

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •
— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVII.—No. 29

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

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

Views and Opinions

Duplicity In The Pulpit

The B.B.C. manfully pursues its avowed object of attempting to prevent the disintegration of Christianity, although its efforts can only be said to be successful so far as they may have managed to give numbers of people a false idea of what Christianity is. Perhaps that is not a quite correct way of putting it, for a great deal of what the B.B.C. permits the people to hear in this connexion is so nebulous that it may mean anything. But here, again, I ought to interpolate a correction, for it may be that this policy of the B.B.C. prevents a large number of people finding out just what Christianity is and what it does, and this may delay the time when these people who usually permit themselves to be fooled by phrases will find out the truth concerning Christianity. And when a man or a woman finds out the truth about Christianity the clerical game is nearly up. The hope of the Church is to keep the people as they are. To capture those already definitely outside the Christian ranks is impossible. Even God Almighty finds himself powerless here, for one may note that the attested cases of conversion occur outside the ranks of definite unbelievers. Their conversion is a "recall" to service of those who have been merely slack in the discharge of their duties. The unbelievers are given up as hopeless. But it is really they who matter, for it is useless trying to convert sensible folk by pointing out how happy certain people are with their religion. So are many people with their whisky or beer. But the essential value of a thing is not shown by citing those who use it, but only by comparison with those who go without. The "Divine Wisdom," is poorly illustrated (or is it characteristically illustrated?) by merely ginging up a few lackadaisical adherents and completely ignoring the growing millions who have rejected God. The conversion of a well-known Free-thinker, say, once a month, would be far more impressive than the rebathing of thousands of men and women who have never recovered from their original

immersion. The conversion of one here and there does but emphasize the indifference of the vast majority.

* * *

The Study Of Religion

The *Listener* recently summed up the concluding arguments of a series of lectures by the Rev. Joseph McCulloch, on "Great Religious Revivals," by citing from the last of the speeches, "Revival to-day must conquer religious ignorance." Heaven bless the man, what can he mean? If he means that he wishes to remove ignorance concerning religion, I might, other things equal, hail him as a fellow-worker. I have been trying all my life to remove ignorance concerning religion, and I think I could show that I have been very much more successful at the job than has Mr. McCulloch. From Mr. McCulloch's point of view I expect he regards religious ignorance as the equivalent of disbelief in religion. But the two are not merely not identical, they are positively opposed. To believe in religion—real belief in real religion—implies an almost appalling ignorance concerning the nature of religion. In the light of present-day knowledge of the origin and nature of religion one thing is quite clear. You may believe in religion, or you may understand it, but you simply cannot do both.

But suppose that Mr. McCulloch and the B.B.C. were genuinely interested in removing ignorance about religion; how would they set to work? They would begin in the usual scientific manner by collecting all kinds of religions past and present, civilized and uncivilized. They would then dismiss all those features in which religions differ from one another and retain those things which they held in common. When this was done it would be discovered that the one thing common to all religions is the belief in the control of natural forces by some semi-human kind of force, and that this, in a very early stage of social life, became crystalized into ghosts and spirits, gods and devils. In other words, the one thing in which religions agree is the belief in supernatural, or superhuman beings, who demand man's homage, and punish him if that homage is withheld.

It would be found that in early ages this conception of existence completely dominated the mind of man. All that was done by man was done in the belief in the omnipresence of these gods and spirits. But man acquires knowledge, and there is the reaction of collective existence on his mental life. And while the gods and spirits are the forces about which he thinks he knows most, and whom he must obey, he must act as though human life depends upon other things. He must secure food and build a shelter, he must rear his children, and he must play a part in the collective life of the tribe. These latter things remain strong and permanent, the former varies in strength, and becomes

gradually subordinated to the facts of life and to the necessities of a social life.

The enquirer would also discover that man's social development reacts on his gods, and just as in the beginning he pictured these powerful spirits as like himself, so as he develops in knowledge, and as he becomes civilized, his gods change also. What the Marxists call the law of the interpenetration of opposites, but which was known long before Marx was born as "action and reaction are equal and opposite," operates, and man gradually makes his god suitable for presentation to his own civilized life. But because it is man who makes and educate the gods, the gods never quite catch up with man. They are nearly always "one jump behind" him. The investigation would also make quite clear the fact that definitions of religion as given by so-called advanced preachers to-day are framed for the purpose of helping people to misunderstand religion. They do not include what are called the "lower" forms of religion, and not all of the "higher" ones.

It would also be shown that all sorts of delusions and illusions and misunderstandings have contributed to the perpetuation of religion. The ravings of lunatics have been universally taken as evidence of the reality of demonic possession. Hysteria has been taken as proof of inspiration, epilepsy has been a fruitful cause of divine visions. The visions resulting from starving the body, and eating of drugs, unhealthy solitary meditation, all sorts of hypnotic and hysterical conditions, the action on the human mind of drugs and pre-disposing abnormal conditions, have all figured as the conditions of man's intercourse with God and the spirits. And added to these factors the scientific student would realize the organic connexion between these conditions and the state of religious belief and teaching to-day.

That would be the right way to study religion; it is the way in which religion is being studied by millions of the most intelligent men and women all over the world. But it is the one way that men such as the Rev. Mr. McCulloch ignore. The B.B.C. would not tolerate him if he acted otherwise. For the B.B.C. does not wish to remove ignorance about religion. The chief desire is to perpetuate it. No one realizes better than does Sir John Reith that ignorance is the mother of devotion.

* * *

Fooling The People

Consider the way in which most attempt to make, what they call, a study of religion. They go to books of devotion, to essays written in the interests of established religion, or they consult their favourite parson as an authority on religion. None of these serves but to darken counsel. The clergyman may be an authority on the history of doctrines within his own Church; he may be an authority on ritual and on religious ceremonies in general. The one thing he is not, and if he were, one would hardly ever know it, is an authority on the origin and meaning of religion and the reactions between it and the social forces. The priest of any religion is the last one to tell the truth about religion, perhaps the last one to know it. And even when he knows it he is the last to make that knowledge public. Consider how long a knowledge of Biblical criticism was kept away from the people. For generations after it was a commonplace with those entitled to speak with authority that the Bible was a collection of books of unknown date, very dubious history, and altogether unsound science, the clergy were preaching as though the world was still in the sixteenth century. Even to-day it is considered press "news" if a parson of eminence says he does not believe in the flood, or the story of creation, or the mir-

acles of Jesus, or in the inspiration of the Bible. Between the worshipper in Church and the expert concerning religion, stands the parson. He will tell you that the Church is not a place in which to tell the truth about the Bible, people come there to worship, not to hear critical discourses, and in any case it is not their duty to shake the simple faith of pious souls. And the worshipper in Church seeing the constant use of the Bible in the old way, and the references to what took place in the days of Ezekiel, or Solomon, as though it were all a matter of verifiable history, passes his life as though the last century of documentary, scientific, and anthropological criticism of the Bible had never existed.

Authorities on religion do not figure in the pulpit. They are not professional preachers of the gospel. Let any reader look up a history of our knowledge of religion during the past century, and he will find that the number of names of clergymen is very few. The makers of the modern study of religion were nearly to a man not parsons. Here and there one comes on a name like that of Robertson Smith, but the vast majority are outside the ranks of the clergy, many of them outside the ranks of those who even profess to have any religious belief. The lawgivers here are freethinkers almost to a man. It was their lot to teach, it was the aim of the clergy to conceal.

We must not expect either the B.B.C. or any clergyman to make any serious attempt to remove ignorance concerning religion. It is their business to see that ignorance is not replaced by knowledge and understanding. Their aim is to prevent the Churches suffering from a disease that has killed so many religions—that of being found out. And if one were writing an exhaustive treatise on the suppression of the truth, on the tricks and turns of controversialists that flouted every rule of intellectual decency, on the solemn preaching of exposed untruths, and the reckless invention of bogus evidence on behalf of an established superstition, the history of the Christian Church would supply an unrivalled mass of material.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Chartered Libertines

"In religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text."

Shakespeare.

OUR unofficial censors are once again on the war-path, and the cinema, the theatre, literature, and the cabaret, are to be the objectives of the latest attack. These things are all said to be harming public morals. In every generation those who possess the itch to censor have discovered some similar agency of human wickedness.

Puritan minds have been stirred to painful anxiety by devices for public entertainment, ranging from the Elizabethan plays, the Restoration drama, to the ladies of the ballet and music-hall songs. A generation ago the "penny dreadful" was said to be making criminals; the cheap novelette was alleged to be ruining young women; to-day the cinemas of the land, which some twenty millions of people attend each week, are accused of upsetting the morals of boys, girls, and adults impartially.

A meeting was held recently at St. James's Palace, of all places, at which some illustrious busybodies were present, to demand a stricter and far more comprehensive censorship of public amusements and popular literature. Press reports stated that for months the Lord Chamberlain's office had been deluged with

correspondence on the subject. This statement shows that the movement is organized, and it would not be surprising to find that the wire-pullers were the clergy, who like, on occasion, to pose as independent investigators when they contemplate more dirty work at the cross-roads.

So the organizers of this crusade want to lay their hands once more on the people's amusements, and their standards will be set by minds of the calibre of callow curates and jaundiced Sunday-school teachers. We can guess what manner of minds they are. Their principal ambition in life is to force upon others their own narrow, sectarian views of what is right and proper. Who ever heard of these creatures wanting to censor a film or a play merely because it was as dull as ditchwater?

The would-be censors' habitual objection to the people's amusements are that they exhibit scenes of crime, of cruelty, and of sex. Doubtless there are some quaint people who would frown upon the representation of the popular pantomime of "Ali Baba" if they reflected on the fact that it introduces not only a considerable element of "sex appeal," but forty desperate criminals who are eventually put to death in circumstances of the most revolting cruelty.

The people themselves, however, are less squeamish than their would-be pastors and masters. They realize that on the stage, on the screen, and in literature, the subjects of crime, of cruelty, and of sex can be presented without offence to a reasonable adult mind. And if offence is given, then the common law provides ample means to restrain and, if necessary, to punish the offender.

To read such highly-coloured allusions to the books, magazines, plays, and films, of the day, as if many of them were a noisome danger to society, is not pleasant. When such accusations come from priests and their satellites, who thrust their out-of-date Bible into the hands of childhood, one's sense of justice is outraged. For all mythology contains things which are both insulting and injurious, and the erotics and barbarities of the Christian Bible are "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." Yet this objectionable fetish-book is forced compulsorily into the hands of every child; but masters of literature, who would present their puppets as sentient beings, must emasculate and etherealize them until they are the merest shadows of men and women, swayed by motives and temptations that would be held blameless by the Rev. Mr. Stiggins and gain the approval of the oleaginous Samuel Pecksniff. The clergy always attach such very loose meanings to the words they fling about so recklessly, but how such creatures can read salacious passages from "Holy Writ" without remark, and point the finger of scorn at modern novelists and playwrights is inexplicable except on the hypothesis that they are insincere and hypocritical.

If the novels, plays, films, and magazines of our day are likely to corrupt the morals of the rising generation, what, in the name of common sense, is the Old Testament calculated to do? There may be found plain, unvarnished accounts of rape, adultery, and unnatural vice, written with all the nasty particularity and heightened effect, which is the peculiar birthright of all Eastern writers. The florid, heated rhetoric of the "Song of Solomon" leaves little to the imagination, and the least lettered reader can appreciate the glowing periods. In fact, this Oriental nastiness begins where Occidental pornography leaves off.

Whether associated with the boasted "Recall to Religion" crusade, or not, this overt action of titled and other busybodies is perfectly unnecessary. If these would-be censors had any real reason for safeguarding public morality, they would see at once,

that if an ordinary novel, play, or film, will corrupt adult persons as well as children, their own fetish-book is still more open to objection. No novelist or playwright would dare to fill his pages with detailed accounts of incest, rape, and unmentionable crimes. He would be imprisoned, and his books destroyed by order of the Law Courts. Yet the clergy force this Oriental fetish-book into the hands of millions of little children. We do not believe in bowdlerizing literature, but if ever there were any occasion for such drastic treatment it most certainly should be directed against this particular fetish-book. Instead of prating of indecency, instead of harrowing and restricting the people's amusements, let these would-be tyrants do something sensible. Let them tell their friends, the clergy, to cease forcing into the innocent hands of little children a volume which they dare no longer read aloud in its completeness to a mixed audience of adults. Until the clergy consent to do this they merit the title of "chartered libertines." Indeed, these creatures are the Jekylls and Hydes of our social system. Professing to be the guardians of morality, they seek to perpetuate the crudities and barbarities of prehistoric times. Pretending to be in the very front of civilization, they are, in reality, the residuary legatees of the savages of the Stone Age.

MIMNERMUS.

Henry Hetherington—1792-1849

(Concluded from page 443)

HETHERINGTON left behind him a document which he called his LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT, here quoted in full:—

As life is uncertain, it behoves everyone to make preparations for death; I deem it therefore a duty incumbent on me, ere I quit this life, to express in writing, for the satisfaction and guidance of esteemed friends, my feelings and opinions in reference to our common principles. I adopt this course that no mistake or misapprehension may arise through the false reports of those who officiously and obtrusively obtain access to the death-beds of avowed Infidels to priestcraft and superstition; and who by their annoying importunities, labour to extract from an opponent whose intellect is already worn out and subdued by protracted physical suffering, some trifling admission, that they may blazon it forth to the world as a Death-bed-Confession and a triumph of Christianity over Infidelity.

In the first place, then—I calmly and deliberately declare that I do not believe in the popular notion of the existence of an Almighty, All-wise and Benevolent God—possessing intelligence, and conscious of His own operations; because these attributes involve such a mass of absurdities and contradictions, so much cruelty and injustice on His part to the poor and destitute portion of His creatures—that, in my opinion, no rational reflecting mind can, after disinterested investigation, give credence to the existence of such a Being.

In the second place, I believe death to be an eternal sleep—that I shall never live again in this world, or another, with a consciousness that I am the same identical person that once lived, performed the duties, and exercised the functions of a human being.

In the third place, I consider priestcraft and superstition the greatest obstacle to human improvement and happiness. During my life I have, to the best of my ability, sincerely and strenuously exposed and opposed them, and die with a firm conviction that Truth, Justice, and Liberty will never be permanently established on earth till every vestige of priestcraft and superstition shall be utterly destroyed.

In the fourth place, I have ever considered that the

only religion useful to man consists exclusively of the practice of morality, and in the mutual interchange of kind actions. In such a religion there is no room for priests—and when I see them interfering at our births, marriages, and deaths, pretending to conduct us safely through this state of being to another and happier world, any disinterested person of the least shrewdness and discernment must perceive that their sole aim is to stultify the minds of the people by their incomprehensible doctrines, that they may the more effectually fleece the poor deluded sheep who listen to their empty babblings and mystifications.

In the fifth place, as I have lived so I die, a determined opponent to their nefarious and plundering system. I wish my friends, therefore, to deposit my remains in unconsecrated ground, and trust they will allow no priest, or clergyman of any denomination, to interfere in any way whatever at my funeral. My earnest desire is, that no relation or friend shall wear black or any kind of mourning, as I consider it contrary to our rational principles to indicate respect for a departed friend by complying with a hypocritical custom.

In the sixth place, I wish those who respect me, and who have laboured in our common cause, to attend my remains to their last resting place, not so much in consideration of the individual, as to do honour to our just, benevolent and rational principles.

I hope all true Rationalists will leave pompous displays to the tools of priestcraft and superstition. If I could have my desire, the occasion of my death and burial should be turned to the advantage of the living. I would have my kind and good friend, WATSON, who knew me intimately for many years—or any other friend well acquainted with my character—to address to those assembled such observations as he may deem pertinent and useful; holding up the good points of my character as an example worthy of imitation, and pointing out my defects with equal fidelity, that none may avow just and rational principles without endeavouring to purge themselves of those errors that result from bad habits previously contracted, and which tarnish the lustre of their benign and glorious principles.

These are my views and feelings in quitting an existence that has been chequered with the plagues and pleasures of a competitive, scrambling, selfish system; a system by which the moral and social aspirations of the noblest human being are nullified by incessant toil and physical deprivations; by which, indeed, all men are trained to be either slaves, hypocrites or criminals. Hence my ardent attachment to the principles of that great and good man—ROBERT OWEN. I quit this world with a firm conviction that his system is the only true road to human emancipation; that it is, indeed, the only just system for regulating the affairs of honest, intelligent human beings—the only one yet made known to the world, that is based on truth, justice and equality. While the land, machines, tools, implements of production, and the produce of man's toil, are exclusively in possession of the do-nothings; and labour is the sole possession of the wealth-producers—a marketable commodity, bought up and directed by wealthy idlers—never-ending misery must be their inevitable lot. Robert Owen's system, if rightly understood and faithfully carried out, rectifies all these anomalies. It makes man the proprietor of his own labour and of the elements of production—it places him in a condition to enjoy the entire fruits of his labour and surrounds him with circumstances that will make him intelligent, rational and happy. Grateful to Mr. Owen for the happiness I have experienced in contemplating the superiority of his system, I could not die happy without recommending my fellow-countrymen to study its principles and earnestly strive to establish them in practice. Though I ardently desired to acquire that benign spirit, and to attain that self-control which was so conspicuous in the character of the founder of the Rational System, I am aware I fell immeasurably short of my bright exemplar; but

as I never in thought, word or deed, wilfully injured any human being, I hope that I shall be forgiven by those whom I may have inadvertently or unconsciously jostled in this world's scramble. I have indefatigably, sincerely and disinterestedly laboured to improve the condition of humanity—believing it to be the duty of every man to leave the world better than he found it; and if I have not pursued this object with that wisdom and discretion that should mark at all times the conduct of a rational man, I have zealously maintained what appeared to me to be right, and paid the penalty of what my opponents may term my indiscretions in many cruel persecutions. I freely forgive all who have injured me in the struggle; and die in the hope and consolation that a time is approaching when the spirit of antagonism will give place to fraternal affection and universal co-operation to promote the happiness of mankind.

(Signed) HENRY HETHERINGTON.

Witnessed by George Jacob Holyoake.

Henry Allsop Ivory.

John Kenny.

August 21, 1849.

Hetherington had composed this document a year and a half or more before his death, and gave copies in his own handwriting to Watson and Holyoake. He had copies made to distribute to a few other friends. On Tuesday (August 21, 1849), when Holyoake visited him in his illness, two days before his death, he signed the will of his personal property, and produced a copy of the document he had given to Holyoake some year and a half before, and after reading it through expressed a desire to sign it which he accordingly did.

The John Street Directors provided 2,000 copies for distribution to the assembly at the funeral. Several reprints were afterwards made.

This document was the cause of much comment by some of Hetherington's co-workers, especially Bronterre O'Brien, who were much perturbed to find they had been associated with such an Infidel! Holyoake, ever complaisant to propitiate the critics, in the *Reasoner*, November 7, 1849, thereupon declared it to be the will of a Deist!!! This is in keeping with all Holyoake's actions on such occasions. Several instances could be given.

Some twenty-four years after Hetherington's death a monument was erected over his grave, bearing the following inscription:—

HENRY HETHERINGTON

Died August 24, 1849

Aged 57

THE POOR MAN'S GUARDIAN

His view of

TRUE RELIGION

was that it consisted in promoting the happiness of every human being irrespective of class creed country or colour

"It is our duty to leave the world better than we found it."

ERECTED BY A FRIEND

1873.

[The date of Hetherington's death has gone down the decades as occurring on August 24. But the correct date is August 23, as the following will prove. Holyoake writing at the time says, "Early on Tuesday morning, August 21, I was apprised of Hetherington's illness." . . . "On Thursday morning, August 24, he expired." Now, Thursday must have been August 23, and that corresponds with all the other dates given at the time: Friday, August 24, when the Directors of the Poor of St. Pancras had their meeting; and Sunday, August 26, the day of the funeral.]

He was not alone even in death. To his right we see the tombstone of Henry Wade, a Republican friend of Hetherington and the compiler of the famous *Black Book*. On his left lies W. Devonshire Saull, covered by an inscribed slab, and next is a stone erected to the memory of David E. Williams, the author of the *Letters of Publicola* to the *Dispatch* in the eighteen-thirties.

We here close our history of Henry Hetherington and his times. Here is given an account of the working-class and Freethought movement of exactly a century ago. Our readers may compare it with the present time, make their comparisons, and draw their own conclusions. For ourselves, it gives us to think, and very hard, too. The high ideals of Socialism have been almost lost in the noisy political clamour of an inert, spineless, inactive Labour Party which impudently claims itself as the custodian of Socialism. This political cry has had further evil effects. The vigour and determination displayed in the eighteen-thirties seem to have been lost in the nineteen-thirties.

When the people are disillusioned of Government superstition, they will surely return to an ardent, aggressive movement for the achievement of the ideals of liberty, which will eventually emancipate the workers.

Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river
Whose waves they have tainted with death;
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity.—*Shelley*.

AMBROSE G. BARKER.

The Gentle Art of Prophecy

I.

Most of the writers who have referred to the Archbishop's "recall" to religion, and who are in full agreement with him that the time has come for a great religious revival, a great outpouring of thanks to "God"—whatever for, the Lord only knows—seem to take particular care not to define exactly what they mean by the term "religion." They take it for granted, no doubt, that the religion which we are again required to embrace is the Archbishop's own special brand of Christianity, a brand, needless to state, scornfully rejected by most of the other brands of the same religion. Perhaps if they were pushed to the extreme and made to define what they meant, these writers would be satisfied if any brand of religion were joyously accepted, so long as it acknowledged "God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"—though here again I think some protest would be made if the acceptance were not accompanied with the show and ceremony of some church or chapel. But exactly how far must one go in religious belief for the "recall" to be successful is never or only vaguely hinted at.

Is a blind belief in the Virgin Birth necessary? Must one believe without question all the miracles of the Bible, or can one pick and choose? Is one a successful believer if he rejects Joshua stopping the sun and moon from moving in the heavens, and accepts the beautiful and wondrous story of Jesus stopping a storm? Would the Archbishop take to his heart an unbeliever in the statement that at the time of the crucifixion "many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves"—so long as the resurrection of Jesus was accepted? And would the

"recall" be again considered successful if a believer accepted everything in the Bible, no matter how silly, but refused to enter a church or pay a cent towards the upkeep either of the clergy or any of their missions? Somehow or other I have not yet come across any answer to these or similar questions, and the speakers at the B.B.C., who have for some weeks been actively exhorting their listeners every Sunday to accept religion, seem most carefully to have avoided any reference as to the *details* of the religion they want people to believe in, except to a vague and wearying repetition of "Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour."

Why, for example, do they no longer point to the remarkable prophecies of "Our Lord" contained in the Old Testament? There was a time when few sermons did not give details of how God foretold almost all subsequent history in the "holy" Bible. The "prophecies" were all—or nearly all—literally believed in. Thousands of books have been written to show that God never erred in a single instance. The fact that many of the successful prophecies were obviously written after the event never dismayed a single believer—nor the fact that hosts of prophecies have not so far been in any way fulfilled. If a prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, that simply means another "mystery"; and as God's ways are not our ways, we are not supposed to understand everything that emanates from "Our Lord."

The writer or editor of Cassell's *Bible Dictionary* is a typical example of a thorough believer in prophecy. He says, "Not only do the predictions of the Old Testament cover the whole length of human history from that time till now . . . but during every period to the close of the Scriptural canon, the chain of prophecy was at once ever ending and ever beginning." This kind of whole-hearted belief is thoroughly refreshing. It shows genuine religion at its best, and contrasts very favourably with the watered-down beliefs of many of our prominent divines. These people hate, of course, to be reminded of all that was once so thoroughly believed in; they feel it safer to impress the modern mind with gush about the uniqueness of "Our Lord." But why should we not remind them of what real religion once was? Why should we agree that the vague generalities that spout forth so often these days from pulpit or wireless contain the truth? Do these priests and clergy want us now to believe that everybody was entirely wrong for centuries about prophecy and prophets?

Nowadays there is a tendency for many sermonizers to claim that the Bible is "holy" and "divine," but may be treated as any other book; it will come out of criticism—as indeed it has, they say—absolutely untouched. But all the same, they seem resolutely to avoid as far as possible the wonders of Biblical prophecy. A few references may prove interesting to readers who are not acquainted with the work of the many writers who dealt with prophecy in the past. Their names are almost completely forgotten—indeed, even in the penny box outside secondhand booksellers it is difficult to find the prophetic works of the Rev. John Cumming, the Rev. Alexander Keith, the Rev. C. Maitland, the Rev. R. A. Purdon, the Rev. Mr. Baxter, and many others. The aim of most of these writers was to predict the exact date of the Second Advent, and a holier mess than they made of it cannot be imagined.

It is quite a mistake to think that the Second Adventists are a vanished sect. Every year since I have taken notice, meetings take place of believers in the literal visitation of Christ once again to our planet. These people come armed with facts and figures culled from the Bible (mostly from Daniel and Revelation) and try to show as mathematical certainties, the exact

date of the "Time of the Gentiles," or when 144,000 of the Faithful will be gathered up into the arms of "Our Lord."

It is most unfair to laugh at them; for if the Bible be true, their expectations must be accomplished. If the religion to which the Archbishop wants us to return is that based on the Bible, how can one deny the Second Advent? Do the Archbishop and his solemn henchmen deny the coming again of Christ in all his heavenly glory?

Moreover, the Second Advent must be preceded with wars, famines, plagues, and every other misery humanity can imagine. So it is predicted, so it must be fulfilled. And when the good Christian, anxiously awaiting "Our Lord," looks around, and sees war, misery, earthquakes, famines, and various other fiery ordeals taking place at this moment, can one wonder at his joyous expectation?

Of course, something went wrong with all the calculations last century. The various writers who laboriously went into the figures given in Daniel, for example, who discussed his weeks of years or his years of weeks, who showed that Messiah the Prince was bound to come if only one got the correct answer to the mathematical difficulties with which, for some unholy reason, Daniel surrounded his calculations, were all eventually proved wrong by subsequent events. Christ should have come in—let us say—1866. The figures proved this incontestably, and the fact that Prussia went for Austria in that year helped to confirm the proofs. However, "our Lord" did not come; he evidently felt that it was but a piffling little war. Then the prophets showed that 1870 or 1871 was probably the correct year. Napoleon—any Napoleon—was "anti-Christ." Jesus seems unable to arrive without a previous "anti-Christ"; yet here again everything which pointed to the coming wonders being successfully accomplished, especially as the war between France and Prussia had been prophesied either in Daniel or Revelation, somehow or other failed to show Jesus in the skies. It was a merry game, and brought forth a large number of books, and possibly much money to the prophetic authors; but no Messiah the Prince. And even such a good all-round year as 1900 failed to be the successful one. But the prophets were by no means staggered. God said this or that and *all* must be accomplished. Let us see how far they have been successful by examining some of their works a little more in detail—which I shall do in the next article.

H. CUTNER.

A Universal Kinship

MANY of us laugh at the Jews for looking upon their race as being "God's chosen people," whilst we seriously look upon ourselves as being "Sons of God," and heirs of all the ages. And whilst we make fun of their claim to being "God's chosen people," we accept their Bible as being "God's chosen book."

I said, "whilst we seriously, etc.," designedly, because whenever man becomes very serious he loses his sense of humour. And as reason cannot hold "a seat in this distracted globe" without the help of humour, seriousness, therefore, should always be very critically examined, if we wish to escape becoming either fools or fanatics.

"All we," Jew and Gentile alike, "like sheep have gone astray."

But Mark Twain would have us believe, not like ordinary sheep, but "discreet" ones. He says:

We are discreet sheep; we wait to see how the dove is going, and then we go with the dove. We have two opinions: one private, which we are afraid to express;

and another one—this one we use—which we force ourselves to wear to please Mrs. Grundy, until habit makes us comfortable in it, and the custom of defending it presently makes us love it, adore it, and forget how pitifully we came by it.

Now, with Mark we deplore that man should under any circumstances live mentally as he does. Ages ago we can understand men herding together for physical safety. But for thinking men to herd together is despicable.

But what is man? Are we not mistaken in ranking him so highly? He is certainly excusable in having a good opinion of himself!

Shakespeare, the human masterpiece up to the present, certainly had a high opinion of man:—

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!—*Hamlet*.

Prof. J. Howard Moore and Mark Twain held a view the direct opposite of this. The study of animals has revealed quite a lot of interesting matter relating to them. Many distinguished men of the past believed in the immortality of animals. And quite a large number to-day support the idea.

But let Prof. Moore speak for himself:—

Instead of the highest, man is in some respects the lowest, of the animal kingdom. Man is the most unchaste, the most drunken, the most selfish and conceited, the most miserly, the most hypocritical, and the most bloodthirsty of terrestrial creatures. Almost no animals, except man, kill for the mere sake of killing. For one being to take the life of another for purposes of selfish utility is bad enough. But the indiscriminate massacre of defenceless innocents by armed and organized packs, just for pastime, is beyond characterization. The human species is the only species of animals that plunges to such depths of atrocity. Even vipers and hyenas do not exterminate for recreation. No animal, except man, habitually seeks wealth purely out of an insane impulse to accumulate. And no animal, except man, gloats over accumulations that are of no possible use to him, that are an injury and an abomination, and in whose acquisition he may have committed irreparable crimes upon others. There are no millionaires—no professional, legalized, life-long kleptomaniacs—among the birds and quadrupeds. No animal, except man, spends so large a part of his energies striving for superiority—not superiority in usefulness, but that superiority which consists in simply getting on the heads of one's fellows. And no animal practises common, ordinary morality to the other beings of the world in which he lives so little, compared with the amount he preaches it, as man.

Let us be honest. Honour to whom honour is due. It will not emaciate our own glory to recognize the excellence and reality of others, or to come face to face with our own frailties. We are our brother's keeper. Our brethren are they that feel. Let us universalize. Our thoughts and sympathies have been too long wingless. The Universe is our Country, and our Kindred are the Populations that Mourn. It is well—it is eminently well, for it is godlike—to send our Magnanimity to the Dusts and the Deeps, our Sunrises to the Uttermost Isles, and our Charity to the Stars.

It would appear, if Prof. Moore be right, that the animal kingdom has made greater progress, in the best sense, than man has done.

The animal kingdom seems to have escaped the drawback of leaders, and to have made an un-restricted advance.

Man has too often been led astray by great leaders who have been entirely wrong. Leaders who have, nevertheless, made some contribution to human progress. Mohammed, for instance, who certainly left the Arabs better than he found them.

When humanity has developed sufficiently to be influenced by reason as much as it has been influenced by legend, we may then make an advance worthy of mention.

Education, to-day, is, speaking generally, the greatest obstacle to any social advance, its principal use being to make us obedient and efficient servants of the State.

Browning was probably right. Reason and truth-speaking he did not esteem highly. Hear him:—

—“ But here's the plague—
That all this trouble comes of telling truth,
Which truth, by when it reaches him, looks false
Seems to be just the thing it would supplant,
Nor recognizable by whom it left :
While falsehood would have done the work of truth.
But Art,—wherein man nowise speaks to men
Only to mankind,—Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought.

Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,
Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—
So note by note, bring music from your mind,
Deeper than ever e'en Beethoven lived,—
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.”

(*The Ring and the Book.*)

GEORGE WALLACE.

Acid Drops

We are—more or less—in sympathy with the thorough-going believer, and share his contemptuous dislike for those Christians who persist in “ watering-down the creeds,” or explaining miracles in a natural way. The series of articles in the *News-Chronicle*, on “ What I Believe,” include some written by people like Mr. Beverley Nichols and Father Woodlock, both of whom are not ashamed to express their absolute belief in the whole of the Bible. Father Woodlock as becomes a Jesuit, bravely declared he believed everything he was taught as a small child, and Mr. Nichols, tells us that the Resurrection is confirmed by the strictest historical evidence.

All this is as it should be. In fact, as the *Church Times* declares, the “ two great certainties ” are God's love and human mortality, and they must be accepted “ on divine authority.” Also, “ to reject the Incarnation is to make it difficult to realize the love of God.” We agree; and also that if one does away with the devil, hell and miracles, there is really nothing left of true religion. Father Woodlock and Mr. Nichols deserve the thanks of all unbelievers. They make the absurdities of Christianity apparent to many who would not read the *Free-thinker*.

Rev. H. G. Fosdick asks, “ Why do we believe in God at all?” and answers his question by replying, “ Because of arguments, never.” And yet we seem to remember that believers were fond enough of arguments so long as they fancied the logic of the argument rested on their side, and are still when they feel they can put it over. But having come to this conclusion Dr. Fosdick then proceeds to advance arguments in favour of not believing in arguments. It is very curious, and the logical conclusion appears to be that arguments are valid so long as they help the people to retain their belief in God. When arguments disturb that belief then we must take it for granted that arguments are inadmissible—with the exception of the argument that proves arguments are of no use. And yet Dr. Fosdick is one of the foremost of present-day “ advanced ” theologians. What *must* those who are in the rear be like!

On the other hand Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, the new occupant of the City Temple pulpit *does*, apparently, believe in arguments. He argues that when men complain God is faced with opposing armies, each praying for victory, he solves the situation by leaving both sides to fight it out. The explanation of this is that “ The power of God is so terrific, he dares to allow men such terrific liberties, knowing that without loss he can fulfil his purpose.” But as whatever happens must be part of his purpose, it looks as though God is just looking on at a comedy, or tragedy he has arranged for his own amusement. He loses nothing. What man loses does not matter. God can afford the “ terrific liberty ” of permitting the slaughter in Spain because he loses nothing.

“ The king is amused,” and that is the important thing. We think Dr. Weatherhead—it ought to be Featherhead—would do well to follow the advice of Dr. Fosdick, and not rely on arguments—particularly *his* arguments.

Quite a holy rumpus is being made in Catholic circles by the publication of a book called *The Pope in Politics*. It is a more or less devastating attack on the Pope and Popery, and is all the more intriguing because Mr. Teeling is a fervent and practising Catholic. Mr. Teeling, unlike his fellow-believers, who insist that the Pope is God's Vice-Regent on earth—whatever that may mean—treats him actually as if he were just an ordinary human being, a terrible crime in the eyes of pious Catholics. These people keep up the legend that a Pope must be something quite superhuman, an exploded myth in our days.

According to Mr. Teeling, the present Pope seems to be a garrulous old man, much like some other old men, and is obviously not very brainy; and the author is pretty sick of having to bow the knee and kiss the hand of an Italian surrounded by other Italians, for whom he has but little sympathy, religion or no religion. Anyhow *The Pope in Politics* is a book viewed with dismay by our Catholic publicists, and they want Mr. Teeling to withdraw it. His answer is that he sticks by every word he has written—at least, that is the present position. Perhaps the Holy Church will find means to make him change his mind and go on a humble pilgrimage to Rome.

Those people who maintain the absolute love and gentleness of Jesus, and who cannot reconcile this with his obviously contemptuous treatment of his mother throughout the Gospels, will be interested in the following from the *Church Times* :—

Various interpretations have been given to the words in St. John ii. 4 : “ Woman what have I to do with thee?” The earliest is that of St. Irenæus, who thought that our Lord was “ checking her unseasonable haste.” St. John Chrysostom thought that our Lord was gently indicating the distinction between human relationship and His divine authority. St. Cyril of Alexandria thought that our Lord was “ admitting out of reverence to His mother what He willed not as yet to do.” Macgregor, in Moffat's commentaries, reminds us that “ the term ‘ woman ’ in the original has none of the harshness it suggests in English, but is perfectly respectful and even intimate : Jesus even addresses His mother by it from the Cross.” Lagrange observes that the first half of the sentence ought not to be isolated from its explanatory conclusion—“ Mine hour is not yet come.”

Does anyone know any more about the question after digesting this lame explanation?

The Rev. Dr. Waterhouse has been saying some straight things about *Hymns for Children*. We could hardly beat Dr. Waterhouse's condemnation of the whole lot. He rightly claims that the modern silliness of songs like *Pennies from Heaven*, is as bad as any Hymns. Speaking his mind about a new book of Hymns for Children, he says, “ Some are rubbish, other are false in sentiment, others are very trite . . . the truth is that there are no good children's Hymns.” We commend his clarity.

Lady Neville, at a recent Conference, blamed the clergy to a great extent for decreasing attendances at Church. “ Some of them come in, wearing cassocks, yellow, worn and torn.” Yes, this is very bad, particularly when we realize how attentive to his personal appearance the son of the Carpenter used to be. And “ The padres made a big noise and did not enunciate their last syllables which makes such a difference.” Nay, Lady Neville, we cannot agree. We think the less heard of the Pulpit message the better. It is neither a pleasant nor a useful message and we would as lief, for all our sakes, have it mumbled.

As an example of the way in which heresy penetrates the most holy quarters, take the case of Bishop Jackson. The ordinary believer used to be taught that the Psalms were all (or nearly all) written by the Poet-King, David. So Bishop Jackson was reported to have said at the Gregorian festival recently in St. Paul's Cathedral. Unfortunately, he has hotly resented the imputation. "I made no such foolish statement," he declared. What a tribute to the way in which Freethought has permeated even among the Bishops.

At the Church Assembly, the other day, the Bishop of Durham protested against using such a term as the *Advancing Church*, "which was to say the least, an audacious label to put to a report, which on every page certified posts which were vacant, supplies in men non-existent, finances which were wasted, and opportunities which were being lost." Dr. Henson continued, "In Germany and Russia the Church was passing through a period of painful disillusionment. In England, the shock had been partly mitigated by the distinctively English phenomenon of the Free Churches." But what must the Assembly have thought of the Bishop declaring that, "the day of the unlettered zealot, who essayed the missionary task with no better equipment than his Fundamentalist Bible . . . was now nearly over." A "fundamentalist" Bible! But the Bible the Bishop repudiates is the Bible of history, the Bible upon which the Christian Church was built, and for criticizing it as the Bishop of Durham is doing, men and women were sent to prison a hundred years ago. The world does move after all—thanks to Freethinkers.

One of the speakers at the same Assembly declared that "the sooner the Church of England severed her connexion with coal-mining the better." It is not so well known among the pious that much of the revenue of the Church comes from mining royalties—a revenue depending upon badly-paid and dangerous occupation of the miners—which, as Mrs Fletcher, coming from a mining district, said, caused "much bewilderment and misunderstanding." Lord Hugh Cecil, on the other hand, "expressed his bitter indignation at such speeches." He insisted that the money coming from the mines belonged to the Church "for the benefit of poor clergymen." And, of course, that settled the question.

The truth is that the Church, where money interests are concerned, is as hard a task-master as the most slave-driving industrialist. It did little, if anything at all, to improve the conditions under which miners used to work, and are still working; and certainly nothing to improve their pay. But few people know the facts.

The Archbishop of Canterbury made another of his portentous declarations, the other day. It was that, "he was impressed by the astonishing ignorance of the Christian faith by the most educated professional men, lawyers, doctors and barristers." We have an idea that the Archbishop is not quite as simple as he pretends to be. This "astonishing ignorance" of educated men is due to the fact that *they have found Christianity out*. The credulous and blind faith which the Archbishop would like to see, is found in all its glory, among the superstitious all over the world.

The ignorance of our news editors is proverbial, scandalous and real. Last Sunday the centre page of the *Sunday Times* was disfigured with an unusually flagrant sample. To deny the editorial ignorance would be to impute a still more disgraceful explanation. Writing about Mr. Herbert's Marriage Bill, "Scrutator" says:—

Marriage cannot be reduced to a civil contract, and the secular law agrees with the Church that it is a sacrament; if it were not so, collusion would be the best of all reasons for giving relief as a matter of course.

Any fifth-form schoolboy could tell "Scrutator" that the "secular law" has nothing whatever to do with Sacraments, and that the law of the Church of England is a total and explicit denial that marriage is to be considered a Sacrament (see Article xxv. of the 39 *Articles of Religion*).

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead's logic is not as sound as his theology. He was talking about what he calls "Victims of God's Way." He says:—

Jesus' teaching about birds, flowers, grasses, the hairs of our head, and His stories of the shepherd who seeks for the one lost sheep and the woman who searches for the one lost coin cannot leave us in any doubt about God's care for the individual.

But God's statistical records about the hairs of our head have never prevented bald-headedness. His punctilious observation whenever a cock-sparrow "falls to the ground" has had no perceptible influence on the bird-mortality returns. God's "care for the individual" seems consistent with His allowing (or causing) huge holocausts, constant disease, innumerable fatalities and injuries to "the individual." Surely even a Theist must wonder at times if God's death would make things any worse than they are.

There has been a "Holiness Convention" at that salubrious seaside resort, Southport. Gipsy Smith, says the reporter, "told a good story." It was about a Class Leader who candidly begged Smith not to save anybody on his account! "He did not want any new members," he said, "because he had quite enough trouble with the last lot." We often wonder what Jehovah must think of all the gangsters and murderers "saved" just in time to go to Heaven, with no guarantee that they are cured of their homicidal mania. No wonder we read in the Bible about "there was war in heaven." After all, Chicago is as pious as it is "racketeered."

A Church at Middlesbrough is troubled because the Deacons have "to face the problem of the installation of new central heating boilers." This question ought to have been referred to Old Nick—the authority on keeping a place warm a long time. We can only suggest that gas should be used, and we imagine no church ever runs short of that commodity.

The Rev. Joseph Fort Newton has been talking about "How and When to be Happy." Naturally the religious cobbler sticks to the "last" of religion. But like many if not all parsons, Mr. Newton confuses "Faith" and "Love" for faith in God and Love of Christ. Which makes him say "No man can be happy at any time of life until he has some faith to live by, someone to love and be loved by." But for the pious definitions of the two words most of us would agree with the parson. "Good faith" means common honesty of one's professions, but Faith in God means the merest credulity.

Fifty Years Ago

EVERY new truth has had to fight for its life against an infallible priesthood. Whether Protestant or Catholic has made no difference. The same spirit of bigotry, tyranny, and persecution, has been displayed by both Churches. But now the tables are turned. Science is stronger than Christianity, and she who of old shed the blood of the martyrs of knowledge sees that she must humble her pride, abate her pretensions, and supplicate instead of commanding. Darwin is buried in Westminster Abbey after being denounced for a whole generation, and the Bishop of Ripon, preaching before the members of the House of Commons, celebrates this as the age of evolution. Nor are astute Catholic leaders behind in praising the prophets whom they can no longer stone. Some of them even go to the length of contending that not only does the Catholic Church allow the truth of evolution, but she has really taught it all along, although her clergy did not properly understand her teaching, because it lay in germ in the writings of her greatest divines, and could not burst into full life until the time was propitious for its development. Evidently the priests see how the wind is blowing, and they will trim their sails to it if they can. The Church adjusted itself to the Copernican astronomy by swallowing its own anathemas.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. WILSON.—Your experience of the Cheshire County Council is interesting. But it would be upsetting a very old historic procedure to place cleanliness before godliness. In Christian ritual people were washed in the blood of the lamb; they were sprinkled with water.

G. PRESCOTT.—When we have time we will resume *Things Worth Knowing*. We flatter ourselves that not many things more educational have appeared in these columns. We are glad they put you on the track of so many good books. Will bear the other suggestion in mind.

T. MARSHALL.—It is not very difficult to give to a cause in which one believes. But a rather better way is to work for it. And most people, if they will, can put in a little work.

F. STEVENS.—Pleased to hear of the approaching marriage of the Secretary of the Birkenhead Branch, Mr. W. Fletcher. We wish him and his bride-to-be every happiness.

RAYARD SIMMONS.—Marie Stopes' ecstatic nonsense concerning the crowning of King George VI. is—worthy of the writer. That is the best—and the worst that can be said of it.

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—C. C. Dove, 19s. 6d.

S. NEWTON.—We are obliged for articles, but you will realize that however interesting articles or cuttings may be, we are compelled to make a selection so far as comment is concerned. And quite a number of considerations enter in deciding that selection.

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

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

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen's two new pamphlets, *What is Freethought and Gods and Their Makers* (Nos 7 and 8 of the Pamphlets for the People) are now ready. We are pleased to be able to report that this series is selling extremely well, and appear to be doing good work. The general aim of the series is to present the different facets of the Freethought position in a condensed, but clear, and cheap form, so that when complete the whole will provide a sketch-map useful as a general introduction. They are written by one person so that a unity of outlook may be maintained. We have received a number of complimentary letters, among them, one just to hand from Mr. Clayton, who describes the pamphlets as "the best series of its kind I have ever seen." During the fine weather Freethinkers might do some useful work by providing themselves with a supply of these pamphlets for judicious distribution.

We congratulate Councillor Lenagh (Sunderland Town Council) on his having the courage to raise a protest against a special course of lessons on the Bible in connexion with the fourth centenary of the order placing a copy of the Bible in all Churches. The special lessons are on "The Bible, how England came by it," "The Bible What it is," "The Bible, its Influence on England," and "What the Bible should mean to you at the present time." We can say with confidence that the pupils will have anything but the truth about the Bible placed before them. It will be one long course of misleading and deliberately falsified information. We imagine that there will be more falsehoods told during the series of lectures than in connexion with any other four lessons ever given in a school. We should like to see a more general protest against the new plan of using the schools for religious propaganda.

The ever-green and always useful *Bible Handbook*, by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball, is almost out of print. A new edition, the eighth, is in preparation, and we shall be obliged if any of our readers who have detected errors in the references given will be good enough to let us know. We are not aware of more than one or two, but in a book which contains such a large number of references, an error is always likely to occur. We know of few books on the Bible that have opened so many orthodox eyes as this one. It is a steady-seller, and will continue to be so.

At its last monthly meeting the West Ham Branch passed a unanimous vote of appreciation of the work of Mr. H. S. Wishart, its late President. Mr. Wishart has had a lengthy acquaintance with the Freethought movement, and many years ago figured frequently on the open-air platform. The West Ham Branch greatly appreciated Mr. Wishart's service to the Branch, and wished him all happiness in his retirement from his usual labour. Mr. Wishart leaves West Ham for Yorkshire, but we are sure that his long interest in the Freethought movement will suffer no diminution. Mr. Wishart was well known in these columns under more than one *nom de plume*.

We have read with pleasure Professor Carnegie Simpson's defence of the principle underlying the Marriage Bill. On the whole he favours the five year clause, but thinks the time too long. But on the question of divorce itself, and the need for its extension, Prof. Simpson takes the side of justice. He severely criticizes the attitude of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It reminds him, he says, of the answer given by the famous "Higher Critic," Adolf Harnack, when asked if he believed in miracles. Herr Harnack's answer was: "It depends on whether I have to answer as a man of religion or as an historical critic."

Here in this enlightened country there are still thousands of people as credulous as any native who cowers before the pointing finger of his tribal witch-doctor. . . .

Think of all the people who touch wood to avert misfortune, who throw spilled salt over their left shoulder, who won't light three cigarettes with one match, who are mortally afraid to sit down thirteen to a table, and who believe firmly in charms, mascots, lucky numbers and so on.

And, quite apart from these childish superstitions, consider the multitudes who will follow any new prophet blindly, who take all they read as gospel, who believe that any ragged tout can tip a winner and greedily accept the invitations of unknown financiers to invest in gold mines and oil wells of which they have never heard.

The scientists, research workers, economists and philosophers are never popular when they introduce us to unwelcome truth.

All this from a Sunday paper which feeds its readers on the grossest superstitions; issues "forecasts" from the (astronomical) stars; is intrigued by any "yarn" of a supernatural character; and lards its pages with Christian "morals" and biblical rhymings!

The Poison of Fiction

THERE are two fallacies which are current in regard to habits, customs, traditions, laws and practices in general. The first is that their age is an indication of their respectability or value. The second is that their prevalence is a sign of their desirability or necessity.

It is a common thing to hear it cited in favour of a custom that it is of long standing. To illogical minds the antiquity of a custom implies that it has "stood the test of time," and must therefore be good. They ignore the contrary facts that a bad custom may also have a long life, and that lapse of time and change of circumstance often deprives an originally good custom of all its present value. It is true that a custom may be old because its effects remain beneficial in spite of changing circumstances. But this is very different from saying that its effects must be beneficial because of its age. For it is equally true that a custom may be old because, although it is valueless, conditions have arisen which render its abolition very difficult.

It is just as common to hear it maintained that, if a large number of people approve of a given practice, this popularity must indicate that it possesses some desirable, or even necessary, trait. Yet we do not need any great width of experience to recognize that popularity is a fickle thing, and that a practice which was commonly approved yesterday may be commonly condemned to-morrow. Cock-fighting, bull-baiting and other cruel "sports" were very popular not so long ago. But do we now, on that account, maintain that they were good or necessary practices?

In discussing the value of the practice of reading fiction, let us at least not confuse the issue by arguing in favour of it on the grounds either of its long-standing or its popularity. Many a bad law, habit or tradition has, at some time during its career, been both widely assented to and of old ancestry.

A more reasonable argument in favour of fiction-reading is that it gives pleasure to millions. As an Atheist I consider the pursuit of happiness—of which pleasure is a part—as a justifiable aim. At the same time I am not so wholehearted a hedonist as to ignore the well-known fact that some pleasures can only be bought at a price which, on the whole, is exorbitant. As a rational being, therefore, I would not advocate indulgence in a practice if its evil consequences outweighed the pleasure or happiness it gave.

Since there are no fixed scales whereby we can measure actual amounts of good or evil, pleasure or pain, happiness or misery, it is always a debatable question whether the merits of a particular practice outweigh its demerits. In some cases a working solution to problems of this kind is arrived at by common consent or a majority vote. Most of our laws are examples of such solutions. It is agreed, for instance, that the practice of helping oneself indiscriminately to anything one may wish to possess is not, on the whole, a beneficial one. So theft and robbery are deemed to be crimes. In other cases, however, judgment is left to the individual. The practice of drinking overmuch alcoholic liquor, for instance, is not adjudged to be criminal provided that one does not annoy one's neighbours thereby. Each person has to decide for himself whether the pleasure he derives from intoxication is worth its evil consequences. With the spread of rational knowledge, the improvement in conditions, and the increase of less harmful pleasures, it is observed that there has been a marked decrease in drunkenness. The inference is unavoidable that most people, having weighed the merits and demerits of alcoholic indulgence against those of other pleasures which can now be obtained as cheaply, have judged the balance of advantage to lie with the latter. The

same change-over from a more to a less harmful pleasure is to be witnessed in other spheres.

When it comes to judging the merits and demerits of fiction-reading, I realize that I am treading on controversial ground. Nevertheless, having considered the question as widely as possible, I am definitely of opinion that the reading of fiction has become a menace to the life and minds of the people second only to the menace of religion. Whether my judgment is justified or not, I leave my readers to decide. A referendum on the subject would, I feel certain, result in damning me as a puritanical kill-joy. This, however, does not deter me from marshalling the facts in support of my indictment in complete assurance that time will bear witness to its justice.

One of our complaints against the teaching of religion is that children are imbued with its falsehoods when their experience of life is too small, and their faculties too undeveloped to permit them to form reasonable judgments. As a Freethinker, my principle is to tell a child only those things which it can verify for itself, or whose truth I can personally demonstrate. In all other cases I admit my ignorance or inform the child that the matter is open to question. But when a child is too young for such treatment—that is to say, when it can neither find out by personal experience, nor understand proofs which are demonstrated to it—then one's instruction is perforce limited to mere statements of a categorical nature. It is precisely during this period that the utmost caution should be exercised not to tell the child anything whose truth one cannot personally prove. Yet it is just at this age that benign, if benighted, parents feed their children upon those forms of falsehood which we call "fairy tales."

And what are fairy tales? Even those which claim to have some instructive moral underlying them, what are they but untruths? Most of them are nothing but fantasies based upon wish-fulfillments. And why do children like them? Simply because they help to submerge those feelings of inferiority, helplessness, and dependence which constitute the real, though unrealized, bugbear of all children who, of necessity, are constantly surrounded by larger and more powerful adults.

But how do these tales submerge those unpleasant feelings? Do they teach the child self-reliance, or how to tackle the facts of life in a practical and logical manner? Far from it. They merely act as a temporary sedative. And with it they encourage the habit of "wishing," of believing in wonders, and of the possibility of attaining power without effort. Hence they breed credulity and discontent which, in their turn, create a greater appetite for indulgence in forms of so-called "recreation," where fantasy bolsters up conceit and where unreality is more satisfying than reality.

"They all grow out of it sooner or later," says the foolish parent, adding: "Anyway, it does them no harm." No harm, forsooth! If there is no harm, then what is there to grow out of? Admittedly most children grow out of their belief in fairies, gnomes, giants, dragons and such like. But what of the inculcated habit of futile "wishing"? What of the habit of avoiding thought and action by inactive immersion in day-dreams? What of the credulity, the belief in miracles, angels, devils and gods, which are nothing but wonders, fairies, gnomes and giants in holy garb? For most people these pernicious habits of thought continue, in almost unabated vigour, till their dying day. They waste an enormous amount of time in reading adult fiction which, in its effects, is little different from the effects of fairy tales upon children. It takes them out of life, they say. The drudgery or dullness of ordinary existence is so depressing that

escape of this sort is not only delightful, but necessary. Without recreation of this kind, life would be unbearable, or at least less bearable.

What utter nonsense! How can an escape which is purely imaginary be truly recreative? As for being "taken out of life," this is another of those silly metaphors whereby the unthinking humbug themselves. We cannot be taken out of life unless we commit suicide or die. If it were true that the drudgery of existence is reduced by reading fiction, why not sit down and read fiction all day long? Far from reducing drudgery, the effect of fiction-reading is to enhance the very drudgery we *must* endure. Unfortunately its temporary drug-like effect upon the senses is so insidious that no fiction-reader is willing to admit this fact.

(To be concluded)

C. S. FRASER.

The Decline of Belief

THE obsolescence of religious belief has sent apologists of the faith on the mission of hastily collecting testimonies from men of science on their religion, in an effort to re-establish their creed on a majority vote of scientists, instead of on the facts of science. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt during the last few years was the book edited by Mr. Drawbell, entitled *The Religion of Scientists*. It is a questionnaire to F.R.S.'s, of whom about 200 replied, and judging by the reviews of believers it would seem that by an overwhelming majority scientists have declared their belief in God and a future life. When I saw these reviews I was puzzled, for I was under the impression that the implications of science were clear to most scientists, and that such beliefs were discarded by them. I therefore obtained a copy and read it for myself.

My fears for the sanity of departmental scientists were soon removed. Inside this book, with the presumptuous title of *The Religion of Scientists* I found, more correctly, the religion of some 200 mining researchers, naval constructors, radio experts, engineers, mechanics, surveyors, antiquaries, experts in metallurgy, aviation, hygiene, statistics—in short, experts on all kinds of subjects except the ones that matter; that is, experts on applied sciences instead of those that study nature, the supposed handiwork of God.

But the most farcical feature of the inquiry was the framing of the questions. The question, Do you credit the existence of a spiritual realm? invites all who regard music, art, poetry, etc., as deserving the title of spiritual, to give an affirmative reply. Again, the question as to whether evolution is compatible with the existence of a creator led even Bertrand Russell, a notable Atheist, sarcastically to join the ranks of the Theists. For all he knows, there may be a creator responsible for the dastardly evils in the process, but what adjectives He deserves was not the question asked.

Now, in 1933, Prof. Leuba gathered statistical information regarding the attitude of American scientists towards the beliefs in God and a future life, and was able to compare the results, group by group, with figures obtained on a previous occasion. The scrupulous way in which this inquiry was conducted, and the use made of Cattell's *American Men of Science*, is detailed by Leuba. He also takes note of the beliefs of scientists of greater and lesser eminence. (Some of Cattell's names are starred, they are those of the more eminent, the selection being the work of a dozen prominent men in each science).

To the question as to the existence of a personal God he obtained enlightening results. In each case the scientists of greater eminence were the less inclined to belief. Not only this, but the more complex sciences showed less believers than the more simple. Whereas 17 per cent of the greater physicists believed in God, the percentage dwindles through the biologists (12) and sociologists (5) until only 2 per cent of the greater psychologists profess belief.

Again, when compared with 1906, Leuba notes a decrease in every group, the greater physicists, for instance, dropping from 34 per cent to 17.

He also investigated two colleges. In one he found that 20 per cent of the Freshmen held belief, the number dwindling through the Sophomores (second year men), who showed 14 per cent believers, Juniors (6 per cent) to Seniors (5). Thus, as the students pass through their college years, i.e., as more is known, they relinquish belief.

There is, in all this, a recapitulation of what happens on a vaster scale in the history of man. In the development of his knowledge man gradually drops the primitive beliefs with which he started. Similarly, as students pass through college, as scientific men pass from 1906 to 1933, as the complexity of the science increases, belief diminishes. Theists are fond of claiming that religious belief is universal among primitive men. Thus Voysey (*Religion for all Mankind*): "Without any conscious logical process religion arose out of the very nature of man. As a reasonable and moral being he could not help inferring the existence of God and his obligations to God." There is not much in this to which the Atheist would object, but Voysey went on to say that the primitive God is always "on the side of right," an assertion to which the lie is given in works like Edward Westermarck's *The Goodness of Gods*; and W. R. Matthews allows in his *Studies in Christian Philosophy*, that the first gods are not necessarily wiser or better than their propitiators. J. A. Hobson (*Domain of Natural Science*) puts the position thus: "To primitive man the distinctions between himself and his environment were blurred. His own thoughts, feelings, appetites and passions he ejected outwards," and made all nature alive. This is seen in the strength of Amon Ra, the wisdom of Thoth, the wickedness of Set, the mercy of Marduk, the frightfulness of Rudra, as well as in the propensities of later deities like Yahweh. But as time goes on man, becoming civilized, civilizes his Gods, and finally, at the state of culture represented by most of Leuba's scientists, dispenses with them altogether. Thus the argument used by many Theists like Voysey and Müller, to the effect that there is a primitive universality of belief, if it is true (and it is with a few exceptions) actually works *against* the Theist's position when contrasted with such statistics as Leuba's.

Man at his lowest stages of knowledge believes in the operation of Deity; man at his highest does not.

Leuba instituted a similar inquiry concerning belief in survival. The question was, do you believe in the continuance of the person after death in another world? This is perfectly fair, in that (a) it embraces belief in both immortality and a mere limited survival, and (b) it makes no stipulation as to whether continuance shall be with or without bodily accompaniments of any kind. (It is now the fashion to posit a kind of ethereal body to harbour the spirit, thus to aid recognition and location).

The results of this inquiry contained the following, and were throughout of the same character as those pertaining to a God. Twenty per cent of the greater physicists held belief; of the greater biologists 15 per cent were similarly inclined, of the sociologists only 10 per cent, while no more than 2 per cent of the

greater psychologists, who study mind as their special job, were ready to see it as something which could endure bodily death. Again, in every group, the more expert were the less inclined to belief.

Leuba also used the membership list of the American Sociological Society, and the 1933 (current) year book of the American Psychological Association. In each group 75 per cent at the lowest, and 90 at the highest, of those asked responded to the inquiry, so that the delinquents could not have turned the scale had they all been of the same mind. Indeed one of them pointed out that while there was every inducement for believers to reply, disbelievers would in many cases prefer to maintain silence. The figures were compared with similar statistics based on the 1906 edition of Dr. Cattell, by an investigation carried out by the same statistical methods. Another striking decline of belief is indicated since 1914. Among the greater scientists the physicists dropped from 40 per cent believers to 20 per cent in 19 years, the biologists from 25 to 15, the sociologists from 27 to 10, and the psychologists from 0 to 2. Again, the physicists, who do not study mind, are prepared to give its continuity the most favourable consideration, but as more is known about life and mind belief diminishes, until only 2 per cent of the more eminent psychologists credit it. And the psychologist really has the last word. *C'est son métier.* He is assuredly in the best position to say whether the nature of mind permits of its separation from a living brain.

With regard to the two colleges, one was a religious college, with students recruited from religious families. When they entered college 42 per cent held belief, but when we come to the Seniors about to leave, we find only 27 per cent believing in this cardinal Christian doctrine. A comparison shows that since 1914 belief among freshmen fell from 80 to 42, and among seniors from 70 to 27 per cent. In the other college belief fell from freshmen (20) through sophomores (20) and juniors (14) to seniors (5 per cent).

It is the first time that such a comparison has been possible, and it may be inferred that an inquiry instituted in, say 1950, would show further advances in disbelief. Moreover, the results may be taken as a criterion to the decline of belief elsewhere. There is a marked decline over a period, testifying to the change in the social circles from which the students are recruited. Further, of the believing freshmen in one college, 51 per cent admitted they had never assigned any reasons for their belief.

May it not be said that real independent thinking often starts only when religion is called to question, and in that respect the National Secular Society is far more important than any political 'ism?

Leuba concludes that the largest proportion of believers are found in the following categories: (1) the scientists who know least about living matter and mind; (2) the less eminent men in each science; (3) the scientists and students of 20 years ago; (4) the students in the lower college classes.

Here we have the four factors, the complexity of the science; the degree of ability attained by the scientist; the passing of time and accumulation of knowledge; and in the case of the students the development of reasoning power and their general intellectual progress; all determining whether belief is possible. *We are therefore not dealing with mere haphazard private opinions. We are dealing with a movement of thought.*

In my own college days I recall a miserable attempt to awaken interest in the Student Christian Movement. All denominations were to be given equal hearing, but when I inquired whether an Atheist might speak I was politely refused. The total num-

ber of the audience who turned up for the first (and last) lecture (abandoned) was two—an Agnostic and myself. No amount of cajoling could induce the lecturer to lecture!

G. H. TAYLOR.

Modern Churchmen

We sincerely condole with the Modern Churchmen's Union in the loss they sustained when the often brilliant "gloomy Dean" Inge ceased to be their President. It seemed incredible that Dean Matthews, Inge's successor at St. Paul's, could become or remain leader of any movement worth calling Modern, let alone "Modernist." It was not surprising that Dean Matthews resigned after one short season.

The successor of the two Deans in the Modern Churchmen's Union presidency is a layman, Dr. Cyril Norwood, President of St. John's College, Oxford. It is said that he was elected unanimously, and the change of leader "has given general satisfaction in Modern Churchman circles." There can be no doubt as to the outstanding and deserved fame of Dr. Inge as scholar and author. Both Dean Matthews and Dr. Norwood are, of course, distinguished men, the former as theologian and preacher, and the latter as a reforming but not revolutionary critic of our educational system.

We have no clear knowledge as to the qualifications for membership or leadership of a "modern churchmen's movement," except that apparently it involves membership of the Church of England. It seems, in any case, that a Modernist may be a clergyman who repeats every Sunday in public a purely Fundamentalist Creed—sometimes three Fundamentalist creeds—and who joins in a religious service implying a belief in Miracle, and an assumed belief in the thirty-nine Fundamentalist "Articles of Religion."

There was once a clergyman in the church I regularly attended as a boy, who refused to refer to the reigning monarch as "our most religious," as well as "gracious" sovereign. His silent protest passed unnoticed except by a few intimates to whom the priest had privately explained his reasons. Another clergyman I knew who omitted the words, "He descended into hell," when reciting the Creed. His paid choir and curate, to whom he "passed the buck," hid the parson's retreat under a cloud of smoke—or a volley of extra emphasis.

As to any kind of public protest against (or resignation from) a church which teaches doctrines abhorrent to cultured modern minds and sensitive modern consciences, we see no signs. We wonder what sort of leadership the Modern Churchmen's Union expects from its new President? He at least cannot resign from the pulpit although he frequently occupies one. Shall we see him preaching truths as a layman in churches where the same truths would condemn the professional clergy? Does he in fact hold any heterodox opinions?

Dr. Norwood asks that the Christian Creed "should be limited to the bare essentials," a request which most Fundamentalists would second. We are sure the Fundamentalists would accept Dr. Norwood's description of the Christian Faith, which he says:—

covers the acceptance of certain events as historical facts, and the acceptance of certain views about those facts.

The word "certain" obviates the need of specification, but at least indicates that there is a definite genuine known "fact" and "view," and not that there are several stories of varying credibility, and as many "views" as there are "believers." And is

this "certainty"—or uniformity of opinion—rightly called Modernism?

Bishop Westcott said (in 1895), "It is impossible to rest indolently in the conclusions of the past": an indefinite statement probably meaning that the Bishop himself felt uneasy in his conformity—but he continued to conform till he died, retaining his bishopric without any public repudiation of "the conclusions of the past," in which his Church evidently "rests indolently" still.

Sixteen years have passed since the Church's Commission was appointed to find out what Christians really do believe. It is interesting to observe that Modernists, like the Bishop of Truro (in the *Modern Churchman*, June, 1937), while protesting that they are burning to discuss Christian Doctrine, "rest indolently," as Bishop Westcott would say, because:—

the Archbishop's Doctrinal Commission will, we hope, soon be publishing its report, and I am sure that that report will give us real help in facing a situation which has become admittedly difficult."

The Archbishop's Commission has been sitting ever since 1921. Millions of Christians are still waiting with bated breath, and a number of their (non-elected) representatives have been sitting exploring, researching, analysing, debating, studying what kind of creed can be safely recommended to secure the largest possible number of adherents. As soon as the clergy learn what they may safely teach and preach without prejudicing their position, we shall find practical unanimity—whatever the decision.

The bare idea of waiting sixteen years to learn the truth about events said to have been divinely revealed to all mankind for their eternal salvation, is on a par with the story that mankind had to wait 4004 years before God's Only Son came to "reveal His Father's will," and that many millions of mankind have died like the Ephesian Christians, who told Paul, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." (Acts xix. 2).

We imagine this Commission will report—some day—in language and with an indefiniteness which will necessitate the appointment of an Interpreting Commission—in favour of God, the Bible, the Church, and all the creeds very much in the spirit of Dean Matthews' portentous judgment:—

The mission of the church is not to seek for a gospel which it may hereafter preach, but to preach a gospel of which it is already possessed.

Archbishops and bishops and clergy are not going to commit *hara-kiri*.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The Ways of Mankind

Man's Worldly Goods, by Leo Huberman; Gollancz, 10s. 6d. Left Book Club, 2s. 6d. 357 pp.

In this work Leo Huberman has attempted the task of avoiding the dry-as-dust treatment of man's economic development. He has shown how man has acquired and distributed his worldly goods from the days of feudalism to the present time, and how social changes are influenced by economic changes.

He has produced a most readable work which, at the same time, provides material for careful study. Instead of giving a mere outline of the structure of feudal society and then of capitalist society, the book reflects an ever changing world and shows how one form of society develops from another.

The processes of change are seen to be uneven in different parts of the world, but each form of society, each institution, appears as a result of certain conditions. No

institution is set up as something isolated from the rest of society—a kind of freak which has dropped from the skies.

We are taken on a long journey, from the days when "the Church gave spiritual aid, while the nobility gave military protection" (p. 15), and both took a goodly meed of payment from the serfs in the form of labour, to the time when "captains of industry who have performed miracles of organization and planning in businesses" (p. 314), are unable to solve the problem of poverty in the midst of plenty, by social planning. Instead, they plan to destroy coffee, cotton crops, and young pigs, while reducing wheat acreage, and sugar plantations, as if the world must go mad for the sake of power and pelf.

In the meantime we are introduced to the coming of the trader, the struggle of the peasant to burst his bonds, the growth of towns, and the setting up of fairs; along with the coming of the "king" as a more outstanding figure in national life. Then onward through the formation of various kinds of guilds, home industry, the appearance of the man of money behind the throne, the expansion of industry and trading, and the power of modern high finance with its cartels and trusts.

It is a story of man's struggle for a livelihood: often against nature, but too often against his fellows; and should lead us to ponder more seriously the problem of how to eliminate from human life those forms of strife which mean so much waste and destruction.

This problem is as great as ever, if the next book is any indication. *The Road to War*, by a Group of Experts. (Gollancz, for New Fabian Research Bureau, 3s. 6d., pp. 207—L.B.C. Topical, 1s. 6d.)

Two of the experts responsible for this work were members of the group of three which, under the name of "Vigilantes," wrote *Inquest on Peace*, a work which dealt with the Government's Foreign Policy from June, 1931 to October, 1935. The new book continues with a documentary review of that policy and shows that it is heading for war.

Whether one agrees with the deductions of the writers of *The Road to War* or not, the amount of information concerning the trend of world events makes the work well worth study by all who are concerned about peace. It leaves no doubt as to the responsibility of all of us in the task of working for peace, if we do not want a world war to overtake us.

The situation is so grave that it is not enough to believe in and wish for peace. It must be worked for, if the forces making for war are to be defeated.

A detailed survey cannot be given, as the book covers a vast field; The Far East; Italy and Abyssinia; Spain; Germany; the Collective System; Defence; Peace; and a Forecast.

The authors do not believe that war is inevitable. After quoting, on page 177, Mr. Baldwin's opinion, "that the next war will be the end of civilization in Europe," they say, on page 178, "But peace can still be saved. No war is inevitable until hostilities begin. Least of all is the stupendous and well-nigh universally dreaded folly of another world war inevitable." In support of this attitude the authors proceed to indicate the forces making for peace.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Correspondence

A GOOD STORY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The following story is to be found in an amusing book entitled *A Mid-Victorian Pepys*, which was written by my late friend, S. M. Ellis.

The "Pepys" was Sir William Hardman, who related the story to some ladies; "they were slightly shocked, but nevertheless laughed most heartily."

This is the story: The Enemy of Human Souls was playing at dice with the Second Person in the Trinity, for what stake I know not. Of course the devil, who can do all that doth beseech a man, threw sixes with perfect facility. But the other party instantly threw *sevens*.

"Come, now," said the devil, "play fair: let's have none of your damned miracles."

G. SYERS.

[The story is worth the telling, but we fancy it is modelled upon the classical tale of James Thomson, in his well-known satire, *Religion in the Rocky Mountains*. In any case Sir William Hardman need not be ashamed of its parentage.—EDITOR.]

ST. MAMMON IN A HANTS VILLAGE

SIR,—According to a recent issue of the *Star*, our Holy Father in the Lord, the Rev. Drury, rector of Binsted (100 inhabitants), will become vicar of Wolburton, a neighbouring Hants village, and Binsted Church, if used, will serve as a chapel of ease.

Four years ago the parishioners objected to amalgamation with the civil parish of Tortington, and would not walk three miles to attend parish meetings. Now they want to know how to show their indignation about the union of the two church parishes. God's representative, Drury—shades of Voltaire!—says: "If they decided not to go to Church, there would be very little difference from the present state of affairs. On Sunday mornings my congregation is not large; very often the only member present is my wife."

If Drury had the comedian spirit of the Lane after which perhaps he was named, he would have added that the Sunday morning Godly service was the only occasion when he could talk to his wife without the possibility of reply.

It is good that the Rev. Drury has enabled our Non-conformist paper to publish that the union of these two parishes allows St. Mammon still to reside in the chamber of the holy gentleman (who says he was taking a salary to preach to his wife), but there is no doubt the arrangement made years ago to hold over the amalgamation until either the vicar or rector died proves the Rev. Drury to be a worthy, if humble, follower of Archbishops and Popes.

CHAS. W. HUBAND.

IMMORTALITY

SIR,—Mr. Hanlon says, "Even if we take the neo-Darwinian rather than the mutationist view . . ." but I am ready to argue by the latter. His criticism is, of course, very relevant, but it would be an arbitrary and unwarranted act, having posited tiny gaps, to stick an immortal soul into one of them, when what is known of variation and mutation promises a complete mechanistic account.

G. H. TAYLOR.

CHRISTIANITY AND FORCE

SIR,—In your issue of July 11, the writer of "Acid Drops" quotes Mussolini as saying that "the Church—especially the Catholic—comes out triumphantly from the hardest of tests." Such an assertion is utter nonsense.

Thirteen hundred years ago three quarters of the Christians of the world were forcibly turned into Mohammedans. Nothing was ever done more easily. Not a single person seems to have made any resistance. There is no record of one Christian martyr in the fight between Christianity and Mohammedanism.

Four centuries ago a large part of the Catholic world became Protestant. It was done entirely by military force. Where the Catholics won, they also won by military force. Belgium is to-day Catholic because the Protestants were put down by wholesale murder. Holland is Protestant because the protestants there were able to hit harder than the Catholics.

Wherever Christianity itself exists, it was imposed by military force. Gibbon estimates that at the time of Constantine not more than five per cent of the people of the Roman Empire had become Christians, after more than two hundred years of propaganda. After Constantine made Christianity the established religion, the whole

population was in two or three generations converted by the sword.

We see the same to-day. Twenty-five years ago nearly all Russians were Christians. Now very few of the younger generation are. In Germany it is evident that Hitler, in his attacks on both churches, has the people at his back. The decrepit condition of the Church in France to-day is due to the tremendous blows it received in the Revolution. Whatever else the Spanish war may bring forth, the Church of Spain can never again be what it was.

R. B. KERR.

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.

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COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BEDLINGTON (The Station): 7.0, Wednesday Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane Corner): 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Grant Street): 8.0, Sunday. Gray Street, Greenock, 7.30, Tuesday. Albert Road, 8.0, Wednesday. Albion Street, 8.0, Friday. Muriel Whitefield and Arthur Copland will speak at each meeting.

HETTON (Front Street): 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, Messrs. Thompson and Parry. Corner of High Park Street, and Park Road, or near vicinity, 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. Thompson and Little.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Park Gates): 8.15, Saturday, Mr. J. Clayton. Platt Fields, 3.0, Sunday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson. Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday, Mr. W. A. Atkinson.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.30, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Market): 8.0, Sunday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (The Cross): 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0, Mr. G. H. Dalkin.

SWANSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (Public Meeting Place on the Sands, near the Steps): 7.30. Mr. Whitehead will lecture each evening during the week.

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of enquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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