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

Views and Opinions

Church and State

THE other day my post brought me a pamphlet dealing with what was once a living issue, and which, had not Nonconformists deserted the one principle that made their movement of value, would have been a closed question. The pamphlet is by the Secretary of the Liberation Society, and bears the title *Why Disestablishment is a Living Issue*. I agree with the implications of the title, but in a deeper sense than the writer wishes it to be taken. I do not agree with the title as the writer intends it to be read, because what he and Nonconformists are aiming at is not a genuine disestablishment of all Churches, but a placing of all Churches on a level at which they will receive *equal preferential* treatment. The existing quarrel with Nonconformists is that they are not now receiving their equal share of State patronage and State help. They do not object to the State giving Nonconformists financial help, or maintaining laws that are intended to protect their special opinions from an assault to which other opinions are exposed. They are simply asking that the large Nonconformist bodies and the Established Church shall receive an equal amount of State patronage and help. They are, in plain fact, in the same position as two competing trading concerns which demand that particular markets shall be open to each of them on equal terms. Other corporations must be kept outside. Nonconformity took its rise in the assertion of a principle. It has become a movement for the exploitation of a superstition held in common by themselves and the upholders of the Established Church. If a Bill for real disestablishment came before the country Nonconformists would be its bitterest opponents.

* * *

A Desertion of Principle

Nonconformity, I repeat, took its rise in the affirmation of a principle. This principle was that religion was not the business of the State, but solely that of

the individual. It held, and rightly held, that the business of the State with regard to religion was to keep the ring, to see that all religious opinions received the same treatment, and that treatment was to leave the selection and the maintenance of any and every form of religion to those who believed in it. Historically, the whole body of those outside the Established Church never did *act* on this principle, but it was affirmed in theory, and many a large body of individual Nonconformists, and some Nonconformist organizations, were prepared to go the "whole hog." But gradually Nonconformists made their legal position secure. They were relieved from the pressure of laws that were designed to threaten their existence and expose them to penalties. Then their minds turned to the fleshpots of Egypt. They began to agitate for legislation that helped them. They supported existing laws that gave them help, and which inflicted hardships on their non-Christian opponents. They were admitted into the "ring," and they did what they could to keep that ring intact. Their motto became, "Serve all *Christian* Churches alike, and damn the rest." Principle gave place to the hunt for pelf and prestige.

For example. Mr. Rowland, the author of the pamphlet, says, quite rightly, "An Established Church is not only a Church, but a political institution." Agreed, but is there any substantial difference between the Established Church as a political institution and the Nonconformist Churches? The Established Church pays no rates or taxes, but neither do the Nonconformist Churches, and both thus receive a huge annual grant from the State. By law, as Mr. Rowland points out, the Church is freed from the payment of road and paving rates, but he omits to mention that what the Nonconformists cannot ask for as a legal right they very often receive as a favour, and on a question of principle wherein lies the difference? The Established Church is protected by the Blasphemy Laws, but so are Nonconformists so far as their beliefs run on all fours with the establishment. What is the difference here? Nonconformists uphold with all their strength Sunday laws which differentiate between Sabbatarians and non-Sabbatarians. They believe in the teaching of religion in publicly-maintained schools; they claim the right to be officially represented at public ceremonies; and when the primitive coronation performance takes place, and there is repeated in Westminster Abbey the magical ceremony of the transformation of a very ordinary human being into a semi-incarnation of the deity, Nonconformists will be there as favoured participants. There is not, as a matter of fact, a single form of State patronage and State help which the Nonconformists can get that they refuse to take; they are constantly clamouring for a more equal division of the swag. Can anyone point out a material difference between the two groups of Christians as political institutions? The only one

that I can see is that Nonconformist doctrines are not settled by law. Church of England doctrines are. What Nonconformists are at present seeking is freedom of control of opinion—for themselves—with participation in the plunder of the community that comes from State help to themselves. They are asking that the State shall reject the upholding of any *particular* form of Christian belief. In other words, they are asking that in the State as a whole there shall be set up the same kind of compromise that exists in the schools, by which a form of religious belief upon which Christians are agreed shall be State maintained, at the expense—material and “spiritual”—of every other form of belief and disbelief. In the light of facts, Mr. Rowland’s statement that Nonconformists believe “the Church must be completely independent of the State rejecting both its material support and civil control or direction” reads very peculiarly. He must be writing in a “Pickwickian sense.”

* * *

The Right to be Wrong

Mr. Rowland advances as a perfectly sound argument the fact that the Church of England no longer comprises the whole of the people, “as it did in the Middle Ages.” True enough, and yet a half-truth, or, rather, it is one of two truths. The other truth is the deeper point of view in matters of opinion or elsewhere, that the State ought not to interfere except in such cases where direct violence or wrong to the individual is intended, or results. The right to express any opinion, and to be relieved from punitive consequences for expressing it, does not depend upon an opinion being right, but upon the fact of it being an opinion. The right to voice wrong opinions is one of the corner-stones of liberty. Further, the fact of the Church being in a minority of the population would hold true also of Christians as a whole if any reasonable test of Christianity could be made. For whatever injustice is inflicted upon society by the fact of the State Church not comprising the whole of the people, will remain, no matter what the number of those outside the religion that is given special privileges and disguised endowments. We have seen what the opposite kind of thinking leads to in the present state of the nations, and in their relations to one another.

Finally, a State religion is of necessity a tribal religion, and is as much an exhibition of uncivilized and unscientific thinking as is witchcraft and demonology. If men believed, as they once did, that a religion was of social value, inasmuch as neglect of the gods might involve the loss of crops, the infliction of disease, or other admitted evils, and if, as again it was once believed, that the gods in their primitive and cock-eyed impartiality, might punish the whole of a community because they were offended by one or two (just as uncivilized militarists and others behave to-day with regard to other peoples in such circumstances) then there was some foundation for the State professing a preference for religion. But no civilized person believes in that way to-day. I know the Archbishop of Canterbury professes to believe in something of this kind, but one must take that with a grain of salt. As Heine said of God Almighty with regard to forgiveness, *it is his trade*, and events have shown that where his trade interests are concerned, not even the Standard Oil Company, in its worst days, is more unscrupulous in its conduct.

* * *

The Savagery of Civilization

To-day we know that bad crops, bad weather, epidemics, disasters in war, or terrestrial upheavals are

not the consequence of man’s “disobedience to God.” The House of Commons voted fifteen hundred millions in support of war, but if there was a proposal brought before the same House of Commons, openly to vote a million for the purpose of enlarging the army of parsons, it would be laughed out. The idea of an established religion is one of the most primitive of our social survivals. It was man’s earliest defence mechanism against the gods whom he would have been pleased to have got rid of altogether if he could have seen a way of doing so. And in those days the medicine-men might fairly claim to have earned their salt because of the dangers they warded off. They performed the incantations that brought food, and health and prosperity to the tribe. Any reader will be able to trace the remnants of these in the prayer-books, in the creeds and ceremonies of the churches, and in the surviving beliefs of the religious; but these professors no longer earn their salt. They are like rudimentary organs that demand nutrition and give nothing in return, and act as potential sources of danger.

And when a belief loses its validity, and a practice, its utility, then it becomes a centre of infection. It poisons thought and saps honesty. It bribes rogues to its service and hounds down honest men and women. It tries to marry outworn beliefs to living facts, and the progeny of the marriage are abortions that fill so many public offices, and issue fantastical recalls to religion. I agree with Mr. Rowland in disestablishment. But he wishes to disestablish, or rather he wishes to re-establish, all churches—Christian Churches—on a level of equality. I do not so much wish to disestablish the Churches as I wish to disestablish religion. I wish to see all religious opinions made to stand by themselves and for themselves. I want the State to stand aloof from the stupidity of religious ideas, and from such crude and insulting ceremonies as the magical transformation of the head of the State into an incarnated deity, by the touch of holy oil and barbaric posturings. In short, I want to see religion fully exposed to the fearless criticism of modern thought and modern life with nothing to protect it but its own truthfulness and inherent strength. And when it is forced to do that—well, may the gods help it! It will get scant assistance from right-thinking men and women.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A REPUBLIC

What is called a *Republic* is not any particular form of Government. It is wholly characteristic of the purpose, matter or object for which Government ought to be instituted, and on which it is to be employed, *res-publica*, the public affairs, or the public good; literally translated, the public thing. It is a word of a good origin, referring to what ought to be the character and business of Government; and in this sense it is naturally opposed to the word *monarchy*, which has a base original signification. It means arbitrary power in an individual person; in the exercise of which, himself, and not the *res-publica*, is the object. Every Government that does not act on the principle of a republic, or in other words, that does not make the *res-publica* its whole and sole object is not a good Government. Republican Government is no other than Government established for the interest of the public, as well as individually as collectively. It is not necessarily connected with any particular form, but it most naturally associates with the representative form, as being best calculated to secure the end for which a nation is at the expense of supporting it.

Thomas Paine, “*The Rights of Man.*”

"The Church of Our Fathers"

"It is in the masses of the people that the deepest fountains of true life reside."—Gladstone.

"The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity."
Disraeli.

THE story of the sergeant, who, at a church parade, divided his flock into "Church of England" and "Fancy Religions," recognized the relative importance of the various religious communities. In this instance it is a case of "Eclipse first, and the rest nowhere." Not only is this Anglican Church the wealthiest, but she is, far and away, the most powerful of all the various religious denominations. As a creature of Parliament, she not only enjoys State support, but has a share in legislation. Indeed, it might almost be said that she holds the balance of power in the House of Lords. Outside of Parliament, the Black Army of Priests has representatives in thousands of parishes, and the Universities and Public Schools are in their hands. Compared with this Anglican Church, the various Nonconformist bodies cut a sorry figure. Owing to industrial depression most of them have to face a steadily falling revenue, and scantily-attended places-of-worship are the rule rather than the exception. The only body with any vitality is that of the Spiritualists, which is outside all the churches, and actually attracts converts and cash from every denomination.

The Church of England owes her unique position to her wealth and to State support. She has actually become, as it were, a branch of the Civil Service, and in return she has given her whole-hearted support to the governing classes. She has not been in touch with the real nation of ordinary men and women since the Ages of Faith and Ignorance. Without delving into the history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is sufficient to glance back just over a hundred years in order to see what this precious Anglican Church meant to some of our forefathers.

Britain was still in the grip of Feudalism at the opening of the nineteenth century, and the position of the working-class was actually worsening. The introduction of machinery in industrialism brought matters to a climax. A wave of humanitarianism, the aftermath of the French Revolution, swept the country, and poets, novelists, and other writers, voiced the new sentiment with no uncertain sound, while practical reformers sought to bring more compassionate views into practice. There was plenty of room for reform, for the population was largely illiterate, over-worked, underpaid and dirty. The penal code was barbarous. Men could be hanged for stealing over five shillingworth of goods, and sent to penal servitude for merely asserting their rights. Little children were forced to work from tender years under terrible conditions.

And all these horrors were actually happening after Priestcraft had occupied a position of undisputed power for well over a thousand years. Present-day priests are not, as a rule, "gey gleg at the uptak," but, when they spout nonsense concerning "the Church of our Fathers," they are at their silliest.

The testimony of people actually living in those days is in direct contrast with the nonsense talked to-day. In 1794 the Rev. Sydney Smith was appointed curate-in-charge of a village near Salisbury. He found the church empty, and the villagers "aliment for Newgate, food for the halter—a ragged, wretched, savage, stubborn race." Five years later he wrote: "In England (except among ladies in the middle rank of life) there is no religion at all. The clergy of England have no more influence on the people at large than the cheesemongers of England." William Wil-

berforce, visiting Brigg in 1796, found "no service on Sunday morning, and all the people lounging about the streets." He found Stamford (Lincs.), in 1798, "a sad, careless place, the shops open on Sunday. A shopkeeper said that none of the clergy were active, or went among the poor." When Archdeacon Daubeney became vicar of North Bradley, at the end of 18th century, he "found the people so barbarous that they would pull down the walls of the church and vicarage, then rebuilding, and cut and destroy the trees." In 1805 Edward Stanley, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, became rector of Alderley, and found that "the clerk used to go to the churchyard stile to see whether there were any more coming to church, for there were seldom enough to make a congregation." And yet, all this while, according to the Anglican Church apologists, this organization was in living touch with the nation.

It would be far more correct to say that this plutocratic church was in living touch with the "upper crust" of society. In her servitude to the rich, she had almost overlooked the very existence of the poor. So doggedly and uniformly were the Anglican Church clergy opposed to all schemes of political or social amelioration, that the parsons were spoken of as the "Black Army" of Despotism. In one instance the Bishops did have a chance of coming in contact with the nation, and that was in the House of Lords. A perusal of their votes in the pages of "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates" shows that they actually regarded the people with hatred. These bishops were defenders of absolutism, slavery, and the barbarous penal code; they were the determined enemies of every political or social reform. And the people themselves knew the bishops for their enemies. The then Bishop of Bristol had his palace sacked and burned, the then Bishop of London was prevented from preaching, the Bishop of Lichfield had to run for his life from St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street. Archbishop Howley, entering Canterbury, was mobbed. On November the Fifth effigies of bishops were substituted for that of Guy Fawkes, and the Bishops of Exeter and Winchester were burnt in effigy outside their own palace gates. The Archbishop of Canterbury's chaplain had a dead cat thrown at him. In 1829 Samuel Wilberforce wrote to a friend: "I think that the Church will fall within fifty years." In 1832 the Rev. Thomas Arnold of Rugby wrote: "The Church, as it now stands, no human power can save."

The trouble throughout with the bishops has been that they live in a different world from the people of England. Men drawn from aristocratic circles, of good social position, of private fortune, posing as a sacred caste apart from their fellows, they were ever seeking ease, comfort, and the good things of life. Like the legendary gods of fabled Olympus "they lay beside their nectar," remote from the ordinary life of ordinary people. They were satisfied themselves, and they abhorred all change. They could not be got to see that it was wrong in a civilized country to hang people for stealing a few shillingworth of goods, and unwise to exclude from all political power millions of law-abiding citizens. Time has proved that the Bishops of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been far behind the best spirits of the age, blindly antagonistic of aspirations and ideals which Democracy approves. "Are they not our own flesh and blood?" Gladstone indignantly asked, with reference to the working-men of England. Such a question never shaped itself on the lips of the bishops of the Established Church during the whole time they lolled on the cushions of the House of Lords. All that they cared for was safeguarding their own positions, and bolstering the aristocracy and royalty which supported them. "Of what use are the Bishops in

the House of Lords?" asked Lord Shaftesbury. "The Bishops themselves have supplied the answer, and by doing so have earned the undying contempt of all true Democrats. The day is coming when the people of England will pass judgment on them, and in that day strip them of power and place, and rid Democracy of its worst enemy.

MIMNERMUS.

Gibbon and Christianity

I.

THE year 1737 saw not only the birth of Thomas Paine, but also the birth of the man who was destined to become, almost by universal acclaim, the world's greatest historian. Edward Gibbon was born on the 27th of April, very weak and sickly; it was something of a miracle that he survived as five brothers and one sister, born after him, all died in infancy. He himself seems to have had endless illnesses during childhood, and he rarely enjoyed good health all his life. He never grew beyond less than five feet in height, his head seemed very big for such a small body—yet this sickly, quaint figure gave to the world an immortal work, one of the most astonishing productions of man's intellect.

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire has never, in spite of later and more scientific research, been superseded. Its latest editor, Prof. Bury, found few important errors in the immense work, an astonishing testimony to its greatness and the thoroughness of its famous author. And it must not be forgotten, as John M. Robertson has pointed out in his own fine essay on Gibbon, that "there is only one historian in modern times who is generally read as a historian after the lapse of over a hundred years"—and that historian is Gibbon. Most of the others—Clarendon, Burnet, Robertson, even Voltaire and Hume, are, if read at all, not read for their actual history.

For Freethinkers all this is particularly interesting. Gibbon, the greatest of historians, the man who, perhaps more than any other single writer, had studied the rise of Christianity with the most intense application, saw nothing in it but that which a purely naturalistic course of events could explain. Looking at it with the cold, dispassionate, analytical eye of a historian, he saw no trace of the supernatural. It was, like the rise of any other religious sect, based on superstition, credulity, faith, and the like; but there was nothing divine about it. "God" had no more to do with it than the "devil"—or a slab of green cheese.

Gibbon had, as we learn from his *Autobiography*—also a masterpiece of self-revelation—had his religious experiences. He was brought up a Protestant, became a Catholic, reverted back to his original faith, and finally became a sort of sceptical Deist. It must not be forgotten that Deism, for the Christianity of the eighteenth century, was considered even worse than Atheism is considered by modern Christians. What *exactly* Gibbon believed, I have been unable to discover. I feel he is more akin to Hume than any other contemporary writer; and we know Hume was as near modern Atheism as it was possible to be in his day—though the fact was not generally known until after his death.

The result of Gibbon's Deism, or scepticism, or absolute unbelief, is seen in the two chapters of his *Decline and Fall* dealing principally with Christianity, and his constant references to the same creed and its fervid believers throughout the work. What he did,

and how he did it, has been summed up with the consummate mastery and malice of the great Byron. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto III., will be found the line:—

Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,

—a description of the way in which Gibbon treated the "divine revelation" of Christianity—which has passed into the English language as an unforgettable proverb.

It required great courage to attack openly the State religion during the eighteenth century. Few of the Deists who did so escaped obloquy or imprisonment. Woolston died in prison, while Paine was pursued with a hatred and malignity which affected even Agnostics like Sir Leslie Stephen. Gibbon did not use a bludgeon. He preferred irony—and what irony! There is hardly anything more deadly in the English language. Not even Swift surpassed the way in which Gibbon dealt with the credulity and orthodox non-sense of the early Christian believers. Many of the passages in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters have become world-famous as examples of the way in which, with consummate art, Gibbon turned the tables on the orthodox, and made those who understood him boil with rage. And the sly attacks on Christian beliefs throughout the immense work keep up the irony with extraordinary effectiveness.

The greatness of Gibbon as a historian has been reluctantly admitted by Christian writers, who had to concede that few works in the whole body of historical literature show such a marvellous grasp of fact, arrangement and balance. Gibbon's English was peculiarly adapted to the subject—sonorous, dignified and majestic. It may be, in some measure, monotonous; but in its own way, it has never been surpassed, and is a fine example of the wonderful flexibility of the English language. Compare the simple, homely yet vigorous Saxon English of Paine and Cobbett with Gibbon's far statelier English which derived from the Latin. Which is the better, as an example, is a matter of opinion, and of taste.

Gibbon has been fortunate in his editors. It is true that the orthodox ones have protested again and again at the way in which their beliefs were attacked; but they tried their best to be fair. In my own edition, I have often been amused at Milman and Guizot trying their utmost to nullify Gibbon's remarks and conclusions by notes which betray their anxiety lest the reader should agree with the historian. Milman says:—

The art of Gibbon, or at least the unfair impression produced by these two memorable chapters, consists in confounding together, in one indistinguishable mass, the *origin* and *apostolic propagation* of the Christian religion with its later progress. The main question, the Divine origin of the religion, is dexterously eluded or speciously conceded; his plan enables him to commence his account, in most parts, *below the apostolic times*; and is only by the strength of the dark colourings with which he has brought out the failings and the follies of the succeeding ages, that a shadow of doubt and suspicion is thrown back on the primitive period of Christianity.

Milman did not like the "latent sarcasm," as he called it, in a passage of Gibbon:—

The scandal of the pious Christian, and the fallacious triumph of the infidel, should cease as soon as they recollect not only by *whom*, but likewise *to whom*, the Divine revelation was given. The theologian may indulge in the pleasing task of describing Religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption, which she con-

tracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings.

This kind of thing was extremely difficult to answer, for the acute reader always saw Gibbon laughing—nay, sneering—at the fools who believed in the theologians as against the secular historians. Time after time one comes across a piece of cutting irony which proves the contempt Gibbon felt for the people who believed in, or said they believed in, a Divine Providence. Time after time he scathingly ridicules the absurd pretensions of the religionists and their belief or conviction that “God” had anything to do with the rise and progress of their particular creeds. The utter inadequacy of Milman to reply to Gibbon can be seen in the note which he appends to this passage:—

When the law was given in thunder from Mount Sinai; when the tides of the ocean and the course of the planets were suspended for the convenience of the Israelites; and when temporal rewards and punishments were the immediate consequences of their piety and disobedience, they perpetually relapsed into rebellion against the visible majesty of their Divine King, placed the idols of the nations in the sanctuary of Jehovah, and imitated every fantastic ceremony that was practised in the tents of the Arabs, or in the cities of Phœnicia.

Obviously Gibbon did not believe in the “thunders” of Sinai nor the “suspension” of the planets, nor even in the “Divine King.” And poor Milman could only say—ignoring the “latent sarcasm”—“Among a rude and barbarous people, religious impressions are easily made, and are as soon effaced,” etc. He had not the gift to attack with irony himself; he did not want to make too much of the satire either; and so he just tried to answer Gibbon in a “straight” way—and he lamentably failed. One reads his notes with amusement, but Gibbon’s biting irony sticks. Gibbon indeed was one of the greatest enemies of Christianity the eighteenth century produced.

H. CUTNER.

Germination and Civilized Society

In his interesting work: *The Philosophy of Civilization* (Putnam’s, 2 Vols.), Mr. R. H. Towner has advanced the view that the decline and fall of past civilizations are chiefly traceable to reversed selection. It is urged that when frigid females bear children and transmit their superior nervous structure to their offspring the community improves mentally, morally and physically. But when the community becomes more and more composed of the progeny of ardent women, while a constantly increasing percentage of the colder type evade the burdens of maternity, decadence and downfall inevitably result.

Despite the proved advantages of birth-control, to the individual, Towner evidently shares Nisbet’s opinion that it spells ruin to the race. For the frigid women now so largely doomed to sterility are, it is contended, imperatively essential to the maintenance of a virile population. Their sterility is therefore regarded as a leading factor in the seeming decadence that has smitten Western civilization. While the Britons in past generations displayed initiative and enterprise, and became the premier exploiters of the globe there are now ominous signs of weakness and timidity. Towner mournfully surveys the mass of the English-speaking peoples as those who “leave pioneering to higher spirits, and, for themselves, love to concentrate in cities, to huddle around a Government, and expect it to keep them and their offspring

perpetually and uniformly fed, clothed, housed, warmed, pleased and good. Such was the Roman rabble after Augustus; such is now most of the English-speaking race.”

Towner opines that man’s ascent coincides with a moral improvement and a continence signalized by the growth of sexual coldness in women. Two American physicians are cited concerning the wide prevalence of frigidity in New World women. It has been estimated that from 10 to 20 per cent are thus constituted. Speaking from professional experience, Dr. Towney considers this an under-estimate, while Dr. Malchow thinks it a fair estimate that, “nearly one half of the (married) women are leading lives that can be neither healthful nor congenial, and whose homes are lacking in a fundamental requisite for happiness.”

In a chapter devoted to ancient Israel, Towner cites various passages from the Bible in support of his thesis, but these appear of very doubtful value. It is said that Greece was in her glory when cold women were constrained to bear children. But, as woman grew in power and independence, acquired property and secured the right of divorce, strict monogamy was replaced by concubinage and other laxities. “These customs in Greece,” Towner states, “had the effect of polygamous marriages elsewhere. Cold women escaped some of the pressure to which they had been subject. Fewer of them bore children. Gradually, the strain of sexual coldness became extinguished; and with its extinction perished the intellectual brilliance and high spirits of Greece.”

Rome’s history is surveyed in considerable detail, and her rise, ascendancy and ultimate ruin are attributed to the positive or negative parts played by frigid females in family life. The several social groups that successively upheld the Republic and Empire indirectly derived their capacity to govern from parental influences. The evolution of Roman marriage customs is traced, and it is submitted that as the morals of the upper classes were lessened by luxury and incontinence the social stratum below which had preserved the sterner customs of the past gradually supplanted them. When this class in turn became enervated with lasciviousness and ease, a more virile, if underlying social order rose to power. Despite the decadence of the patrician classes, through many centuries, there remained in reserve some section of the community that had continued unsullied by the fashionable vices of the hour. Towner detects the inception of Rome’s decline at the time of Augustus. He asserts that “By the free distribution of corn, Augustus exactly reversed the selection of mothers begun 700 years earlier by Numa. Through all these centuries of poverty and oppression, the Numan selection of mothers had augmented, slowly it is true, but steadily, never letting it decline until the nervous organization of the Roman plebeians had become, in comparison with the contemporaneous proletariats of other nations, a race of supermen. While freedom, diversity, private property and monogamy had made the character of posterity depend upon other factors than fecundity, their spiritual stature rose, and they conquered the Mediterranean world. With all other factors abolished, and only fecundity retained, the Romans were easily worsted by the very nations they had vanquished. Their augmented nervous organizations could not multiply as fast as the prolific groups of low nervous organization. The latter had an easy victory, and the Roman stock died out without replacing itself.”

Towner expresses the opinion that while the early Christians remained a minority their relatively austere customs served to strengthen the tottering State. But the splendid period of Trajan, Hadrian, the two An-

tonines and other able Roman rulers may be safely assigned to several contributory causes. Towner admits that the alleged services of the adherents of the new religion were transient in character. Moreover, he does not claim that the first Christians did anything more than help to restore the ancient virtues of Pagan Rome.

If the primitive Church fostered matrimony and denied divorce, its subsequent encouragement of celibacy Towner regards as a leading factor in the rapid downfall of the Roman Empire. So early as the fourth century the Christian fathers decried sexual intercourse, even within lawful wedlock, and this marked antagonism towards marriage soon spread throughout the Christian world. Their teaching is thus summed up by Gibbon: "It was their favourite opinion, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of immortal beings. The use of marriage was only permitted to his fallen posterity, as a necessary expedient to continue the human species, and as a restraint, however imperfect, on the natural licentiousness of desire."

The less erotic, the more austere pious, the delicate and refined, were invited to enter religious retreats to safeguard their chastity from carnal desires. Men, women and children crowded into convents and monasteries, and in every part of the Empire these institutions multiplied and were rapidly filled with devotees. Gibbon shows how peasants, slaves and mechanics smitten by the current craze, or influenced by ulterior considerations eagerly embraced the opportunity of escaping the exactions of the workaday world. Taxpayers evaded the extortions of the State by joining the monks. The legions so essential for the protection of Rome from the barbarian invader were seriously depleted by defection to the monastic ranks and, states the historian, "the same cause which relieved the distress of individuals impaired the strength and fortitude of the Empire."

An enforced infertility of frigid and intelligent females became almost universal. Towner concludes that: "In the brief period of two generations, the perennial sterilization of the virtuous complexity changed the character of the population. Wherever the Christian religion was most successfully preached and was most devoutly believed, each successive generation of men and women was more debased than their predecessors."

First championed in Rome by Athanasius in 341 A.D., the doctrine of religious celibacy thus cursed the land. Both in the spiritual and temporal realms dictatorship was established. The law was Orientalized and the fruits of industry and commerce were ruthlessly swept into the Imperial Exchequer, while freedom of thought and expression became criminal offences, thus penalizing that unfettered exercise of the intellect which is absolutely indispensable to the maintenance of civilization and progress.

No marvel then that the once proud Pagan mistress of the world was soon assailed and sacked by the barbarians. Towner trenchantly declares that by the fifth century the Christian world had been reduced to a state of pitiful slavery.

The Greek Empire at Byzantium that so long outlasted that of the West was, it is suggested, enervated by similar causes, and ultimately shared its fate. For, once more our historian discerns the seed plot of decay in the unfavourable selection of mothers. As in Rome, the flower of womanhood was immured in nunneries and as Towner phrases it: "Religious and worldly sterilization completely extinguished sexual

coldness, and with it the augmented nervous organizations by which civilizations rise."

The evils of asceticism, supplemented by a coincident sexual laxity, Towner regards as the antithesis of the factors which induced the rise, spectacular conquests and brilliant, if brief civilizations of Islam. Instead of the exaltation of celibacy, the Moslem peoples were zealously bidden speedily to increase the Prophet's devotees not only by means of conversion, but by procreation also. Nearly all women in Moslem communities became mothers, with the result that the originally wild and fanatical followers of Mohammed evolved stately cultures in Spain and other lands. In a few centuries Islam produced a galaxy of illustrious names in science, philosophy and letters at the very time when Christian Europe was sunk in dirt, distress and intellectual darkness. According to Towner's theory the wide Moslem advance coincided with a constant infusion of fresh blood through the child-bearing of conquered Christian mothers. Progress proceeded apace until this blood became exhausted while the colder women were more and more released from the burdens of matrimony owing to the customary practice of polygamy. Other factors admittedly operated in the subsequent decline of Saracen civilization, as in that of earlier States, several of which are dealt with in the second volume of Towner's thought-provoking work.

T. F. PALMER.

Auld Nick!

SCPTIC: "Can you refer me to any literature in the world more ludicrous than the biblical tales of the alleged antics of the devil?"

Christian: "I fail to see anything ludicrous in them. What exactly do you mean?"

S.: "The Bible describes how, among other performances, the devil attempted to bribe Christ, how he carried him to the top of the temple and tried to induce him to leap to the earth. After he had failed in this attempt, he took God up into an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, which he promised him if he would fall down and worship his Satanic Majesty. Language is inadequate to describe the absurdity of this story."

C.: "I admit the event, if interpreted literally, appears strange. If you consulted a standard commentary, you would probably learn that it was intended as an allegory."

S.: "Scott, a clergyman, in his well known commentary, published in 1824, thus refers to the incident 'Many expositors think that this (the alleged event), took place in a desert near Jordan, within the promised land, yet it is more probable that it was in the wilderness of Sinai.' He gives details of what he thinks actually happened, but these are too diffuse for repetition. With his contemporaries he saw nothing allegorical in the account, and believed the incident, as recorded to be literally true."

C.: "Scott may have been correct in his interpretation despite what you say to the contrary."

S.: "Like many others, you evidently believe anything, however nonsensical, provided it is supported by the authority of the Bible. Perhaps you see nothing unusual in the reference in Revelation to the angel binding the devil for a thousand years, and casting him into the bottomless pit, and setting a seal on him?"

C.: "I am not prepared to admit that even this incident does not contain an element of truth. I maintain these stories are figurative."

S.: "In my youth I was taught the full gospel that

everything in the Bible was literally true. Any teaching to the contrary would then have been considered little short of blasphemy. The introduction of allegory to explain incidents which educated people now will not believe is clearly a modern expedient devised to extricate the clergy from positions which they find untenable. Judging by your replies it would not surprise me to learn that you believe the tales which once were current and believed by Christians that the devil gave back youth to the aged, enriched the poor, and conferred favours on all if they signed and sealed away their souls."

C.: "These things may have happened in the past. In the old days the people were very depraved."

S.: "Even so, if to-day the devil were prepared to bargain to secure more victims, thousands of proposing Christians would be ready to negotiate with him. To many the prospect of obtaining betting tips would be an irresistible lure. It will not do. With the spread of education people are learning that the devil is nothing but a product of the imagination. What once was an object of fear to them is now becoming either food for their merriment or a target for their sarcasm."

PRO REASON.

Acid Drops

As contemporary history is being written, there appears to have been two Kings who bore the title of Edward VIII. One commenced his reign in January, 1936, and continued until nearly the close of the year. He was a fine manly fellow, the idol of his people, devoted to duty, full of human sympathy, and with his personal character guaranteed by the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury. He was the worthy son of a father who was also a manly fellow etc., etc. The second Edward VIII. reigned but a few weeks. He was careless of his responsibilities, blind to the calls of his high office, surrounded himself with a number of dissolute men and women, and, in short, so shocked the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury that he was forced to abdicate.

Several lives of these Edwards have already been issued. The most recent one is by Mr. Hector Bolitho. He describes the ground on which the abdication of the second Edward was forced to resign, and the way in which he lost the respect and confidence of those around him. Our acquaintance with the Royal Family is not intimate enough for us to say how far Mr. Bolitho's picture is correct, but one feels curious about the date at which the transformation from the good King to the bad King took place, and at what stage the Archbishop and the Prime Minister became aware that it was impossible for him to continue on the throne. Did they guarantee him without knowing anything about him, or was his waywardness and lack of dignity something that only began a few weeks before the abdication? There is something here that needs explaining. Is it all part of an official attempt to discredit the late King, and so help in creating interest in the new one?

A possible explanation occurs to us. It may be that the good King Edward VIII. was murdered by some of the dissolute members of the upper circles of society, and then the assassin disguised himself as the dead King, wore his clothes and took his salary until he was finally unmasked by the Archbishop and the Prime Minister. That would explain the mystery of the two Edwards, but so remarkable a change of character in a few weeks deserves some study. It will certainly puzzle future historians.

A striking case of the way in which God simply will not look after his own is reported from New York. It seems that 5,000 Catholic policemen attended a service in

St. Patrick's Cathedral; and while they were thus showing their love and devotion to the Almighty, a number of mean and soulless smash-and-grab bandits took the opportunity to raid a fur store and get away with £5,000 worth of goods. They actually escaped, so the report tells us, "in comfort." The Lord, for some unaccountable reason—his ways are so very, very mysterious—did nothing. Nothing!—and yet 5,000 policemen were pouring out their hearts to him. Really it's enough to make a good Catholic turn Atheist.

A correspondent to a religious journal thinks that a good beginning to reconverting England, in accordance with the Archbishop's "Recall to Religion," would be the "conversion of professing Christians themselves to carrying out the principles of Christ fully in their daily business and social lives." We are in hearty agreement. It is about time that Christians should show their belief by doing what Christ ordained. For example, an earnest and sincere Christian would at least share his business with an out-of-work; he would remain as celibate as was Christ himself; he ought to leave everything and everybody for Jesus's sake. A little cursing after the splendid example shown by Jesus towards the Pharisees would help. No genuine Christian ought to possess any wealth—he ought to sell all he has and give to the poor—and then some. And he should at least treat his mother as Jesus is said to have done in quite a number of Gospel passages. Unfortunately the average Christian will always supply valid reasons why we cannot follow Jesus. And they are quite good ones too.

Miss Ruth Kenyon, writing on "the Church in action," in a religious journal, says, for the umpteenth time, that "a right sociology cannot ignore the fact that man is a fallen being, and that society therefore needs not only illumination but redemption." We like that word "fact" in this connexion. It has about as much truth in it as if it were applied to the Virgin Birth. But, of course, we ought to recognize that the only "right" sociology is Christian sociology; and "Our Lord" therefore must be the Saviour. Otherwise there would be no need of Christianity. And if man is *not* a "fallen being" (whatever that exactly means) there would be no need for such writers as Miss Kenyon, or even for religious journals! Good old Genesis!

Miss Kenyon has a little tilt at Secularism. "It is rapidly shedding," she tells us, with the air of one who knows what she is talking about, "the humanitarianism it developed in the nineteenth century, a residuum, perhaps, of the traditions of Christendom." This is surely humorous enough to make a cat laugh; but Miss Kenyon continues: "It has shed even the great tradition of Greek philosophy, which at least regarded man as essentially a spiritual being. It seeks the centre of his life merely in one or other of the elements of that life, economic, political, racial, biological, sexual, or what not." The "what not" is quite a gem. The real truth is that Secularism simply means that a man should base his life on secular principles—that is, without bothering about heavens, hells, angels, devils, or gods. One world at a time is sufficient for everybody. "Spiritual" needs simply means keeping churches going, and are actually of no value whatever in the business of life. But Secularism does not mean killing, cruelty, intolerance and other evils generally associated with historical Christianity. One day, Miss Kenyon will discover that it was Secularism which has civilized the Church. Is there *now* a flaming Hell with babies frizzling in it for eternity?

Except in very small circles, one does not hear now very much of Theosophy—that curious religion to which Mrs. Besant gave over forty years of her life. But it is interesting to note that "a £100,000 building of which she laid the first stone, at Letchworth, Herts, was bought by the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in 1933 and turned into a Catholic school." News of something similar comes from Australia, for the Australian Catholic Association has brought an open air theosophist temple near Sydney Harbour. It was built by the Order of the

Star of the East, which was expecting the second coming of Christ. Unfortunately he did not come—or has not as yet—and the members of the Star of the East got tired of waiting for the heavenly visitor to walk over the waters at Sydney Harbour to the temple. So it is now going to be used for the production of Catholic religious plays. Anyway, there seems little difference, as far as credulity and tom-foolery go, between the Star or the Christian sect.

At last some non-Christian documentary evidence of the Resurrection has been unearthed. Dr S. Loesch, who is the Professor of Catholic Theology at Zuebingen University, has been studying a Greek marble inscription found in Nazareth in 1878. This inscription "carries a text of a regulation issued by the Roman Emperor Caligula in A.D. 40—which threatens all who disturb the tombs of the deceased with capital punishment." This order, thinks the Professor, must have been made because of the commotion caused by the Resurrection, and because of the claim made then that the Pharisees had secretly removed "Our Lord's" body. It never struck this learned Professor that because objects of value were buried with the dead for reasons with which anthropologists are familiar, rifling tombs was a very common offence, and, apparently these grave-robbers were as common with the followers of the "true" God as they were with the followers of the ordinary deities.

Canon Sheppard, in common with some "clergy and laity," wants to pass a resolution "declaring our passionate conviction that Jesus Christ would refuse, in any cause whatever to employ the methods of modern warfare." What basis of fact such a conviction rests upon we don't know; but it is genuinely amusing to find Jesus being always credited with the special beliefs and convictions of some of his particular followers. He disagreed with the "money changers" in the temple and went for them hammer and tongs with a whip; we don't know whether he would have used a Mills bomb had one been handy. At all events, the question is not, and never was what Jesus may have done, had he lived now, the question is, given a particular set of circumstances, what ought we to do now?

Canon Sheppard would only do what his "passionate conviction" tells him Christ would do. Others would do what their "passionate conviction" tells them to do. One is surely as good as the other; and dragging in Christ's name means nothing at all in the ultimate. In other words, Christ is of no value whatever—except as a sort of amulet-name. And one is hopeless as soon as he descends to this kind of tom-foolery.

The Archdeacon of Furness made some dismal observations at a Sunday School Congress, the other day, in Blackburn. As far as the *adult* Bible classes were concerned Blackburn did very well; but as regards baptisms Blackburn was thirteenth on the list in the North. Naturally, the Archdeacon pointed out that this was "a serious position, and probably meant that many members of the Sunday schools and Bible classes were actually unbaptized." It was, obviously, a very depressing state of things, and became more so when he added that there was now a decline in the Sunday schools, and that "there was much less difficulty in getting teachers than children for them to teach." Teachers should become "evangelists and gather the children in"—as the only way they could be true men and women was through religion. It is pretty obvious from this that all is not well with Jesus even in our hide-bound and religious north. But it is very good news all the same.

There was also a very depressing report from Leeds, where the Annual Meeting of the Leeds Church Extension Society was held recently. According to the Vicar of Leeds, had it not been for the help given by the Society "half the parishes in Leeds would be in serious financial straits." No new churches had been consecrated during

the year either but, of course, efforts were being made to do so now. Leeds seems to be in almost as holy a mess as Blackburn.

The Melbourne Catholic *Advocate* is not surprised that Houdini, the celebrated illusionist has failed to communicate with his wife within ten years, as he promised to do if he were able by an agreed code message. Its comments:—

Only the Catholic Church contacts departed souls, and not through seances. . . . Through prayers, the Mass, indulgences. . . . A Catholic mother does not cry to her dead daughter, "Mary, are you there?" She kneels at Mass; gains indulgences. . . . Through God, her good works reach Mary. . . . If Houdini is in purgatory now, he is watching souls soaring towards heaven through the efforts of friends, relatives on earth. He is probably saying to himself: "I wish someone would teach my wife the only way to contact me; tell her to stop those seances; to pray, have Masses said for me."

Which being interpreted means, "don't pay Spiritualistic mediums, by masses."

With regard to a Conference of Peace Societies held in Brussels, the Catholic Archbishop of Malines, Cardinal Van Roey, issued the following warning to Catholics:—

Having been consulted on the opportunity for Catholics to take part in the Conference of Peace Societies, which will be held in Brussels, we consider it our duty to warn Catholics, as the inspiration of this conference is at least very questionable, and its aims somewhat suspect, not to let themselves be the victim of their good faith.

This attitude is in harmony with the Beauty and Fascination seen by official Holy Church in the "colonization" of Abyssinia. It is in harmony with the attitude recently expressed, of Cardinal Isidoro Goma, Archbishop of Toledo, who describes the "conquest of Abyssinia" as a "work of civilization," and in Spain describes Franco's work as a "providential mission to save Christian civilization." Temporal Power is dear to Holy Church and the acquirement of it by any means—poison-gas included—is the holiest of work. All counter influences are "questionable" and "suspect."

Mr. Gregory, editor of the *Methodist Times*, is honorary secretary of the Religious Film Society. He announces that the Society is now filming the "Te Deum!" Hollywood can only beat that by filming—say—*Euclid*. Yet no!—for pons asinorum and other problems would surely lend themselves to portrayal, but—the "Te Deum!" What sound-track could possibly render "all angels cry aloud"? And who are the R.F.S.'s "cherubim and seraphim?" Well—they must find parts for James Douglas and Hugh Redwood at least.

Christianity is by no means having an easy time in Germany. It seems that when a German child is asked: "Which is our Bible?" he is expected to answer: "Hitler's *Mein Kampf*." This will suit neither the Lutherans nor the Catholics. The leader of the former, Dr. Dibelius, may have, we are told, "to pay dearly for his courage," in opposing the Nazis. One of his friends, Dr. Weissler, was imprisoned in a concentration camp, following some obviously trumped-up charge, and he is now stated to have committed "suicide." This is the Nazis' favourite way of designating one of their own brutal murders. We hold no brief for either Judaism or Christianity, but we bitterly oppose any method of attacking these religions which has to resort to concentration camps and assassination.

According to the *Church Times*, the Pope presided, the other day, at a meeting of the Propaganda of the Faith Congregation, which discussed the future of the Church of Rome in Abyssinia. It is interesting to note that as Roman Catholicism is considered to be the one "universal" religion that is international in its scope, it has been decided that, "in future, non-Italians will not be sent by the Holy See to Abyssinia." What have English Roman Catholics to say to that?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D. FISHER.—Thanks for paper. Much appreciated.

PETLAND.—Newspaper correspondence always does good when editors will admit it. The attempt to prove immortality on a moral basis is a very old trick, but the two questions are quite distinct.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—We hope you will have a very successful summer season in the North. Shall expect to see you at the Liverpool Conference.

Will Branch Secretaries be good enough to send lecture notices on cards, or separately addressed. Enclosed with other communications they are likely to be overlooked.

For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*, H. Mitchels, 5s.

A. MOWBRAY.—Personally we care very little whether Christians speak well or ill of Atheism. We are not an Atheist because Christians speak well of Atheism, and we are not in the least disturbed when they speak ill of it. And the patronage of Christians is more often an insult than a compliment.

V. CRELLIN.—We have read your letter with interest, and hope to meet you one day. We note what you say about this journal, but you must remember that the *Freethinker* has a specific purpose in view.

C. KAISER (N.S.W.).—Thanks for the high estimate you place on the *Freethinker*. Our many readers in Australia are part of the girdle with which we encircle the earth.

F. R. BLSMORE.—We were not under the delusion that the "farrago of superstitions," that make up Christianity were dead for all people. There are millions who still accept them, but for those who have a genuine understanding of Christianity its doctrines no longer have power. And even the destruction of specific religious doctrines does not guarantee the removal of the superstitious cast of mentality from which Christianity springs.

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.

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Sugar Plums

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held in Liverpool on Whit-Sunday. Liverpool is as convenient as any place for the whole of the country, and we hope that not only every Branch of the Society will be officially represented, but that there will also be a good muster of individual members. Quite apart from the importance of the discussions that take place it is an occasion when members get into close touch with one another and carry back to their "home towns" fresh inspiration for the common task.

The West London Branch of the N.S.S. held what it hopes to make the first of an annual gathering on Thursday, March 25. It was a complete success. There were nearly 100 present, and everyone appeared thoroughly to enjoy themselves. Mr. Bryant, President of the Branch, was in the chair, and Mr. Cohen, Mr. G. Bedborough, and Mr. Saphin were among the speakers. Miss Thelma Tuson and Miss Jeannette Athelstone delighted the meeting with their singing, and after dinner the tables were cleared and dancing went on until 12 o'clock.

The gathering was held at the Union Helvetia, Gerrard Place, Shaftesbury Avenue, and an unexpected pleasure was a presentation to Mr. E. Saphin, in recognition of his thirty years service to the Freethought cause. He has been a loyal worker in the West London Branch, and many nice and merited things were said of him by those present. Mr. Saphin modestly said he thought it time he took a back seat to make room for younger workers. But we hope to find him active for some time. There is room for both young and old, and the ideal thing is a combination of both. And Freethought is such an ever-youthful cause that men tend to keep young by their association with it.

In *The Papacy in Politics To-day* (Watts & Co., 7s. 6d.), Mr. Joseph McCabe has produced a timely and informative work. Mr. McCabe traces the action of the Roman Church in all parts of the world, and produces verifiable evidence of a policy that is marked by an unscrupulous determination to forward the secular power of the papacy by any means, fair or foul, but mostly foul. The chapters on Spain and Mexico are very timely, and in addition to providing much useful material, give many indications of the road to be taken by those who wish to pursue the matter at greater detail. Not the least important chapter of the work is one in which it is made clear that the Roman Church has an esoteric and an exoteric doctrine. The latter is given to the world, the former is kept to a select circle. And this applies, apparently, to both doctrine and policy. The usefulness of the book is heightened by the influence that the Roman Church manages to exert over the newspaper press, and to that one may add that many publishers hesitate to publish works that attack the Roman Church in a direct manner. A cheap edition of the work, say, at about a shilling would do much good at the moment.

One thing that does emerge from *The Papacy in Politics* is the readiness to make friends with any movement that is willing to come to terms with "the great lying Church." In Italy it is hand and glove with Fascism, praising its rule, endorsing its almost incredible brutalities in Abyssinia and elsewhere, and urging it to clandestine acts of aggression in Spain. In Germany it plays the part of critic, because Hitler has not come to heel quite so quickly and so thoroughly as Mussolini, and threatens the autonomy of the Church. The Roman Church is ready to-day, as it always has been, to do anything, to make friends with anyone, who in return will give it a free hand to pursue its own aggrandisement.

Another very useful book from the same publishers is a reprint of *Man and His Universe*, by J. Langdon-Davies. This is issued in the Thinkers' Library series at the popular price of 1s. The work consists of a pleasing and simply-worded outline of the position of modern science, and its bearings on humanistic speculations. Someone is to be congratulated—we hope it is the author—for having left out of this edition the sixteen pages of introduction which accompanied the earlier editions of the work. Such expressions as the following, "The history of science is the history of the most intelligent search for God," and of the conflict between science and religion: "There is no such thing; there is only a conflict between two religious outlooks and two ideas of God," are just nonsense, and worthy only of the pulpit. Mr. Langdon-Davies' book was published in 1930, and we hope that the excision of this introduction, a blot on a very interesting and instructive piece of work, is an indication of a change of mind on the part of the author.

The *Cork Examiner* of March 9, has what is now a rather stale, but welcome, item of news. The County Cork Library Meeting have before it the supply of books, and there were some complaints that the lists of books sent in for the Committee to purchase contained much that was not liked by the people, bearing in mind the number of books that are barred in the Free State. But after much discussion it was quite pleasant to find the chairman declaring, "There is no demand for religious books." A censorship may function, but unless it is of long standing, and rigorously exercised, people will want something better than "religious literature." Of course, in a country like Germany, and to a smaller extent in Italy, where thousands of the world's best books are absolutely banned, and people imprisoned if found with them, it is possible to develop a generation that will have lost the use of critical appreciation of literature. But the rule must be rigid and prolonged to be successful.

Modern Mystics

NEARLY four centuries ago the God hypothesis was driven from the science of non-living bodies. It was subsequently driven from that of living bodies. It is now turning to the recesses of the human mind, basing a claim for direct communion with a supreme Personality via some supposed hidden faculty.

"But I am only too well aware," writes Bishop Barnes,¹ "that if we admit the existence of realms which science has not yet conquered, we give to religious quacks and obscurantists a domain where only too probably they will house superstition." On this point Prof. Ames speaks for psychology, "Those who tend to identify religious experience with the activity of some peculiar organ or element of the mental life have made much of the subconscious. Here there seems to be a safe retreat for the hard-pressed advocate of religious experience."² No hope, he maintains, lies in this direction, while the opinion of Prof. G. B. Brown is "that the return to the terminology of introspective psychology would be a disastrous step, calculated to return the subject to its discredited anthropomorphic and anecdotal stage."³

Yet despite this advice from the practising psychologist, and the warning from a clerical colleague, a direct mystic approach to God through some mental power which has escaped scientific analysis is much to the fore. Let us pursue some contemporary efforts on these lines.

In his book, *Is Divine Existence Credible?* Mr. Kemp-Smith, rejecting the classical arguments, falls back on his so-called direct experience. The mystic approach also appears to be the mark of St. Paul's, in the persons of Inge and his successor, Matthews. The latter pleads⁴ for Otto's *Idea of the Holy*, which contends that "religious consciousness is a quite distinct emotion," rooted in the numinous, appearing rudimentarily as "a shuddering sense of the uncanny." In Russia Lossky⁵ is a leading exponent, while recent German philosophy evinces a similar trait, in the following of Ruckert's "noological spirit," while Schleiermacher's "religious consciousness" is here championed by Clement Webb, who does not seem to have freed himself from the obsolete type of argument, for he holds that "in the consciousness of our own incompleteness or imperfection is implied a consciousness of that to which we are thereby contrasted, or in other words a consciousness of God."⁶ In passing

from idea to objective reality he is reviving an old theistic error, and one which is not entirely out of fashion, other instances being Dr. J. E. Turner (*Revelation of Deity*) and Dr. Mackenzie (*Cosmic Problems*), who believe that we can sense a "perfect type of selfhood," or "ideal personality," while H. W. Carr, in the *Hibbert Journal*, claimed to intuit a "world soul." Webb himself, in his *Religion and Theism*, claims this religious consciousness to be a normal feature of human life, and puts forward the following argument in support. If, he says, we are in a room and hear music, we infer that somewhere there is a musician, though he is not visible to the senses. And just as we infer a musician through our musical experience, so we infer a God through our religious experience. The analogy is, however, unsound. For Webb, both God and the unseen musician have independent objective existence apart from that person's head who is the experient. But the sceptic who challenged the listener's interpretation of what he heard as having to do with a musician unseen could be met by having the vibrations traced to an instrument operated by a player, who could then be verified as existing, as having weight, appealing to the senses, and filling a track in space-time, with a biography behind him. No mystic has ever, outside the realm of fantasy, shown that his experience will bear the interpretation of relating to the publicly verifiable activity of a God. It would seem safe to assume that the physical accompaniment of the mystic state of mind relates to events in this natural sphere, and most of them inside the mystic's own head. However sincere this new order of intuitionists may be, their case is in effect an attempt to establish an approach to God, which shall be unassailable because it is private and personal, and without material for public examination. But as such it must share the deficiencies of all private interpretations, in the differences and disagreements among individual mystics themselves. Let us leave them to their inner contemplation, and watch with amusement while they cancel out each other's beliefs.

An allied form to which the theistic case has been cast is that of the Nonconformist, Rev. E. S. Waterhouse, in *The Philosophical Approach to Religion*. The intellectual approach, he holds, is only one side of our mental life, and man must exert the affective and volitional in his search for God. (Those who argue thus, however, are usually eager to seize any intellectual or scientific support which they believe is vouchsafed). But any approach other than this defeats itself. Not only do wills and affections vary from one individual to another, but the mystic who declares himself impervious to scientific approval or condemnation leaves a very serious gap in his armour, for it is then left for science to show how known, demonstrable facts actually rule out his beliefs; facts, for instance, militating against the idea of a moral governor of nature. Finally, a devastating analysis of mysticism was last year published by Dr. Forsyth (*Psychology and Religion*), in which he subjected the idea of God, among others, to a searching inquiry calculated to explode any notion that here we have phenomena indicating the "supernatural." Whatever effect prayer might have on the subject could, he showed, be met with in the ordinary course of auto-suggestion. Further, at about the same time Prof. Leuba issued his *God and Man*, and illustrated how phenomena once supposed to be the prerogative of religious exercises—cures of deafness, blindness, lameness—are capable of scientific explanation, and have been performed under the auspices of mental science, whereas if they had been done under theegis of religious faith they would promptly have been counted as miracles.

¹ *Scientific Theory and Religion*.

² Quoted with approval by A. N. Whitehead (*Religion in the Making*).

³ *Science Progress*.

⁴ *God in Christian Thought and Experience*.

⁵ *The World as an Organic Whole*.

⁶ *Divine Personality*.

From time to time sensational cases of the "wonders" wrought by spiritual faith and mystic intuition appear in the press. One of the latest concerns "the man with X-ray eyes," a Hindu gentleman, Mr. Kuda Bux, who claims to be able to resurrect himself after a burial of three months under the ground, and to read blindfolded. It will be time enough to comment on the former escapade when, and if, it is done; but the latter, a development of an old Christmas-time trick, has, I understand, failed to satisfy Mr. Harry Price. Apart from the difficulty of blindfolding anybody with thoroughness on account of the usual concessions for comfortable breathing, especially when the blindfolded person is the last to arrange the folds (though it might logically be expected that a man who can do without air for three months should not be incapacitated in the least), there is an important point which escapes the usual audience. It is that, if it is possible to see through the handkerchief, why not let the handkerchief cover the book? A faith that enables a man to see through a handkerchief a fraction of an inch away from his eyes, should enable him to see through it a foot away, over the print.

The contentions of our clerical mystics are more refined and less spectacular, but equally untenable. Not only are their "visions" and "spiritual senses" the subject of psychological inquiry, but they do not meet the stock objections to theism. A God who cannot surmount the usual difficulties is not rendered more plausible by being mystically apprehended.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Immorality

"I DON'T see anything immoral about that, my boy." This remark made to a boy of fifteen as a contribution to a discussion which involved some trivial ethical issue such as the permissibility of occasional fibbing, was so unexpected that it served as an invaluable beacon to that boy, and has never been forgotten. The word *immoral* arrested the youngster; he had only heard the word used with a very definite sex significance. To hear it applied to a subject no more serious than fibbing was startling, and the attempt to understand this use of the word led to a clarification of the meaning of morality that has been to him of lifelong utility.

The parent who said that to his son was not a Christian. It is a Christian peculiarity that immorality is generally a synonym for one or the other form of sexual transgression. That this is an obsession of the Christian man can be checked, if one desires, every day in life. I have known many Christian parents whose anxiety about their offspring was almost confined to how their children were going to behave after arriving at puberty; the possibilities of this phase of their life being to them a veritable nightmare.

Ethics, of course, includes the consideration of that branch of life which is concerned with the relations between the sexes; it is concerned with *all* human relations. It is, however, the peculiarity of the Christian religion that it has always been sex-obsessed. The business of living in its thousand ramifications has come in for relatively scant consideration. Sex as a disruptive influence, strong enough at times to make the consideration of one's immortal destiny a trifling matter, has always been considered as the main, and almost the only, moral issue. Let the Godless arrange their Plans for the improvement of society and the analysis and improvement of moral codes; the Christian is content to stick to the Ten Commandments and to

get hot and bothered about what might happen when Man and Woman collide with one another.

The serious inquirer can fill notebooks to substantiate this. We know Christian households in which children are watched closely in case they show signs of unapproved sex symptoms, where but the faintest interest is taken in the wireless record as far as this deals with social activities and experimentation. International relations, which may at any moment blaze out into mass slaughters, fail to interest. Tommy and Mary are made to attend Church and Sunday School; that is assumed to be sufficient as far as their moral training is concerned. In the home life, they look after Tommy and Mary in one respect well. They must be saved from *immorality*; all the rest will be added unto them.

"Is she a good woman?" I once heard Ellen Terry, in the rôle of Olivia, ask the Squire regarding one of his lady friends. A person of Christian training knows what Olivia meant by such a question. If we, as Freethinkers, know what she meant, it is because we understand Christian mentality, and realize that what is to us the most interesting of all subjects, human conduct, is to the Christian, bound up with one solitary aspect.

The Vicar of Wakefield indeed is an excellent example of this Christian peculiarity. We find in that work that when Olivia was *tricked* into a mock marriage, she lost her virtue. Yes, all virtue had gone out of her. She ceased to be a good woman. She ceased to be an honest woman. Purity and honour left her. All the pretty children and their dam in one fell swoop!

Examine this classical example of the constituents of Christian virtue a little further. When all her friends and relations are in despair about the deplorable condition in which Olivia had got herself, it is discovered that the marriage was not a mock marriage; the priest who conducted the ceremony was no masquerader. He was an authentic priest with his certificate endorsed by the Almighty. What happened then? Back immediately came Olivia's goodness, her honour, her virtue, her honesty. Universal falling upon necks to slow music! And one thing stood out as clear as day, that through both her disgrace and rehabilitation Olivia herself had done nothing at all to deserve one or the other.

Christian morality is the most contemptible thing on earth. Ponder on the disgusting mess, as exemplified by *The Vicar of Wakefield*, that Christian sexual ethics was in a century ago. Remember, later, the freethinking Thomas Hardy who told of a good and, at the same time, seduced woman. It was Thomas Hardy who gave his book the challenging title of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman*. And reflect upon the fact that his book was banned, screeched at and denounced as "immoral" by official representatives of Christian purity.

And nowadays we have papal pronouncements concerned firstly with the matters which are thought to affect the temporal welfare of the Holy Institution. Secondly, they are concerned with woman's "modesty," as this is evidenced by the length of the skirt and the amount of flesh exposure. God made the human body devoid of clothes, but he appointed His agents to look after "morality," and the way to assist morality was to cover up, as much as possible, his shameful handiwork.

Everywhere we keep hearing expressions such as Christian morality or Christian virtue. It is well for mankind that what we know of morality and virtue has not dropped from the clouds. The Gods propose, but it is man that disposes.

T. H. ELSTON.

The Recrudescence of Religion

THE "recall to religion," in conjunction with campaigns to "restore faith in the Bible"; the increase by the B.B.C. of week-day religious services, the broadcasting of week-day Bible talks and talks on Church and State (the former intended for schools, the *Schoolmaster* has stated, a conclusion that some of us had previously arrived at, the hour of issue being 12 noon); the multifarious attempts to extend and intensify the teaching of theology in schools, teachers' training colleges, universities, evening schools and elsewhere; the abundant religious propaganda and suggestion by the B.B.C., and the Press, and the boycott of Secularist exposition and news; all these demand constant attention, and all possible resistance from those who desire the advance of real knowledge, rational thinking and due attention to real, significant affairs.

In the present partial, and doubtless temporary intellectual and political degeneration (the "flight from reason," the gangster governments of some countries, etc.), religious protagonists have gained increased confidence. They freely indicate, if they do not always say, that recent desertion of religion and Secularism in general are but temporary features. Such people are probably unaware that theological unbelief has always accompanied or closely followed the advance of knowledge and thought; a fact that is equally well shown by the outburst of intellectualism and Rationalism in ancient Greece and Rome, and the re-development of intellectualism and scepticism in early modern times.

But we have still to insist on the plain vacuity of current creeds, on the absurdity of numerous freak religions, which, naturally enough, follow on those creeds—e.g., the addition to the Bible of the angel's revelation to Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, as the basis of a new sect; and rather closely related to Hebrew and other divination is the attempt to draw prophecies from the Egyptian pyramids. We have to combat the tendency to increased intolerance and obscurantism of the Fundamentalists, including, especially, Romanists. And we have to point out insistently the unintellectual character of both the Old and the New Testaments, from which naturally follow the ignorant sects and revivalists of our own day.

However, we are getting a measure of support here and there. In a circular-advertisement of a scientific and thoroughly rationalist book we find the following in an appreciation from Prof. Sir Arthur Keith: "You have put into words what most scientific men really believe, but which so few of them care or dare to own in conversation, lecture or book." This was the more appreciated by some of us because the circular came enclosed with a bulletin of Cosmopolis, an organization which one member in a long communication to an earlier bulletin, quoting Hilaire Belloc on the vital importance in social affairs of due consideration of "the End of Man"—apparently launched an attempt at "capture."

It will probably be known to readers of the *Free-thinker* that H. G. Wells in his *The Anatomy of Frustration*, passed a number of drastic criticisms on theology and the Bible, as a book considered to be sacred beyond criticism; and his letter in the March issue of the *Literary Guide* usefully extends the strictures to a call for protest against the assumption that the current creeds, moral code and practices are the only accepted standards, and that the citizenship of non-Christians exists only in sufferance. And so on.

As regards the inevitable permanence and growth of Secularism, the following passage from Prof. Shot-

well's *Religious Revolution of To-day* is noteworthy:—

... But we have already seen that this revolutionary era in religion, as in science, is no temporary phase in the history of thought. The ground which has been won will not yield to the forces of superstition under any disguise of orthodoxy; it is secure for all future time, because the life of civilization has established itself upon them. . . . For the comforts of the body as well as of the mind, are to be found in the new regime, and no blind barbarism is able to withstand this double appeal. Science controls as well as studies disease, prevents the danger its vigilance discloses, and stands like a warder on the frontiers of experience. It is increasing the store of wealth, and now calling for a higher justice in its distribution. Armed with such powers it is invincible; the pre-scientific era can no more return than the pre-historic. We left our cave shelters of the frozen past many thousands of years ago, built our cities, and spread out our nations; but until yesterday—and even now—the mind has kept reverting to those hidden channels where it groped in blindness and marked its spells of magic on the subterranean walls. It does so still whenever it has a chance, but the chances are lessening. It is too much to say that the reign of reason is at hand, for most of us are primitive through and through; but it is not too much to say that the irrational is henceforth doomed to yield up the command of the motive forces of conscious conduct.

The achievements of the intellect have been greater than most people suspect. Its scope is not to be measured by any single discovery in science or philosophy, but in the general movement towards rational control. Evolution brings emancipation; it offers life the poise that secures judgment upon its actions and dreams, instead of the blind, quick satisfaction of emotion. The reason is working out a vaster science than we dream of—a *scientia scientiarum*, which is not metaphysics or theology, but simply the great science of living. This is not a new creation, for it is as old as thought, but it has only now won its way to the position of control. It recognizes the emotions which are stung into being along the quivering nerves, just as definitely as the thoughts which follow. But it knows where to place such phenomena and how to interpret them.

J. REEVES.

Walt Whitman and Immortality

"LIFE would be unendurable here," said an old lady. "but for the thought of immortality in the next world."

But as immortality seems just as hopeless as immortality, why laugh so "consumedly" at the old lady's mistake?

Why most of us have been endowed with mortality may puzzle many, even although an intelligent power cannot be credited with our creation.

But to many, intelligent and thoughtful people, life can only be deemed endurable if completed by an immortal existence.

Though St. Paul tells us that he "spake as a fool" sometimes (2 Cor. xi. 23), and though his utterances leave us in doubt very often, one accepts his seriousness in 1 Cor. xv. 32:—

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?

That personal profit here and hereafter meant something in the days of St. Paul no one will doubt, but that the Apostle could be influenced by personal profit to be gained either here or hereafter does not add to his moral stature.

But still more remarkable is it that a thought so selfish should have entered the mind of Walt Whitman.

During the past fifty years I have come in contact with hundreds of Whitmaniacs—wealthy, middle-class people, mostly—who claim Whitman as the poet of immortality.

The few poor students I have met accepted him as a great democrat, but rejected his metaphysics.

Had Whitman asked, as Matthew Arnold does:—

"Is it so small a thing to have enjoyed the sun,
To have lived light in the Spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done?"

he wouldn't have surprised me, but:—

"The ambush'd womb of the shadows,"

was yet more in his line. And he was comforted by the thought that we were:—

"All toward the mystic ocean tending."

Dogmatic utterance he knew the value of, and he used it unscrupulously:—

"I know that I am deathless."

And:—

I laugh at what you call dissolution and I know the amplitude of time.

"The maker of poems," he tells us, "settles justice, reality, immortality."

Well, does he settle immortality? Let us see! :—

The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

When dogmatism enters, science departs. There can never be anything dogmatic about science. "Science," says Bertrand Russell, "is always tentative, expecting that modification in its present theories will sooner or later be found necessary, and aware that its method is one which is logically incapable of arriving at a complete demonstration."

Science, without that revivification which it gets from the poet, says Whitman, must remain a dead thing. To speak of the "final applause of science," however, can only be possible in whatever he may mean by "true poems"; and "tuft" in the sense he uses it could only be the efflorescence of the world tree—the end of all things.

But what he exactly means here, and elsewhere, seems to have been dubious to himself for he warns his readers very significantly:—

"You shall not look through my eyes,
Nor take things from me, you shall listen
To all sides and filter them from yourself."

Later, he speaks of:—

"The sweet hell within the unknown destiny of me."

And he asserts that:—

We know not what the use of life nor know the aim,
the end, nor really aught we know.

But, *finis coronat opus*! :—

"The soft voluptuous opiate shades,
The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd
—(I too will soon be gone dispell'd),
A haze nirvana—rest and night oblivion:"

But "Something too much of this!" Whitman tells us he knows, and that he knows nothing, that we must listen to all sides and then please ourselves. So after great argument, as before we come out—

"By the same door wherein we went."

"Everything was made to complete and delight me," he tells us. Mrs. Poyser's bantam thought the sun rose every morning to hear it crow. And Hamlet tells us

"There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Every living creature might truthfully make Whitman's claim, but I am assured by a Whitmaniac that "it was rather different in dear old Walt's case, for behind him one could sense a Cosmic Purpose."

This, evidently, explains his question:—

Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well suited toward Annihilation?

The Cosmic Purpose is proved, then, by Whitman's ability to walk "pleasantly and well suited!" Whitman had a very poor sense of humour.

And whether anyone has succeeded in making any progress or not, along the lines he lays down, or indeed along any other lines, these signs he tells us will follow them that believe:—

Understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things, that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.

Now, instead of a greater struggle being evident in the lives of the disciples of Whitman, which I have met, speaking candidly, I should say they are all "asleep in Whitman!"

GEORGE WALLACE.

Gnukutt Coronation

QUAINT CUSTOMS

ALTHOUGH a populous, prosperous, and in some respects progressive country, Gnukutt is still extraordinarily primitive in its principal customs and ceremonies. These are too many and varied to describe within the limits of a single article, but an idea of their quaintness may be gathered from an exhaustive account sent to the Ministry of Bachsheesh by our resident at the Court of the Gnob of Gnukutt. We are privileged to give a few details concerning certain preliminaries to the forthcoming Coronation of the new Gnob, which our Resident was permitted to witness.

It appears that the right to participate in a more or less official capacity at the Coronation is eagerly contested by tribesmen. These rights are based mainly upon the ground that they were granted to some ancestor of the claimant's house. A claim may be either to perform some peculiar duty or to acquire a thing of exchangeable value used in the Coronation ceremony.

As might be expected of a deeply superstitious people, the witch-doctors are supreme at such events. Nor may the Gnob himself defy the almost autocratic powers of the Prime Witch-doctor without danger to the royal seat. Fear being the very basis of the "doctor's" authority, Counsellors of State and people are equally intimidated, and dare not oppose their "spiritual" leaders howsoever the latter may act.

From the resident's description we may construct a picture of the Prime Witch-doctor in ceremonial attire. He wears a cullender mitre on which a gaudy ostrich-feather emerges from every hole; an alb of tent-canvas on which is seen a National religious device, i.e., W.D.; and a stole of sack bearing the mystic words "Cement: old lag brand." From his neck is suspended the holy-bag of prayer-stones, below which is a dust-bin cover breastplate of righteousness.

Thus garbed, it will be the office of Kantebo, the present Prime Witch-doctor, to anoint and crown the Gnob. The anointing is done by cracking a cocoanut on the head of the Master-of-Ceremonies, with the Pastoral Crozier, a heavy staff studded with gold knobs locally known as tithes. The milk from the nut is then sprinkled over the Gnob's forehead and chest. (Although the palm-oil is held to contain the most potent magic, it is accounted too sacred for any others but Witch-doctors, and is therefore kept in what they term "reservation.")

Now to come back to the preliminaries referred to. At

the hut of the Royal Indaba (i.e., Council) a Court of Claims sat to determine the applications of Tribesmen. Chansella Hailiboi presided, wearing a headdress of horse-hair and a robe of rabbit-skin. He was supported by Chief Urmashallo clad in the militia tunic originally acquired by an ancestor in exchange for a load of ivory. Several gum-rings (i.e., chosen headmen, so-called from their headdresses of ochred gum) completed the Court.

The first claim came from Chief Lordumbuggu, who urged that his Controldership of the Board of Loincloth entitled him to apparel the Gnob at the Coronation. Producing several assegais in support, his title was granted unanimously.

Induna (i.e., Counsellor) Hotchaka, descendant of the famous Warrior—Gnob Chaka, moved to assume his great-great-great-grandfather's right to fill the Gnob's beer-calabash with warriors' corns in token of the Army's pledge to march at their Gnob's command. When the Court proposed to adjourn consideration, Hotchaka moved further—but this time with a spear—whereupon the motion was accepted.

Petty-chief Surbartu put forward a privilege to hold the Gnob's footstool at the beer-soke. Claim disallowed on the ground that the Gnob's weight was beyond physical capacity.

Two ells of the Gnob's blanket were said to be the perquisite of Headman Warjobba on account of his forefather being the first to clothe a Gnob of Gnukutt—which he did from the loot of an R.A.S.C. waggon. The claim was conceded on condition that Warjobba secured the portion at his own risk.

Tribesman Todinole exhibited a certificate of his ability to bear a double-shuffle of thirty stones avoirdupois on the buttocks, and was duly awarded the office of Chief Footstool to His Gnobship. This claim was preferred from thousands of applications.

Chief Grabango sought to establish a right to appropriate seven of the Gnob's wives in return for his guardianship of the harem during the public festivities. Chansella Hailiboi said that His Gnobship had been pleased to increase this privilege to fifteen wives over the age of fifty-five. Upon this announcement, Chief Grabango left the Court abruptly, threatening to "smell-out" (i.e., exterminate) his enemies speedily.

Headman Skrounja pressed to receive the Gnob's carved pillow, his snuff-box and the spoon appertaining thereto worn in the Royal ear. Granted on conditions as in the case of Warjobba. This ended the Court's business—being the nineteenth sitting.

A later report from our resident states that great excitement prevails already in the capital city. Huge crowds gather daily to watch the exercising of the span of twenty-four black oxen which are to drag the Royal ox-waggon. The animals, both beast and human, have to be trained to the sounds of tom-toms, war-cries, whoops, and Royal salutes. To feed the multitude of participants and spectators will require the slaughter of thousands of other animals, and expenditure is certain to be colossal. However, in order that the poorest—and even the labour-compounded slaves of the Nation—shall share in the general joy, the Gnob's Council has decreed that each and all such shall be appointed a banana on Coronation Day. Touching this magnificent gesture, Ingrama, Witch-doctor at the capital, expresses the opinion that such large-hearted charity can only be ascribed to the fact of Gnukutt having a Constitution and Religion approximating very closely to our own. D.

Obituary

MR. GEORGE WEIR

MANY of the older Freethinkers will learn with regret of the death of Mr. George Weir, an ardent worker for many years in this country, who went to Australia when he was sixty years of age. He was a man of pronounced opinions, and was always eager to do what he could to advance Freethought ideas. A report of his death in the *Murray Pioneer*, speaks in high praise of his ability, his character, and of the value of his work as health inspector, and social work generally. He was one of the Old Guard, and his influence was always on the right side.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Stop Playing the Game!"

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place) : 7.0, Speakers—R. C. Saphin and J. W. Barker.

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

COUNTRY

INDOOR

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountains Street, Leeds) : 8.0, Members' Meeting.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Board Room, Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool) : 6.30, Annual General Meeting of members.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hesketh Buildings, Preston) : 7.15, Councillor R. Twist (Chorley)—"Deficiencies of Educational System."

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

Richard Carlile

Born at Ashburton, Devon, December 10, 1790.
Died in London, February, 10, 1843.

MORE blazoned names in thousands sprawl

In history that pedants teach;

But you, the noblest name of all,

That freed our speech,

That freed our press, that freed our thought,

Remain unread to all but few

Who've traced the heroic paths you wrought;

So here's to you.

Of all the heroes that men vaunt.

The shabby gods, the showy kings,

None equalled you, who dared to taunt

—Impossible things—

Laws, states, conventions, monarchs, gods;

For life and youth

Thrusting against incredible odds

To prove your truth.

They slew you ere your death was due,

Worn by the solitary strife

Borne by lone warriors like you;

But your one life

Won freedom for us all; and we,

Who know the only strife worth while,

Hail first in our world-liberty

Richard Carlile.

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