. TOWNSEND.—We imagine the dose of nonsense which the *Daily Express* publishes from the Vicar of St. Brides, is a forerunner of the kind of stuff we shall get in barrow-loads as the *Recall to Religion* develops. What with this campaign and the much-advertised Coronation, it looks as though 1937 may become memorable for an outbreak of national insanity.
- H. PREECE.—There is no logical ground for denying that legislation favours vested interests at the expense of the community, nor can it be said with truth that the rights we enjoy are "by the King's grace," although there is much King-worship that favours retrogression in many forms. There are also, as we have often pointed out, many remnants of feudalism in both our laws and customs, but to argue from these things that the British people are in the same position as the French were prior to the revolution, and that we have a much greater number than twenty millions—which means three-fifths of the population—without rights, is to weaken one's case by extravagance.
- Mr. HAROLD BAMFORTH writes that the reading-room of the Dewsbury Public Library no longer contains a copy of the *Freethinker*. He suggests Freethinkers should busy themselves in the matter, and we pass the suggestion on with the hope that it will be acted on. We send weekly copies of the paper to a large number of public libraries in Britain, and nothing serious happens to the people, so far as we are aware.
- JOHN REID (Glasgow).—The claim that the poem commencing "To gull the mob and keep them under" was by Robert Burns, has been repeatedly investigated. In our opinion it would be unwise to accept its authenticity. We cannot say where a copy of the poem can be obtained.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- 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.
- 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.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.
- 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.
- All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

To-day (February 21), Mr. Cohen will speak in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, at 6.30, on "What is the Matter with Religion?" He may deal with the Archbishop's "Recall to Religion." On Sunday next (February 28), Mr. Cohen will speak in the Picton Hall, Liverpool, on Thomas Paine.

Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow on March 7. On the evening of March 6, the Glasgow Branch holds its Third Annual Dinner and Mr. Cohen will be present. There will be a musical programme, speeches, etc. Every effort is being made by the Branch to make the Dinner a success, and we hope that each member will bring a friend along with him or her. Tickets are 5s. 6d., and we understand are selling readily; and it is well that application for them to be made as early as possible. This helps considerably those upon whose shoulders the work of arrangement rests.

Members of the N.S.S. are reminded that their Annual Subscriptions were due on January 1. The books of the Society are made up on March 31, and we hope those who have delayed sending to the General Secretary will not overlook what has been said.

We are asked to announce that the West London Branch of the N.S.S. is having a dinner and dance at Union Helvetia, Gerard Place, Shaftesbury Avenue, on Thursday, March 25. Reception at 7, Dinner at 7.30. Tickets are four shillings each, and can be obtained of the Secretary, Mr. C. Tuson, 11 Portland Road, Holland Park, W.11. Early application for tickets is requested.

Our business manager asks for the patience of those who have recently ordered bound copies of *The Age of Reason*. The first binding has been exhausted, and a fresh supply is expected within the next few days. Orders will then be at once discharged. The sale of the book still goes steadily on.

In the oak-panelled chamber of the Privy Council have been sitting the Commissioners of the Court of Claims, to hear petitions in connexion with the Coronation. The petitions are to perform services and obtain "perks" based upon hereditary rights. Lord Hailsham sat in a high-backed chair attired in glorious robes of black and gold and a full-bottomed wig. Advances Lord Ancaster who could claim "to attire His Majesty with the Royal robe, to gird upon him the Sword of State and invest him with the gold spurs," but he did not "press" this claim. Perhaps it had been suggested to his Lordship that even monarchs in these days may prefer to do their own dressing. But ancient rights must not be given up without a struggle, so Lord Ancaster asked for a box of his own in the Abbey in order to see well all that was going on. "Application dismissed," said the Lord Chancellor.

Then a further claim was urged by his Lordship:—

To have 40 yards of crimson velvet with his robes.

To have the bed wherein his Majesty lay the night before the Coronation, with the curtains and vallances thereof, and all cushions and clothes within the chamber, with the furniture of the same, and his Majesty's night robe.

This claim, it was ruled, was to be left to the personal decision of the King. What eventually happens to the King's Nightgown will not, we anticipate, be divulged to the common herd. What is likely to happen is that the King will be advised to make a "compromise." The Earl of Ancaster will be allowed to take possession and (should he be disposed) bequeath as a rich legacy unto his issue, one hot-water-bottle, one bell-pull, one ash-tray (complete with two cigar-stumps) In such a way would the genius of the English people in delicate situa-

tions become once more manifest. At the same time the more conservative elements would not be agitated overmuch, and red revolution kept at bay.

A writer in the *Radio Times* commences an article on Moody of "Moody and Sankey" fame with:—

Moody and Sankey? said the modern young thing. Moody and Sankey? Oh yes, of course, they were a circus weren't they?

The writer seems satisfied that the "names struck some kind of responsive chord, even if not quite the right one." It looks as if he were conscious of the fact that the Moody Centenary Revival performances to be held shortly desperately need *any kind* of boosting, and that perhaps the comparison with a *circus* was as hopeful a way of trying to draw a crowd as any other.

He even saves us comment:—

There may be some excuse for her obvious confusion of thought. For Moody and Sankey, like Barnum and Bailey, were American visitors to this country; they made three triumphant tours of Britain in three successive decades of the nineteenth century, preceded and accompanied by an unusual amount of publicity, as publicity went in those days. Moreover, in the methods adopted by these two celebrated evangelists in the wholesale saving of souls, many of the respectable orthodox found them not above suspicion of a Yankee claptrap vulgarity, Yankee showmanship, and (more serious charge) Yankee commercialism that would have done credit to P. T. Barnum himself. Their meetings were described in reputable journals as "performances" and "religious penny gaffs."

At the same time the writer should remember that even a circus nowadays has to be a *good* one, to gain the respect of the "modern young thing."

Mr. Edward Thompson, whose praiseworthy attempts to shed light upon dark and murky places, have more than once earned our admiration, has been continuing the good work in his article on "Sport in India," in *The New Statesman and Nation*. This is what he says about Big Game Hunting:—

Everyone except these innocents from England knows how such things are "fixed." Men told how a Royal Personage found the claws of a slain tiger gilded in anticipation of the honour that was to come to it; how a Viceroy in glee at success rushed down from his *machan* to see his victim—before the ropes that bound it had been untied. One celebrated tiger (it figures in a Viceroy's letters), suffering from overeating and under-exercise while waiting for doom, began to waste away from diarrhoea. The nearest vet., a Bengali, was ordered to see to it. He doped its food with opium, and it grew stout again, living in an iridescent dream in which it hardly knew death when it arrived! The vet. demanded double Travelling Allowance, "on account of dangerous character of patient!" Legends? Not all of them. Five years ago, watching preparations for a Commander-in-Chief's visit to a Native State, I was told, "Only His Excellency will get a tiger. But we are making arrangements that each member of his Staff shall have a leopard or a bear or a sambar." "Where is His Excellency's tiger?" I asked. "She is sleeping in a nulla over there." Only people fresh from outside could suppose that thirty-one bears normally populated one hillside, or seven tigers (a Viceroy's morning bag) a single acre! Immense spaces are combed out and denuded, and weeks of close shepherding precede these holocausts, which are followed by careful nursing to provide the next one. Sandgrouse, living in deserts, visit the nearest pools between sunrise and noon; and those massive bags are composed of birds that have been kept from water until desperate with thirst, so that they rush in madly when at last allowed access.

Mr. Thompson points out that Mysore is the one Indian State which is intelligently awake to the preservation of its fauna. But there is also Hyderabad

which has done a magnificent job of preservation in the Ajanta Caves frescoes. If the exquisite scenery around them—the deep ravine and river, the wooded hills—

could become a sanctuary, this would wonderfully appeal to Indian sentiment. We might see everything again as the saffron-robed ascetics (disciples of the Buddha, with his teaching of mercy to all that lives) saw it in the morning of time—the peacocks glowing through the wilderness, the deer coming down to the stream. Then there is Parasnath, Bihar's highest mountain, in a lovely district of river and forest. The mountain is sacred to the Jains, whose religion forbids the taking of life; this wealthy community might surely lead a movement to save the the whole region as a National Park.

Mr. Edward Thompson thinks, and we agree with him, that such a movement would form a worthy Coronation objective. But this is a Christian country and animals have no souls. Does God care for animals? So what we will have in England is miles of Bunting and millions of Mugs.

We are indebted to a friend for a report of a lecture delivered at the Annual Conference of Education Associations in London by Dr. E. O. James, Professor of History and Philosophy of Religion at Leeds University:—

There had grown an ever-increasing gulf between the specialized knowledge of the expert and the profound ignorance of the common man. This applied as much to theology as to any other department of knowledge. We had been brought up to regard the opening narrative of Genesis in a traditional sense. We now had to alter that point of view, and we did not know how to "get it across" to the children that these opening stories were myths.

This does not strike us as one of the more difficult problems. If Professor James's difficulty consisted in how to avoid putting such things "across," he could get expert advice from Sir John Reith, whose experience in the "suggestio falsi" is second to no man's.

China Awakes

A CHINESE "THOMAS PAINE."

THE terrific struggle in Spain between the forces of Human Progress against "Nazi" Re-action and brutality, must stir the imagination of every Free-thinker, in every Region of the World. It DOES arouse us to renewed activity against these Black Armies, amongst which Religion finds its friends.

It may interest Freethinkers to know that the same struggle has more than begun in the distant East. Through the Esperanto journal *Chinio Hurlas*, I have learned much—at first hand—about the new movement in China. Apparently it started about December, 1935; and it is a combination of all kinds of "advanced" and liberty-loving Chinese against Japanese invasion, tyranny, and imperialism. Its progress appears to point to ultimate success; although we can read but little of it in Western Regions.

The New Movement is called the "National Liberating Movement of China." Liberal-minded intellectuals and great numbers of students are in its ranks. The "All China Student National Rescue Union," in its tribute to Lu Sin, represents "240,000 students in eight towns and two provinces." The November number of *Chinio Hurlas*—not long received—contains a short account, by "Maro," of the life of one of the intellectuals. As becomes a great Chinese, Lu Sin was a Secularist in life; so, I have Englished the story for our readers. The closing lines could be better rendered by the poetical pen of Bayard Simmons; but I have had to put them in my more pedestrian prose.

"Lu Sin is dead.

"In the early morning of October 19, the heart of our mighty author ceased to beat. The Advance-guard Thinker of our Epoch, who so courageously

and persistently fought for the future of Humankind, for the Liberation of the Chinese People, has left us for ever. The Workers of the whole World have lost one of their best comrades: immeasurable is the loss!

"It was Lu Sin, this just dead genius, who laid the foundation of Chinese modern literature. It was Lu Sin who most fearlessly, by his works, dissected the putrid corpse of Feudal China and showed the right way to the construction of a new, free, China. For 30 long years he tirelessly fought, diligently worked, with always more energy, always more confidence; while his contemporaries, his one-time comrades, either became traitors or, having lost courage, deserted from the battle-front, one after another. Lu Sin dedicated his whole life to China Revolution. He always stood on the side of the oppressed hundred-millions.

"Lu Sin, was born in 1881 in the town of Shao-shin,* in the Chekian province. When 13 years old, he had to live with some charitably disposed relatives owing to his parents being impoverished. Afterwards, his father died; and he left his home-town in the hope of finding an opportunity to enter a free school. He entered the Seamen's School in Nankin when he was 18. After six months, he left the Seamen's School and in another school commenced to study the mining of ores. Having finished the complete course, he was sent to Japan, where he decided to study medicine; because he saw that medicine had much helped the 'Meiji' reform in Japan. For two years he studied in the Medical College at Sendai. Then occurred the Russo-Japanese War; and, by chance, he saw a photograph of a Chinese, whose head was struck-off for spying. He came to the conclusion that bodily health, alone, would not save a mentally unconscious people. One had to create a new literature, before everything, to awaken the people. With the help of some friends, he started publishing books; but failed because of social indifference.

"He returned to China when he was 29. He taught for several years. From 1918, he began to write novels, which had great influence on modern Chinese literature. On March 2, 1930, he joined the 'Left Authors' Union.' After the Manchurian affair he wrote, for several daily papers and magazines, articles sharply criticizing the shameless compromise of the 'national-traitors.'

"In the beginning of this last year, he was laid-up by sickness and suffered for about six months. Nevertheless, he watched with great attention the growth of the 'National Liberating Movement.' In an article, written during his sickness, we find these lines:—

"By the intensifying of the Japanese offensive and the sharpening of the national crisis caused by the treachery of the perfidious Government, most of the Chinese People, not wishing to become slaves, have become aroused and have arisen. They are raising their countless clenched fists, to break asunder the chains by which the enemy has put the yoke upon a half-colonial China. The students are the most fearless pioneers in the National Liberating Struggle; therefore the National Rescue Movement, initiated by them, certainly shall spread throughout the land, and even influence the World, which now wanders at the turning point, between the darkness and the light!

"On the organization of the United Front, he wrote: 'I think that, in the anti-Japanese Front, we must welcome every anti-Japanese force whatever. I have read, and I support, the policy of an anti-Japanese United Front presented to the whole people of the land by the present evolutionary party of China. Un-

conditionally, I join this United Front. The reason is that I am not only an author, but a Chinese; therefore I consider this policy absolutely right.'

"After his death, more than 10,000 people—students, workers, women, intellectuals, clerks, and even little children—gave to him a last salute. More than 5,000 took part in his funeral procession, singing the funeral hymn:—

"Oh! Our Teacher, Rest in Peace.
We march on, by the signs you left;
And soon shall come that day,
When we shall stand before your Tomb;
And tell you of your Will, fulfilled."

ATHOSO ZENOO.

Human Sacrifice, in the Bible and Elsewhere

ONE sometimes cogitates upon the great loss that has been suffered by the West by the belief that the Bible is a supernaturally inspired, and therefore a fully authoritative, book. Read critically, the work includes, I think, the most comprehensive account of the rise of a people from barbarism to civilization. Read uncritically, with a naive belief in its infallibility, it has been in the main a prop of primitive superstition; and its neglect of genuine intellectualism, together with its innumerable absurd statements and false ideas, opposition to natural investigation, and to discovered truth which militated against ancient legends and other vacuous matter, have doubtless prevented and still prevents an incalculable number of people from recognizing the real value of the book.

For some few years after I became an unbeliever, I continued to go to church because I played the organ. Naturally the sermons were irksome to one who was reading the works of Darwin and Herbert Spencer. And I can remember being puzzled and rather horrified by references to the narrow escape of a boy from being killed on an altar by his father. I cannot recall that any explanation of the event was given by any preacher, the point emphasized being the benevolence of the supposed divine command, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad."

I do not think that reference was ever made in my hearing to a passage in Leviticus xxiv. 29, which is also said to have been a divine injunction: "Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of thy daughters shalt thou eat." This ritual cannibalism is, of course, a well known feature of anthropology; and the work of Frazer and others has familiarised us with the "eating of the God." This rite was evidently practised in very early Egyptian times, being shown by a passage in a spell that was used: "Unis appears as a god, who lives on his fathers and mothers. He it is who eats their magic and swallows their power. The big gods are his morning meal, the middle gods his evening meal, and the little gods his night meal." And the British Museum Egyptian Guide refers to the notion of the people that "they could ensure their King eternal life by chanting in unison that he is a great King who eats the gods and boils their grandmothers in a cauldron."

We were again reminded, a few days ago, of human sacrifice in another aspect, by the report of trouble in India, caused by a rumour that some children of one body of religionists were to be taken (presumably kidnapped) in order that they might be built into the foundations of a temple which was about to be built by a rival religious body. A similar scare was reported about 1890, when a bridge over the Hoogly

*All names are written as printed in the Esperanto paper.

was projected; it was said that 100,000 native heads were required for the foundations of the structure; and one result of the story was an attack by natives on a hunting party of Europeans, with the cry, "Gulla Katta" (Cut-throats).

There are some traditions of the practice in this country, including those of Devil's Bridge near Bedgellert and London Bridge. And it has been concluded that the rhyme and game, "London Bridge has broken down," refers to the immurement of someone in the foundations of the structure.

That the early Hebrews performed this rite is shown by a passage in 1 Kings xvi. 34, which informs us that: "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundations in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun." And of late the view has been confirmed by the finding of the skeleton of a child, in a kind of coffin, together with a dish and a lamp, at the foundations of many of the Hebrew houses unearthed during recent excavation in Palestine.

The most probable explanation of the practice seems to be that the spirits or ghosts of the sacrificed individuals became very angry, even demons, and that by haunting the place drove away would-be depredators, whether ghostly ones or not.

As is well known, animals came to be substituted for human beings in all sorts of sacrifices, or in the case of the "foundation" variety the shadows of persons might be "built in."

J. REEVES.

Personality

We select from the various meanings assigned to this word the following: "that which distinguishes a person from a thing, or one person from another." We therefore define "a personality" as a person having the above characteristics; which distinguish him from a thing, and from other persons.

These characteristics can only be those associated with "life," or rather the psychic features it develops. We can therefore omit, in considering the nature of personality, the "thing-like" characters of the person; and this in spite of the obvious fact that our direct knowledge of each other is exclusively "thing-like." It is only, of course, by inference that we credit others with a psychic organization akin to our own.

Most of our readers, we believe, will share our "sure and certain hope" that the walls of our evolutionary Jericho will not fall flat—like those of the Newtonian citadel—at the sound of the trumpets of a few prominent modern physicists. In this faith, we may continue to rely on the overwhelming evidence for the universality of the law of Evolution, in spite of the fact that a readily negotiable footway over two "bad steps" in the evolutionary climb has not yet been constructed. The "bad steps" lie between the dead and the living, and between unconscious and conscious life; the present bridges over these formidable crevasses being too reminiscent of the snowy piecrust which is the climber's bugbear.

Gaps notwithstanding, however, there is ample evidence to justify us in maintaining the hypothesis that things apparently lifeless have evolved into living things, and that unconscious life has further evolved into conscious life. The surprising results of the artificial synthesis of things, provide at least an analogy for the still more surprising results of the accidental synthesis brought about by the interplay of

natural forces, during vast periods of time. Things have become conscious of unconscious things, as well as of conscious things like themselves; the conscious being related to the living unconscious, as the flower to the bud. The flower we may call "a personality," the fruit will be its psychic content which, together with the psychic contents of all other personalities (living or dead) in the environment, constitute the medium in which the individual personality "lives and moves and has its being." It is related to the unconscious as the fruit to the bud.

What are the characteristics of this medium? Like a sea it is never at rest. Its surface is for ever traversed by conflicting wave-currents of impression, thought, and feeling; or broken, as is claimed by modern psychologists, by upheavals from the unconscious depths below. Personalities—it will be remembered that we have eliminated from consideration their "thing-like" aspects—are just waves or groups of waves, and receiving parcels of "energy" and direction as the result of their incessant encounter with other waves. When particular personalities are lucky, they may become powerful enough to affect for good or evil the destinies of Continents, or even of the world. These we call "outstanding personalities." On the other hand, if unlucky, they may oscillate feebly in the shallows, quietly awaiting an inglorious extinction.

We should like to draw attention to a curious—if perhaps quite fortuitous—analogy between these human units (personalities) and the units of physical Nature. Modern physicists have lately been much exercised in mind over the fact that the latter behave "sometimes like particles and sometimes like waves." They inform us that we may have to presume the existence, below the limits of experimental verification, of a restless medium similar to that which we have associated with personality. Only when lucky waves have acquired a certain minimum of energy and direction do they make themselves manifest as electrons, protons, photons, etc.

It is said that for years after Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, every disease was diagnosed by the medical faculty as a "blood-disease." The doctors were hypnotized—like (*mutatis mutandis*) many generations of Christians—by the word "blood." "Wave-theories" are very much in evidence at the present time, and we recognize that we may incur a charge of "seeing waves," as the Malay who "runs amok" is said to "see red." In self-defence, we may point out that this account of the stuff of personality does not rule out rigidities—biasses, inhibitions, and the like—which, especially in early life, may be set up in personality by strong directed currents in the environment. In so far as these rigidities prevail, the "personality" will behave "more like a particle than a wave."

Moreover, at this point we can cheerfully acquiesce in the closure of the "wave" talk. Even the physicist as yet claims no robustious physical characters for his "waves"; ours are obviously and admittedly purely metaphorical.

There remains the consideration of the "I" element in personality. In what sense is my personality *my own*? The golden words, "Ye are not your own"—whatever they may mean to the devout Bible-reader—are the expression of a basic sociological fact only dimly recognized by any human community up to the present time. One aspect of that fact is, that our personalities are inextricably entangled in the meshes of their environments. If we wish to expiscate from this web a specific personality, we must (in thought) eliminate the environment and consider what remains; a thing—once living, now dead—furnished with a delicate and in-

tricate series of gadgets for dealing with sense-impressions, and its own physical and psychic reactions to them. So far, so good. Only a few Noah's Ark Fundamentalists still maintain a "resurrection of the body"; but we are now most emphatically assured by very large numbers of intelligent persons, that if we only look carefully enough, we shall discover an "immortal soul." Not, of course, the psychic content of the personality at the moment of dissolution. That cross-section of a moving personality-environment complex would be of substance too light and gossamer even for a soul. What we are to look for can be nothing less than the total psychic content (or some imaginary principle which actuates it) of the personality from the beginning to the end of its existence. That content we have already seen to be inextricable from the medium in which it lives, moves and has its being—the psychic environment. True, a personal Deity (that contradiction in terms), a "mad hatter," or some other "figure of fun," might solve the puzzle: "Find the immortal soul!" We give it up.

We were once favoured with the views of the intelligent verger on the preacher: "The sermon's quite all right, you know sir; really good stuff, but when he comes to the poetry . . .!" At the risk of a similar judgment from the reader, I conclude with a few original unrhymed lines on the place of residence of departed personalities:—

"Behind the looking-glass" they dwell,
With gods and sprites and faces-in-the-fire:
We see them if we fan to flame
The smould'ring embers of our memories.

Nothing they have, nor nothing want:
They sleep—and sleep—neath gossamer coverlets
Woven by countless Yesterdays:—
Faiths, forlorn-hopes, could-, would- and might- have beens!

They died who, by those selves then ours,
Were loved and mourned. Anon new selves
The Dealer dealt. "Behind the glass"
Abide both our dead selves and those they loved.

Save only: If, in Time's despite,
Past, present, future, are the Three-in-One,
And the world's pageant a bad dream:
Nought ever *was* or *will be*: but all *is*.

G. TODHUNTER.

Inspiration

We have met many who appreciate good pictures, fine music, great plays and charming scenery, without being specially anxious to claim miraculous "inspiration" in the fact that they prefer the best to the less good.

There are, however, many who regard delightful scenery (and even fresh air) as an "inspiration," while dismissing ordinary street scenes and the odour of drapers' shops as totally uninspired and uninspiring.

Some confess themselves bewildered in the presence of genius. They have heard of a ploughman who wrote excellent poetry, of a policeman who could paint sunsets, of a Foreign Office clerk whose essays reveal an original mind. They are struck with wonder at the "inspiration" of those who write extraordinarily good stories, poems, plays.

The publishing-houses to-day are turning out vast numbers and varieties of books. All intelligent critics are bound to condemn a large proportion of these books. Some are of no value to anybody. Does not the truth of this judgment suggest that inspiration covers a multitude of nonsense? Is it not obvious that poor novels, halting verse and dreary essays are as much a sign and proof of inspiration as the greatest and best in each class? Shakespeare and Smith merely represent the best and the worst inspiration.

Is it not true that inspiration, in any reasonable inter-

pretation of the word, is simply the mechanical impulse to do, say (or think) anything, good or bad, clever or idiotic, helpful or hateful? Somebody once said: "I could have written *Hamlet*—if I had had the mind to." May we go so far as to say that the impulse to write *Hamlet* is no more and no less an inspiration than the impulse to throw a brick at a stranger or to drink a glass of beer after a long walk?

The rarity of excellence in all kinds of authorship (and everything else) has nothing whatever to do with an alleged "inspiration" peculiar to a few. Inspiration is common to all, or it is a meaningless word. Heredity and the environment which compasses every experience explain the differences in results which are the expression of such experiences. The rarity of genius is no more remarkable than the fact that few men attain the height of six feet nine inches. Some men are taller than others and some men write better than others. All men die, but as not all of us live to 87, it is right to say that some lives are (in an actuarial sense) better lives than others.

The ladies who gasp the word "inspired" when they enjoy Tennyson or "Madame Butterfly," and sniff contemptuously at Longfellow and Sullivan are just exposing their preferences, making comparisons, selecting the "inspiration" they like, from a number of "inspirations" they like less or not at all.

If this idea of inspiration had prevailed in the unscientific ages, we might have been spared continents of crudities supported by Niagaras of bloodshed, when men murdered their fellows because one affirmed and the other denied the "inspiration" of books like the Bible.

Mr. W. J. Bryan—the prosecuting Counsel in the Scopes case in 1925, boldly defended the "inspiration" of every word of King James's version of God's Word. In Germany most Lutherans still believe that a Teutonic God inspired Moses to write (in German) a similar Book. The Roman Catholics testify that the same God "inspired" a slightly different version, but they are equally sure that the "inspiration" is the essential thing.

Protestants are wrong in announcing Catholic indifference to an inspired Bible. Pope Leo XIII., in 1893, declared the Bible to be "written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, with God for its Author." Archbishop Bourne recommended the daily study of the Bible—"This inspired message . . . this Divine Revelation." Catholic teaching on the highest authority includes the belief that "Inspiration is incompatible with error." Catholics, of course, regard not only the Bible as inspired, but they consider their Church and its Pope to be inspired to maintain the inspired Bible in all its pristine perfection.

If we glance at Modernist conceptions of "inspiration" we may perhaps miss the ancient note of the "verbal inspiration of every word and every letter." But Modernists believe that Christ was very specially "inspired" by God, and they cannot deny that Christ was a Fundamentalist in regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures. Modernists nowadays claim the right to pick and choose what texts they will believe, but in the end, we find them "choosing" from the old documents. The fact that Modernists reject some parts of the Bible, only emphasizes their acceptance of other parts. As Bishop Gore said: "We ask to be allowed to recognize the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Bishop Gore's "recognition" was remarkable! He found that the Holy Ghost's "inspiration" was "at its maximum in some of the psalms . . . and is just discernible at its minimum in Esther." Quite a nice discrimination between "Inspiration" at its ebb and at its flow!

Incredible as it may seem, some Hymns have been claimed as the inspired work of God Himself. We have the authority of the *News-Chronicle* (February 1, 1937), for a most curious story about God inspiring Ira D. Sankey to get the divinely desired tune to some silly words Mr. Sankey had read in his album of newspaper cuttings:—

Sankey's thoughts went to the newspaper clipping in his notebook. But he had no music; to sing those words meant improvisation. He prayed silently, opened his notebook and began in A flat.

The first verse was a success: could he remember his own music and repeat it for the next? He could and he did, and afterwards noted it down.

The tune has remained unchanged from that day to this.

And what was the Masterpiece of Music evolved under the direct inspiration of the M.C. of the Heavenly Choir? It was no more than the ancient fish-like poverty-stricken tune to which is sung the most banal of all Hymns. It begins:—

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay. . . ."

The theory of divine inspiration surely never suffered a severer blow than this.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence

SWEDENBORGIANISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. Cutner may regard all religion as being freakish; that is a matter within his own "freedom and rationality" (to use a phrase from Swedenborg). But, historically, a belief in Christ or in an esoteric meaning to sacred writings, or in another world and spirits there, or in the possibility of communication with that other world are beliefs more or less common to all the great religions of the world, and are not sufficient grounds, therefore, for distinguishing Swedenborg's religion as freakish in comparison with others.

I have no intention of undertaking a polemic on behalf of Swedenborg; your readers can form their own opinion when they feel so inclined, by reading his works. Several are issued in Dent's Everyman Library, and there are also cheaper editions about; but Swedenborg adduces so many reasonable arguments and known facts in support of his system that it cannot be called "ridiculous." Swedenborg's interpretations of Scripture and mythology are uniform, and based on some very reasonable grounds, and suit the facts better than anything Gerald Massey ever wrote. There is an adequate enough reason for Swedenborg not having any intercourse with spirits from Uranus and Neptune. One may not believe in Swedenborg's system, but there is a great deal more cogent reason and solid argument in him than Mr. Cutner allowed your readers to suppose. All I want is to save your readers from forming an ignorant prejudice.

If I asked someone what sort of fellow Mr. Cutner was, and I was told, "Oh, he's quite a freak. He spends a lot of time making dirty little marks on pieces of paper. Anyone can see him afterwards in the street, rushing round looking for a hole to slip them into," I should call such a statement a travesty of a poor journalist's life. It could only be due to unintelligence, malice or misplaced humour. But, of course, the statements in themselves are not inaccurate; "chapter and verse" for them could be given.

E. C. MONGREDIEN.

THE QUEEN MOTHER

SIR,—I agree that the Queen Mother has no constitutional position acknowledged in this country, except a courtesy and ceremonial one, and that any attempt to create such a belief must be exposed and resisted. But it helps rather than retards such a process for you to refer to the Queen Mother as *Queen Mary* as do the rest of our lick-spittle press. During the reign of Edward VIII., the habit was excused, because, it was explained, in the circumstances of a *bachlor* King, no confusion was likely to occur. These circumstances no longer exist, but the practice is still continued.

BRAND EAGER.

Obituary

ONA MELTON

THE Birmingham Branch N.S.S. has lost one of its oldest members by the death of Ona Melton, which took place on February 6. He took a keen interest in the spread of Freethought ideas which found expression in a booklet

for young people, *Prehistoric Man and His Ancestors*, also one or two novels for a more general public, with an occasional appearance upon the platform of his Branch. The cremation took place on February 10, when a Secular Service was read by Mr. C. H. Smith of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. Our sincere sympathy is with his wife, and only son, 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

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH (17 Grange Road, Kingston-on-Thames): 8.0, each Thursday evening, lectures, discussions, etc.

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 Theory of Organic Evolution Unscientific and Immoral?" Affir.: Capt. B. Acworth, D.S.O. Neg.: Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4, opposite Clapham Common Station Underground): 7.30, W. Kent, Author *London for Everyman*—"Thomas Paine, Centenary."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton—"Music and Life." 50th Anniversary of First South Place Concert.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Alick West—"The Roman Catholic Church and its Advocacy of Fascism Against Atheism and Socialism."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

ACCINGTON (King's Hall): 6.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Fraud of Modern Religion."

BERKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, R. Stevens (Birkenhead)—"Embryology."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street): 7.0, Mr. Russell—"Is State Socialism Inevitable?"

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, entrance in passage facing Burtons): 7.15, Mr. Chas. H. Smithson—"The Natural Distribution of Wealth."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"And Man Made God in His Own Image." No. 4—"The Building of the Creeds."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 7.0, Dr. P. Gray, A Lecture.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Rev. Dr. I. K. Cosgrave—Garnethill Synagogue—"Zionism: Its Aims and Objects."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"What is the Matter with Religion?"

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

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street Manchester): 7.0, C. Bradlaugh Bonner—"Freethought's Struggle in Europe."

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, entrance in Ormskirk Road): 7.15, Mr. Newbold—"Dialectic Materialism."

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