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Views and Opinions

Watch Your Words

I do not know how many of the present generation read Oliver Wendell Holmes, but I do know that a great many writers nowadays have achieved popularity, and have established a leadership with but a small part of the wisdom displayed by the author of the *Aulocral* series. No one, for example, ever gave better advice than when he warned readers to beware of "polarized" words. He meant by this the power of words, by virtue of long usage, to attract to themselves certain significations, and to repel others, neither of which corresponded with the existing facts. John Stuart Mill had the same thing in mind when he said that the champions of Determinism gave their opponents a very powerful advantage when they spoke of Freedom and Necessity, instead of Determinism and Indeterminism. Everyone likes to be on the side of freedom, and everyone dislikes compulsion, with the result that opponents of Determinism had in their armoury two polarized words which created a prejudice in their favour before ever the discussion commenced. So, said Wendell Holmes, our first care should be to see that our words are freed from misleading associations, and thus become the slaves of thought instead of its master. At the last L.C.C. election, for example, the walls were placarded with posters of the Municipal Reform Party advising everybody to "Vote British." That was, indeed, a very good sample of dishonest advocacy, but it was enough to rouse in the minds of many a connexion between voting for the Labour Party and voting a non-British party into power, to say nothing of vague background thoughts of casting a vote in favour of some avowed enemies of the country. One need only think of the number and quality of the prepossessions that cluster round such words as "Communist" and "Capitalist," "Atheist" and "Christian," "Revolutionist" and "Loyalist," with scores of others, to see how necessary it is for our leading words to be depolarized if they are to fulfil their proper function as conveyers of

thought. In most cases they serve as little better than fuel for the fires of prejudice.

* * *

Potted Prejudice

There was a fine example of the truth of what I have been saying in a recent issue of the *Church Times*. The editor is violently opposed to Hitler and Hitlerism, but he found some ground for praise of him because Hitler was an "Idealist," and had given Germany "a religion of patriotism" that is "something better than cocktail-drinking and loafing-self-indulgence." Whether Hitlerism is better than loafing, or cocktail-drinking may well be open to question. But to contrast the two, with the assumption that to give a country a religion (we are under the impression that Germany had a religion before Hitler appeared) is a good thing in itself, is a fine example of the use of polarized words, by which the user seeks to carry his audience with him from the play of prejudice excited. Even as it stands, the statement is incorrect. All that Hitlerism has given Germany is a system that for sheer brutality is worse than anything the world has ever seen. It has made insistent war upon what is best in human nature, and if it persists, must reduce the German people to the lowest possible intellectual and ethical level. And even for this Hitler cannot claim the complete credit. Hitlerism would have been impossible but for the stupidity of politicians, the cowardice of the military-minded among the Allies, and the fact that they had to deal with a home public that for four long years of war had been fed on a series of hate-sodden catchwords that made clear and profitable thinking almost impossible. When the Allies threw away the one chance that the history of modern Europe had presented, of bringing within reasonable distance the end of the war era, when they declined to make concessions to the better Germany (only to agree to the demands made by the later and brutalized Germany) they created Hitler and the erotic degenerates that now rule Germany. We foresaw these consequences during the war, we foretold the consequences of the Peace Treaty at the end of the war, and we are entitled to speak out now. Europe was ruined, not by the war, but by the Peace.

* * *

Patriotism—True and False

Now let us grant to Hitler the qualities of Idealism, Patriotism, and Religion. Where are we? Are we not drugging ourselves with words, making use of polarized terms that need severely depolarizing before they can be anything but dangerous? "Idealism" may mean one of two things. To call a man an Idealist may mean that he holds a particular philosophic theory of the "nature of things" that is in itself without any ethical value whatever. Or it may mean that one has in mind an end—any end—that he is fighting for. We can dismiss the first meaning so far as Hitler

is concerned. It is altogether beyond the reach of the intelligence he displays. And the second meaning is so true of nearly everybody that it is of little value when it is applied to anybody. The man who lives all the week sober, inspired with the idea of a good "drunk" on Saturday is an idealist, denying himself six days in a week in order that his ideal may be realized on the seventh. The Chicago Gangster King, shooting and bribing in order to gain control of a city, is an idealist. The man who throws away his life in the attempt to discover a cure for cancer, or one who braves the dangers of the frozen North to advance meteorological and geographical knowledge is an idealist. Any ideal for which one is striving may be expressed in terms of idealism. It is not the fact that a man has an ideal, but the quality of the ideal he has that is of consequence. Without bearing this fact in mind, such a word rapidly becomes a cloak for roguery, or a phrase given as an opiate to fools.

And what of Patriotism? That stands for love of country, loyalty to one's own people. What do the majority understand by that? Here, again, it may mean, often does mean, no more than flag-wagging at a coronation, stupid talk of "My country right or wrong," or "My country is the finest in the world," or, in times of war, the cultivation of a hearty hatred of the "enemy." We have in this country but one monument that bears the inscription "Patriotism is not enough"; that stands near Trafalgar Square, but I have never seen anyone in passing raise his hat to the monument to Nurse Cavell, no wreaths has been placed at its foot, I have seen no gathering of distinguished men and women to pay homage to one of the best sentiments the "great war" produced. The reason for its existence, the pregnancy of its message, all this is unconsidered. An intelligent patriotism, that is expressed in terms of the co-ordination of human needs and development to meet modern conditions is ignored in favour of sheer tribalism. Of course Hitler is a patriot, so is Mussolini. Every murder they commit, every assassination at which they connive, every time Hitler beats up old men and starves children, every time Mussolini imprisons a woman because her husband will not come back to Italy to be shot, they are demonstrating their "patriotism," they are exhibiting their idealism. And they who praise them for their patriotism are gilding crime with compliments.

* * *

The Higher Patriotism

I have not said this by way of a jibe, or with a desire to say something that is fantastically paradoxical. I am saying it as an expression of sober fact. No one could live comfortably with the crimes of Mussolini and Hitler on his conscience unless he was able to use some religious, ethical, or patriotic "dope." When the "Great War" began I said that its outstanding feature was, not its size, but the fact that it was, in the fullest sense of the word, civil war. It was not a war between nations in the sense that national wars existed at a time when each nation stood as a substantially self-contained unit; it was a war between groups of people living in different areas, but who were still indissolubly bound together, who must suffer together and benefit together. And for that reason, for the reason that the advance of science no longer leaves nations with a Chinese wall existing between them, and because science has robbed space and time and geographical situation of their barrier-like qualities, patriotism has to be expressed in wider terms than those of loyalty to a person or to a party, or in the perpetuation of prejudices and vanities that are as little pertinent to existing conditions as the ox-

cart is to present-day necessities of transport. And for this reason love of country can no longer be intelligently expressed by Germany commanding Europe, or by Britain commanding the seas or the trade-routes of the world, or by Italy converting the Mediterranean into an Italian lake. The larger loyalty has to overcome the smaller, the tribalism of conventional patriotism has to give way to the recognition that an intelligent love of country must contain a recognition of the fact that one's local welfare is bound up with the welfare of a much wider and an international area.

* * *

The Burden of Religion

I agree that Hitler is religious. His creed has all the marks of a primitive religion, of a Bible religion, although he puts the Bible on one side. But its influence is there, and its worst features are retained to effect the degradation of Germany. The German God takes the place of the Bible God. The chosen race becomes the German man instead of the Jewish people. The God of Hitler takes the place of the God of Christianity. And above all, perhaps the worst of all, Hitlerism is a religion because it has the quality that religion has always possessed, that of moralizing and justifying any brutality, any indecency that one may perpetrate. This is the quality of religion from its earliest ages, and it is only repeating a truism to say that there is not a single crime known to civilized humanity that has not been justified at some time and somewhere in the name of religion.

This is, perhaps, the most lasting of the evils religion has inflicted on the world. Religion begins in the field of a-morality. It is not then a question of what is socially right, it is one of what the gods desire. The socialization of life gives rise to morality as an independent branch of conduct, and established religion takes this over. More and more social considerations achieve the upper-hand, and religion, in order to maintain control strives to incorporate ethics. In this way religion, in the minds of many, has come to have a moral significance that does not belong to it. It has become associated with other things, with the result that it secures perpetuation under false colours.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Symonds, in his *Greek Poets*, says that while Cyril's mobs were dismembering Hypatia, the Greek authors went on creating, "Musaeus sang the lamentable death of Leander, and Nonnus was perfecting a new and more polished form of the hexameter." These authors, ignorant that the Asiatic superstition had destroyed their world, that they had themselves been stabbed to death, were like a man who has been shot, but whose wound is still warm, and who does not know that he has but a few more breaths to draw, kept on singing their song. But their song was, indeed, the "very swan's notes" of the classical world. "With the story of Hero and Leander, that immortal love poem, the Muse," says the same author, "took final farewell of her beloved Hellas."

After a thousand years of night, when the world awoke from her sleep, the first song it sang was the last song of the old Pagan world. This is wonderfully strange. In the year 1493, when the Renaissance ushered in a new era, the first book brought out in Europe was the last book written in Alexandria by a Pagan. It was the poem of Hero and Leander. The new world resumed the golden thread where the old world had lost it. The severed streams of thought and beauty met again into one current, and began to sing and shine as it rushed forth once more, as in the days of old. A Greek poem was the last product of the Pagan world; the same Greek poem was the first product of the new and renaissance world.

Between the dying and the reviving Pagan world was the Christian Church—that is to say, ten dark centuries.

M. M. Mangasarian.

A Real Comedy of Errors

"Learning is good, but common sense is better."

G. W. Foote.

THOMAS CARLYLE, in one of his most splenetic moods, once described man as a "two-forked radish." The term was far more critical than accurate, and it would never have won the approval of a naturalist like scholarly Charles Darwin, or even of doughty Ernest Haeckel. Yet Carlyle erred in the most distinguished company, for the writers of the Christian Bible were the worst commentators on natural history that there is any record of. Indeed, the amazing ignorance of these ancient scribes is to be wondered at. Their mathematics would disgrace a lower-form schoolboy; their history was almost entirely imaginary; but their excursions into zoology were so peculiar and so extensive that they were almost too funny for words.

Wordsworth has told us that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." And this pleasant precept reminds us that there is such an astonishing discrepancy between the zoological conclusions of earnest students of science and the alleged science of the old-world, ignorant Oriental writers of the Christian Scriptures. The consideration of this enormous difference affords us the opportunity for a few genial comments, entirely free from that acrimony far too often imported into the writings of professional theologians.

In natural history proper, not the veriest tyro, the most myopic bungler, would confound the hare with the ruminants. Yet dear religious folk would have us believe that the alleged creator of Nature blundered concerning the hare chewing the cud, and fondly imagine that the same august authority would waste time writing about clean beasts and dirty beasts. These are not solitary examples, for, in another place, it is suggested that this particular deity, who it is alleged, inspired or wrote the Christian Bible, could not recollect accurately the simple fact that a whale is a mammal and not a fish, although he is credited with making countless millions of them. Ironically, it was actually reserved for mere worms of the dust like Buffon, Lamarck, and Darwin, to clean out the Argcean stable of theological ignorance, and to create the science anew in the face of the most tremendous opposition from the clergy and their dupes.

"Wild beasts used to roam at will through the whole of Britain, but now very wild beasts are only found in theological gardens," wrote a very juvenile essayist. And "very wild beasts" are to be found in this Christian Bible. In what other volume can one find a talking snake, a lodging-house whale, or a pigeon co-respondent? Where else are the fiery serpents, the dragons, the cockatrice, and the worm that never dies? Where, other than in this sacred zoological collection, are the bedevilled pigs, the four-legged fowls, the unicorn, the cherubim, the ventriloquial donkey of Balaam, and the menagerie of the Apocalypse? Even the so-called "human beings" mentioned in this Bible are most extraordinary creatures. "Adam" and "Eve" both start life at full age, and "Eve" is said to have been carved from "Adam's" rib. The lives of the patriarchs ran into centuries, and "Methuselah" is alleged to have lived nearly a thousand years. Some lucky, or unlucky, individuals died twice, unless they are still walking around. Other "humans" were so magnificently developed that ordinary folk looked like grasshoppers beside them. Among such a freak collection it is remarkable that cats are nowhere mentioned. Maybe, the third person of the Trinity, that sacred dove, had

an objection to that animal. The Bible menagerie also boasts of horses of fire which are said to have carried the prophet Elijah to "heaven." There is also Aaron's walking-stick that turns into a serpent, and swallows all other snakes. The leviathan, mentioned in "Job," is a wonderful creature, with its "comely proportions," its firework "neesings," and organs of vision "like the eyelids of the morning." And what is to be said of the kind-hearted ravens who brought lunch to the prophet Elijah? Indeed, this Bible menagerie is unique, there has been nothing like it in all the earth.

These nonsensical ideas, and hundreds more as silly and as ignorant, emanate from this Christian fetish-book. Of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible volumes which have issued from the brains of neurotic individuals, this is easily one of the most remarkable. And the work which Freethinkers have set themselves is that of freeing their fellow men and women from the ignorance of pre-scientific times, which are perpetuated by this precious fetish-book. To class this so-called sacred volume as a book of sane, ordered, vital knowledge is the last word in absurdity. It is a crossword puzzle of riotous, exuberant, imagination, and may be interpreted in any way that crafty priests think fit. The first stage in the religious road to ruin is to regard such a farcical comedy of errors as the truth, and nothing but the truth. If this ridiculous volume had not been associated with a most heavily endowed system of superstition, by which hundreds of thousands of priests make an easy living, it would, centuries ago, have been known only to the antiquary and student of comparative religions. Though Freethinkers are alone to-day in opposing Priestcraft, anti-clericalism will be the governing thought in the democracy of to-morrow. Just as in Wagner's great imagery of "Tannhäuser," the Pilgrims' Chorus rises above the sensuous notes of the Venusberg music, so will the voice of reason one day be heard above the hoarse cries of an ignorant and tyrannous past. For in that day the reign of Priestcraft will be ended, and the clergy become mere supers upon the stage of our social life.

MIMNERMUS.

The Messenger of Moderation

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, the pioneer apostle of sweet reasonableness, is still an attractive, if puzzling, personality. It is true that the writings of this great humanist are now almost unread, with the exception of his inimitable *Praise of Folly*. Certainly, these were composed in what is now an obsolete language, the Latin of the Renaissance. Still, it seems strange that the works of a scholar once eagerly perused in every land in Western Europe should have suffered this eclipse. For, probably no other man of letters ever exercised such influence or enjoyed such universal appreciation. Also, his outlook was pre-eminently modern; he championed the cause of liberty; he was a consistent apostle of peace; he loved poetry and adored divine philosophy; while his humanitarianism embraced the entire world of men.

Bigotry, fanaticism and intolerance were his lifelong aversions. As Stefan Zweig avers in his brilliant study: *Erasmus*, Cassell, 1934: "Himself a free spirit, he looked upon it as a fettering of the delightful manifoldness of the universe when, from pulpit or university chair, a man declared his truth to be the only truth, to be a special message which God had whispered into his ear, and his alone." It is, indeed, one of the numerous ironies of history that a thinker

so eclectic should have lived in an age so passionately devoted to recrimination and conflict. It was certainly an untoward time for a thinker who, in Drummond's words, was "the apostle of common sense and rational religion. From the beginning to the end of his career, he remained true to the purpose of his life, which was to fight the battle of sound learning and plain common sense against the powers of ignorance and superstition."

Erasmus admittedly overrated the importance of printed information in moulding character. Yet, this cannot be wondered at when we remember that the printing press was still a startling novelty. Culture, to Erasmus was certain to promote and sustain good conduct which would secure universal human harmony. This sanguine view won wide acceptance in intellectual circles and in an era of striking discovery and invention, it appeared to many that the United States of Europe were well on the way. For, never since the fall of ancient Rome had an all-pervading European culture existed until it was restored by the activities of Erasmus and his disciples. Unfortunately, these benign influences were restricted to a faithful few and when the Reformation tempests raged, the mass of men speedily reverted to the hatred and intolerance which remain ever ready to re-emerge at the earliest favourable opportunity. Erasmus consistently declined to participate in the shameful conflict, much as his support was solicited by both parties in the struggle. A clearly declared conviction would without question have carried tremendous weight, perhaps sufficient to have averted the more sanguinary aspects of the strife. But Erasmus, a constitutionally nervous man, evaded all efforts to range him on either side. Some surmise that a timely declaration from one whose judgment was so universally esteemed might have prevented the pains and miseries of the Peasants' Revolt in Germany as well as the horrors and sacrifices of the 'Thirty Years' War. But the oracle remained silent or non-committal.

In the tragedy of the Reformation Erasmus has no rôle save that of witness and mourner. On the other hand, as Zweig notes, the remaining actors play their parts to the destined close. "John Huss was consumed in flames, Savonarola burned (though after hanging) in Florence, Servetus was thrust into the fire by Calvin the zealot. Each lived through his hour of tragedy; Thomas Munzer was tortured to death with red-hot pincers; John Knox died prematurely from the hardships to which he had been subjected; while Luther straddling the German earth with his sturdy peasant legs, declared in defiance of emperor and empire: 'Thus can I and no otherwise'; Thomas More and John Fisher were beheaded; Zwingli died on the battlefield, slain by his own compatriots."

Erasmus was born in Rotterdam at a dramatic time. Maritime discovery had magnified men's concepts of the earth's form and extent. New continents and races, strange birds and beasts and rich treasures of silver and gold were landed at the ports of Lisbon and Cadiz. Copernicus greatly amplified the extent of the universe. All these occurrences stimulated religious unrest. The illegitimate offspring of a priest and one of his penitents, the boy Erasmus was received into the clerical school in Deventer, and in 1487 he entered a monastery at Steyn, where a splendid classical library attracted the interest of the novice. He soon discarded the monk's garb, although in 1492 he was ordained by a bishop. He then obtained permission to dispense with his priestly garments, and was also excused from keeping the customary fasts. His cloistral years were far more fully devoted to art and letters than to religion and, having once escaped from the cloister, all threats, cautions and entreaties failed to induce him to return.

Pre-eminently a philosopher who favoured the happy mean, Erasmus was ever distinguished by a spirit of sturdy independence. He disliked authoritarianism in any form; he declined all the many distinctions he was offered, and his lifelong aloofness from coteries and sects much resembles the attitude taken by Herbert Spencer. Unlike the great evolutionary thinker, however, Erasmus preferred compromise to decisiveness. Shrewdly enough, before he abandoned the monastery, he had secured the post of Latin secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, which introduced him to society life in Brussels. Later in Paris he entered a theological college, whose austerities and verminous surroundings disgusted the Epicurean scholar.

An impecunious man of letters, Erasmus was driven to dedicate his writings to the affluent, but his refusal of constant service to any patron made him nomadic. While in England he spent some of the happiest hours of his life and his fine abilities were fully appreciated in the selectest social and literary circles.

The *Adagia*, a collection of maxims increased the celebrity of Erasmus and his subsequent *In Praise of Folly* was acclaimed as a masterpiece by cultured Europe. Placing, as he did, his wittiest, sarcastic, and most searching sayings in the mouth of Dame Folly, he secured himself from the charge of treason or blasphemy. The Dame reflects on spiritual and temporal affairs alike, and displays their shortcomings. "If the highest dignitaries," she suggests, "of the Popes, those representatives of Christ on earth, were really to model their lives upon his . . . who could be more worthy of compassion than they? How many treasures would the Holy Fathers have to forfeit if wisdom were suddenly to subdue their minds? Instead of untold riches, divine honours, the distribution of so many dignities and offices and dispensations, the pocketing of so many taxes and contributions, the people who have led such easy and enjoyable existences would have to spend their sleepless nights in prayer, would have to observe the fasts, would be expected to weep and meditate and pass their days in a thousand hardships."

Erasmus deprecated warfare in an age when military achievement was universally extolled. All war accomplishes is, he urged, the sowing of seeds of future conflict. But in the time of "the wild irrationality of war," all sensible men, he counselled, must strive to maintain friendly relations even when their respective countries are in armed conflict, a lesson still unlearned. But Erasmus' vision of the advent of international harmony was dissipated. The humanists were disregarded and, as Zweig mournfully remarks: "Luther, the fanatical man of action, backed by the irresistible force of a mass movement, sallied forth to swamp and to destroy this supranatural dream."

With the purer manifestations of the Reformation Erasmus was in sympathy, but he gave Luther no decided support. This detached attitude induced the truculent Martin to declare that secular affairs meant more to Erasmus than things divine. Truly, Protestant fury and intolerance seemed a miserable substitute for the autoeracy of Rome. Indeed, any appeal to force was entirely alien to him, but Erasmus' weighty word was ever at the service of those who would redeem the Church from sin by pacific means. The powerful Charles V. invited Erasmus and Luther's temporal sovereign, the Elector of Saxony, to the Diet of Worms in order to compose religious differences. But Erasmus, unfortunately, failed to appear and, as Luther proved irreconcilable, all hope of compromise was past. Later, Luther tried to win Erasmus' aid, but it led to little save a searching criticism of Lutheran doctrine from Erasmus' pen. The Reformer was infuriated, and all the native coarseness of his character was disclosed when he said

that, "He who crushes Erasmus crushes a bug which stinks even worse when dead, than when alive." Also among other amenities, Luther remarked while glaring at a portrait of Erasmus: "This is the face of a wily and malignant man who has made mock both of God and religion."

The Diet of Augsburg having proved abortive, Rome, in 1534, made a final effort to persuade Erasmus to condemn the Reformation. When Paul III. became Pope he offered Erasmus the nomination to the deanery of Deventer, "the income of which," Mark Pattison tells us, "was reckoned at 600 ducats, and an intimation that steps would be taken to provide for him the income, viz., 3,000 ducats, which was necessary to qualify for the cardinal's hat." But Erasmus, ever true to his principles, declined the honour and emolument.

The eminent humanist, now on the eve of his death, was the recipient of a letter from the immortal Rabelais, who thus addressed the master: "Everything that I do, all that I am, I owe you; and were I to fail in acknowledging my debt, I should prove the most ungrateful man alive. Greeting and yet again greeting, dearest father and honour of the land which gave you birth, champion of the arts, invincible fighter for truth."

Erasmus died in 1536 in his 70th year. By his will he left his property, apart from a few legacies, to his friend Amerbach, partly for his own benefit, and partly in trust for the old and infirm, or to be devoted to the portioning of poor girls and the instruction of promising youths. Nothing was set aside for masses for the soul's repose or other religious purposes, and the dispassionate philosopher passed peacefully away without the customary services of priest or father-confessor.

T. F. PALMER.

A Domestic Idyll

Abraham . . . was called the Friend of God.

James ii. 23.

RELIGIOUS people comment on the unwisdom of Free-thinkers in finding fault with the morality of Old Testament Heroes. True, the Patriarchs loom large in the syllabus of Simple Bible Instruction devised to regale our youth in the schools of this country, but, we are told, they have been such an unconscionable time dead that it is absurd to compare the merits of General Joshua and General Booth; Father Abraham and Father Martindale; Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite (Blessed above women!) and Florence Nightingale; the Song of Solomon and that of Algernon Charles Swinburne; the Lamentations of Isaiah and those of our Archbishop of Canterbury. You see these old worthies were so very near to the Divine Pattern Shops, so what could we expect? It takes time to turn out a man like Abraham Lincoln or John Galsworthy. And in still more time we may, with luck, have completely forgotten those far-off divine events when the Father of Jesus walked abroad in the cool of the evening and cursed with the fluency of a modern Sergeant-Major those he had created in his own Image.

It was Free Will that caused the trouble. If man had only been modelled as the cat, mouse and weevil, that is, simply fitted with a complete kit of reactions, then all might have gone as merry as a marriage-bell. But no; Adam was endowed by the Primeval Potter, and he possessed, without a signature, our power of attorney. This poor fish was put on the team to represent us all, and a bad first slip he made. He

mulled the very first chance that came his way. He was disobedient and became automatically a bad lot. And so are all of us. All the perfumes of Arabia cannot wash out that little stain.

As Free Will led to Sin, which God hates, He drowned the sinners—save one family. He started afresh after the Deluge, but, being omniscient, he was averse to learning from experience, and included another pinch of Free Will in the ingredients of the second bunch. The result was no more hopeful, so He came to the conclusion that his Images could do with a little assistance in the business of living. So He made *Holy Men* to give the Mob a few useful tips. God might, alternatively, have made the Mob Holy, but that would have tended to do away with Class Distinctions, and Class Distinction is another of those things which require Time to upset. So, we got, via the Holy Men, Ten Commandments telling us what not to do. We got particulars as to the important Rite of Circumcision. We were told how to know a witch when we saw her, and what to do with her. We were told how to kill and cook animals and were instructed that the Holy Men must always have the first cut from the joint. By reams of this type of information, Mankind was filled with Passion for Righteousness. And when he saw that passion kindled, God leaned back and heaved a great sigh of relief. Free Will by itself had proved a failure, but, plus pedagogism, it was bearing fruit.

So encouraged, "guidance" increased. Moral approbation exuded. A gentleman named Abraham was *approved*. He became the Friend of God. Not that this was the highest of encomiums. God was the Friend of Abraham, but he *loved* Jacob, and, as for Saint David and his Guernica habits, well, *he* became the Man after God's Own Heart. The Passion for Righteousness became so manifest in David that God granted him his Ethical Victoria Cross, the only one of its kind. It is only fair to Abraham, however, to point out that though David had scaled moral heights which he could hardly visualize, David had had the benefit of the Ten Commandments upon Murder, Adultery and the like. Abraham had had to accumulate his little nest of virtues in their absence.

There was no doubt about the friendship that God had for Abraham. It was, truth to tell, a rather extravagant affair:—

I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

It was a case then of "Love me, love my dog." The friendship became historic. Jesus himself tells us that when the beggar, Lazarus, died he went straight to the bosom of Abraham in search of the warmth he had not been able to obtain in this world. Jehovah, he it noted to his credit, was no fair-weather friend.

It is clear from theological principles that if we approach the subject reverently, we will find good reasons for this friendship. In order to find out in what way Abraham pleased the Lord we will search the Scriptures.

Abraham's wife was Sarai, ten years his junior. When he was seventy-five, the couple took a trip to Egypt, and Abraham conceived a *HAPPY THOUGHT*. Said he to his wife:—

Behold I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon.

This was a good start.

Therefore it shall come to pass when the Egyptians shall see thee that they shall say: This is his wife and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake.

That it may be well with me *for thy sake*. A good finish.

It happened in accordance with Abraham's intelligent anticipation. Pharaoh was pleased with Sarai and she was taken into his house. "And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses and menservants, and maid-servants, and she asses and camels." Nowadays we would write "treated" rather than "entreated," but the archaism does not at all interfere with the idea conveyed.

In this matter the Lord proved a real pal. Money was put into Abraham's purse, and there were no unfriendly exchanges. "Live and let live" was the Lord's motto. Expostulation, of a practical kind, was reserved for Pharaoh.

The Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

This may surprise some people, but not us.

It surprised Pharaoh, for Abraham had to appear on the carpet to be questioned. "Why didst thou not tell me she was thy wife? Here is thy wife. Take her, and hop it, the pair of you." So they did as they were bid and with them hopped the sheep, the oxen, the he asses, the maid-servants, the men servants, the she asses and camels.

Happy indeed was the issue, for was not Abraham the Friend of God?

Some years after, Abraham being then 86, Sarai got a little weary of being without children. As she had a hand-maiden named Hagar, employed on an All-In Comprehensive Contract, she suggested to Abraham that there was a method (and cheap at that), of adding to the dignity of the house, and in this Hagar could help. Abraham put up a half-hearted demurrer (it can be surmised) but in the course of time, Hagar delivered the goods. Abraham's friend continued friendly. Fourteen years after Abraham had a heart to heart talk with his friend, which took this form. "You call yourself a friend and yet this respectable union can boast no honest-to-goodness child of its own." This, as it was intended, touched Jehovah on a sensitive spot. The Father of Jesus replied: "Thy seed shall be as numerous as the stars." Seeing a blank expression on his friend's face, he continued, "Thy seed shall be as numerous as the grains of dust upon the earth." This Abraham considered to be inexcusable hyperbole, so he laughed. "Good God," he said, "I am ninety and nine and Sarai is ninety." The Lord remembered that he was the Friend of Abraham and reproved him not.

But Sarai laughed as well, and that was a bird of another colour. Sarai had been listening, after the manner of women, at the tent-door. He said unto Abraham: Wherefore did Sarai laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? And Sarai, again after the manner of women, said, "I laughed not." And the Lord said: Nay, but thou didst laugh" and, like jesting Pilate, waited not for a reply. At the set time, Isaac was born, Abraham being then a cool hundred years old. The dispute between him and Sarai as to whether the baby's name should be Jubilee or Isaac, is it not recorded in the Book of Jasher?

Once a happy mother, Sarai thought that Hagar had survived her usefulness. She complained to Abraham that she had seen Hagar making faces at her and said, "You must pack her off." So Abraham packed her off, but as his passion for righteousness was by now a huge flame, it must not be supposed that he treated Hagar thoughtlessly. For in the morning, when he sent her on tramp, he strapped a loaf of bread and a bottle of water to Hagar's shoulder. When

Hagar came to the end of this slim diet, she lost heart and "cast the boy [then 15 years old] into some shrubs." This seems to have been a hefty piece of athleticism which has somehow or other escaped the commentators. Hagar never returned to the *ménage à trois* and so, thanks again to God's friendliness, another domestic crisis in the happy home was avoided.

Abraham enjoyed his improved circumstances and being wise enough to profit by experience, he and Sarai played once more the "sister" trick, this time on Abimelech, King of Gerar. This monarch, in a similar fit of terror, dislodged many more she and he animals and sundry bags of ducats.

The wing of friendship never moulted a feather.

Sarai's feelings on both these occasions are not considered worth recording. It is only doing Abraham bare justice however to admit that throughout he showed not one trace of the unworthy emotion we know of as jealousy.

Sarai died when Abraham was one hundred and thirty-seven. But Abraham did not speedily follow her to the grave though her surprising habits of accommodation must have endeared her to him. His Friend saw to it that he had not only another thirty-eight years of life, but unimpaired virility. Not till he was one hundred and seventy-five years old did he finally don his heavenly costume, and prepare to receive beggars, and, as the sacred historian informs us (in case we had overlooked the point), "he died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years."

But before then Keturah had caught his eye. We do not know whether Keturah was a blonde or brunette, homely or comely, sweet-tempered or a shrew. All we know is:—

She bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak and Shuah.

Even the Book of Jasher does not inform us what Abraham's feelings were when Shuah was announced. It is, however, in every way likely that he recalled what a good friend the Father of Jesus had always been to him, and visions of his offspring being as numerous as the grains of dust upon the earth flickered before his bedimmed but happy eyes.

Pride, approaching alarmingly near to vainglory, nearly overwhelmed him. A few moments' cogitation over the hard roe of a herring, might, peradventure, have somewhat modified his enthusiasm.

Reproduction in quantity has lost its place as one of the fine arts.

T. H. ILSTOR.

THE PASSING OF MA CLEGHORN

And suddenly Ma's lips ceased to twist and slobber with their blowings of brownish spume, her hand in Chris's slackened with a little jerk; and she stepped from her bed and out of the house, and up long stairs that went wandering to heaven like the stairs on Windmill Brae. And she met at the gates St. Peter himself, in a lum hat and leggings, looking awful stern, the Father of all the Wee Free Ministers, and he held up his hand and snuffled through his nose and asked in GAWD's name, was she one of the Blessed? And Ma Cleghorn said she was blest if she knew—*Let's have a look at this Heaven of yours*. And she pushed him aside and took a keek in, and there was God with a plague in one hand and a war and a thunderbolt in the other, and the Christ in glory with the angels bowing, and a scraping and banging of harps and drums, ministers thick as a swarm of blue-bottles, and no sight of Jesus, only the Christ, and she said she wasn't impressed. And she said to St. Peter *This is no place for me*, and turned and went striding into the mists and across the fire-tipped clouds to her home.

From "Grey Granite," by Lewis Grassie Gibbon.

A Danger to Youth

BUCHMANISM, otherwise the Oxford Group Movement: one of the many bastards sponsored by "True Christianity," claims to be "Guided by God." Well—the Almighty led the advocates of "Changed" lives far astray when they invited Miss Margaret Rawlings, the actress, to be their guest of honour at luncheon. (At a leading West-end hotel, as usual). Mr. William Hickey's account of the event in the *Express* is exceptionally worth while quoting. He and Miss Rawlings were together, in a minority, he says, as "two un hypnotized people at a lunch of 2,000 Buchmanites." (Our italics). "We'll get hold of some actress," said the organizers: "she'll be decorative; she'll like the publicity." So they got in touch "with an agency," and Miss Rawlings was asked to be guest of honour at a Literary Luncheon at which G. B. Shaw was going to speak. (Again, our italics to emphasize the obvious lies of "Literary," and the pretence of Bernard Shaw's presence).

Miss Rawlings agreed to the invitation provided she could speak her mind, and, as thousands of cards had gone out with her name, this condition was accepted. "Then"—quoting Mr. Hickey throughout—"every sort of pressure was put upon her to induce her either not to speak or to say something which she didn't believe. Buchmanites visited her dressing-room at the theatre, deluged her with cheerful propaganda. She remained UNCHANGED, or at least regarded attempts to pry into her soul as an impertinence." The organizers became distressed, and followers threatened to "walk out if she were allowed freedom of speech."

Lunch-time came. The chairman was Buchman himself. "When he was announced a bugle rang out, floodlights were turned on, and up in the balcony long rows of young Buchmanites sang choruses. Others held banners aloft. Then a man downstairs interrogated them in sharp, parade-ground staccato: "Who are you?"—"The youth of the nations!"—"What do you want?"—"A NEW WORLD!!" And so on. It was as carefully rehearsed, as brilliantly produced, as a Nazi Party demonstration. Here Mr. Hickey recalls that Buchman had been reported to have said once, "I thank God for a man like Adolf Hitler," and a woman neighbour at the lunch remarked, "They make good potential Fascists." There ensued individual testimonials: from an ex-Lord Mayor of Newcastle, a French architect, a Bishop from Rangoon, and a general who trains horses and said he has "quiet times" with God and the lads in his stables. A cowboy (in costume) sang a sort of hill-billy songs with refrains like "You got to be willing, Absolutely willing, For God to hold the reins His way. . . ."

"In this elaborately worked-up atmosphere Margaret Rawlings got up," proceeds Mr. Hickey. Following a plea for modesty, and mentioning her childhood in Japan with reference to a contrast of Eastern and Western conventions on modesty, she said "To me personally . . . this public exposure of the soul, this psychic exhibitionism with its natural accompaniment of sensual satisfaction is shocking—as shocking, indecent and indelicate as it would be if a man took all his clothes off in Piccadilly Circus." The speaker who followed praised Miss Rawlings' bravery, but "dragged in that well-known bromide, Sincerity . . . a widespread modern heresy. Bolsheviks, Fascists, Lunatics, People who believe the earth is flat are sincere. Better make certain first that you've got something to be sincere about, and with," comments Mr. Hickey: who concludes—after suspending his judgment for years—that Buchmanism "as a social force seems potentially dangerous." He describes it as mass hysteria, and recommends "an acid, devastating survey of various modern mass-movements called 'Totem; the Exploitation of Youth,' by Harold Stovin."

D.

There can be no doubt of the critical situation in which the Christian Faith finds itself to-day. Everywhere ancient religions are losing hold.

Theological "Expository Times."

Acid Drops

The *Church Times* eulogizes the speech of Lord Russell of Killowen in opposition to the Divorce Bill, and says it was the best speech in the debate. The reason for this is that the noble Roman Catholic Lord exposed his brother Law Lords as showing "a pathetic ignorance of theology and history." But even if this were true, what has such ignorance got to do with preventing two people who loathe each other from being free of a man-made marriage? Why should a man or a woman be tied for life to a drunken sot, a homicidal lunatic, or a bigamous felon? The real answer is, however, not that Lord Russell showed up the ignorance of his fellow peers, but that "Our Lord" was against divorce; and the fact that the Bill has at last become law shows that after all the power of "Our Lord" is slowly, but quite surely, declining.

Miss Sara Burstall, a Past President of the Association of Headmistresses, has written an article in a recent number of the *School Guardian*, strongly opposing "examination scripture." She complains that children have to "get up" a book in the Bible just as they do a play by Shakespeare, or a poem by Coleridge. How can they be guided "spiritually" by the "most magnificent Book in the world" if they have to "scan texts or contexts in the same way as memorizing European battles?" Miss Burstall is almost bursting with indignation about it. Unfortunately she can get little comfort from our pious journals. One of them in fact, sadly points out "that there is a danger that if Scripture is cut out of the examination syllabus, it will cease to be taught scientifically"—as if Scripture can be taught "scientifically." Why can't all these people see that if they want their students taught religion they should do it themselves in their own spare time, and leave the regular school hours to Secular Education? This is the only solution, and it is bound to come one day.

A new book on Richard Jeffries, written by Mr. Henry Williamson, has just appeared, and it is interesting to find that the author claims that "the affinity of Jeffries with Jesus of Nazareth is patent in nearly all his work." We always suspect that when a writer says "Jesus of Nazareth," he is trying to show that he does not altogether believe in the God Jesus, but finds there was really someone so utterly wonderful living in Palestine 1900 years ago that he becomes, so to speak, a marvellous ideal with which to make comparisons. In this case, however, it is rather unfortunate, as Jeffries has long been known as a "pagan." In fact, Mr. Williamson visiting his birthplace a few years ago, met an old lady who had known Jeffries, and "A lazy loppet he was too," she said, "a proper Atheist." The old lady properly described Jeffries, who would have roared with laughter if anyone had told him that he had "affinities" with a god living centuries ago, who believed in Heaven and Hell, myths and miracles, devils and witches. However, it is good to record that Mr. Williamson thinks *The Story of My Heart* "one of the most beautiful, and one of the most noble books in the world"; and it is quite pagan.

Ignorance of the Bible seems characteristic of many religious professors. A writer in the *Methodist Recorder* tells of a student named Tyerman, who constantly offended the "fastidious and rather finicky" Methodist Classical Tutor, W. L. Thornton, M.A., by his plain language. One day the student was severely rubbed down for using the words "spew out of the mouth." Tyerman had his revenge. Taking his turn to preach in the College Chapel, he took for his text Rev. iii. 16, showing that the "vulgarity" belonged to Divine Revelation. Fancy a student having to prove the Biblical authority of his language to a Tutor who later became President of the Methodist Conference.

It cannot be said that Methodists, as a whole, take very literally the teaching of Christ: Blessed are ye poor. The latest proposition of the Methodist Finance Board is to

reduce the salaries of Circuit Superintendents . . . to a minimum of £260 a year. As many Superintendents already get considerably more than the minimum, we can only congratulate these followers of Him Who had not where to lay his head, on their superiority to "the common working men," who were once upon a time supposed to be "the people called Methodists."

For colossal vanity we must give the palm to the author of a "poem" written by a Methodist, and quoted with admiring approval by the Rev. Francis B. James, who says:—

From all eternity I was included in God's purpose of love. His heart went out to meet me before my life began. I can even say, greatly daring:—
Ere suns and Moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me His child.

God seems to have had a busier time than we imagined when He sat in Chaos, before deciding to make worlds and to count hairs. Even then He was thinking about Mr. James. Can this account for His bad workmanship and general incompetence in creating Cyclones, Mosquitoes and Dictators?

The *Christian World* reports a sermon by Dr. W. R. Inge on "The Revolt Against Christianity." Much of the sermon is trite, and obviously meant to "fit in" with orthodox prejudices and precepts. The ex-Dean thinks it a "mistake to insist too much" on the fact that "the Church is hated because it has shown too much sympathy with the powers that be." If this is a fact, as we well know it to be, it is difficult to see why it should be hidden under a veil of pretended interest in democracy to-day.

Principal John Murray, in the *Hibbert Journal*, defends Hitler and likens him to Queen Victoria, who, says this learned Christian, "seemed to multitudes a living guarantee of fundamental decency in government." We are only too painfully aware of the persecution of opinion—especially Freethought opinion—which was often atrocious in Queen Victoria's reign, although not so bad as is that of her predecessors. The list of Freethought martyrs in Victorian days must never be minimized or forgotten. But inside and outside the Victorian jails a public opinion never ceased its protest. Freethought survived because Freethinkers refused to be silenced.

Still more money for church-building. The Bishop of Gloucester is borrowing £30,000 from the Central Board of finance, and "six parishes have assumed the responsibility of repayment." There is going to be a new church at Tuffley and others for Coney Hill and Cheltenham. In addition two mission churches, one at Broadwell, Coleford, and another at Cheltenham will be built. And all this dreadful waste of money to bolster up a worn-out creed about which even its most fervent adherents cannot agree. It would be a farce were it not so tragic.

"I have made seven public speeches in six days," said the Archbishop of Canterbury. Evidently a case of "quantity" but perhaps not "quality." Abraham Lincoln seldom spoke, but he made a speech after Gettysburg, that will live for ever. Probably the only person who will remember the Archbishop's speeches is the Archbishop.

Bewailing the "irreligion" of most novelists in these days, the Rev. Dr. Bond, new President of the Methodist Conference, assured the Bradford gathering, on the other hand, that "Happily, many of the newspapers, with their great influence, are more with us than ever before."

A member of the Archbishops' Evangelist Council, a few weeks ago, also gave a vote of thanks to the press, in the hope, presumably, of a continuance of favours.

Similar motives no doubt inspire Hitler and Mussolini in giving their mead of praise to those bulwarks of Christianity, the *Daily Mail* and the *Observer*.

"How long, O Lord, how long!" has probably been the anguished cry of thousands of congregations bored by the length of sermons and services of the old-fashioned churches. Donne used to preach at St. Paul's, sometimes for three hours; 45 minutes was common 40 years ago; to-day 25 minutes is considered excessive. Now there is a general trend towards the short service, and St. Paul's has changed its morning service accordingly. A press "diarist" recalls that King Edward VII. punctiliously attended divine service, but insisted that it should last no more than 20 minutes. If it went on longer he coughed noisily, and in other ways indicated his displeasure; but if the closing benediction was reached under the 20 minutes, the King sent the clergyman a special complimentary message. Regal control in ecclesiastical directions seems to have declined since Edward's Day, and garrulous prelates occasionally usurp authority over the "Head of the Church."

Backsliders are always welcome to return to the fold so long as they fall in with *something*—no matter what—in the practices of their respective churches. In an autobiography just published, Mr. Gerald Hamilton tells of his meditating to leave the Catholic Church into which he had been received a few years before. He met Father Martindale, who tried to dissuade him, and they argued the matter until they found themselves in the Palace Theatre:—

"Father Martindale pressed me to make a confession," says Mr. Hamilton.

"But," said I, "I cannot. I am not sorry that I have committed these sins."

"Are you not sorry that you are not sorry?" Father Martindale replied, and I admitted that perhaps I was.

"Very well, then, that's enough," he said. "You can make your confession. Nobody will hear you. Hold up your programme in front of your face."

As we whispered together Basil Hallam, on the stage, was singing "Oh Hades! the Ladies!" Father Martindale indicated the moment of absolution by opening his watch.

And down in the catalogue Mr. Hamilton goes as one.

Fifty Years Ago

BUT *revenons à nos moutons*, or rather our pigs. Archdeacon Lefroy says that when the men of Galilee heard of Christ's miracle they "were not so much in a state of exasperation at the loss of their property as they were in a state of horror at what might yet occur if Jesus remained." Well, what immorality was there in such a frame of mind? It is all very well for Archdeacon Lefroy to stand up for his Saviour, but he might have sung a different tune if he had been a Galilean pork-butcher. Jesus was simply invited to move on. Such wholesale destruction of pigs threatened to annihilate the pork trade of the district. Jesus had a perfect right to work miracles, but he should have performed on his own property. Besides, it was a wanton destruction of good meat, and thousands of poor men were probably done out of a rasher.

Archdeacon Lefroy forgets all about the poor pigs. "Doth God care for oxen?" asks Paul, and Archdeacon Lefroy says by implication, "Doth God care for swine?" But why not? Are they of less value than sparrows? If the story be true, Jesus did the possessed men a good turn, but he was rather rough on the pigs. Had they grunted in the middle of his speech, or what had they done to incur such a punishment? Why did he not send the devils home to Hell at once? But the whole story is puerile in the extreme. Its science and its morality are just on a par. Both may suit the knowledge and character of Archdeacon Lefroy, but they are distasteful to those whose heads are not addled, nor their hearts corrupted, by a silly superstition.

The Freethinker, August 7, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Obituary

DEATH OF ARTHUR B. MOSS

We regret to report the death of Mr. Arthur B. Moss, one of the few survivors of the stormy Bradlaugh days, and whose association with the National Secular Society has remained unbroken to the end.

The interment will take place at Forest Hill (Old Cemetery), Forest Hill Road, S.E.22, at 3.30, on Thursday. Mr. Chapman Cohen will conduct the service.

L. EDWARDS (Hastings).—Pamphlets for the People are selling very well, and it may be possible to include some, if not all, of the subjects you suggest, in later numbers of the series. Thanks for your efforts to help.

J. MOULT (Bingley).—The article appeared in the issue dated December 13, 1936. Copies could be supplied, on request.

R.A. (Montrose).—The hypnotic nature of certain words is a fact well understood and worked upon by irresponsible writers. See this week's leading article, which deals, to some extent, with this matter.

L. ABRAHAM. —Next week if possible.

MISS A. M. PARRY.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

R. PAYNE.—We imagine that the comment of Reynolds on the stark superstition of transporting the piece of carpet on which the King knelt to Winchester Cathedral, was "writ sarcastic." Certainly no race of savages could sink to a lower mentality than indicated by so ridiculous a performance. And yet we imagine there will be a large number of people who will stand in blind adoration before it.

M.L.—We saw the article by the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, and for the moment thought of writing on it. But it is really too inane for criticism. Nothing but very old arguments served up in a manner suitable to an infant school. And one cannot punch an empty egg-shell.

H. T. ALLPRESS AND OTHERS.—Thanks for cuttings.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums

An article in the *Times* commences:—

By degrees the comprehensiveness of the Christian religion is being better understood, but it may be some time before there is complete escape from the dualism which apportioned life into sacred and secular provinces. In the former were placed specifically religious duties, such as prayer and Bible-reading, and in the latter everything else. Literature, art, and music were "secular" unless they had special characteristics entitling them to be described as "sacred." Admittedly they might have a good influence, yet their influence was not supposed to have any direct relationship with religion. This narrowing of its scope has been for many people a real obstacle to their whole-hearted acceptance of Christianity as a working creed.

So that now, when attendances at Church and Chapel are falling off, the Christian religion is being *better understood*. What is being better understood by wide-awake clerics is that the Christian Religion must "suffer a sea change into something rich and strange"—or perish.

Anything will do, from a King down to a notorious criminal, or a well-known prize-fighter. The last and latest example of the craze for a sight or a memento of those who have been in the news is the late rector of Stiffkey. At his funeral, the other day, the crowd took away every stone they could lay their hands on to serve as a memento. And the piece of carpet on which the King knelt at the Coronation, bearing the impress of the royal knee-cap when he knelt at the Coronation is being exhibited in Winchester Cathedral. Souvenir-hunting pays no attention to the quality of the thing desired. As we have already said, anything does.

May we remind readers that the present holiday season offers many opportunities for the introduction of this journal to new subscribers. One need not make a nuisance of oneself in doing it, but a sense of fitness, with a spare copy of the paper or a small supply of our cheap pamphlets, may be the instruments of putting in a piece of useful work for the "Best of all Causes."

This is taken from a magazine article on "The life of a Country Clergyman":—

On another evening the electric lights failed just as the sermon started, and I requested the congregation to sit quiet until the lights came on again and I would proceed with the sermon. The lights remained off longer than was expected, and I finished the whole sermon before they came on again. The sermon concluded with the words: "May God in His Mercy bring a soul out of the darkness into His wonderful light?" and just at that moment the lights came on, making quite a theatrical climax.

We wonder, when this occurred, what was going on at Guernica.

Mr. Duff Cooper, Secretary of State for War, was reported some time ago as saying: "There has recently been a tendency in this country on the part of the clergy to withdraw their prayers from politicians whenever they disapprove of them. Speaking as one of the politicians I have not noticed any ill effects from the temporary withdrawal."

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Liverpool this week, and will speak each evening, beginning to-day (August 8). The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate at all the meetings, where Pioneer Press literature, including the latest publications, will be obtainable. There is plenty of room in the Branch for unattached saints, especially those ready to do a little work for the movement.

Bertrand Russell—Atheist?

ONE cannot prevent a person who is not an Atheist from calling himself one. Nor can one prevent a person from describing someone else as an Atheist, even though the latter is not one. But one should at least try to correct the false impressions created by such misnomers whenever one is in possession of the necessary evidence. For, unless we do this it is an almost invariable rule that, sooner or later, someone will take advantage of such mis-statements in order to discredit genuine Atheism and its adherents. Perhaps the experiences related hereafter will lend force to what I have said, and may cause those who have the interests of Atheism at heart to be more careful in their descriptions of persons who, though not Christians or even Theists, are nevertheless not Atheists.

In an article on "The Decline of Belief," recently published in this paper, Mr. G. H. Taylor describes Mr. Bertrand Russell as "a notable Atheist." In the same sentence Mr. Taylor also records that Mr. Russell in answering some sort of questionnaire about his religious views, "sarcastically joined the ranks of the Theists." The fact that a man, said to be an Atheist (and a notable one to boot), should have joined the ranks of Theists, even though it were in sarcastic mood, does not seem to have roused any suspicion in Mr. Taylor's mind as to the correctness of his description of Mr. Russell. It is true that I have not read the book from which Mr. Taylor quotes, and am therefore unable to judge of the sarcastic nature of Mr. Russell's "theistic" remarks. But, in spite of this, I have irrefutable proofs which qualify me to state, quite categorically, that Mr. Russell is *not* an Atheist and, so far as I am aware, never has been.

In making this assertion I insist that for general purposes of information and communication we, as individuals, are not entitled to use words with any other meanings than those which are commonly current. Whatever we may choose to do in private conversation or discussion, we have no right to put meanings upon words in common use which are of our own invention. It is absurd, for example, to call a man a Christian if he believes that the Christ-story is a myth. The word "Christian" has its own clearly definable and commonly accepted meaning. So also have the words Atheist, Theist, Agnostic and God. And to use these words in public with any other meanings is stupid, not to say unjustifiable. As an illustration of the results of such misuse of words let the following letters bear witness.

Consequent upon the publication of an article written by the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton for the *Radio Times* in 1934, I wrote to the editor of that paper as follows on the first of July:—

Sir—In his article on "The Mystery of Broadcasting," in your issue of June 22, Mr. Chesterton goes out of his way to declare that "Materialism is dead." (In view of your professed objection to giving publicity to opinions on controversial topics, I am surprised that you should have permitted Mr. Chesterton to make such a statement as this, especially as it is in flat contradiction to the true facts and is, therefore, utterly misleading. It is to be expected that Mr. Chesterton, being a Roman Catholic, should wish to give the impression that a philosophy, which is hateful to him, is dead; but) when he adds that "The proof of the defeat of Materialists can be found in the very fact that they have been practically defeated by some of the most brilliant Atheists," I think that one is entitled to ask him to state his evidence. Having been for years in close touch with Atheists and Materialistic movements, I venture to suggest that these "brilliant Atheists" who "prac-

tically defeat" their own philosophy are nothing more than the figments of Mr. Chesterton's imagination.

This letter appeared, in bowdlerized form, in the *Radio Times* of July 13, 1934—the words in brackets being omitted. Mr. Chesterton replied to it in a letter published in the issue for July 20, as follows:—

In answer to Mr. Fraser's letter, in which he asks me to state my evidence for saying that the Materialists have been practically defeated even by Atheists, I should like to say that anyone who thinks I am drawing on my imagination in describing Atheists as opposing Materialism has only to read some of the remarks of Lord Russell, formerly better known as Mr. Bertrand Russell.

The point which I had now to ascertain was whether Mr. Bertrand Russell was really an Atheist. It seemed to me to be the height of absurdity that a professed Atheist should propagate arguments which nullified his own philosophy, although it was not beyond the realms of possibility that a man, who at one time called himself an Atheist, should recant. So I turned to Mr. Joseph McCabe's *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists* for information, and found the following:—

Russell, the Hon. Bertrand Arthur William, M.A., F.R.S., writer, etc., . . . His Rationalist views are given in a chapter on "Religion and the Churches," in his *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, etc. . . . He believes in a god who is a sort of world-soul. . . .

No mention was made in the whole of this paragraph of Mr. Russell's alleged Atheism, nor of his ever having claimed to be an Atheist. On the contrary, since it was clearly stated that Mr. Russell believed in a God of sorts, my opinion was confirmed that it was quite incorrect to describe him as an Atheist. So I promptly wrote another letter to the editor of the *Radio Times* as follows:—

Sir,—When Mr. Chesterton wrote that Materialism had been practically defeated by "some of the most brilliant Atheists," I suspected him of giving rein to his imagination. My suspicions have been confirmed. Mr. Chesterton's "some" now turns out to "one," and that one is not even an Atheist. As for Materialism being dead, I fear that Mr. Chesterton is merely giving expression to "the wish that is father to the thought."

Needless to say, this letter was ignored by the editor of the *Radio Times*. In view of the notoriously cowardly attitude of the B.B.C. towards honest discussion of any controversial subject, I might have expected this treatment. Nevertheless I wrote to the editor on August 12, 1934 as follows:—

Sir,—You were good enough to print a bowdlerized version of my letter of July 1, commenting on Mr. Chesterton's false statements about Materialism and Atheists. You also allowed Mr. Chesterton to bolster up these false statement by publishing his very lame reply to my letter. But you have not yet published my letter of July 19, completely exposing Mr. Chesterton's implications.

The effect on the public mind will be as obvious to you as it is to me. Mr. Chesterton's false statements will be regarded as true, and the truth will remain suppressed. Is this your idea of honest controversy?

The following is what I received from the *Radio Times* a day or two later:—

Dear Sir,—We published your letter and Mr. Chesterton's reply, and we cannot see our way to continue the discussion on the Listener's page, where space is very limited.

(signed) G. FLETCHER.
for Editor.

In spite of the "very limited space" on the Listener's page, the *Radio Times* subsequently published another letter backing up Mr. Chesterton's mis-statements. Nothing I could do would persuade the Editor to publish my contradiction. So, as far as the public is concerned, Mr. Chesterton's lies have never been exposed till to-day.

I should add that in order to verify Mr. McCabe's description I had meanwhile written direct to Mr. Bertrand Russell himself on August 4, as follows:—

Sir,—Mr. G. K. Chesterton declares that you are an Atheist. My information (derived from McCabe's *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*) is that you are not an Atheist. Would it be asking too much of you to settle the matter by crossing out one of the two sentences below and signing the other? In the hope that you will oblige, I enclose stamped, addressed envelope for return of this letter.

Yours truly,
C. S. FRASER.

- (1) I call myself an Atheist.
- (2) I do not call myself an Atheist.

In due course my letter was returned as requested. But neither of the two last sentences had been deleted or signed. Instead, Mr. Russell chose to alter them in the following manner and to add a further note. This is how the alterations and note read:—

- (1) I sometimes call myself an Atheist.
 - (3) I sometimes call myself an Agnostic.
- I think the odds against a God are about ten million to one.

Frankly I was surprised that Mr. Russell did not clarify the situation still further by adding, "I sometimes call myself a Theist"! In consequence of this vague reply I wrote to Mr. Russell the following letter, to which I received no answer:—

Dear Sir,—Thank you for your courtesy in replying to my somewhat tersely-worded request for information. The terseness of my letter was prompted by my desire to avoid introducing, and therefore troubling you with, side-issues. I fear, however, that my aim was unsuccessful. The side-issues have turned up in your reply; and I still remain in the dark as to the main issue. Let me explain myself.

On reading your reply, two questions arose in my mind. (1) Is the man in the habit of altering his opinions from one moment to the next? (2) Does the man regard the terms "Atheist" and "Agnostic" as synonymous? Assuming that the answer to (1) is "No" (which may be a false assumption), I am forced to answer the second with a "Yes." And this conclusion seems to me well nigh impossible as applying to a man of your reputed intelligence.

The fact that you wrote, "I think the odds against a God are about ten million to one," is proof that you think the odds for a God are about one to ten million. In other words, you do not discard the possibility of there being a God; or, more briefly, you are an Agnostic.

The term "Atheist" I have always understood to mean "a person who denies the possibility of there being a God." At any rate, as an Atheist myself, that is the sense in which I use the term, and that is the sense in which my Atheist friends use the term, and that is the sense given in most of the dictionaries I have consulted. It will be seen, therefore, that the terms "Atheist" and "Agnostic" are mutually exclusive. (Whether I am right or wrong in denying the possibility of God's existence is not material to the issue.)

Of course one cannot prevent an Atheist from calling himself a Roman Catholic, or a Roman Catholic from calling himself an Atheist. But the point is—would either the Atheist or Roman Catholic be regarded as using these terms logically or legitimately? To my mind, they could not be so regarded. To my mind, therefore, you are adding to the confusion of

thought and speech in failing to use the terms "Atheist" and "Agnostic" in a sense which agrees with that in common use.

You may argue that linguistic terms have no hard and fast meanings. I am aware of this fact. Yet this does not absolve us from using terms with meanings that are consistent with the common usage of the time. Else language would be gibberish. It is just this habit of loose terminology which gives so strong a foothold to illogicality and unreason.

You may, on the other hand, question my use of the terms, and declare that I am wrong in giving them the meanings which I have done in this letter. If so, then it must follow that (1) most of the dictionaries I have consulted are wrong; (2) all my Atheist friends are wrong; (3) you are not wrong. Or, in other words, you constitute yourself the judge as to what is and is not the meaning in common usage of the two terms in question.

Since I can hardly believe that this is your attitude, and in view of your expressed opinions as an Agnostic, would it not be to the advantage of logic and reason if you were to deny the epithet "Atheist" as applied to yourself or, at least, to deny that your philosophical conclusions may legitimately be called "atheistic"?

With the foregoing facts at their disposal, I leave it to my readers to decide whether or not I am justified in asserting that it is incorrect to describe Mr. Bertrand Russell as an Atheist. I also leave it to my readers to decide whether or not I am right in my view that misapplication of the name "Atheist," whether deliberate or unintentional, puts a weapon into the hands of our detractors which they do not hesitate to use in cowardly fashion whenever opportunity permits.

C. S. FRASER.

The New Turkey

In the discussions at the recent Montreux Conference, to decide the future of the Dardanelles, there stood out visibly the affinity between Soviet Russia and modern Turkey. Ordinarily, too, their relations are good, and close co-operation between the two countries in all their activities has characterized them since their respective births. The similarity of their geneses and aims and the resulting similarity of their problems have steeled their bonds: the methods which they have practised to achieve their ends, among which is notable their rigid control and regulation of organized religion, have further cemented their friendship.

The Bolsheviki used force as the mid-wife of a society pregnant with a new order, and so did Mustapha Kemal and his revolutionary compatriots, even if they had little or no political philosophy with which to maintain their thesis. As the Bolsheviki, so did Kemal set about and achieve the creation of a new society by force, by liquidation of political opponents. Kemal though, did not hesitate to murder by assassination and other terrorist methods, and without free trial, all those who opposed him, even when they were his best friends. As a poor military cadet and a member of his revolutionary organization, the Vatan Society, he had agitated and striven to overthrow the Sultanate. On taming the Imperial power finally, he had forced himself into a progressive alliance with it at a high price, and after battles and struggles with both usurping Greek and Englishman, and a final reckoning with the Sultan, made himself as strong a dictator as Salim: as earnest, as sincere, and almost as revolutionary a dictator too.

The years immediately following 1924, when Kemal made himself supreme, were troublous times for

Turkey. Kemal had the devotion of a band of resolute followers to aid him in his fight against the almost infinite apathy and conservatism of the people, but his avowed enemies in various guises, chief among them the various churches, were his most powerful opponents: they engineered many upsets and retarded his plans considerably. His best friends and followers deserted him, and by change of policy and extra ruthlessness, he alienated many sympathizers, and even members of his government—all in the best manner of dictators. The point to be stressed though, is that despite all Kemal has immensely invigorated Turkey, and changed the entire life and habits of the vast majority of the most conservative people in the world; the Turk is no longer lazy and ignorant.

The Turkey of to-day then presents an entirely new face to the world. Thirty to forty years ago Turkey belonged to the middle ages; she now belongs to the English-American West. She was the meeting place of East to West thirty to forty years ago; now she is a territorial extension of Western Europe, to which much from the United States of America has been exported.

Of course, there is still a good deal of the Old Turkey to be seen in Angora, the almost new capital. The visitor's response to a small Angora street, for instance, shares that derived from seeing a Limehouse Alley, there is so much drabness and poverty evident. American taxies rattle over the cobbles, but dirt and decay hide not far away. Drab men and women skip out of the taxies' way into holes in the walls of big buildings. These buildings look well kept and gleam and hum with activity in contrast with the streets.

But a Turkish street scene is one scene only in the Turkish landscape, and it is the worst scene. There is the scene presented by the Government's achievement so far, which is a much brighter scene. Since 1925, Attaturk and his ministers have done what seemed impossible to most Turks. For instance, the beloved Fez has gone; and European hats have come to displace it, and European clothes the Turkish garments that go with it. Turkish women no longer go about veiled and fill harems. Arabic lettering has been abolished in favour of Latin characters, so that all books, newspapers, posters and signboards are in Western lettering. And the entire nation under forty years of age has been put back to school to learn the new alphabet. The Turks have a merchant marine, a national, Turkish-run railway system, Turkish-owned, run and staffed factories, a fine national road system, and several remarkable social experiments to their credit, besides a consciousness of their past and scientific interest in the future; all due to Mustapha Kemal and his colleagues.

The slogan of this Turkey is "Turkey for the Turks and buy Turkish," which means that there is little opportunity in present-day Turkey for foreign concession-hunters and foreign business men. The maintenance and inculcation of this patriotism and much more in the way of enlightened ideals in hygiene, housing, education and many other matters, is the work of a Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment, which is as thorough as either of its contemporaries in Germany or Italy.

Naturally, the Turkish Government's efforts to escape from the burden of a slothful past, have encountered the opposition of organized religion. In this encounter organized religion has been worsted. Turkey, formerly a rallying centre and spiritual fountain head of the faith of Islam, to-day has no time for religion. The estate is secular. Outside their mosques or homes, priests must go about without their

clerical clothes. Evangelism by the predominant faith, or by any faith is forbidden.

The Muslim Sunday, Friday, is no longer a holiday. This prevents the religious from worshipping: the Western Sunday is now compulsorily a day of rest. Such measures have led to a decrease in the numbers of the worshippers to the extent to give rise to the popular joke that there are more mosques in Istanbul (actually 500), than there are worshippers. What the cities lack in religious feeling the conservative rural districts make up for however, though even they are beginning to recognize that the acts of God they propitiate are amenable to scientific irrigation and the tractor.

The Government declares that it bears no animus against religion in so far as it does not oppose progressive reform, and stand in the way of the instillation of a virile patriotism into the minds of the people. How the Governmental decrees work out in practice, however, can be seen best by their effect upon the school curriculums, which do not teach Jesus's life story as mere ordinary history, but exclude altogether any mention of him and Christianity. Far from suffering under this deprivation, the young actually thrive under it, and continue to show only a faint interest in religion. There is deep interest among them in philosophical and psychological problems.

Many of those who are at variance with Kemal and the Government over their anti-religious policy hope that Kemal will grant freedom of worship once the important reforms have been carried out but whatever may ultimately come, there seems little hope of that yet. There is still much to be done in the way of establishing technical schools, regulating the employment of child labour, and rehousing the poorer sections of the community. As most of the various faiths have a common opposition to science, and a financial interest in slumdom as well as in the employment of child labour, their opposition is still likely to be kept weak by maintenance of the present discriminatory measures against them.

L. H. BORRILL.

Clerical Pirates

AROUND the old pirates of the Spanish Main there has been flung the glamour of romance. Distance, of course, lends enchantment to the view. But one can hardly think of any of their leaders without some feeling of admiration. For, after all, those stout, if callous and unscrupulous, fellows took great risks because they might, on the one hand, be captured by rivals; on the other, be run down by armed patrolling ships.

But there can be no romance surrounding the clerical pirates who stole the materials of which Christianity is constructed. These buccaneers did most of their piracy by proxy, and, in the furtherance and protection of their own interests, took care to avoid the dangers of storms and enemy attacks. They captured Governments by supernatural terrors, and then used them to convert or beggar heretics. The unknown is always terrible to the ignorant and fearful. These human weaknesses the clerical pirates have played upon and exploded to the *nth* degree.

And this has always been done under cover of an assumed rectitude, "holy" language, and an affectation of kindly concern. The early Spanish conquistadores full to the bung with religion, and flying Christ

at the fore, the Holy Ghost at the main and the Queen of Heaven at the mizzen were willing to accept with love the surrender of wealthy heretics, and to guarantee them a high and honourable place in the favour of the Spanish King, and eventually in the favour of the Almighty himself. As for the impecunious and rebellious heretics, who had nothing to gain and very little but their lives to lose, they were simply so much vermin to be trodden underfoot. Of course, there were some of these who were spared if they embraced the faith, and were found to be useful as spies and betrayers of their fellows for the advancement and the glory of the great Catholic Monarch.

Britain, in her own way, followed in the step of the Spaniards, and annexed new territories in the name of her King and the Lord of Hosts. The sword of steel and the sword of the spirit were crossed upon each other. Britain's Jesus, or Ju-Ju, should reign where'er the sun did his successive journeys run. That is, the extension and development of the British Empire meant the enrichment and increased power of British clericalism, which like Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicks when any limitation of its influence is suggested. For British clerics must take precedence of all the other uniformed forked radishes who rule the destinies of Britain.

In such circumstances no one need be surprised to find that British clerics, almost to a man, have always been able to bless every war declared and waged by Britain as a just, right and honourable war. No doubt British clerical pirates got a bad jolt in 1899 at the start of the South African War, when several prominent believers, led by the late W. T. Stead, issued a flaming protest, in which it was pointed out that the Boers were a Christian people, and were therefore bound to us by fraternal bonds. But the British go-getters were not to be balked of their prey (no matter how many gallant British soldiers might be sacrificed) and the clerical pirates yelled themselves hoarse in support of the go-getters. And the filthiest slanders were published about our adversaries, and the most fulsome adulations heaped upon such men as Dr. Jameson and Joseph Chamberlain.

The Boer War is but typical of a hateful war frenzy fed by clerical pirates. In the Great War, as General Crozier pointed out, the British clerics fed the blood-lust, and were equally as potent as rum in firing our soldiers for action.

Christianity originated in and was instituted by clerical piracy, and it continues to be subsidized by the clerics' wealthy constituents. There is not a passage in the Sermon on the Mount (so much mouthed but so little acted on!) which can be described as original. Infringement of copyright is patent indeed in many of the writings of the Bible. And the thing—Church, code or institution—that begins in falsehood, cruelty, piracy and robbery can only end in one way. Its last shall be like its first. Everything carries the seeds of its own dissolution; but Christianity in greater measure than anything else.

The general interests of the community are bound to suffer so long as clerical pirates continue to exist. The common people so far as identified with the Church are subjected to a kind of impoverished existence which is unnatural and artificial. Freethinkers strenuously maintain that this need not be so: that a fuller and more abundant and richer life is available to all, once men's minds are freed from the shackles imposed by the clerical pirates. For the worst piracy possible is the enslavement of any human mind. Free men's minds and you free them to all intents and purposes. Store men's minds with the knowledge of ascertained Truth; and the end of the Piracy of clerics comes within sight.

A London Encyclopedia

To compress within the compass of one volume of 800 pages the wealth of information contained in Mr. W. Kent's *An Encyclopedia of London** is a feat of which the editor can be justly proud.

London, of course, has had innumerable historians, and in this book, Mr. Kent has produced a sort of epitome of them all, enlivened with his own patience and humour, and aided by a number of specialists. Lord Snell, for example, deals with the London County Council; and there are authoritative accounts from other writers on Art, the Bank of England, London Clubs, etc.

All great Londoners have not always been Londoners. But Mr. Kent is a Londoner who has had many opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of the places, persons and events of our great capital. He rightly gives, however, a short bibliography of other books on London, just a few out of hundreds of the many fascinating works giving a general survey of the great city. I was disappointed not to find *The Town* among them, but I did not know Mr. Kent. Look up the article on Leigh Hunt and you will find full particulars about it; and, in addition, Mr. Kent adds, "A contemporary, according to Edmund Blunden, said that 'Hunt had illumined the fog and smoke of London with a halo of glory, and peopled the streets and buildings with the life of past generations.' From a literary standpoint there is no more charming book on London than this: it was an appetite-whetter to the editor of this encyclopedia, and might well be to others. Equally charming is the *Old Court Suburb* dealing with Kensington." And the *Encyclopedia* is packed with scores of references to writers, artists, clerics, reformers, musicians, statesmen and other London celebrities. Moreover, the great Londoners—like Samuel Johnson and Charles Dickens—are referred to over and over again. One will also find a large number of accounts of the lesser-known people. How many of us, for example, know that the original of Butler's *Hudibras* was Sir Samuel Luke, a parishioner of St. Anne, Blackfriars? One gets dozens of notices of this kind and other curiosities of London in the pages of the book.

Mr. Kent deals lengthily with the City churches—and in an exceedingly interesting manner too. But it is a pity that he did not deal more fully with London's heretics—a subject for which he had already qualified in *London for Heretics*. After all, this is a London Encyclopedia, and there must be a large number of people who would expect to see references to Robert Taylor and the Rotunda at Blackfriars, to the Hall of Science, so long connected with Bradlaugh and other Freethinkers, and to the Fleet Street shops which sold Freethought publications. The Rotunda is mentioned—without Robert Taylor—and the Rationalist Press Association is noticed in the reference to Johnson's Court. William Hone is dealt with, though not Richard Carlile or Henry Hetherington—both important figures in the fight for the freedom of the press and speech. But perhaps any omissions in this way are not the editor's fault. Publishers must sell their wares, and the threat of boycott is a very strong one. All the same, an encyclopedia should be without bias. Freethought has had a long and honourable career in the shaping of many of London's reforms; and it has earned a place in any account of the great city.

* *An Encyclopedia of London*, edited by W. Kent, J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 7s. 6d. net.

Once again we raise a strong protest against the deliberate suppression on the part of author or publisher—or both, of the work of a great movement and its historic connexion with London.

For the rest, I strongly recommend those who want a one-volume work on London, packed with accounts of its literary and artistic history, as well as its political and social record, to buy this 800-page Encyclopedia. It has in addition 16 excellent illustrations—including that of Mr. George Bernard Shaw in a stained-glass window in the Ethical Church. A picture of G.B.S. as a saint is almost worth the price of the book.

H. CUTNER.

Correspondence

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—My attention has recently been drawn to an article in your columns written by C. Suffern, entitled "Spirits Under Proof." Mr. Suffern refers to my father, the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Although I am well aware of the fact that certain remarks, particularly when they are made at the expense of a man who is dead, and thus unable to defend himself, are too cheap and inconsequential to warrant any serious comment. I nevertheless take this opportunity of refuting Mr. Suffern's inference that my father was inefficient as a doctor. As a matter of actual fact, as distinct from your contributor's irresponsible and impertinent conjecture, my father was generally recognized as being specially proficient at the profession which he practised as a younger man. It may interest Mr. Suffern to know that my father was one of the first, if not the first, medical man in England to throw serious doubts on the efficacy of Dr. Koch's supposed cure for consumption, in the 'nineties. It is true that shortly after coming to practise in London, after studying in Vienna, my father did abandon the medical profession, but that was not the result of any inefficiency on his part, but was a direct result of the development of his literary career, which at that time became so comprehensive that he had to abandon his medical practice.

Your contributor would be well advised in future to refrain from committing himself to misleading and fallacious assertions which are not in accordance with fact.

DENIS P. S. CONAN DOYLE.

READ FREETHINKERS

SIR,—When I have done with my *Freethinker* it is my custom to take any name out of the directory with "Rev." to it, and favour its possessor with a gift "without money and without price." The poor souls may be too much involved with the responsibilities of life dependent on keeping their jobs to be able to heed it themselves, but it may discourage them from putting their sons into the sorry trade.

ROBERT HARDING.

Adults are never religious unless they have had religion forced down their throats in their youth. This is why ministers and their assistants have to be so busy attending to the religious education of their children; and it is to this incontrovertible fact that we owe Sunday Schools, Bands of Hope, Societies of Christian Endeavour, and even the regular services of the Churches. The idea that underlies all ecclesiastical institutions, consciously or unconsciously, is that man is not by nature a religious being, and that all religious convictions, beliefs and practices must be drilled into him by a long and most laborious course of teaching.—*J. T. Lloyd.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mr. A. Connell.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market) : 8.0, Saturday, A Lecture. 7.0, Sunday, A Lecture.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connel and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Carlton and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others. *The Freethinker, Age of Reason* and Mr. Chapman Cohen's latest pamphlets on sale outside Marble Arch Tube Station every evening.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Barker. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. H. Preece. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton—"Spiritualism." Market Place, 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt, A Lecture. Literature on sale at meetings.

BURNLEY MARKET : 7.45, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

BATH (The Fountain) : 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (The Mound) : 7.0, Mr. A. Copland—A Lecture.

IIUNCOAT : 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday and Monday. Edge Hill Lamp, 8.0, Tuesday. St. James Mount, 8.0, Wednesday. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, or near vicinity, 8.0, Thursday. Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths, 8.0, Friday. These are Mr. Whitehead's Liverpool arrangements.

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