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

Views and Opinions

Holy War

ALL war is brutalizing and tends to degradation. Even when war is "necessary" that truth remains; for war means a settlement of human differences in terms of struggle on the animal level, and it demoralizes the more speedily as it quickly accomplishes its aim. It accustoms men to a quick method of establishing one's will, and so makes the use of brute force attractive to the least thoughtful. Ruskin tried to discriminate between the modern mechanical and chemical war and earlier forms of conflict, on the ground that when men fought hand to hand it encouraged keenness of eye, strength of hand and a well kept body. Even so we are still on a level little higher than that of the animal. We have only reached the level of the Major-General, who, fronting a body of men all dressed alike, shaved alike, standing immovable as images, and exhibiting man in his least man-like attitude, receives the praise of "a fine body of men, sir." Human society, a desirable human society is not made up of this type. It does not rise to greater heights because of mere animal fitness, but because the higher social qualities, intelligence, desirable emotional reactions and the like—assume an increasing dominance. Physical warfare cannot be divested of its brutalizing character. It can only be rationalized; it is gangsterism on a national scale, and it is significant that in the worst of wars religion has been used as a defence mechanism against the impact of more civilized feelings and protests.

Religion And War

But beastly as all wars are, there are none so bad as those which have been openly waged in the name of religion. And when the revolution broke out in Spain, the Roman Church left no doubt in the minds of the impartial that this was another "Holy War." Lurid tales of the raping of nuns, of the massacre of priests, of the closing of Churches, and of the disinterment of the dead bodies of priests, illustrated the

mental activity of rogues, and were read eagerly by fools. But it was well established that the Church was behind the revolt, that many of the churches were used as ammunition stores, and that priests took part in the fighting. The Pope gave his sanction to this new "Holy War." Ex-King Alfonso, rapacious, dishonest and unscrupulous, told a representative of the *Evening Standard*, that every member of the "left," that is, all who supported the Government, would have to be exterminated. The indecent, but very pious General de Llano broadcasted his determination to mix the blood of the defenders of Madrid with the cement used to rebuild the Churches—often destroyed by his own guns. General Franco gave his Moors a free hand to rape and rob, and took no prisoners. It was the Church's cry in the Albigensian War—"Kill all, God will know his own" over again. It really is a "Holy War."

The Church had behind it its own precedents. The Spanish conflict followed in its nature the lines marked out by other wars of the Church. When the soldiers of the Holy Crusades entered Jerusalem, Mills, in his *History of the Crusades*, says, "the subjugated people were dragged into the public places and slain. Women with children at their breasts, girls and boys, all were slaughtered. The squares, the streets, and even the uninhabited places of Jerusalem, again were strewn with the dead bodies of men and women and the mangled limbs of children."

The Pope and his followers found the right phrase when they called the Spanish Civil War a "Holy War." No more fitting description could be found. And he and his devoted generals could have found full authority in the Bible for what they did. For God told his favourite people "When the Lord thy God hath delivered it (a city) into thine hands thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women and the little ones and all that is in the city. . . . Of the cities of these people which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save nothing that breatheth." Generals de Llano and Franco merely translated the Bible into a broadcast talk in Spanish. The Lord was with them; the Pope was with them. It was a "Holy War."

* * *

The Crowning Crime

The crowning act of brutality, that has filled the minds of all decent men and women with horror is the destruction of Guernica. This was an open town. It was not inhabited by Atheistic "Reds," no Churches had been destroyed; the people were very strongly Roman Catholic. But relay after relay of German planes flew over the place, flying as low as they pleased, so that there could be no difficulty in reaching their mark. Showers of explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped. The town was completely destroyed, and women and children were followed up by planes, and machine-gunned as they

tried to escape to the open fields. It was Abyssinia over again, and not even the criminal Mussolini or the arch-brute Goering—who was prevented attending the coronation only from fear of a riot if he did so—could have done better. This was no case in which stealthy sympathizers with the rebels could plead “there are barbarities on both sides,” as a reason for not denouncing the conduct of the rebels. Publicity for this tremendous crime was too much even for Franco and Co. They deny having anything to do with it. Germany also issued the same denial, so did Italy, although no one but Baldwin, Simon, Hoare and Eden would place the slightest reliance upon the word of either Hitler or Mussolini. We are to suppose that it was the Government itself that destroyed Guernica and massacred its inhabitants. Is it any wonder that people fly before the advance of the rebels as from the plague?

* * *

The Human Aspect

Part of the difficulties of the Spanish Government is the overcrowding of places like Bilbao and Madrid with these refugees. The Basque Government appealed to France and England for help in evacuating from Bilbao the aged men, women and children. It is likely that our Government in its desire to be what it calls “impartial” (which in practice has meant denying the legal Government of Spain the free trading with this country in whatever it is able to get in normal times, and so playing into the hands of the rebels), would have declined the protection of the British fleet for this purpose. At first Mr. Eden actually decided to ask Franco whether he raised any objection, which would have meant waiting on the doorstep for a month or two until Mussolini and Hitler gave permission for a reply to be sent.

The situation appears to have been saved by the “Skippers” of the merchant vessels that are lying in Spanish ports. These men dissipated the myth of a mine-strewn sea, which was so cheerfully accepted by the Government as a reason for advising food-ships not to go to Bilbao. These men saved the reputation of this country, apparently by their resolve to take as many children as their ships would hold to French territory, and then leave them to be sent wherever possible. That screwed up the courage of the Government to sticking point. British warships will protect the children and women on their way, even though Franco disapproves. But in this situation the inimitable Sir John Simon rose to the occasion, and could at least plead to Franco that he did as little as possible to help. He says that as Home Secretary he is willing to allow a limited number of children to come to England, provided that the funds in the hands of the relief committee are adequate to cover the expense of each child brought here, and that no charge is incurred by public funds for their maintenance. I question whether anything meaner has ever occurred in the history of this country. We are spending huge sums of money on the coronation, we are on the point of raising the salaries of Cabinet ministers, rates are being levied by councils to pay for coronation decorations. Are we to believe that there is any considerable body of people in Britain who would begrudge, say, a farthing rate for the feeding of these little victims of Fascist brutality? If Sir John Simon really represents British feeling then Britain must have sunk very low indeed. Sir John professes to be a follower of one who is reported to have said, “Suffer little children to come unto me,” and Simon adds to the text the proviso, “But they may come only in small numbers, and must not become a charge upon public funds.” If there is any likelihood of that then they must be left to the mercies of Franco and de Llano, of Mussolini and Hitler.

I think that the vast majority of British people would be quite willing to spend some public money to save these little victims of the “Holy War.” And at any rate I am quite sure that there are many thousands of us who can and who will make themselves responsible for the maintenance of a child, or even two, until the Spanish War is ended.

At any rate Franco and de Llano cannot say that our Government has not done what it could to help them. The Spanish Government is the elected Government of Spain. As such it was justified in assuming that normal relations would be continued between it and this country. These normal relations would have meant trading in arms, and if this had been permitted, the war by now might have been over. In the case of the Russian Revolution, we properly decided not to recognize the existence of the revolutionary Government until it had shown itself to be in control of the country. This has been the rule in other cases. In the case of Spain we have almost from the first treated the rebels as though they were at least co-governors of Spain. In that we have, under the plea of non-intervention clearly played into the hands of the rebels. When Franco sent the lying message that the coasts of Spain were blockaded with mines, his demonstrated lie was tamely accepted by the Government, and merchant vessels were advised not to go to Bilbao. Only the indignation of the public at the sight of the British Fleet obeying orders from Franco, and the determination of British merchant seamen to take food to Bilbao, induced the Government to tell Franco with his mythical mines to go to the devil. Surely, the game has been played far enough. We can surely now say with firmness that we will do our best to save the Spanish children from Mussolini's soldiers, and Hitler's bombing planes. There was a time when such a phenomenon as Guernica would have roused the whole of this country to decisive action. To-day we are fearful lest we should seriously offend the Generals de Llano and Franco. We boast, in our history books, that about a hundred and thirty years ago we saved Europe. To-day our Government objects to saving children from bombing-planes, if it is going to cost us anything.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Swinburne Centenary

“Master who crowned our immelodious days
With flowers of perfect speech.”—*Watson*.

“Swinburne was the greatest of our lyrical poets of the world's, considering what a language he had to wield.”—*Meredith*.

Two of the greatest English poets of the nineteenth century were militant Freethinkers. Shelley graced the opening of the century, and Swinburne adorned the closing years. The literary fortunes of both these very eminent poets and reformers were seriously hampered by Orthodox malignity. In the case of Shelley, men and women were prosecuted for selling his *Queen Mab*. Swinburne, in his turn, was regarded as an outcast, and his books were boycotted. As near half a century separated the literary activities of these Freethought singers, it shows that toleration is a plant of slow growth in Christian circles.

Some of this bigotry and partisanship remains to this day. The centenary of the birth of Swinburne received far more attention in the Continental press than in that of the country of his birth, and in the home-grown periodicals his work was damned with faint praise. In some instances Swinburne was dismissed with contempt, and one critic, himself a

poetaster, declared that if Swinburne's work was poetry, then modern verse was nothing of the kind. Thus to see the latest freaks of literary futurism preferred to "Atalanta in Calydon," "Poems and Ballads," and "Songs before Sunrise" is surprising. Indeed, it is difficult to account for the detestation which Swinburne's poetry seems to awaken in his present-day critics, except on the principle that the old virus of Orthodox bigotry is still actively at work, and that "the glorious free press" is now controlled by half-educated financiers and not by editors with some pretensions to literature.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, like Milton and Browning, was born in London, and was early attracted to literature. He first goes to school hugging a volume of Shakespeare under his arm, but, curiously, he made no mark at Eton or Oxford. Indeed, as an undergraduate he was anything but a success. Not only did he fail to obtain a degree, but he missed the Newdigate with his poem on "The North-West Passage." A red Republican even in those early days, he imperilled his position by his outspokenness. He boldly displayed in his rooms a portrait of Orsini, who attempted to assassinate Napoleon the Third. And later, when he visited Paris, his parents made him promise he would do nothing to undermine the authority of the French monarchy. So well known were the young poet's political views, that he was invited to stand for Parliament, but on the advice of Mazzini, he declined wisely to give up poetry for politics.

With the publication of *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne, like Byron, awoke one morning to find himself famous. No such tumult had taken place in literary circles since the appearance of the older poet's "Don Juan." Henceforward, until his seventieth year, Swinburne was an acknowledged force, not only in English, but in European literature. Men came to think of him—with Shelley, with Keats, with Wordsworth—as one of the singers who mark an era. For two whole generations he upheld that splendid tradition of liberty, and gave us poems, plays, and criticisms which breathed into our language new harmonies and the new revolutionary spirit. It is the plain truth to say that, had not Swinburne lived, the world would have been largely ignorant of the infinite flexibility and potentialities of English speech. There has been no such musical inventor in our language. He enlarged the frontiers of poetry, although scores of men of rare genius had ransacked verse for centuries before he was born. Compared to Swinburne, Keats and Coleridge are poor of resource, limited in range, timid in execution. This is not to say he has excelled them in ideas or melody, only that he was a master in the use of a far wider choice of instruments.

No poet since Shelley sings more loftily, or with more fiery passion, or with finer thought, than Swinburne did when he was arraigning Priestcraft at the bar of Humanity. His most heretical poems will be found in "Songs before Sunrise." The "Hymn to Man" is frankly even triumphantly, Atheistic. In the prelude he writes:—

"Because man's soul is man's god still,
What wind soever waft his will
Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led."

In another passage he treats the priests with fearful derision. He represents them calling on their deity, and he says, "Cry aloud, for the people blaspheme," and he concludes:—

"Thou art smitten, thou God: thou art smitten: thy death
is upon thee, O Lord;
And the love-song of Earth as thou diest resounds through
the wind of her wings—"

Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of things."

In his lines apostrophizing the figure of Christ on the cross, he says with Voltairean bitterness:—

"Thy blood the priests make poison of,
And in gold shekels coin thy love."

The poet's scorn draws no distinction between the priests and their deity. The lines addressed to Jesus are the quintessence of satire:—

"Thou had'st let children come to thee!
What children now but curses come?
What manhood in that God can be
Who sees their worship and is dumb?
No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and died,
Is this, their carrion crucified!"

Swinburne regarded prayer as folly, and he vents his scorn in music:—

"Behold there is no grief like this!
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in air?

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate.
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?"

In the "Hymn to Proserpine," he sings:—

"O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all
knees bend;
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the
end."

In another poem, "Song in Time of Order," he breaks out:—

"We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the King,
The lie at the lips of the priest."

One quality of Swinburne's writing leaps to the eye of the dullest reader. It is his warm enthusiasm for right causes. Such tributes as he has paid to the great apostles and champions of Freedom have a generosity and enthusiasm unequalled in all poetry. How he has sung the praises of Cromwell and Milton, of Shelley and Landor, of Whitman and Victor Hugo. The love of Liberty has been a common possession of our greatest poets, and hardly one of them has failed to give splendid expression to the feeling. But Swinburne has surpassed them all in the ardour of his devotion, and the rapture of his praise:—

"The very thought in us how much we love thee
Makes the throat sob with love, and blinds the eyes."

When Swinburne died in 1909, he was accorded a Christian burial, and a priest mouthed ecclesiastical nonsense over his dead body. It was the last insult of a Church against whom he had fought all his life. But for his outspoken views about priestcraft and monarchy, he must inevitably have succeeded Tennyson as Poet Laureate. He was the last of the great English poets who dominated the imagination of his countrymen. His rare genius was enkindled at the altar of Humanity, which will endure when all other altars have crumbled into dust.

MIMNERMUS.

The Pope was well enough to-day to bless the picture of "Our Lady of Divine Love," to be sent to Addis Ababa.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Pieties of the Past

FOR an Octogenarian to have changed his address may seem, in view of the change that cannot be far distant, somewhat anomalous; but it so happens that such is my position, and I have therefore lately been engaged in looking over old letters and recalling to mind certain old stories that used to amuse me. I venture to hope that some of these anecdotes of early years will have interest for readers of the *Freethinker*.

My mother was very religious, but she had a keen sense of humour, and there were cases where she allowed it free play. One was when a cousin in the Indian Army consulted her, in all seriousness, as to the length of time he should kneel in that initial prayer in which church-goers were expected to indulge. It had been his practice, he told her, to count twenty. Did she consider that sufficient?

To tell this to a schoolboy, already on the look out for such things, was perhaps indiscreet; and I shocked her by one or two of the stories I took back from Eton, where the chapel services lent themselves inevitably to diversions. No eccentricity, no deviation from the fixed routine went unnoticed. A gown among surplices, or a surplice among gowns, subjected its wearer to merciless attention; and when the chaplain by inadvertence read the same prayer twice, or confused one precept with another, the interest suddenly became keen. One of his slips, "Rend your garments, and not your hearts," was immensely popular with us. Our cruelty was a thing of which even seventy years later I feel ashamed. There was one boy who had been convicted of some theft from a schoolfellow, and him we named Barabbas, and when the text reached us, "Now Barabbas was a robber," there was not a head that was not turned in his direction. Such was religion at a great public school.

At King's College, Cambridge, where, as a scholar on the Eton foundation, it was my duty at certain intervals to read the Lessons, things were not very different. I remember the awe with which, on the first occasion, I stepped down from my stall to the lectern, which stood in the centre of the great Chapel; but the awe soon passed, and in a year or two I had devised the plan of making the long homily short by announcing at a suitable juncture: "Here endeth the Lesson." And it *did* end; the organ tuned up, and the service proceeded. I used to expect to be called to account for taking this liberty; but either the authorities did not follow the rubric with due attention, or they were secretly glad to be spared what I cut out. I suspect the latter.

Then I was back at Eton again, as a junior master; and my troubles in chapel-going were much relieved by someone giving me a small volume of Wordsworth's poems bound like a prayer book, so that my piety went unquestioned; I still know a lot of the verse by heart. Though I had not as yet realized the importance of enlightening others, I had long lost any faith in Christianity; and once when my mother, who was staying with me, asked me to go with her to communion at the Eton parish church, as she was growing old, it was from filial piety that I did so. There an unusual thing happened; for the second of the two parsons, who was carrying the cup, left me by mistake without his attention. I was letting the matter rest; taking the omission as a sort of recompense for my goodness in being there at all; but unfortunately my mother, seeing what had happened, brought the poor man back by a wave of her arm. The thing that puzzled me was that afterwards, at home, when I asked her in all innocence (as I thought) the *reason* of her interference, she expressed the utmost horror and amazement; said that never in her life had she

been so shocked. What malady she feared would have befallen me, if I had had only half of the sacred rite, she would not say; nor have I ever been able to learn from friends in holy orders.

The evening prayers that had to be read in the boarding-houses at Eton were a great trial. A member of a large household told me that once, when the bell rang, she had heard one of the servants (who were expected to be present) say to another: "Oh! why *do* gentry have prayers?"; and I thought the question an appropriate one: I think I can guess now why they do. But there were risks. I once read prayers with our cat seated on my shoulder, and I was so lucky as to succeed in jerking her off before the boys, who were kneeling with their backs to me, were able to turn round. I dread to think what would have happened if I had been seen so encumbered; though why a cat should not attend prayers as much as a boy (or a master) I cannot pretend to be aware.

I was married in that Eton Parish Church of which I have spoken; for my father-in-law, a very kind old clergyman, knowing my wish to get to Keswick the same day, offered to borrow the church from the vicar, a great friend of his, and to omit certain parts of the service which he did not hold to be essential to matrimony. He did so, and we caught our train at Euston; but what I want to mention is that when he proposed, a year or so later, to borrow the church again, in order to marry another daughter to a most devout clergyman, the vicar declined to lend it, and the reason he gave for his refusal was that the scandal caused in the parish by Mr. Salt's marriage had been so great. It must have been the omissions from the service that caused offence, and the verger who blabbed. Thus, once more, my piety had led me into trouble.

HENRY S. SALT.

Table Turning

THIS is not an essay on Spiritualism. It is merely a disquisition upon the miraculous manner in which I was led to discover how the hard-hearted Atheist might easily turn the tables upon those gentle souls who do not see eye to eye with him on the subjects of church and religion. Let me explain myself—if possible.

If an Atheist is asked to what church he belongs, he would normally answer, "To none." If he is asked whether he professes any kind of religion, he would likewise answer "No." Yet, honest and harmless as these replies are in themselves, one does not need to be acutely observant in order to notice the disturbing effects which they have upon the questioner. In this archiepiscopally dominated country, the fact that a man possesses no religion and that he is possessed by no church, is apt to be woefully misconstrued.

Parental and scholastic miseducation, plus a modicum of priestly prejudice, have all combined to confuse the public mind as to the true meanings of many important words in our language. The words *church* and *religion* are two notorious examples. Thus we find that, by persistent association in such phrases as "Church and State," "religion and morality," the Church has come to be regarded as an integral part of the State, while religion has become practically a synonym for morality. This being so, how can we condemn the average citizen when he mistakes the average Atheist for a self-confessed criminal and outlaw?

Coroners, judges and other sensitive officials, when they have had the misfortune to deal with people like ourselves in the course of their duties, have been

known to wince at our brazen repudiation of any religious faith. In the circles of so-called "high" society, although religion as a subject of conversation is taboo, and although Sundays are usually spent far from any place of worship, the decent fellow is nevertheless expected to wear some sort of Old Church Tie—the colours, for preference, being those of the Established variety. The absence of this (or some similar), badge of respectability and gentility cannot fail to brand one as a member of that inferior species known as "the rank outsider." In the "lower" circles, discussion of religious topics is not so rigorously barred. But, even here, one is expected to tread softly and with circumspection. For, in spite of this seeming broad-mindedness, the sudden revelation of one's Godlessness acts upon most people in much the same way as would an open confession of murder in the first degree.

Apart, then, from comments upon the weather, football, horse-racing and other equally uncontroversial subjects, it seems that every time we Atheists open our mouths, we are fated to shock the tender susceptibilities of our fellow-Christians. So much so, indeed, that most of them do not hesitate to relieve their feelings by handing out snubs or rebukes with the utmost altruism and generosity. The fact that some of us have feelings of our own which may be hurt, is an aspect of the case which we have little right to stress. After all, from the Christian point of view, what can we expect? Being without church and religion, we must obviously be without feelings.

Now this is a very sorry state of affairs. My heart has often bled for the poor, tender-skinned Christian upon all those occasions when he meets a callous Atheist. And when I realize that, with the passage of time and the inevitable increase in the number of Atheists, these encounters are certain to multiply, my heart has bled the more. With similar, though perhaps not equal, profusion, it has bled on behalf of the callous Atheist. For, in spite of his reputation as a wife-beater and a baby-eater, I know him to be a well-intentioned human-being with sensibilities which are not noticeably tougher than those of Christians, Jews, Mahometans, Voodooists, Hoodooists and other spiritually-minded persons (if any).

The more I brooded upon the needless misunderstandings and the mental suffering which our lack of church and religion creates, the more did my heart bleed for all concerned. And although my doctor informed me that I was in the best of health, these repeated spasms of cardiac hæmorrhage would, I felt convinced, have soon resulted in a ghastly state of intellectual anæmia, whose baffling symptoms might have proved a serious blow to the reputation of the medical profession. Fortunately the tragedy was averted by what can only be described as a miracle.

Last night, like a revelation from on high, there was vouchsafed to me a wondrous vision. I saw a flock of Christian sheep, reading their Bibles and lying unconcernedly alongside a pride of Atheist lions, who seemed to be studying dictionaries. The vision did not last long enough for me to discover whether the flock was being slowly, but surely, assimilated by the pride; but I gathered from the seemingly amicable discussions which were going on, that the aversion formerly manifested by the sheep towards the lions had virtually disappeared. "What church do you belong to?" asked one sweet young lamb, proffering a twig of mint to a tawny king of the forest. "What religion do you profess?" asked a plump old ewe, as she passed the red-currant jelly to a hungry-looking lioness. And although the answers were drowned by the din of my alarm-clock, I woke with the happy conviction that I had at last found a clue to the proper remedy for my

sufferings, as well as for those of the aforementioned Christians and Atheists.

Throughout the day I strove to solve the riddle of my marvellous vision. My wife said that it was flatulent dyspepsia. But, refusing to be discouraged by such mundane explanations, I took refuge in the wood-shed and in private contemplation. There was nothing especially puzzling, I thought, about the Bible-reading sheep. But what was the meaning of the dictionary-reading lions? And why did those two words *church* and *religion* keep bubbling up through my subconsciousness with such irritating persistence? Then the solution came in a flash "When in doubt, turn to your Bible," is a familiar slogan of the Christian. "When in doubt, turn to your dictionary," might be a suitable one for Atheists. I would do so. I did so.

I took the first volume and turned to the letter C. There I found the word CHURCH, and below it a large and varied selection of definitions, all presumably legitimate and correct. "CHURCH—a building set apart for public Christian worship." That definition did not help me. I ploughed steadily through the list, discarding one definition after another, until at the very end I came to this: "a society, school, or the like, resembling more or less remotely the Christian Church as having a set of opinions held in common." Eureka! I had it at last!

Excitedly I took up the second volume and turned to the letter R. There I found the word RELIGION with a similar assortment of definitions. "RELIGION—the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or of gods. . . ." That definition was no use. Again I ploughed through the whole list, and again at the very end I was impelled to shout "Eureka!" For there it was—the very definition I sought: "devotion or fidelity as to a principle or practice." I needed nothing more to fill my cup of joy to overflowing!

No longer need the callous Atheist shock the delicate Christian by bluntly declaring that he belongs to no church. Surely we all belong to some society or school? Even if we do not, we cannot deny that we belong to "the like"—whatever "the like" may be. As for its "more or less remote" resemblance to the Christian Church—well, what's there to quibble about in that? Undoubtedly the resemblance is "more remote"—indeed, the more the better. And, lastly, it would be absurd to say that we held no "set of opinions in common." If Christians, with their ninety-nine sects and their nine hundred and ninety-nine different and contradictory dogmas, can claim to hold a set of opinions in common, why should we be modest about our own slight disagreements upon matters of opinion?

Religion, too, presents no more difficulties for us. Most of us act in accordance with certain "principles" and indulge in certain "practices" which claim our "devotion or fidelity"—even if it be only such habits as cinema-going or gum-chewing. It is clear, therefore, that we may justly claim to have a religion. The dictionary says so.

In future, therefore, when I am asked whether I belong to some church or profess some religion, my answer will no longer be in the negative. Neither will I hum and ha, or stutter and blush, uncertain how to make reply. Nor will I be so tactless as to say "the Atheist church" or "the Atheist religion," since the word *Atheist* invariably leaves an unpleasant tang upon the finicky palates of Christians. No; I have a much better word than that. It is based upon the good old English word *infidel*. My church will be the Infidelist Church, and my religion the Infidelist Religion—with the accent on *fiddle* in both cases.

In this way we shall undoubtedly succeed in turn-

ing the tables upon those who have, hitherto, been unable to see eye to eye with us on the subjects of church and religion. We will acquire the most important qualifications for decent citizenship, and our status as honourable members of society will at last be established. Best of all, the B.B.C. will welcome us into its select fold—I *don't* think!

* * *

Of course, if anyone should have the effrontery to accuse us of being humbugs, we have a very effective and simple retort. It is one that I learnt at school—"Tu quoque," or, as the negro said, "Everything you says I is, you am."

C. S. FRASER.

Does the Lord Bless the Killer?

THE sympathetic, admiring comments by Nicholas Merc, in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*, under the heading, "Nature Notes of a Freethinker," have promoted the present contribution, expressive of my ever-growing horror at the cruelties suffered by so many forms of life, and my amazement that church-people themselves do not see in this a refutation of the least claim to mercifulness on the part of any Power that is held to be responsible for the state of affairs under which we live.

Certainly we have, practically everywhere, societies for the protection of cruelty to birds and animals.

Many of the members and founders of these are church-people. Let us most ungrudgingly give them that credit. But, after all, it is very little protecting that is done, compared with the ruthless suffering and slaughtering that is daily inflicted in practically every quarter of the earth.

I am not a vegetarian.

For that reason, I all the more readily concede that if we are to live—if we have to adapt ourselves to the practicalities of existence—there must regularly be put to death a proportion of the creatures that provide so many nations with the greater part of their food.

But—and this is the point I desire to emphasize—it is inconceivable to me that, in this process of killing, Christians so utterly fail to realize the cruelty of it.

I speak here, of course, of church-people in the bulk—that is, the enormous majority of them.

Killing is regarded by them as quite the Divine order of things. To them it is a God-conferred right that they should put to death whatever creature—fish, bird, animal—that they feel disposed to eat. The Almighty, it is urged, has given them dominion over everything that does not come within the human category. Ethically, it is a brutal, barbarous conception—that unceasing murder on so vast a scale has the blessing of the Creator.

Let Christians, if they will, eat flesh to their full content.

Still, in doing so, should they not have at least the decency to feel regret that this involves the taking of life? That every created thing, in fact, is just as much the creature of the Creator—has the same right to life and the pursuit of happiness—as man himself? And that there is an ever-present denial of the alleged goodness of God in man so being forced to become a slayer in order to sustain himself?

Deplorable is the callousness with which church-people kill—have killed, from the earliest Biblical days; and will kill, I suppose, so long as their Biblical or Christian faith endures.

The mercifulness of the Lord, forsooth!

What of the unfortunate snake, pursued and killed, if possible, wherever it shows itself?

It has a lot for which to thank its creator!

Mercifulness, it is clear, is distinctly lacking in creation. In the words of Ingersoll it is a world where every mouth is a slaughter-house and every stomach a tomb. Here we have very tellingly described the carnage that is for ever taking place.

Recently, I had the opportunity of reading a book by Herbert Gezork, entitled *Thus I Saw the World*. It is "the world-voyage diary of a young German"; and in it is a chapter, "My Tour Through Swift's Gigantic Slaughterhouse in Chicago." Under this heading Gezork writes:—

Outside, as far as the eye can see, pens in which bellowing animals are waiting for their doom.

We go inside—first into the slaughterhouse section. We see, at the entrance, notices warning visitors with weak nerves against paying a visit to this section. But we are curious; and so we enter this hell of anguish and blood.

A negro of gigantic size stands there.

Pigs hanging on one leg pass towards him on a travelling band. With his sharp knife, he slashes the throat of the first, while the next one rolls up close behind. Seven hundred pigs are killed here in this fashion within an hour.

The smell of blood—the anguished cries of the animals—are terrible.

A lady standing next to me becomes green in the face, falls against the railings, and nearly over into the blood-pond below. We drag her back. She refuses to go a single step further, and keeps repeating, "Away—away from here!"

We others pass on to the other slaughterhouses—those for sheep and cattle; and the thought keeps on recurring to me, "Oh! on what a foundation of misery and horror rests our civilization!"

But our guide assures us that the method of slaughter as carried out here is the most humane that one could think of, and above all, the quickest and the most rational.

We pass on through the various departments.

We follow, so to speak, the poor pig which we saw a quarter of an hour ago rolling towards the knife of the negro. It rolls along the travelling band. It is divided again and again. It loses its legs; then goes its trunk.

Finally we arrive in the smoke house, where we see hanging thousands of juicy hams which fill the air with a most appetising smell.

At the end of our tour a guide proudly presses into our hands a little pamphlet. There we can read it in black and white—3,000,000 cattle, 8,000,000 pigs, 5,000,000 sheep are killed here every year, and made into sausages and preserved products; or, in other words 57,000 animals each day, or 120 every minute.

Amazing, to be sure!

But one scarcely knows whether, as lords of creation, we should feel proud or ashamed.

Yes, I can only repeat, let Christians like others eat flesh, if they must. But let them, at the same time, realize the sufferings and atrocities that this entails. Above all, let them for ever give up the fiction that the world in which they live was mercifully ordained by an all-seeing, all-just, all-loving God.

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

I once heard a missionary describe the extraordinary difficulty he had found in translating the Bible into Eskimo. It was useless to talk of corn or wine to a people who did not know even what they meant, so he had to use equivalents within their powers of comprehension. Thus in the Eskimo version of the Scriptures the miracle of Cana of Galilee is described as turning the water into blubber; the eighth verse of the fifth chapter of the first Epistle of St. Peter ran: "Your Adversary the devil, as a roaring Polar Bear walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." In the same way "A land flowing with milk and honey," became "A land flowing with Whale's blubber," and throughout the New Testament the words "Lamb of God" had to be translated, "Little Seal of God," as the nearest possible equivalent. The missionary added that his converts had the lowest opinion of Jonah for not having utilized his exceptional opportunities by killing and eating the whale.

"The Days Before Yesterday,"
by Lord Frederic Hamilton.

Acid Drops

There is a new Roman Catholic Church at Moston, Manchester, which is claimed to be bomb-proof. We believe there is a charge often brought against soldiers of *insubordination by look*, or some such thing. Surely this claim, made by the authorities of St. Dunstan's is blasphemy by implication. What is the use of prayers and candles, and masses, and priests and holy water and consecration if a building sanctified to God cannot protect itself against an ordinary bomb? Why, it is ranking a church as no higher than a gambling hell! Job said that he would trust God even though he slew him. The Roman Catholic priests of Moston say: you can trust God to protect you from bombs—provided the building in which you happen to be is bomb-proof! We should like to get the recording angel's private opinion of St. Dunstan's Church, Moston.

Two famous matadors accompanied Jack Johnson, the prize-fighter, into the praying chapel of the Barcelona bull-ring, when Johnson made his debut as a matador. "This is the custom of all matadors who ask for Divine guidance in the ring," writes the boxer (or his literary ghost) in more reminiscences appearing in a Sunday paper, which makes a feature of "spiritual uplift." To the disgust of the crowd, Johnson failed twice to give the victim a death thrust "through the great hump of muscle between the bull's shoulders," but his third thrust ended the contest, to the wild applause of the spectators, the glory of God, and the justification of prayer.

Examples of dissension between clergy and congregations are all too common to be worthy of remark as a rule, but it is amusing to find prominence in the press for three cases in one week:—

At Albourne, Sussex, Miss Linda Hole was re-elected people's warden, but the rector, Mr. Edwin Wills, raised a quarrel by opposing her continuance in the office which she had held for seven years. He wants a male warden, who would be more subservient.

At Cliffe Church, Lewes, Mr. C. H. Morris, rector's warden for over twenty years, was "sacked" by the rector-cum-rural-dean, Mr. Griffiths, on the ground of the former's ill-health. This, it transpires, was just a typical clerical prevarication for the rector's real reason, which was the church-wardens having reported to the bishop that "the amalgamation of the Cliffe and All Saints parishes had been a failure."

At St. Anne's Church, Radipole, near Weymouth, Mr. Sidney Barrett was appointed to replace Mr. S. J. Purchase, rector's warden for the past twelve years. Boos greeted the rector, Mr. W. S. Syson, at the last vestry meeting.

"All one family we."

A Spiritualist contemporary tells us all about Kurwenal, the talking dog. This perhaps shouldn't cause much excitement in a Christian country, a country amiably disposed towards a "talking mongoose," which accepts as a Divine Truth that a donkey chatted with Balaam, and that if it had not been for a talking snake the blessings of Christianity would not have fallen upon the land. It is allowable, however, for a non-Christian to view the case of Kurwenal with misgivings. A sample of the dog's conversation does not reassure us. Asked whether he liked the company of a neighbour's dog, Kurwenal said, "No, he is too stupid; I prefer the company of human beings." Now just as we suspect that Moses never wrote himself down as *the meekest man on earth*, so do we suspect that no talking dog, moving in such company, could ever have said that.

Dr. A. C. Underwood, principal of Rawdon College, Leeds, in addressing young ministers at the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union, at Manchester, said:—

We reject *in toto* the Catholic doctrine of the absolute authority and infallibility of the Church. The notion of this infallibility is, we say, a figment of the imagination. It finds no support in logic or in history.

So far so good, but the only advice that this gentleman has then to give is—it is difficult to believe—to study the book of *Amos*. "There only can they find an adequate solution for the big social and economic problems of our day."

Voltaire said that those who liked Ezekiel should be compelled to dine with him. Those who can find anything sensible about big social and economic problems of the day in that portion of God's Word attributed to Amos, should be compelled to live with that person in one of the institutions we put aside nowadays for such cases.

Public Enemy No. 1 continues to demonstrate:—

Two hundred people fell in a screaming mass 18 ft. through the floor of Mexico City's great cathedral while the enthronement of Mexico's new Archbishop was proceeding amid magnificent pomp.

The cathedral was packed with thousands of worshippers when the wooden floor near the High Altar collapsed under their weight. Worshippers and chairs vanished from sight into the crypt, while hundreds fled from the gaping hole.

Archbishop Martinez, who was taking his oath, bade the congregation keep cool, and proceeded with the service.

The Archbishop *was taking his oath*. Jesus said *Swear not at all!* What need have we to search further for an explanation?

Norman Sebastian Dobson, 35, went to prison, the other day, as "a plausible rogue." He went about as a "reverend," working—as he said—"in the Lord's vineyard." His Christianity was more adaptable than usual, for he posed as a priest to Roman Catholics, and as a "converted monk" to Protestants. His "oath of allegiance," was a lively affair, from which the following is an extract:—

I do swear to perform this oath, and witness the same with my name written with the point of the dagger, dipped in my own blood.

I will wage relentless war against heretical Protestants, extirpate them from the face of the earth, will spare neither age, sex nor condition, burn, waste, boil, flay, and bury alive these infamous brutes.

I will secretly use the poison cup, strangulation cord, the steel of the poignard, or the leaden bullet.

If I prove false, may my brethren cut off my hands and feet and my throat from ear to ear, and may my soul be tortured by demons in eternal hell for ever.

Six months was the Lambeth magistrate's sentence, whereas in an earlier day Dobson might have looked for commendation, at least, from holy church. And eventual canonization, to judge from his fervent words.

The Bishop of Croydon, speaking recently on the "Church and the Cinema," said that "the Church must see that the Cinema's recreative side was free from inanities, futilities and vice." It is a pity that some representative of the Cinema did not point out that the Church, far more than the Cinema, has been responsible for "inanities and futilities." And, in the better sense of the term, vices. There may be quite a number of silly films but the public is very quick to recognize the fact. On the other hand, almost the whole of the Church's ceremonies, services and teaching, is a mass of stupid anachronisms in a modern world, and a supreme example of "inanities and futilities." And the crowded cinemas on Sunday evenings abundantly testify that the public is aware of the fact.

A number of churchmen, calling themselves "the Friends of Reunion," discussed, the other day, the possibilities of uniting the Churches. The Bishop of Southampton considered "that a reunion that left out Rome was unthinkable," and he was convinced that "the way to reunion was not to flout Rome." Indeed, he "would never relinquish the idea of reunion with Rome." Romanists must be laughing at these sentiments—they have heard similar expressions hundreds of times. They have

made it quite clear how to obtain "reunion." Nothing less than complete surrender would satisfy them. This means that Bishops like the Bishop of Southampton and other non-Catholic priests, would be done immediately out of their jobs—for, of course, they are not really in "Holy Orders"; and this is not likely to take place yet. Altogether, any prospect of "reunion" seems to be as far away as the skies.

But although Christians and their Churches are at loggerheads with one another, their optimism never decreases a hair-breadth. In the troubled waters of the "Jewish National Home," where Arab and Jew seem to be mortal enemies, and where orthodox and unorthodox Jews are by no means united on any question whatever, the Bishop of Portsmouth recently declared that "the only genuine solution of the problems of Palestine, as of the world at large, is through the acceptance of the full implications of the Christian Gospel." But what a squabble there would immediately be if the simple question were asked, "What is the Christian Gospel?" Is it as interpreted by the Popes, Anglican Archbishops. Knox, Calvin, or Wesley? Or by Mother Lee, Johanna Southcott or Ma Eddy? Or even by Dr. Cheyne, Dr. Inge, or Dr. Giles? When the Bishop of Portsmouth can answer these questions so as to satisfy all the sects embraced by the comprehensive term "Christianity" he will have more right to talk.

One of the writers in the *Church Times*, discussing Mr. A. Craig's *The Banned Books of England*, quotes a "realist," who said:—

In Bolshevik Russia, in Fascist Italy, and in Nazi Germany, the Governments have found it impossible to carry on if the publication of literature subversive of their principles is allowed to be published. I believe that they are right. I believe in a really Christian country, literature antagonistic to the Christian faith and Christian morals would properly be prohibited. I believe that in a nominally Christian State, Christians are right in supporting the suppression of literature that is, from the Christian point of view, blasphemous or immoral.

The case for the rigid suppression of all criticism of Christianity, in a Christian country, could not have been more succinctly expressed. And putting it this way, could there be a better justification for Freethought?

The writer above referred to claims that "the *Church Times* has always stood for free speech and a free press"—but adds, "there must always be a limit to freedom." We agree, providing we can come to an agreement on the word "freedom." And after all, the *Church Times* is not the Christian Church. The Church, as the Church, is bound in the very nature of things to suppress any freedom of criticism and discussion of its claims. It recognizes that the result of these criticisms must seriously damage its "divine" authority, if not altogether to expose its falsity. And just as Freethinkers have fought for the right to criticize religion, so they will fight for the right to criticize any theory. Ideas can never be completely and perpetually suppressed. To show that in the Roman Catholic Church "freedom of opinion"—up to a certain point—can reign, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, dealing with the Popes in a Catholic journal, admits that some have been "unworthy men." Alexander VI., he tells us, "was certainly unworthy. He is the stock example of a bad Pope, and efforts to whitewash him only make his defenders ridiculous." Mr. Belloc adds a number of other Popes to the list, but he indulges not a little in the process of "whitewashing." For example, Julius II "broke the rule of continence"—and that's all. Another, Calixtus III., "was accused of avarice"—which does not seem to be a very terrible sin. But no amount of whitewashing can explain how it comes that Christ's Vice-Regent on earth, chosen by men who inherit "Holy Orders," who form the ruling body of the Church, which is "Christ's own Bride," turns out to be a blackguard.

Mr. Belloc puts it this way:—

If every single Pope from St. Peter onwards had been a depraved and abominable character, persisting in

his enormities till death and practising them from his early youth, it might not, in pure reason, affect the validity of the Papal office; but we know that in practice it would prevent that office from doing its work among men.

All we can say is that "validity" or no "validity," "in pure reason" the practical result of an infamous Pope would be, and it ought to be, a repudiation of the "Divine" character of the Papacy. The "Holy Office" is no more "Holy" than a tin hat. It is a purely secular function; and as such, the head of the Catholic Church is simply in the same boat as a primitive head medicine-man. No whitewashing or apology can alter that fact.

In introducing the order of the Coronation Service, the Archbishop of Canterbury made the reputed antiquity of its forms a special plea for its higher regard. He referred to "days of chivalry," "anointing," "recognition," "feudal ages," "homage," and—INTRONIZATION (!) in a spate of medieval nonsense which recked naught of these "days of chicanery," "fodder wages," "bombage," and INTERSECINATION—or mutual destruction. (Mayn't we also take priestly liberties with our language?)

Meanwhile, the officiating clergy went through their "parts" like the good old stock company they are. We think a psychic "resurrection" of Sir Augustus Harris is due, for his experiences of rehearsals for Drury Lane pantomimes should render his opinion on those of the Coronation quite useful. We trust that the Lord understood that the *real* thing was only to be recognized on the 12th, otherwise his wrath might fall upon those who got him to attend as an ordinary member of the company instead of as the "star" of Cantaur's production.

One of the most amusing exposures of lying tradition is a geologist's discovery that the stone underneath the Coronation chair is "just a bit of Scottish stone, quarried not far from Scone." This ought to dispose of the legend that it is the same stone upon which Jacob slept when he had the vision of those lightly-clad ladies—or something of the sort—and that it went round Egypt and Ireland before being made "holy" in Scotland in the ninth century.

Furthermore, Mr. C. H. Davidson, of the Geological Museum, who (on the word of the *Star*) is responsible for the discovery, looked up history and found that "the legend was a piece of propaganda used by one Baldred Bisset when he was trying to persuade the Pope that Scots were God's own people." And it's said the Scot has no sense of humour!

Fifty Years Ago

THE main features of Christianity, according to Dr. Cairns, are the Incarnation and the Atonement. Yet nothing is more common in the ancient mythologies than the miraculous birth of incarnate gods "When we say that the Word was produced without sexual union," says the first great Christian apologist, Justin Martyr. "we propound *nothing different* from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter." As for the Atonement, no doubt Plato and other sages of antiquity were too far advanced to believe in the pardon of the guilty through the punishment of the innocent. The doctrine is a remnant of savagery, and its prototype was seen in the offering up of children, often the firstborn or only son, in order to avert the displeasure of the gods.

As for the moral teaching of Christianity, the doctrine of overcoming evil with good was taught by Buddha and the so-called "Golden Rule," by Confucius. Every one of the moral precepts can be paralleled from heathen teachers who needed no inspiration from on high in order to inculcate them. Whence then the necessity for a revelation which revealed nothing?

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. DOBBIN.—We are obliged to your friend for having obtained twelve new subscribers to this journal. Originally we suggested that a Freethinker circulation campaign should take the place of a proposed testimonial on our having filled the editorial chair for twenty-one years. To have placed this paper on a paying basis, by the time we give up its direction, is the testimonial to our work we should most gladly welcome—in anticipation. Paper will be sent as requested.

H. MELROSE.—We intend trying for a holiday, and making it a period of rest, as soon as possible after the Annual Conference. Meanwhile we are getting along fairly well.

T. COLLINS.—There is no law in this country that enables the Government to seize any book, the sale or publication of which is prohibited. This also applies, in our judgment to non-copyright books that are printed abroad. Books that are copyrighted here may be confiscated, because in that case an injustice would be done the author. But where no copyright exists the private property of an individual is immune—unless it can be shown that sale or publication is intended.

J. CASSIDY.—Please do as suggested.

J. MACKINNON.—Next week.

P. POLLOCK.—Thanks for the address of a likely new reader; paper being sent.

T. S. WILSON (U.S.A.).—We are obliged for your kind references to the *Freethinker*; the service has been arranged as suggested.

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

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

Sugar Plums

In connexion with the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. at Liverpool, an outing to Chester has been arranged for Whit-Monday. The cost of fare, lunch, and tea will be about 6s., and all members and friends wishing to join the party will be welcomed. Tickets may be had from the local secretary, Mr. Ready, during the Whit weekend. The business sessions of the Conference will be held in the Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool, on Whit Sunday, commencing at 10.30 and 2.30, and only members of the N.S.S. can attend. Then there will be the Public Demonstration in the Picton Hall, on Sunday evening, at 7.0, to which admission is free, with reserved seats at one shilling each.

The business sessions of the Conference is open to members only, who will use their current cards as tickets. Those members who by mischance are without cards may be admitted on giving their names to the Secretary. There will be a reception of members at the Stork Hotel, on Saturday evening, at 7.0. Mr. Cohen will be present.

Those who require hotel accommodation over the weekend must write Mr. Rosetti at once, stating their requirements.

That pathologic obscenity, and favourite of Hitler, Dr. Goebbels, says that there are more than a thousand priests in prison on charges of sexual depravity. We are not at all concerned with the morality of the Roman priesthood, but we should decline to take the word of a person like Goebbels—while admitting that he is a first-hand authority on sexual depravity—as to the morals of a tom-cat. A great many Roman Catholic priests may be in prison in Germany, but we do not believe for a moment they are there because of the offences Goebbels alleges.

Mr. G. Whithead will address open-air meetings in Birkenhead during the week commencing to-day, Sunday (May 9) and in view of the growing local protest against the Council's action in refusing to let the Town Hall to the Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. for Freethought lectures the saints should not only attend themselves, but bring others with them. Working to principles on local councils is becoming obsolete, and an increasing number of Councillors can be pushed into bigotry, justice or injustice according to the voting strength behind the moves. The removal of the injustice to the Birkenhead Branch N.S.S. will depend upon the electorate and not upon the Council.

By an agreement made about 900 years ago, the vicar of Pinhoe is entitled to sixteen shillings a year for the upkeep of a donkey. The association is significant and historical. The first triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was on the back of a donkey. The Lord selected a donkey through which to communicate with Balaam. In the Festival of Fools, held sometimes on Christmas Day and sometimes on New Year's Day, an Ass was led with great ceremony into the Church, placed under a cloth of gold, and the corners held by four Canons. Outside Christianity, the Ass figures in many religious ceremonies, and (of interest at the present juncture) is found as the crest of several Royal Families. But Christianity has never lost touch with the Ass, and is today in closer spiritual accord with it than ever. Take the Ass out of modern theology, and there remains a very obvious gap that nothing else seems able to fill.

There is something in the clerical and missionary game that seems fatal to truth. Captain Spencer, a prison missionary, informs the world that Horatio Bottomley once told him that "any life lived without God must end in failure." It is possible for Bottomley to have said this, with his tongue in his cheek, but then follows a very robust kind of a lie that only a professional missionary who has found God would retail. Bottomley, he says,

confided to me that he was with his Uncle, Charles Bradlaugh, the well-known infidel lecturer when he was dying. To his nephew he said, "I have one great regret, I have robbed so many people of the comforts of their religion in their dying hours."

This is the first time we have heard of Bottomley as Bradlaugh's nephew. In the usual story he used to be Bradlaugh's son. We congratulate Captain Spencer on his capacity for lying. He is a born missionary, and taking "by and large" a different run of luck might have seen him in a much higher position in the church than a mere prison missionary. Still he must have felt at home while in the different prisons.

The West Ham and District Branch resumes its summer activities at Water Lane, to-night, May 9. In view of the present conditions, both at home and abroad, there is an exceptional opportunity for effective work for Freethought and Secularism. The apologists for Religion are more desperate than they have ever been and greater numbers of Christians are more in doubt than ever before. It is to be hoped that Freethinkers—attached or unattached—will support the meetings and bring believers with them. This year of the Great Recall to Religion and of religious brutality abroad, should be a good one for the advance of Freethought.

Saints and Angels

II.

A SAINT, we are told by authority, is a "holy" man; or a person eminent for piety; or one "blessed in heaven"; or one canonized by the Church. The name is also used by Mormons when speaking about themselves; and has even been used—though satirically, of course—to designate some of our own Freethinkers.

There are a number of books dealing with the lives of saints but one has only to go through a list of these people to see that most of them and their deeds are quite imaginary. They are as mythical as the genii of the *Arabian Nights*. Their sayings and doings are puerile rubbish, and if modern people were to emulate them, they would either be laughed out of their "sainthood" or put into a lunatic asylum. Men and women who are made "saints" in these days, have got to qualify with something quite different from the recorded adventures of the early saints.

Every Christian country has its "patron" saint, but of what earthly use he is puzzles me as much as his selection. England, for example, chose St. George, and I must admit his story makes romantic and quite enthralling reading. His adventures with the Dragon are quite as thrilling a narrative as any of fiction's favourite detectives settling old scores with old lags. After all, Sherlock Holmes' terrific fight with Professor Moriarty is only a version of St. George and the Dragon.

But the difficulty of St. George is that modern scepticism has discarded the hero as a myth, and insists that if there is anybody called George at all in history, it must be a swindling old reprobate of a pork butcher, who was finally lynched by an exasperated mob. As is well known to students of Church history, just as there was a constant struggle between the partisans of Peter and Paul, so later on there was a bitter fight between the Arians and the Athanasians. As the latter won, the Arians were invariably credited with all the sins of the Universe. It was a case of the modern antagonism of Protestant and Catholic. The story is that St. George, after supplying the Roman Army with inferior bacon—or, to put it more clearly, swindling them—and making his fortune, became the Arian Bishop of Alexandria. In this capacity he levied outrageous taxes, and was eventually put to death by his own angry flock. It may be that even this story is simply a piece of fiction invented by an Athanasian. Be that as it may, there is nothing here of the famous adventures of the First Champion of Christendom. And Gibbon, who records part of the story of the swindling Archbishop, and Emerson, who agrees with him, both claim that there is nobody else in history.

Modern believers in the St. George myth are very angry with the sceptics—though one of the apologists admits in a recent article that "the history of the real St. George is obscure." But surely not more so than St. Denis, or St. David? And what of the large number of Saints whose lives have been written by Butler and Baring-Gould? Are they not just so much pious fraud?

But it must not be thought for a moment that the pious fraud is the beginning and end of the matter. The Roman Catholic Church is not—and never has been—quite so simple as that. The astute men of business who founded it, and have conducted it ever since, had a purpose with their fictions, a purpose which worked out admirably to the satisfaction of both the Church and its dupes. From it sprang a whole theology worth looking into.

The definite purpose of the invocation of saints was *intercession*. As the Council of Trent puts it: "The

saints, reigning together with Christ, offer to God their prayers for men; it is good and useful to invoke them with supplication, and on account of the benefits obtained from God through his Son, Jesus Christ." And it was particularly emphasized that all who did not believe this balderdash either by word or thought "are impious in their opinions; if any shall teach contrary to these decrees, let him be accursed."

In the famous Creed of Pope Pius IV., it says, "The saints reigning together with Christ are to be venerated and invoked; they offer prayers to God for us and their relics are to be venerated." The net result of invoking the saints and venerating their relics is well known. The unlucky faithful brought and still bring their cash to swell the coffers of the Church; and most of them truly believe that the particular saint whom they invoke would actually intercede over something or other with Christ or God Almighty in their favour. It was and is one of the best paying delusions for which the Church of Rome is responsible. It was a masterstroke of business.

But not for a moment must it be thought it was an *original* idea. As a matter of fact, Pagan mythology is packed with gods for all sorts of prayers, cures and hopes. When the Pagans were converted to the one true belief, it was impossible to do away with their gods. A good many of these deities were promptly converted into saints, endowed with Christian virtues as well as names, with miraculous powers, often with heroic deaths, becoming shining examples of a truly Christian spirit, and sent to Heaven to sit with God, Christ, the Virgin and the Apostles.

Saints, of course, are not to be worshipped with all the adoration given to God, though pretty near it. It is always a religious service; and priests—and cash—are indispensable adjuncts. There are special saints, in particular, for all manner of diseases; and if faith could cure through the intercession of saints, there wouldn't be a single illness left in the world—at least, among the Roman Catholic community. Of course, no matter what the flock believed, the higher orders never seemed quite so sure about either the efficacy of special saints, or in their intercession. Most cardinals and bishops would hastily run to a prosaic doctor when ill, whether Jew or Gentile would not matter.

How profitable the practice became to the Church is shown in the famous story about the shrine of Becket in Canterbury. On one occasion, when the begging box was opened it was found that £100 was cast for Becket, £10 for the Virgin, and nothing at all for Christ. Becket was a marvellous source of wealth to the Church.

When it comes to intercession it is hardly necessary to state that not a saint in heaven is quite as powerful as the Virgin Mary. Not even Jesus is worshipped by Catholics so fervently as his mother—no matter what they say or protest. Their liturgy is packed with intercessional prayers to Mary; and the truly fervent and pious Catholic never misses an opportunity to pray to her on all sorts of occasions, and for almost everything under the sun. The ancient worship of Astarte or Venus has been transferred in nearly all its features to Mary, taking, of course, into consideration the differences in age and morals. And the more ascetic the Catholic, the more fervent the prayer. An example must be given of the way in which the Mother of God is adored, taken from a work published about a hundred years ago, *The Devotion and Office of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ*:—

As the adorable heart of Jesus was formed in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin, and of her blood and substance, so we cannot in a more proper and agreeable manner show our devotion to the sacred heart of the Son than by dedicating some part of the sacred devotion to the ever pure heart of the Mother.

... Come then, hardened and inveterate sinner, how great soever your crimes may be, come and behold, Mary stretches out her hand, opens her heart to receive you. Though insensible to the great concerns of your salvation, though unfortunately proof against the most engaging invitations and inspirations of the Holy Ghost, fling yourself at the feet of this powerful advocate. Hail Mary, lady and mistress of the world to whom all power has been given both in heaven and earth. . . .

And so on for many pages, ending with, "You, Mary, are the great mediatrix between God and Man, obtaining for sinners all they can ask and demand of the Blessed Trinity."

This kind of nonsense is the spiritual food of millions of Catholics. Our *intelligentsia* revel in it, of course. Or, do they?

And almost the same kind of thing is addressed to the "holy" saints.

H. CUTNER.

Henry Hetherington—1792-1849

(Continued from page 278)

ANOTHER case of a like nature, which will be of interest to our readers may be cited. In the *Freethinker* prosecution for blasphemy, George William Foote, the founder and editor of the *Freethinker* till his death in 1915, was prosecuted for blasphemy in 1882-3, and received the infamous sentence of twelve month's imprisonment from the Roman Catholic, Judge North. Foote immediately replied, "Thank you, my lord; the sentence is worthy of your creed." A fortnight after his release a public banquet was held in his honour. In a fighting speech he delivered on this occasion, he concluded with the words, "It is my intention to-morrow morning to drive to the West of London, and to leave the first copy of this week's *Freethinker* pulled from the press, at Judge North's house with my compliments and my card." Which was accordingly done, and Foote afterwards remarked, "Judge North had the first copy of the re-illustrated *Freethinker*, and I hope he relished it."

The prosecutions of the *Poor Man's Guardian* went on apace. Every week several cases occurred, both in London and the Provinces. Meanwhile, Hetherington was conducting his very successful tour in the country, with the Bow Street "runners" at his heels most of the time. On September 14, 1831, he appeared at the weekly meeting of the National Union of the Working Classes, at the Rotunda (London), and delivered a long address recounting his experiences in the provinces. While he was in the country, he said, he felt infinite pain at hearing of the poor fellows that were daily taken up and committed to prison for selling the *Poor Man's Guardian*, so he came up to town to convince the Government that no prison bars would ever put it down. He had *right* on his side, and the Government had *might* on theirs—and for his part, he intended to write to Messrs. Birnie & Halls, that he would surrender himself immediately, and bear all the punishment they could legally inflict, provided they liberated the poor fellows then in custody.

That the victims were not all adults the following case will show. "A child was stopped by a policeman last Friday [September, 1831] and taken to the watch-house upon the charge of 'carrying about' unstamped newspapers. He was remanded on Saturday till Monday, when he was committed for three months, and all this while the parents and employers of the boy were ignorant of his fate."

Hetherington's offer to voluntary surrender on behalf of the numerous victims of the "Unstamped" was opposed by all his friends, "who considered that he was *bound* by his duty to himself, and to the public to frustrate the tyrannical intentions of his persecutors, by keeping out of their clutches as long as possible." Shortly after this, news reached Hetherington that his aged mother was very ill, in fact, dying. Filial affection prevailed over every other sentiment, and, casting discretion to the winds, he hastened home, arriving at midnight of September 28, 1831. Standing on the doorstep, with the knocker raised, he was pounced upon by a couple of Bow Street "runners." He resisted arrest, until overcome by numbers he was secured. In vain he begged for the trifling indulgence to be allowed to enter, if only for a few minutes. He was hurried off to Clerkenwell Prison, there to serve a sentence of six months' imprisonment. He was in prison some time before his friends knew what had become of him, and before the inmates of his home knew what had transpired at their own threshold. At the end of 1832, when he had not been many months at liberty, he was *again* convicted and *again* imprisoned for six months in the same gaol; and now it was that his friend Watson became his fellow-prisoner—also for the same "high crime and misdemeanour" of selling a penny paper without a taxed stamp! Their treatment during these six months was most cruel. An opening called a "window," but which was without a pane of glass, let in the snow upon their food as they ate it; cold and damp filled their bodies with pain; and the authorities seemed intent on trying by these means whether they could not break their spirits. After his release, by adopting various devices, he escaped arrest for some time. But the Government revenged themselves by making a seizure for £220, in the name of the Commissioners of Stamps, on the false pretext that he was not a registered printer. They swept his premises. But undaunted, he resumed his work—rising out of the midst of ruin. For nearly four years, 1831-34, he led the fight for a free press—fined, imprisoned, hunted as an outlaw, but finally defeating the Government, obtaining from a special jury the verdict, that his *Poor Man's Guardian*, for which he and others had suffered was a strictly legal publication. This happened on June 17, 1834. He had been summoned in respect to the *Poor Man's Guardian* and decided to defend himself, with the above-mentioned result. He had emerged after the long, cruel struggle, in glorious triumph. On June 21, 1834, No. 159 appeared with the following under the title: "This paper (after sustaining a Government persecution of three years and a half duration, in which upwards of 500 persons were unjustly imprisoned and cruelly treated for vending it) was, on the trial of an *ex-officio* information filed by His Majesty's Attorney-General against Henry Hetherington in the Court of Exchequer, before Lord Lyndhurst and a special jury, declared to be a strictly legal publication."

During all this struggle, the Church joined its forces with the Government against the enlightenment of the people. The following extract from an article, "The Church in Arms against the *Poor Man's Guardian*," places on record the opposition of the clergy to the freedom of the press.

We understand, that not only are the "Government" and "Houses of the Select Few," determined upon saving us all expense of advertisement, but also the Church has volunteered its assistance in the circulation of our papers; several of the *learned Reverends* have been mentioning us, from the pulpit, in a manner which answers our most sanguine expectations; for the abuse, affected contempt, and violent condemnation, which we have received at their

hands, show us, that our efforts to unmask the profligate hypocrisy and pride of old mother church are already becoming dangerous to her; we attack her dearest interests, her tithes and her glebes—and these are her tender part—her only conscience; let not her opinions of us have weight; were we really contemptible, she would, in her charity, be the last to notice us. No, they know we say the *truth*, and they cannot justify their pride, pomp, and wealth, supported as they are by “law,” at the expense of the labouring, miserable and starving *poor*! Let them answer this, not by merely calling us “seditious” and “blasphemous,” but by wholesome *argument and reasoning*, and not that *ex parte*, but with an opportunity of reply on our part; we defy them to a *trial of reason*.

The *Poor Man's Guardian* continued down to the last Saturday in 1835, when it ceased publication with its 238th number. It may be considered as the organ of the National Union of the Working Classes. It commenced publication a few weeks after the inception of that body and ceased when other movements came into prominence and the National Union of the Working Classes merged into the National Association and People's Charter Union. Through all these various movements, Hetherington never forgot the condition of the workers and laboured continually for their economic independence.

Henry Hetherington anticipated Proudhon's famous “Property is robbery.” In the second number of the *Poor Man's Guardian* Richard Carlile had an article on “The Consequences of having Kings, and Priests, and Lords,” and concluded with the cry:—

Choose ye, therefore, whom ye will serve; but as for me and my family, WE WILL NOT SERVE EITHER KINGS OR PRIESTS OR LORDS.

In a footnote to this article, Hetherington says:—

We perfectly agree with Mr. Carlile on the propriety of abolishing Kings, Priests, and Lords, but he does not go far enough—he does not strike at the *root* of the evil which exists. It is in Property that the evil lies—were there no property, there would be no Kings, Priests or Lords. It is property which has made tyrants, and not tyrants property—Mr. Carlile points out the *effects* of monopoly—we grapple with the *cause*, and would at once destroy it. Down then with property, and Kings, Lords, and Priests will go down of themselves.

AMBROSE G. BARKER.

(To be continued)

Is Any Sick Among You?

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.”

James vi.

To those who are unfamiliar with the history of magic, mysteries, and miracles of the pre-Christian Pagan world, and whose only acquaintance with the subject is what they were taught in the Sunday School, or heard from the pulpit, the miraculous stories of healing related in the Old and New Testaments appear to be not only wonderful and unique, but as evidence of the divine origin of Christianity, and the truth of revelation. But cults of healing, connected with the various priesthoods, had, of course, been in existence some thousands of years before the wandering tribes of Israelites were formed into a nation under the leadership of a King. Magic and mystery were the offshoots of the Upas tree of Religion. When Moses appeared before Pharaoh to demand the release of the

Israelites, according to instructions he had received from on High, to convince the King of his divine mission, he told Aaron to throw down his rod, and it turned into a serpent. He also caused all the rivers to turn into blood, and brought a plague of frogs over the whole land of Egypt. Pharaoh's magicians must have smiled to themselves at the simplicity of Moses; these “miracles” were part of their own stock-in-trade, and had been for ages. But the God of the Hebrews only came upon the scene of history about 4004 B.C., thousands of years after the Egyptians had built up a wonderful civilization, so that his ignorance of their mysteries may be excused. The Hebrew scribe himself had no doubt that the miracles wrought by the Egyptians were just as genuine as those of Moses, for he says: “And so also did the magicians with their enchantments.”

The instructions of the Apostle James with regard to the treatment of the sick and the infirm show that whatever else Christianity brought into the world, it did not inaugurate any sane or rational methods in the arts of healing disease. So far as the hazy, superstitious atmosphere, which surrounded the subject of the cure of disease in Apostolic days is concerned, Hippocrates might never have lived. But—and this is the point—if all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and the Apostolic treatment of disease is part of Scripture, how does it happen that the practice has fallen into disuse? It is generally believed in the Protestant world, that the Apostolic gifts of healing, etc., only lasted until about the end of the third century. Their cessation is somewhat of a mystery, and the Protestant churches seem to have no answer to the query. But while Apostolic practice was allowed to fall into abeyance, the fact remains that miracles continued to be performed just the same. Supernatural cures were attested in the fourth century by Athanasius, Ambrose, and Chrysostom; in the fifth by Hilary and Jerome; and in the sixth by Gregory the Great, and Augustine of Canterbury. The Catholic Church claiming to be the mouthpiece of God on earth, with power to interpret the Scriptures as it thought fit; and the Apostolic practice going out of fashion, it was the Church's business to find other means by which these cures could be effected. And so, instead of the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, they substituted holy water, bones of the Saints, and any old rag supposed to have belonged to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, if they had thought of it, the application of cold feet, instead of the laying on of hands, would have answered the same purpose. It is difficult to tell where the Catholic Church got these fragments of Mary's underclothing from, as the Catholic doctrine of the Assumption teaches that Mary was translated bodily up into heaven—with all her clothes on; the extras being a little handbag containing a supply of lip-stick and powder-puff.

And then came the Reformation, exposing the puerilities to which the Catholic Church had lent itself; and, ultimately, to the creation of some three hundred different sects of Protestantism. But this matter of spiritual healing was one of the causes of the severance, for the Reformers regarded these unapostolic cures of Catholics with incredulity and abhorrence. The quantity of Mary's milk on tap at the numerous churches, convents, and nunneries, led the great John Calvin to remark, that, “had the Virgin been a wet nurse her whole life, or a dairy, she could not have produced more than is shown as hers in various parts.” These Reformers repudiated the authority of the Catholic Church, and claimed the right of private judgment in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Indeed, Martin Luther fell foul of the canon of Scripture itself, and did not accept some of the books as canonical. The Protestant revolt was more

of a doctrinal nature, and Christian healing does not occupy a prominent place in the early movement. They were too busy exposing the flagrant abuses of the Church. And yet Protestantism lays claim to many miracles. The Waldenses and Moravians, heretics of the Middle Ages, are recorded as having held the tenet of a direct supernatural answer to prayer. The Huguenots, of Cevennes, also developed the miraculous gifts of healing and spiritual prophecy. The Quakers in England also laid claim to these original gifts of the Spirit; and their founder, George Fox, wrought many wonderful cures, which are narrated in his journal. The Methodists, in their early days, recorded cases of miraculous interposition. Wesley's *Journals* contain many miracles that had taken place among his disciples. Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, claimed the possession of supernatural powers, by which he could cast out devils and perform cures. These Latter-day Saints, according to an American author, who has made a special study of faith-healing, states that in working miraculous cures they were "fully equal to Catholics or Protestants." Edward Irving, the founder of the sect known as the Catholic Apostolic Church, regarded disease as a form of sin, and taught that no one having sufficient faith need, or should, yield to it. This is quite in keeping with the assurance of the Apostle in the text, that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him." This sect of the Irvingites firmly believed in the Apostolic gifts of prophecy, tongues, and healing. Spiritualism, too, like the hen that hatched the ducks, has taken some strange monstrosities under its wing; but seems to have quietly settled down as a healing cult. The number of its "healing mediums" must be enormous; but, probably owing to the exposures to which the movement has been subjected, they wisely don't court the limelight.

Perhaps the greatest superstition in our time is the so-called metaphysical healing of Mary Baker Eddy. Part of the lesson-sermon appointed to be read in all the Christian Science Churches for March 14 of this year says: "The Denial of the possibility of Christian healing robs Christianity of the very element which gave it divine force and its astonishing and unequalled success in the first century." This prodigious success of Christianity in the first century is a signment of Mrs. Eddy's brain, and of it there is no historic evidence. The writer I have already quoted says: "This creed, invented, demonstrated, expanded, and diffused by American ladies, is surely the natural outcome in emotional and untrained minds of a smattering of spiritualism, mesmerism, mental therapeutics, mysticism and metaphysics, coupled with a profound and lofty disdain for the most elementary scientific knowledge."

The case of Eugene V. Hamilton, a poet, and a Freethinker, is one of the most marvellous on record; but enough has been said to show that all these wonderful cures, Pagan and Christian, allowing all that is claimed for them, have nothing whatever to do with any form of religious belief. They occur as the result of emotional excitation, and in all cases take place in accordance with and through the same physiological laws. The Catholic Church seems to be fully aware of the shortcomings of the Apostolic mode of treatment; and one of their leading papers, some little time ago, actually denied that there was any such thing as a "ministry of healing" in the early church. Mrs. Eddy says that any such denial robs Christianity of its vital force. So it comes to be a case of you pay your money, and you take your choice. And the Holy Father, and the Holy Mother Eddy, both have an insatiable appetite where cash is concerned.

It will be evident that the theological foundations

of the Christian faith, at the present day, are not so secure as they were formerly thought to be. The belief in miracles has had to go by the board; and the new wonders of psycho-therapeutics have opened the eyes of leading churchmen to the fact of the tremendous influence of the mind upon the body as an important factor in the cure of disease. It was, perhaps, with such disturbing thoughts in his mind that the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested recently that the time seemed to have come when it might be fitting for the clergy to invade the sick-room, following in the wake of the doctor and the nurse. The doctor, the nurse and the priest! What a fall was there, my countrymen! Fancy these mouthpieces of God Almighty, claiming Apostolic succession, with all that it involves in the shape of prophecy, and tongues, and gifts of miraculous healing, and before whose presence, in those far off times, evil spirits and demons quaked in their shoes! Fancy their degenerate descendants having surreptitiously to sneak into a sick-room as an unwanted and useless appendage to the doctor and the nurse. Some of their fellow-labourers in the Lord's vineyard—or hospital, as the case may be—such as the Witch-Doctor or the Medicine-Man, would I imagine look upon the offer of such a back seat as an unwarranted affront to the dignity of their profession.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

What is Truth?

FRANCIS BACON commenced his essay *Of Truth* with these words: "What is Truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." But I cannot think that Pilate as he left the judgment hall asked the momentous question in jest. There is nothing in the Biblical story which suggests levity. The occasion was a solemn one both for the Procurator and the man whom he sought to release because he found in him no fault at all. It was unfortunate that Pilate did not stay for an answer; a divine definition of truth would be interesting, but the equivocal and evasive replies with which Jesus met his interrogations did not encourage further enquiry.

If Pilate attempted a plaiserterie Jesus would not have responded, for it appears that he had no sense of humour, even as a child, but surely the carpenter's-shop must occasionally have been enlivened by some homely fun in which he would take part. The apocryphal account of "The Infancy of Jesus" gives an account of how he and his playmates made divers clay models of asses, oxen and birds. Each boasted of his work, but Jesus said: "I will command these figures which I have made to walk and immediately they moved."

Models of "Birds and sparrows" also became animated, flew, returned and did eat and drink.

Many other "miracles" are told of the infant Jesus, who must have been a most helpful "mate" for his parent who, it seems, was "not very skilful at his carpenter's trade," for, whenever Joseph botched his work, a common occurrence, the boy stretched out his hand and "presently it became as Joseph would have it."

But the youthful playmates of Jesus had to be wary, for he was sudden and quick in quarrel, and when angered played such havoc with his companions that their parents implored Joseph to depart with him for, said they, "he kills our children."

These old fables, both apocryphal and canonical, are curious and interesting. There is, too, much that is beautiful. The immorality and obscenity should be eliminated and forgotten, but such fine stuff as

"Ecclesiastes" and the "Song" are literature for all time.

What a love song is that of the rose of Sharon! "Till the day-break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved and be thou like a roe of a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

She charges the daughters of Jerusalem that they awake not her lover who hath lain all night between her breasts.

It is curious that devout Christians have divorced the first line of this amorous invocation from its context, have ignored its significance and adopted it as a tombstone text, a *memento mori*.

I have strayed from the age-long question; ultimate truth may be unknowable, truth is what a man troweth, but that is *his* truth.

Justice, faith, truth, are creations of thought; they would not be if we were not.

Did Pilate jest?

I. SYERS.

Obituary

WILLIAM HEAFORD

ONE by one the old guard retires. The last to join the ranks of those who are now but a memory is William Heaford at the advanced age of 82. As far back as sixty years ago he was writing in Freethought journals and lecturing on Freethought platforms. He contributed to Mrs. Harriet Law's *Secular Chronicle*, Foote's *Secularist*, the *National Reformer*, the *Freethinker*, and other Freethought journals. He was also well known in the open-air meetings in London, and in lecture halls all over the country. Of small build he was a perfect "live wire" once he got upon his feet, and he bore his part at a time when Freethought called for real fighting courage, if it did not call for the quiet determination that is necessary in our own time.

A self-taught linguist he had mastered no less than six languages, and was responsible for a number of translations from the French, one or two from the Spanish, and, we believe, some from other tongues. His interest in international Freethought was very great, and there were few of the international congresses he did not attend while he was physically able to do so, and he spoke at many of them. Some of the foreign Freethinking Societies came, indeed, to regard him as their mouthpiece in this country.

He was a personal friend of Francisco Ferrer, and an executor of his will. He worked hard to bring Ferrer's case before the British public, and it was done from sheer admiration of the man and his work—unpaid labour on his part, and not the work of one who saw an opportunity for paid journalism.

His death, happening when it did, leaves no cause for regret other than that which will be felt by his own personal friends as leaving a gap in their list of comrades, and even with them must come the regret that it did not come as a quiet ending to a busy life, while the man as they knew him was still active. But about five years ago he experienced a cerebral hæmorrhage, and gradually lost all power of movement, and for some little time before death was merely alive, always a painful sight for those who knew the once active-minded man with his vivid interests in life and its activities. With such men death comes in its pleasantest forms when it takes them while all their faculties are still strong, and we are sure that a man such as William Heaford would have met death in those circumstances with almost a smile. The philosopher's fight is with life, death he merely accepts.

The funeral took place at Mitcham Road Cemetery, Croydon, on May 3. A secular service was conducted by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

The bishops on the Episcopal Bench, the deans in their cathedral closes, all the bustling conscientious early-service priests—not one of them but has his mind enslaved by fantastic preconceptions. The dead weight of two thousand years of mistaken thinking hangs heavy upon them. . . .—*Llewellyn Powys*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Professor F. Aveling, D.Sc.—"Experiments on Will and Choice."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market) : 7.0, Mr. J. W. Barker—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner) : 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. Hampstead, White Stone Pond, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury. Mornington Crescent, Camden Town, 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 6.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, May 11, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Cuck Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, May 14, A Lecture.

WEST HAM AND DISTRICT BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. H. Stewart Wishart—"Religion, Royalism and Re-action."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connell and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

MIDDLESBROUGH (Unitarian Church Hall, Corporation Road) : 8.0, Thursday, May 13, Mr. H. Dalkin—"Elements of Freethought."

OUTDOOR

BIKKENHEAD (Wittal) BRANCH : Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at the following places on Saturday, May 8, Haymarket; Sunday, May 9, Park Entrance; Monday, May 10, Park Entrance; Tuesday, May 11, Well Lane; Thursday, May 13, Well Lane; Friday, May 14, Well Lane. All meetings commence at 7.30 p.m.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.0, Mr. John Clarke—"The Birth of a Soul." Literature for sale. If wet this lecture will be delivered in Cobden Hall, 14 Cort Street, Blackburn.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge) : 8.0, Friday, May 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

FOULRIDGE : 7.45, Friday, May 7, Mr. J. Clayton.

HIGHAM : 7.30, Monday, May 10, Mr. J. Clayton.

NORTH SHIELDS BRANCH (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday, May 11, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PADLIHAM : 7.30, Tuesday, May 11, Mr. J. Clayton.

STOCKTON (The Cross) : 7.0, Monday, May 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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