

THE
FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVII.—No. 50

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

Prayers and the Public

The House of Commons has its own chaplain. Every day before settling down to *serious* business the chaplain of the House calls the attention of God Almighty to the state of mind of the members, and presses upon him the need for endowing them with a sense of wisdom and justice. The need is obvious, the ever-present emergency clear, but, apparently, and in the opinion of the chaplain, nothing short of a miracle will remedy the state of mind of the elected representatives of the people. Nor would I hastily deny that if one is to look for a miracle, the House of Commons is as likely a place as anywhere. When one sees a man prepare to take control of the army by serving an apprenticeship in looking after traffic, while another serves an apprenticeship as Minister of Education in order to understand how to carry on the business of selling postage stamps and carrying parcels, while yet a third finds an experience in controlling mines fits him to discharge the duties incumbent on looking after the navy, it really does seem that the evidence for the need of divine intervention is rather strong. At any rate it is as good a case for the activities of God as anything I have come across.

Very few members of the House, I believe, are present when prayers are said—or read—but the prayers are asked not only for those present, but for the whole House, as it is possible that God may overlook the fact that the majority do not come in until after prayers, and he is asked to help the absent ones just as much as those present. Nor does one find any member asking, in the middle of a debate, that the House should adjourn so that members may beg for "divine" guidance on the matter under discussion. Perhaps the members take it that having asked God to give them all wisdom and justice, and finding they still lack these qualities, it is then the fault of the deity in not living up to the promise made

by his son that whatever was asked for in prayer should be granted. I believe it is true that some few—very few—members do hold private prayer-meetings, but that seems to cast some doubt as to the efficacy of the chaplain, and the majority of the six-hundred and odd probably regard these few as pure cranks. It is also true that the late W. E. Gladstone is said to have sometimes consulted God on the measures he had in hand, but God so seldom disagreed with Gladstone that his advice to that famous statesmen could have been little more than the political equivalent of the cab-driver's "Leave it to you, Sir."

* * *

God and Town Councils

From Parliament to Town Hall. Impressed perhaps with the striking results of praying to God for the improvement of members of Parliament, the President of the Birkenhead Free Church Council has suggested to the Birkenhead Town Council that a panel should be formed consisting of a priest belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, a clergyman of the Church of England, and a Nonconformist preacher who shall take it in turns to say prayers before every meeting of the Council. The three political parties in the town, Conservative, Liberal and Labour, have been consulted and they have agreed—the Labour Party, as usual, playing up to the religious crowd. But the object of each of these parties is the same. Each wants votes, and each means to get them, honestly if they can, but if they can't, to get them by other methods. The three religious representatives are to agree upon a prayer, so that the messages reaching God Almighty will be identical. This certainly shows some ingenuity. It would never do to let the Lord receive contradictory prayers; neither would it satisfy his representatives on earth if only one preacher was allowed to parade. The Catholic, in the ordinary religious situation, would roundly deny that either of the other preachers had any official standing with God Almighty. The Nonconformist would return the compliment, and the Anglican might, if he were High Church, take the side of the Catholic, and, if he were Low Church, that of the Nonconformist. The three combine on the one point in which agreement can be said to exist between them—that of securing a public advertisement by praying for the Council in public—unless one of them with a little wit in his composition considered the Council—and then prayed for the ratepayers. As for the rest of the community, those who were neither Nonconformist, Anglican or Roman Catholic, well, they could go to the devil in their own fashion. It is Christians alone who are to be considered. The others' job is to help the rates, and—we presume—for it would not be long before he had a salary—pay a Christian for advertising his own spiritual wares.

Religious Harmony

A Liverpool paper says that when the trinity of Christians had agreed upon the only point on which agreement between them was possible—that of exploiting the community in the interests of their creeds—they waited upon the leaders of the Labour, the Liberal and the Conservative Parties, they expressed the opinion that “an opening prayer would not only affirm the central belief on which we were united as a people, but would tend also to lessen acerbity in party feeling.” To exclaim “What humbugs these Christians are!” hardly does justice to the situation. One might fairly add, “What liars these Christians are where their religion is concerned!” We are united as a people! and on belief in Christianity! What an obvious falsehood. It is not a mere blunder; the facts are too obvious for it to be that. It is just a simple lie. I feel I ought to emphasize that word “simple.” It is so obviously untrue that it almost ceases to have any claim to be a lie. It is an insult to all the capable liars that the Christian Church has produced. As a people we, in this country, are made up of some scores of Christian sects, about 400,000 Jews, a large number of Mohammedans, Buddhists, Freethinkers, Agnostics, Rationalists, Mormons, and numerous other tiny sects. Does anyone outside a lunatic asylum mean to say that a profession of any one form of Christianity can possibly display us as a united people? All Christians will not be christened in the same church; they will not be married in the same church; they will not pray in the same church; they will not even be buried in the same cemetery. They agree in sending each other to the same hell, but that is about the only point on which there is unanimity.

When they go to prison—and if Christians did not go most of our prisons would have to be closed—they insist on having their own parson to visit them. If a Christian is hanged, if he is a Roman Catholic, he asks for a Catholic priest to accompany him to the scaffold; if an Anglican, for a parson of the English Church, and there would be a howl of indignation from his brother sectarians if this privilege were refused. In clubs and social gatherings it is considered “bad form” to discuss religion, solely because it is such a disturber of social harmony. Even in the proposal we are considering a single parson cannot do the praying in the Town Council. Each must have his separate talk to God Almighty, and each of the three only agreed to work with the other—in relays—because if this compromise had not been offered the proposal would never have been even considered. This display of three rival priests is to show the one thing on which we are a united people! In Birkenhead, too—which is just across the river from Liverpool with its Orange and Roman Catholic street fights! Really, if these parsons are ever permitted to pray to, or for, the Town Council, they might each begin their prayers by saying, “Oh Lord, thou knowest what liars we Christians are.”

But alas! and alas! After the matter came before the Finance Committee of the Birkenhead Town Council the Town Clerk wrote the President of the Birkenhead Free Church Council that “after careful consideration the Finance Committee was unable to recommend the Council to adopt the suggestion.” Still, of course, these preachers can pray for the Council—in their own churches. But that will not give the preachers the advertisement they are after.

* * *

Policy and Politics

I congratulate the Birkenhead Town Council on its sensible decision. It may be, of course, that the Council did not relish the prospect of these three rival merchants in the religious business being given

an official position on the Council, because it felt that sooner or later that there would be a row as to which one of the three competing praying experts was “biting the ear” of God Almighty most effectually. Or, it may be that the majority of members of the Council had reached the sane and honest conclusion that they were not there to represent either Church or Chapel. Let us hope that the latter supposition is the true one, and, if that be so, then I am encouraged to ask how long will it be before it occurs to members of local bodies, and Members of Parliament also, that they are not elected to represent any religion whatsoever? They are in Parliament and Town Councils to manage the secular affairs of the country. Elections are not fought—openly at least—on religious issues. I have never heard of one that was decided on the issue of whether prayers are answered. Parliament, it is true, does have a say in the appointment of Bishops, and the prayer-book may not be altered without its consent. It is true, also, that Parliament does help the Churches and Chapels with Sunday laws, blasphemy laws, and a cash grant of many millions annually by relieving religious buildings from rates and taxes. But, in spite of all this, when a man is elected either to Parliament or a local governing body he is there to look after the secular welfare of the people; and, once elected, he represents not merely the Christians in his constituency, but every one—without regard to differences of religious opinions.

The Labour Party should certainly be above this miserable game of playing up to religious organizations. The other two parties are older; they run back to a time when Christianity was at least professed on a more general scale than at present, and religious bigotry was stronger and more “blatant.” But the Labour Party is a newer body. It owes its very existence to the impulse to Freethinking, to the determination to arrange life with a view to *this* world, to base legislation on human needs and possibilities, ideas that played so great a part at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That party, at least, ought to be above this truckling to sectarian impudence and trickery. It may be true that if a political party plays a strictly honest game it is much longer getting into power. It may even be that so long as it remains completely honest it will never get into power. But I have a conviction that a strong party *out* of office, a party that keeps high ideals and clear ideas steadily before the public, is of ultimately greater real strength and benefit to the world than one that snaps eagerly at office, and counts position cheaply bought at the sacrifice of personal honour and social justice.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

This apt negation of free-will in man, Spinoza extended to broader spheres; and in showing that the force which moves the world acts because it exists and as it exists—that it has no alternatives, no standards of comparison of better or worse, and no appreciation of antithesis, of right or wrong—in fact, in showing that everything occurs in virtue and in accordance with eternal laws which could not be otherwise—arrived at the consoling deduction that he who understands that everything which happens, happens necessarily, will find nothing worthy of hatred, mockery or contempt, but rather will endeavour, so far as human power permits, to do well, and, as the phrase goes, to be of good cheer.

. . . To the Pantheist, man is never the subject of fate. The laws of necessity are identical with his own nature, and it is through an understanding of them that he finds himself at peace with all the world.

Saltus, "Anatomy of Negation."

Dignity and Death

"We are such stuff

As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."—*Shakespeare.*

LONDON possessed one solitary public statue of Shakespeare, which was erected by a notorious financier. On it is chiselled "There is no darkness but ignorance," which may be a truism, but is by no means a really representative quotation from the supreme genius of literature. The lines at the head of this article are quintessential Shakespeare, and when Jean Paul Richter declared that these words "created whole volumes in me," he only said what discerning readers the world over thought of Shakespeare at his best and worthiest.

This materialistic similitude of death to sleep is a thought which has possessed a peculiar fascination for great writers, ancient and modern, but more particularly Shakespeare, whom it always prompts to utterances of universal sublimity. With this lofty thought is mingled a touch of simple pathos that strikes home to every heart, as, for example, in the saying, "Tired we sleep, and life's poor play is o'er."

Sleep! All that the human fancy can conceive, of delightful and refreshing things, is compressed in that gentle word. Poets in all ages and in all countries have sung its praises, but of all tributes uttered on this subject, the most striking, probably, is that which Cervantes puts in the mouth of stout Sancho Panzo, a fellow well worth knowing:—

Sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all like a cloak. It is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot.

Indeed, left to themselves, men have been kindly in their thoughts in death. It was long, long ago pointed out by Lucretius, the stateliest of all the old Roman poets, that death is dreamless rest. Mark his beautiful words:—

"Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy sweet wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go.
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store
Thou hoardest for thine own, men say, and lo!
All thou desired has gone. But never say
All the desire as well hath passed away."

To so many of the grand old Pagan writers dissolution has no terrors beyond the sundering of friendship, or of love. They look death in the face without flinching. Epictetus says proudly:—

Why should we fear death? For where death is, there we are not; and where we are, there death is not.

No less emphatic is Marcus Aurelius, whose golden book of *Meditations* has been hailed by Renan as the gospel of those who do not believe in the supernatural. He bids us regard death as a friend:—

What is it to die? If we view it by itself, and stripped of those imaginary terrors in which our fears have dressed it, we shall find it to be nothing more than the mere work of Nature; but it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural. Nay, it is not only the work of Nature, but is conducive to the good of the universe, which subsists by change.

Recall, also, the death of Socrates, one of the most memorable pages in the world's history, and one that raises our whole estimation of the human race. These great Pagans not only invested death with dignity, but destroyed all its terrors. The modern Freethought poets carry on the same proud tradition.

Shelley in the lovely opening lines of his *Queen Mab*, hails death and sleep as brethren. Walt Whitman, "the tan-faced poet of the West," has chanted many a hymn of welcome to death. Our own Swinburne sings beautifully:—

"Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done :
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore."

That "unsubduable old Roman," Walter Savage Landor, in extreme age, wrote:—

"Death stands above me whispering low,
I know not what into my ear;
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear."

George Meredith asked with a fine touch of Stoicism:—

"Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

Death to that fine poet, Sully Prudhomme, was the liberator as well as the great consoler. He wished to "drift on through slumber to a dream, and through a dream to death." Left to themselves, men tend to become materialistic. But Priests, for their own sorry and despicable ends, have ever sought to derive material advantage from the bare fact that man is mortal. They have had control of education, and they have taught their innocent dupes that death is the most dreadful evil. All the bestialities, all the horrors, that theologians could gather from savage nations were added to increase the terrors, and, invariably, they tried to paralyse reason with the clutch of fear. Priests have been gangsters since the dawn of history.

The advent of the Christian priests actually deepened this terror. Their truly horrible dogmas of hell and damnation were exploited to the full. Never has death been the cause of such craven timidity as in the Christian world. To a mere handful of visionaries like Catherine of Siena, or Emanuel Swedenborg, it may have been different, but to the innocent and uncultured multitudes death has been, and still is, unhappily, the King of Terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Seneca and Plato would have scorned with lifted eyebrows. These great Pagans were free from the Christian Superstition, but Christians themselves fear death as children fear to go in the dark. In Bacon's famous essay on death, it is remarkable that all the instances he gives of death being borne with equanimity are taken from Pagan sources. For the Christian Religion added fresh terrors to death in the thought of being cut off in sin. Even in our own day, the Church, the State form of Superstition, has a prayer against sudden death, which the old-world Pagans regarded as by far the best form of death.

The Christian clergy have found it very profitable to invest death with terrors. They have heaped horror on horror's head. "Prepare for death, flee from the wrath to come," have been their cries. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," shout the evangelists, and afterwards make a collection. By such appeals to fear and imagination, the clergy have made a terror of what should be accepted with serenity. Old Sam Johnson was not a fool, but he was tormented by the fear of death. Gentle William Cowper was actually driven mad by the horrors of religion. It is idle to pretend that the Christian clergy do not preach hell and damnation when every lunatic asylum contains victims of religious mania. Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the last century, preached and wrote that the majority of human beings were destined to everlasting

ing torture in full view of their merciful deity. Today, the Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful of all the churches in Christendom, has not abated one solitary spark of its fiery damnation, and the Salvation Army, which caters for the bed-rock believers, actually works the same horrible threat into its business trade-mark—"Blood and Fire"—and the tambourines of its theatrical devotees are full of money.

Truly, the Pagans and the poets have left the priests and their savage superstitions far behind. Beyond the fabled fireworks, the paltry purgatories, and the pinchbeck paradises, the dignified words of the great writers sound over the world. For uncounted centuries priests have chanted for mere profit the old, unhappy, disheartening refrain of death as a dreaded enemy, but the Freethinker listens to far other and far nobler strains. Paying no heed to "the lie at the lips of the priest," he dies without fear:—

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

MIMNERMUS.

The Supreme Gods of Savage Cults

THE late Andrew Lang, with characteristic perversity, revived the view that monotheism was the earliest religion of mankind. While evolutionary anthropologists contended that the concept of one supreme deity is the product of a long anterior course of mental and cultural development, Lang suggested that monotheism preceded polytheism, and that animism, corpse worship, and other inferior cults have resulted from deterioration from primary purer faiths.

This speculation naturally commended itself to those ethnologists who were unemancipated from theological prepossessions, and was eagerly adopted by the Jesuit Father Schmidt, whose disciples, Fathers Koppers and Gusinde, with others, have instituted the German culture history school.

The so-called evidences propounded by the advocates of the doctrine of primary monotheism, have recently been subjected to careful scrutiny and destructive criticism. In his *Origins of Religion*, (Kegan Paul, 12s. 6d. net), the eminent ethnologist, Rafael Karsten, Professor in the University of Helsingfors, discards superstition and rests on science alone. No merely academic anthropologist, Prof. Karsten travelled for six years in South America, where he dispassionately studied the cults and customs of the Indian tribes. He has also conducted a close inquiry into the religions of the Finno-Ugrian region where, he assures us, "Finnish and Russian ethnologists have been at work in the last decades, bringing to light a body of facts which form a valuable addition to our knowledge about religious life at an early stage in evolution. These new facts, however, are known only imperfectly to international science, being written to a great extent in languages not generally understood in Europe." Hence, the author has gained conclusions that run counter to those cherished by several other anthropologists. Karsten dismisses the curious contentions of Lévy-Bruhl and Marett as more or less visionary, while his intensive studies have made him conclude that the views originally enunciated by Herbert Spencer and Sir Edward Tylor are in the main correct.

Despite the objections urged against Tylor's animism and Spencer's ghost theory, Karsten is convinced that animism as conceived by Tylor, "still goes to the root of the matter." And in reviewing

Spencer's doctrine he writes: "Since the days of Spencer, modern ethnology has brought to light numerous facts which directly confirm his hypothesis. Everything, for instance, favours the hypothesis that the religion of the Finno-Ugrian peoples, as existing among the Russian and Asiatic tribes up to our own day, has been developed out of a primitive worship of the dead. The same may be said of the religion of the Bantu tribes of Africa and of that of the South American Indians. Even the highly developed State religion of the Incas was at bottom nothing but an ancestor worship in a wonderful system."

Still, we encounter clerical and lay anthropologists, who profess to discover vestiges of a primary divinity rising supreme to the common spirits that haunt savage theology. When dealing with the Fuegians, Father Gusinde stresses the existence of monotheism, while ignoring the natives' adoration and propitiation of the dead. Again, Schmidt assumes as an established truth the entirely unwarranted theory of an original revelation of monotheism to humankind and obstinately maintains this doctrine against his evolutionary adversaries.

Father Schmidt's Supreme Beings are, as Professor Pettazzoni, of Rome, points out, a very motley assembly, while Karsten pays scanty respect to the claims of this priest concerning them. He is far more interested in the facts disclosed by an unprejudiced study of lowly cults. Andrew Lang originally found these shadowy deities in aboriginal Australia from certain statements of A. W. Howitt, the weight of whose authority appears to have been greatly overrated, for, when other and more reliable witnesses are consulted, especially Spencer and Gillen, it becomes plainly evident that the Australian High Gods bear little resemblance to the moral divinities depicted by Schmidt and Lang. Karsten discerns in these celestial beings the plain characteristics of deified ancestors.

Moreover, these so-called Supreme Beings are revered as ancestral spirits, who, in former times, created plants and animals, and instituted the rites and ceremonies of tribal life. These ancestral gods sometimes assume animal forms such as the kangaroo and other native organisms. Some tribes assert that these deities, having performed their mundane tasks, were converted into the sacred symbols known as *churinga*, or became incarnate in holy trees or stones. Long ago they lived and laboured in the land when, their activities completed, they ascended to the heavens where they repose in peace.

Howitt himself admits the crude anthropomorphism of these "supreme gods." When referring to the High God of the South Eastern aborigines he remarks that: "This supernatural being, by whatever name he is known, is represented as having at one time dwelt on the earth, but afterwards to have ascended to a land beyond the sky, where he still remains observing mankind." (*Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 506). Also, Spencer and Gillen, in speaking of the tribes of Northern Australia state that: "They have not the vaguest idea of a personal individual other than an actual living member of the tribe who approves or disapproves of their conduct, so far as anything we call moral is concerned."

Yet the native higher gods have been described as the jealous guardians of tribal morality, but Prof. Haddon ascertained personally, that an alleged ethical deity in the Torres Straits has no existence in the native mind, while their sacred ceremonies were attributed to the tribal culture heroes—men who after death were enrolled in the ranks of the gods.

Dr. Karsten considers the Australian sky-god as an outstanding ancestor, who was in the past promoted to a divine status, and revered as the creator of

the world and its ways, "Having given his people its institutions and rites, he retired to the sky, where he still lives."

The assertions of Schmidt and his disciples suffer severely when analysed. Prof. Pettazzoni complains that the omniscient powers ascribed to these chief gods have been seriously exaggerated. For they are far from all-knowing and, indeed, the lowly races are incapable of forming an idea so abstract as that of omniscience.

Turning to the Andamanese, we discover that their "Supreme God," Puluga, is easily deceived, particularly after sunset. The benevolent character claimed for these elusive deities cannot be sustained. They are frequently completely callous concerning human calamities and, in some instances, are actually dreaded as diabolical powers.

Another clerical anthropologist, Bishop Söderblom asserts, that the Australian god Baiame is "clearly distinguished from the spirits which the same tribes know and fear," and that, strictly speaking, the aborigines are not ancestor-worshippers and possess no cult of the dead. This episcopal pronouncement is scarcely countenanced by the facts which reveal an intimate relationship between the celestial divinities and the totemic ancestors. Spencer and Gillen, first-hand authorities, note that during the initiation ceremonies when the *churinga* or bull roarers sound at loudest, the women imagine that the uproar is caused by the supreme spirit Twanyirika, who has come to carry the boys into captivity. Again, among the natives of South East Australia thunder is attributed to their ancestral spirit in the sky, who is swinging his *churinga*, or that the pealing in the heavens is the sound of Daramulun's voice. Even Howitt admits that Daramulun is supposed to reside in the sky, where he ministers to the spirits of the dead, and that prayers are addressed to Baiame. Rude images of this god and his wife are also erected at the initiation stations. Moreover, "the men throw blazing sticks at the women and children to symbolize Daramulun coming to burn them."

The alleged primary monotheism of the African Negroes is more enigmatical, but Christian and Moslem influences have been in constant operation over a long period. Bosman, who traded with the Negroes, thought their supreme god arose from European sources. It is certainly suggestive that the Islamic geographer, Leo Africanus, who journeyed through North and West Africa from 1505 to 1520, definitely states that the blacks at that time were unacquainted with any being that could be considered a god.

Even the Great Spirit of Red Indian religion is not above suspicion. Scientists and missionaries alike have been misled by a misunderstanding of native terms, not only in North America but elsewhere. Dorsey has shown that the Dacotah word *wakanda*, interpreted as *Great Spirit*, really means "mystery" or "mysterious." As Dr. Karsten observes: "Among many tribes the sun is *wakanda*, among the same tribes the moon is *wakanda*, and so are thunder, the stars, the winds, as also various animals, trees and inanimate objects or places of a striking character; even a man, especially a medicine-man, may be considered *wakanda*."

Karsten's personal investigations among South American native races, completely convince him that all the Indian tribes uninfluenced by the missionaries or European travellers, have no idea whatever of any ethical Supreme Being. Primitive theologies are certainly to be met with, and lowly peoples, like more advanced communities, naturally speculate concerning origin and destiny. As Karsten states: "They want to find an answer to the question, who has given them useful plants, implements, and weapons, who

has taught them to cultivate the ground, to spin, weave, and so forth. . . . Answers to such questions are given in myths about mighty ancestors and chiefs who formerly lived among them, but later, from one reason or another, retired from their people, either up into the sky, or down to the under-world where they still exist."

T. F. PALMER.

Gentle Jesus

AS LITERATURE

[A round table discussion in the Editorial Room of the *Slimtown Sentinel*.]

EDITOR: And whose bright idea is this?

Railton: It was Macfarlane's.

Ed.: *Macfarlane's!* Angels and Ministers of Grace defend us!

Macfarlane: And why for no, may I be so bold as to ask?

Ed. (mock seriously): An' how long, may I be so bold as to ask, may it be since Jock Macfarlane graced the House of God?

Macfarlane: That's got nothing to do with it, at all. We're speaking here as journalists; not as Catholics, Atheists, Non-cons,—

Railton: Mac's right, chief. Just give him the floor for a while.

The Editor assents with a nod.

Macfarlane: What I'm thinking is this. Let's print the Bible in instalments in the *Sentinel*, day by day. In the first place, it's *free* copy. It'll draw to us some of the customers of the *Shriek*, which has been getting the whole boiling of the pious in this town by featuring each day a wee Bible text, with comment, by the Rev. Angus Turner. It also runs a weekly article entitled *Things of the Spirit*. And they bring in God every chance they get, Spain, China, Slimtown Council Meetings. They—

Ed.: The point is, Mac.: What good does it do them?

Macfarlane: Well, Chief, we all know how difficult it is to definitely account for ups and downs of circulation. But we do know we are going down and, from all accounts, the *Shriek* is going up. And another thing we all know and that is that Religion is a best seller. What was I taught the very first year of my training? Best Seller Number One, War; Best Seller Number Two, Adulteries and the like; Best Seller Number Three, Religion. Best—

Ed.: Quite, quite! Admitted, with the qualification that it is more than possible that some of our received axioms may need revising from time to time. Things aren't quite where they were in these matters. I see the point, of course, of collaring some readers of the *Shriek*. But we may lose as many by printing the Bible. Of course, Mac., you mean *some* of the Bible?

Macfarlane: Naturally. I'm not quite daft. We could run selections daily for a fortnight or three weeks; or, if you preferred, a couple of columns weekly for three or six—no—three, months.

Ed.: That, of course, would depend upon how it caught on. But if it's going to be a matter of picking and choosing, who's the man for the job? We haven't got any amateur theologians amongst us. Or, have we?

Railton: Belton, Rossiter and Grand are Catholics.

Ed. (turning his head): Any offers, boys? (The Catholic trio are silent.)

Macfarlane (after a pause): You don't want a theologian, Chief. You want a journalist. I'll back my-

self for the job if it's a volunteer you want.

Ed. (pensively): These religious people need tactful handling. I don't think, for instance, that the Catholics will show any enthusiasm.

Brown: The priests won't, but they're a handful. And in *this* country, they won't voice the point, even to their flocks.

Macfarlane: The Bible, ye ken, is the source of England's Greatness. (Laughter).

Ed.: Business, Mac., *Business!* Robson, what are you thinking?

Robson: There's something in it, Chief. Mac. has a pretty talent for blasphemy, but you can rely upon him to tackle any job like a journalist. He's got some pride. The difficulty I see is that the only parts of the Bible we could publish that would make our paper sell like hot cakes, we dare not print. The Law would be down on us. And, if we print the tame parts, will anyone read them?

Macfarlane: There's such a thing as a judeecious blend. We can introduce a hair-raiser now and again, prefaced by a few remarks about "rich oriental imagery." No Christian will complain, and the reader will be left hoping for more.

Ed.: Good! Have you anything to say, Miss Lennard?

Lennard: What would Mr. Macfarlane's viewpoint be in making the selections? Or, if the text is to be extensively drawn upon, the *omissions*?

Ed.: Yes, Mac. You must tell us that.

Macfarlane: With pleasure, Chief. First, I think I know what the type of customer you hope to catch wants. I would lead off with one of the Gospels.

Brown: Which?

Macfarlane: Well I couldn't give any one of the four in its entirety, and I don't want to use too much blue pencil. So this points to *Mark*, the shortest. It frees us from some major difficulties. *John*, for instance, contains the story of the Woman taken in Adultery. The Church of England with its passion against any Divorce Facilities don't want that advertising just now. They would call it "condonation."

Ed.: Then why not cut it?

Macfarlane: That would be too signceficant. Now, in *Luke*, I should knock up against the text:—

But these mine enemies which would not that I shall reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

This, at a time when the *Pacifist Jesus* is the approved rôle, would have to be deleted.

Miss Lennard (impatiently): What about *Mark*, if you please.

Ed.: Miss Lennard is right, Mac. We want *positive* information.

Macfarlane: Well, I think from a journalist's point of view, we would need to be liberal with the blue pencil over the parables. They are definitely dull. Then we must cut out every reference to Hell Fire, for that does not catch on nowadays. Cut, for instance, the later verses of the 9th Chapter. Also those in the last chapter, uttered *after* the Resurrection:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Cut also from this chapter the list of the "signs" to follow those who believe, such as the drinking of poisons and the suffering of snake-bite with impunity. And, then, there is the 13th chapter, when the coming is foretold of the Son of Man, who will gather together his elect. This, it is said, would take place in that very generation, even—

Ed.: *Cut!*

Miss Lennard: Oh Sir, this is monstrous. You can never take these liberties.

Macfarlane: Oh, it can't be done, can't it? Well, allow me to tell you, Miss Lennard, that this is being done at the present moment, *precisely* on the lines I suggest, by a leading Fleet Street Sunday paper. They are following the lead of *The Bible as Literature*.

Ed.: Yes, Mac., I know. The Perfect Alibi! What after *Mark*, please?

Macfarlane: I should follow up *Mark* with the Story of Susanna and the Elders. That'll fetch 'em. Thank you, Robson. It will also be a sop to the Catholics. Then we will have a heavily bowdlerized *Genesis*. Then, perhaps, the Song of Solomon—

Ed.: Good enough, Mac. We'll give it a run. Passed to you for action, Jock. Thank you very much, Miss Lennard and gentlemen. Good morning, all. (They file out.)

T. H. ELSTON.

The Shadow Show

"For in and out, above, about, below
'Tis nothing but a magic shadow show,
Played in a box whose candle is the sun
Round which we phantom figures come—and go."

Omar Khayyam.

HE HAS TO LIVE

"The Church had to live and so it became what it is."—*Dean Inge in the "Evening Standard."*
Precisely!

In one of the hitherto unrecorded speeches of Sergeant Buzfuz defending his client Mr. William Sikes* on a charge of murder, I came across the following moving peroration.

"Gentlemen of the Jury. My learned friend has used no little of his forensic skill and a good deal of his histrionic ability to blacken the character of the prisoner. I use the word blacken advisedly. We live in a relative age. He has proved to his own satisfaction—if not to yours—that the prisoner has shed blood, hot human blood, that he is a liar and a thief, a bully and a braggart, and that for years he has battered on the credulity of his ignorant and deluded dupes.

"My learned friend has cunningly insinuated that the prisoner merits your condemnation, but I have a far higher opinion of your intelligence than that. You are not to be swayed by mere emotion and tawdry rhetoric. My learned friend doubtless expects me to deny his charges, or, at best, to gloss over them and palliate them. I shall, in that case, disappoint him.

"I shall not deny the impeachments. I shall glory in them and justify them in one brief but golden phrase. What if the prisoner is a bully and a braggart? HE HAS TO LIVE! What if he has shed human blood? His own existence was imperilled. He was about to be denounced by his wretched victim, he was hunted and harried from pillar to post, deserted by his oldest friends.

"Self-preservation gentlemen, we are taught, is the First Law of Nature. He obeyed that law. HE HAD TO LIVE.

"And so, Gentlemen of the Jury, confidently I appeal to you. In your hands rests the fate of the prisoner.

"Shall he be condemned for what is manifestly a primary Virtue, or shall he go forth Free, untrammelled and unafraid with your verdict of Not Guilty? Gentlemen, it is in your hands, I say to justify the first and foremost Law of the Universe. A MAN MUST LIVE."

* Yes. One is in *Pickwick* and the other in *Oliver Twist*, but I have a psychic edition.

WHAT! AGAIN?

The latest edition of the Holy Bible is—as usual—reported to be selling more than Hot Cross Buns. This is the "Bible as Literature."

There are, it is computed, already seventy-five thousand five hundred and forty-seven "Lives of Jesus" published—and still they come. We've had "The Man Jesus," "The God Jesus," "The Jesus Nobody Knows," "Everybody's Jesus." We've also had "Christ the Scientist," "Christ the Conservative," and "Christ the Communist."

We've had ingenious speculations ranging from "If Christ Came to Chicago, Camberwell—and for all I know—Chorlton-cum-Hardy." There's nothing to prevent an enterprising American publishing "Christ and His Gang," to be followed in due course, possibly by "Jesus the G. Man."

After all, if Christians are right, Jesus should be—as the schoolboy wrote about Cæsar's wife, "All things to all men."

WHY NOT B.F.?

The following letter appears in the *Evening Standard* :—

In the autumn of 1918 I was in the Blackhall district, near Carlisle, on holiday, and witnessed a remarkable phenomenon.

In certain fields around Blackhall and Dalston the leaves of the wheat and barley were growing with the imprint of letters actually on the leaves.

These letters were "B" and "V" and appeared as plainly as if they had been impressed by machinery on each leaf.

It was said locally that this promised a British victory, and that the same phenomenon had occurred before—just prior to the end of the Crimean War.

I should be interested to hear of any confirmation from your readers.

UP TO DATE

The Pope's recent circular on the Japanese invasion of China with all its attendant atrocities, points out that "after all Japan is fighting Bolshevism and Atheism."

Mr. W. N. Ewer ought to revise his famous poem

How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews!

by adding

Now in response
To pious pleas
He's, for the nonce,
Turned Japanese!

AND THEN, OF COURSE, THE BISHOP

As quoted in *This England* :—

"Where the Rainbow Ends is the Most Beautiful Play in the whole world."—*The Bishop of London*.

GWYN EVANS.

November Folly

"The man who disturbed the Silence has been certified insane."—*Daily Paper*.

THE poor benighted Fool
He did no ill,
Save call for Peace.
The crowd could only clamour "Kill!"
The Silence broke. Above the Cenotaph
God got his longest, loudest laugh.

Acid Drops

The Rev. J. R. Armitage, vicar of Bootle, has urged the Evolution Protest Movement to protest to the Board of Education against a teacher in one of the local elementary schools who has been telling his pupils man has developed from the ape-world, and that what Darwin said was true. If the Rev. Armitage had his way, we expect that would mean the "sack" for the teacher. And this in 1937, when evolution is the accepted hypothesis throughout the civilized world. There is, however, one grain of comfort for Mr. Armitage and the Evolution Protest Movement. The evolution of man from an ape-like form (mentally at least) has not proceeded so far as to quite shut out the possibility of a return. Reversion to type is not unknown in the biological world.

We have often said that we have no special objection to a liar, providing the liar brings a little artistry into his work. Then he may become interesting. But the religious liar nowadays simply bores one. There is no originality in him. He repeats all the old lies, with a mere variation in time and place, and he tells them to people that can confer no credit upon the liar's power of deception. For example, there is the attempt made by the Roman Catholic press in this country (the *Catholic Herald* is an exception), some of the Church papers, a number of Members of Parliament and a few others, to identify the proposed International Conference with a Communistic gathering ordered by Russia. Then there is the general card played by some of our syndicalized papers, the Roman Catholic propagandists and others, to identify the revolt of the Spanish people against the Church with the propaganda of Atheistic Communism ordered by Russia. And by contrast, the unspeakable brutalities of the Franco gang, openly organized and supported by Germany and Italy, become the work of a band of spotless knights fighting for liberty and the Cross.

No one who was not anxious to be deceived could possibly be misled by such transparent lying. To their credit plenty of the leaders of the Churches in this country have openly protested against the travesty of history and current fact. Those who doubt this will find in the *Times* for November 29, a letter signed by the Deans of Exeter, Chichester and St. Paul's, the Bishops of Lichfield, Ripon, Exeter, and other bishops, with some Nonconformist ministers, which states that "Reference to Spanish history completely dispels the idea that anti-clerical outbreaks in Spain must be prompted by Communism, for they were familiar long before the days of Karl Marx." But, of course, the mass of people know nothing of Spanish history; they never think of even looking up the history of any country to understand the significance of current events, and eagerly swallow any sensational lie that panders to their own prejudices.

But the matter goes much farther than the signatories to the *Times'* letter indicate. It is not the question of Spain but of general European history that crops up here. For during the history of medieval and modern history, whenever the body of the people revolted, that revolt was usually partly aimed against the Church. That is a significant fact which we should like to see those who have written to the *Times* explain. Of course, the only genuine explanation is that the Christian Church in all ages has stood for might against right, and for vested interests against the people's claims; and the wielding of "spiritual" terror was with rare exception exercised against the claim of the "under-dog" to a more equitable share of the land in which he was living. Martin Luther's advice to the Princes during the revolt of the peasantry that they who resisted the established powers might be shot, stabbed, or poisoned like mad dogs, struck a generally Christian and historic note. The history of the Church in Spain, which brought a high civilization to ruins in that country, offers only a striking illustration of the general truth.

We have had a great many things claimed for Christianity, but the strangest claim we have ever heard is that of the *Church Times*: "The Englishman can laugh at himself, and that is truly a Christian faculty." The Christian can neither laugh at himself, nor can he stand other people laughing at him. We are told that Jesus wept—but never that he laughed. The last thing one can picture is a laughing St. Paul. Scotland and Geneva, in the days when Christianity was most powerful, and England, under the stricter Puritanism, were not exactly centres of merriment. Confessions of Faith do not read as though they were written by men with a strong sense of humour. The ordinary parson certainly "jokes wi' deeficulty." Finally, in this sadly incomplete catalogue, the essential feature of legal blasphemy in this country to-day consists in laughing at, or ridiculing, Christian beliefs. The one thing that is quite Christian about the *Church Times* is that of labelling everything it agrees with as good "Christian."

The *Catholic Herald*, in its issue for December 3, cites the following from these columns:—

After all, what is the difference between a Roman Catholic service and that of an African tribe with witch-doctor complete.

Quite good, but the *Herald* would have conferred a favour upon us if they had told just what and where is the exact difference between the two? It must be rather dangerous to quote it without some explanation. Some of its more intelligent readers may wonder what the correct answer is.

Father Leonard writes in the *Catholic Times*, "It is a frightening fact that thousands of our teachers to-day are not Christians, and some even avowed Atheists." It is a far more deplorable fact that so many teachers are not believers in Christianity, but are lacking in the courage to say so for fear of arousing the active bigotry of Christian bigotry. There must always be something bad about an educational system which so far as it can places a premium upon hypocrisy, and a tax upon intellectual straightforwardness. But the desire of Father Leonard and his kind is to breed believers, not to encourage children to grow up with mental independence.

Father Leonard is also wroth with the B.B.C. He says that the B.B.C. "while pretending to be broad-minded, impartial, and even Christian, has been won over to sponsor the anti-God movement." This is very, very ungrateful. After the B.B.C. announcing that it is its business to save Christianity from disintegration, and giving so large a portion of its Sunday service to religion, to be told that it has been won-over to the "Anti-God movement," is enough to make Sir John Reith cry out for one or two straightforward broadcasts on religion from avowed and known Freethinkers.

By an interesting analysis of ethical conditions which affect sexual morality throughout the world, Mr. J. Rumney, B.Sc., Ph.D., in *Science and Society*, quarterly, tabulates the U.S.S.R. as well ahead of all other countries, followed by the Scandinavian countries, with the U.S.A. and Great Britain lower down the scale. The code of morality is lowest in Catholic countries, and Italy—the motherland of that faith—has the basest code of all except Persia, which, for some undefined reason, is given no code whatsoever. Points were awarded each country according to the scale of its (1) control of property and participation in economic life as between men and women; (2) educational system; (3) suffrage; (4) prostitution; (5) divorce grounds; (6) guardianship of children; (7) illegitimacy treatment; (8) birth-control, etc.

"Millions of Us" is a Hollywood film about American labour troubles. On arrival in England, the censor refused his certificate, although the L.C.C. passed it with only one cut. The banned sequence (we learn from the *Star*) "shows a starving unemployed man lying on some

steps. A benevolent old lady gives him a card with an address on it. He goes to the place and finds it is a chapel, but all it can offer him is a call to prayer." This was evidently too clear a "catholic truth" for our Roman Catholic censor Lord Tyrrel.

The "United" Christian Front has met with disunion already. Mr. Angus Watson has resigned from the Committee on the ground that political use has been made of his connexion with the society. Sir Henry Lunn, who remains with the Committee, denies certain statements made by the resigned member and adds: "It is Mr. Watson's duty to withdraw his statements now." We can assure the Committee that the present little differences, so early in the movement's history are nothing at all to the deadly feuds which always arise when Christians pretend to "sink their rivalries."

Feeling that "the Churches have failed," and that "the Archbishop of Canterbury's recall to religion has received no answer," Mr. Cyril James is going to sample the services each Sunday and let the *Daily Mirror* report him on the Monday following. His pathetic "campaign" began with a visit to Kentish Town Parish Church. After enquiring his direction of several men in vain, a girl he approached remembered that the church was "next door to the Forum Cinema." So he found it, and entering for morning service, passed the embarrassing and wondering gaze of seven men, two boys, and 53 women spread over a seating capacity for hundreds. Three of the men assisted at the "collection." "Plump, baldish, spectacled, deliberate," Rev. E. J. Bentley, the vicar, conducted service, but he has a curate, the Rev. W. R. Gill, "a thinner man, with a shock of dark hair and sharp profile," to assist! Mr. James came away with an impression that there was no warmth of welcome, and more young men are needed at the morning service. Perhaps it would be helpful if Mr. James could trace the "young men" who were wont to attend in more conventional times.

Happy news for Walthamstow children! Three Sunday-school teachers of St. Mark's, Shernhall Street, have resigned. The new vicar is accused of dictatorship, and eight teachers threatened to strike. Fascism will never have anything new to teach our clergy.

Fifty Years Ago

CANON LIDDON pretends to believe that without a Day of Judgment, and future rewards and punishments, the old "Epicurean rule, Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die, has much to say for itself." Surely it is anything but soul-stirring to find such nonsense talked in the greatest church in England. There never was such an "Epicurean rule." This absurdity was fathered upon Epicureanism by St. Paul, who knew as much about it as the man in the moon. Epicurus taught a noble and beautiful philosophy, compared with which most Christian teaching is childish babble or lunatic raving. Why should a man live like a pig because he does not believe he will live for ever? Is Canon Liddon stupid enough to think that any Atheist sat down and deliberately said to himself—"I cannot possibly live more than seventy or eighty years, and therefore I will gormandize and guzzle, ruin my health, deny myself every intellectual and moral pleasure, and end my life with the greatest rapidity?" Canon Liddon will find that Christians, and not Atheists, fill our gaols as well as our asylums. Seneca aspired to live nobly without a thought of heaven or hell, but Canon Liddon, who says that God made us, has so poor an opinion of mankind—doubtless derived from study of his fellow Christians—that he thinks the hope of heaven and the fear of hell are necessary to keep them from social suicide. Such is the philosophy of a "soul-stirring" preacher after eighteen centuries of Christianity!

The Freethinker, December 11, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. C. CORNET.—There are just under 400,000 Jews in Britain. The other question is incapable of answer, but you must not be misled by wild statements. Insist on having authority—one that can be verified—for the stories you hear.

H. ROBERTSON.—On the face of it there are far more inducements in this country for a man to profess Christianity than there are for him to attack it. So long as this is so profession of disbelief carries with it a greater guarantee of sincerity than will a profession of belief. That is all we meant by what we said, not that the Freethinker was bound to be right—although, as a matter of fact, he has usually been on the right side very much more than has the Christian.

S. WILLIAMS (Sydney, N.S.W.)—You must expect to find things with which you disagree in the *Freethinker*. We disagree with some of them ourself. One of the main purposes of this paper is to incite people to do their own thinking. If we encourage them to do this on any and every subject we shall have done good work.

H. LEAVIS, H. C. HOLDEN and W. A. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper will be sent for four weeks.

For Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—E. Williams (U.S.A.), 3s. 3d.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

Sugar Plums

There was a good audience at the Birkenhead Town Hall on Monday last, to listen to Mr. Cohen's address on "Will Christianity Survive?" The address was heard with attention and obvious appreciation by the majority. A number of questions followed, and there was a little opposition. The main feature of this was the obvious unacquaintance of the questioners with what Free-thought meant. Mr. Standfast took the chair, and acquitted himself well. There was a number of friends present from Liverpool and elsewhere.

On Sunday next (December 19) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Birmingham. His subject will be "Are we Civilized?" Chair will be taken at 7.0, and admission will be free. We hope that Birmingham friends will make this meeting as widely known among their friends as is possible.

On Tuesday, December 14, in the Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead, Mr. Joseph McCabe will lecture for the local N.S.S. Branch, at 8 o'clock, on "The Papacy and the World-Crisis." Chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m.

A large number of our readers will, we are sure, be pleased to learn, that the Secular Society, Limited, has

just issued a reprint of the very fine defence of Thomas Paine, by J. M. Robertson, against the aspersions of Sir Leslie Stephen. We consider this to be one of the most striking examples of J. M. Robertson's forceful and scholarly writing, and it is a publication that every Freethinker should have in his possession. The ground covered by Mr. Robertson is that which is traversed by most of Paine's calumniators, and it is well to know the facts. The booklet is published at sixpence. Postage 1d.

Mr. J. Marsh informs us that he has been instrumental in getting some of our three volumes of our *Essays in Freethinking* introduced into the Cardiff Public Library. We are pleased to have the news, and hope the books will lead to further reading along the same lines. A fourth volume of this series is in the press, and will be issued shortly.

Tickets for the Annual Dinner in the Holborn Restaurant on Saturday evening, January 22, are now ready, and an early application (8s. per ticket) is strongly advised. Besides the Dinner there will be speeches, the usual first-rate musical programme, and what is always a very enjoyable feature, the opportunity for meeting Freethinkers from different parts of the country. Cheap day excursions from most of the large provincial towns in most cases enable ticket-holders to remain until the end of the proceedings. Cash should accompany applications for Dinner Tickets. Vegetarians are catered for; and details of hotel accommodation, if required, should be stated, and addressed either to the Pioneer Press or Offices of the National Secular Society, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Attention is again directed to the folding greeting card, with quotation from Col. Ingersoll, twopence each, seven for one shilling, and the tastefully designed post card with a pointed verse from Thomas Hardy's "Winter Words" at one penny each (or ninepence per dozen), which includes postage in both cases. Orders received by the Pioneer Press or National Secular Society will receive prompt attention.

P.C. Brown has something pertinent to say:—

Frank Filmer, a butcher of London Road Teynham, Kent, was fined £10 10s. at Faversham County Sessions to-day for moving animals in an area infected with foot-and-mouth disease. Pleading not guilty, he stated that insufficient notification of the order in force had been given by the police.

P.C. Brown: The notices are usually posted on the church doors, but as nobody goes near the churches, I put the posters where the farmers would see them—in saloon bars.

We are assured by His Grace of Canterbury and other prominent clerics that all is well. *The Recall to Religion* appeal has been quite satisfactory.

This evening (December 12), at 6.30, Mr. H. Cutner is lecturing at the Leicester Secular Society, Humberstone Gate, on "Malthus and Marx." We hope that there will be a good attendance of members and friends.

We are informed, by himself, that Mr. Beverley Nicholls sees beneficent *Design* in everything. Mr. Nicholls has his path cast in pleasant places. With the exception of the occasional shedding of a tear over a drooping chrysanthemum, there would appear to be little to bother him. One's beliefs are very frequently affected by one's circumstances.

We remember an American story of a man who got out of bed at three in the morning, wrapped his nightgown closely to him, walked down-stairs and stood on the front step, impressed with the beauty and wonder of the Heavens, loudly declaring the Glory of God. Then a little click came from behind. The door had closed trapping his clothing. He had to divest himself of his one article of raiment and climb like a cat-burglar to reach his bed again. His admiration of the wonders of Nature meanwhile suffered a complete eclipse.

Fundamentalist Modernism

AN interesting feature of the last Modern Churchmen's Conference was the reading of a Paper by the Rev. Laurence Browne, D.D., on the "Fundamentalist Solution." This Paper forms part of a volume* reporting the Fifteen Papers which examine *The Crisis*, and the various angles (called by courtesy *Solutions*) from which differing Sects look at it.

Dr. Browne is a cultured and fair-minded controversialist, and there is no reason to suppose he has willingly concealed any relevant argument in the case (if there is one) for Modernism versus Fundamentalism. Dr. Browne claims that "most of us (Modernists) haven't the ghost of an idea why anybody should be a Fundamentalist."

A belief in a liberal acceptance of the infallibility of the Bible, and a rejection of the theory of Evolution, Dr. Browne regards as the main characteristics dividing Fundamentalists from Modernists . . . in the Christian Church. He gives a summary of the tenets of Muslim Fundamentalists to show that Muslim Fundamentalism is more drastic than the Christian variety. We are not convinced. We have met Fundamentalists of both creeds, and we were rather impressed with the likenesses of the two branches of credulity.

All species of pious supernaturalism deny the validity of reason. It is not only (as Dr. Browne suggests) "Allah's actions," which "cannot be called in question by human reason." Jehovah's actions—and unfortunately also Jehovah's moral judgments—are equally unquestioned by Christians of several schools.

The fact that Roman Catholics have a separate "Paper" devoted to them seems to imply that Catholics are not Fundamentalists. But perhaps this was merely a question of convenience in arranging the Conference programme. Anyway, Roman Catholics are certainly Fundamentalists if the word has any meaning at all.

Possibly the Fundamentalists referred to by Dr. Browne are Bible Fundamentalists, and Catholics might be classed Creed Fundamentalists. The former class could only come into existence subsequent to a general acceptance of a Bible in the vernacular. But Catholics cling at least as fanatically and unreasoningly to the literal acceptance of all that their Church and Pontiff have declared to be God's will. No Protestant Fundamentalist follows more literally and unquestioningly the contradictory teachings of the Bible.

Dr. Browne fails to give any clear idea as to where a line of cleavage can be drawn between the Fundamentalist and the Modernist. Verbally, of course, the distinction is clear. No Fundamentalist, for instance, would say with Dr. Browne that "God is not Almighty if 'almighty' means that He can do anything": we assume what the Doctor means "can do everything." But Dr. Browne asserts that "God is the Ruler of all things." If God is the Ruler of all things He might as well be called Almighty.

Then again, these two schools are at loggerheads because Fundamentalists regard as genuine prophecy what the Modernist calls "at best a somewhat fantastic play on words." Let us see what the Modernist thinks about prophecy. Dr. Browne can "readily agree that the prophecy from Trito-Isaiah, which our Lord read in the Synagogue was fulfilled as He said, and that Peter was right in the Day of Pentecost in claiming that Joel's prophecy . . . was fulfilled." If these and other samples given by Dr. Browne are

worthy the name of prophecy to the extent stated, then the Fundamentalist idea may be right that Christ rode into Jerusalem on a couple of donkeys in order to fulfil a prophecy of Zachariah.

Why is Dr. Browne so satirical about Fundamentalist views of prophecy when he himself thinks that:—

When the Evangelist or a pious commentator finds in some details of Old Testament language "types" of our Lord, it cannot be dismissed as a mere phantasy; it is what we should expect if there is one Divine mind controlling history.

The Fundamentalist—equally with Dr. Browne—believes in God controlling history. We prefer to regard such ideas as—to use Dr. Browne's word—"fantastic" to say and mean that God is Almighty, than to assert that there is a God who is not almighty, but is the Ruler of everything and controls all history.

Of course Dr. Browne smiles at the Fundamentalist nonsense of believing that Genesis—without exception—is the very word of the God both he and the Fundamentalist accept. But he does not laugh unrestrainedly! Dr. Browne, like any good theologian, modifies and qualifies his very mild "attack" on Fundamentalism—if we can call this Paper any kind of "attack"—in these remarkable words:—

But I do say that if one jot or tittle of the Old Testament were different from what it is, it would be less true . . . there is a sense in which I should be quite prepared to say that the Old Testament was verbally inspired to be written just as it was.

Let us leave it at that, the Fundamentalist agrees.

Now let us turn to Miracles. Here Dr. Browne tries to turn the tables on us. He does not think there is much to choose "between the ignorant credulity of those who believe literally in every miracle recorded in the Bible and the scientific pride of those who say that miracles never happen." Dr. Browne apparently agrees that some of the Bible miracles actually happened, and that others of them are too severe a tax upon HIS credulity. His standard of judging miracles rests first "upon the ordinary criteria of historical probability." He accepts "the greatest of all miracles: the bodily resurrection of our Lord" while admitting that he does not "expect to find the confirmatory evidence of similar occurrences." It would be easier, we suggest, to admit the possession of a credulity exactly similar to that of the ordinary Fundamentalist.

It seems hardly worth while to strain at a gnat (Dr. Browne "hesitates to believe" that Elijah was fed by ravens) while one so easily swallows such a whale of a miracle as the "bodily resurrection of our Lord." Dr. Browne's excuse is that the Miracles HE believes in are only those which are "in full accord with what we know of the fatherly character of God." What we know indeed! What do we know? The belief in God and Divine Goodness is just an act of faith—a faith shared by Fundamentalist and Modernist in equal measure.

Dr. Browne, of course, concludes that the Fundamentalist:—

may be quite ignorant . . . but I think he is nearer the truth than the critic who . . . decides that he must deny the resurrection of Christ.

In what other realm of thought or philosophy could any student or professor claim that ignorant credulity was likely to possess greater knowledge of the facts than the thinker and teacher, who, after deep research and weighing of evidence, decided against a given theory?

During the present year's bi-centenary of Thomas Paine, we have read some would-be tolerant and actu-

* *Christianity and the Religious Crisis*, Blackwell, Oxford; 3s. 6d. net.

ally patronizing praise of the author of *The Age of Reason* from journalists who, in some instances, were Christians. Thomas Paine was in their jejune judgment just an early Modernist. Let us compare Paine's words with the above quoted expressions. Paine said about the Resurrection:—

Thomas did not believe the resurrection and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. So neither will I. . . . The best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the times this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say IT IS NOT TRUE.

We can no more imagine Thomas Paine occupying a Modernist Christian pulpit than we can picture him presiding at an *auto-da-fe*.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Thomas Scott's "English Life of Jesus"

III.

Scott's business in writing his book was to show that the Gospel narratives were in themselves quite incredible. He does this by a very close comparison of the texts purporting to relate more or less the same event; and the reader should, if he is interested, go slowly through such an analysis as that of the narratives of the Conception, in which, point by point, we see the Gospel writers contradicting themselves, relating things which are in themselves absurd, or making statements which have driven orthodox commentators to despair.

Was Jesus born in Bethlehem or in Nazareth? According to both Luke and Matthew he was born in Bethlehem; but it is not too much to say that according to every other part of the New Testament, the inference is that he was born in Nazareth—he is always called Jesus of Nazareth. But the stories of his birth in Luke and Matthew are packed with difficulties. Says Scott:—

In the one story, we have a birth (implying the ordinary residence of the parents) at Bethlehem; a hurried flight (almost immediately after the birth) from that village into Egypt, and a journey, after many months, from Egypt to Nazareth in Galilee. In the other the parents, who had lived in Nazareth, come to Bethlehem only for business of the State; and the casual birth in the stable is followed by a quiet sojourn during which the child is circumcised, and by a leisurely journey to Jerusalem; whence everything having gone off peaceably and happily, they return naturally to their own former place of abode, full, it is said again and again, of wonder at the things which have happened, and deeply impressed with the conviction that the child had a special work to do and was specially gifted for it.

Christians have never been able to reconcile the two narratives—though it is true that they have put forward many "explanations," some of which are more incredible than the Gospels themselves. The fact remains that in Matthew the angel announces the miraculous conception to Joseph; in Luke it is to Mary. In Matthew it is after Mary's conception; in Luke it is before; and one could go on in similar fashion throughout all the stories of the birth of Jesus. For the various attempts to harmonize the contradictions Scott has nothing but contempt. He says:—

Is it worth while to notice the vain attempts to reconcile these flagrant inconsistencies and impos-

sibilities by notions such as that Joseph was at a distance, when both the Gospels represent him and Mary as both in the same place; or that Mary, in deep perplexity, reserved her intelligence till she had taken council with Elizabeth, when the motive assigned to her visit in the third Gospel is not anxiety or doubt as to her duty, but simply to assure herself of the sign given to her by the angel (viz. the pregnancy of Elizabeth), an assurance given almost before she crosses the threshold, and followed by an immediate outburst of exultant thanksgiving? Is it worth while to waste words on the supposition that Mary did tell Joseph, but that he refused to believe her? Are we to suppose that a man, thus incredulous about the message of an angel who had spoken with Mary while she was awake, should have his scruples instantly removed by phantasms in a dream?

For those of us who have given up belief in angels, or even in the actual existence of Mary and Joseph, a good deal of this close examination may prove a waste of time; but it should not be forgotten that this spade-work was necessary to bring us to this stage of almost complete scepticism. Besides, there is still a considerable body of Atheists who will stoutly argue that the story of Jesus in the Gospels has a real historical background; and that if we could only scrape away the mythical accretions which have been added by a too enthusiastic band of devoted followers, we should get a wonderful figure of a real reformer. Such a work as Scott's is therefore still necessary. For though he himself was a thorough believer in an historical Jesus his minute analysis of the Gospels leaves the "history" without a leg to stand on. If the narratives are indeed as incredible as Scott makes them out to be, then it is almost, if not quite, certain that their hero is as unhistorical as Sinbad the Sailor. Scott did not, in all probability, think that this would be the conclusion sensible readers of his book would arrive at; but it is true, nevertheless.

There is in the work a valuable chapter on the Canon of the New Testament. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, when dealing with Christians who maintain that the Four Gospels are genuine history, and the Apocryphal Gospels are not, that they cannot produce any proof whatever for this statement. Even Bishop Westcott, one of the great scholars of the English Church last century, whose work on the Canon is a theological classic, has to admit: "Express statements of readings which are found in some of the most ancient Christian writers are indeed the FIRST EVIDENCE which we have, and are consequently of the highest importance. But until the last quarter of the second century this source of information fails." In other words, there are actually no quotations from the Church Fathers or other Christian writers which are indisputably from our four Gospels until after 175 A.D. And it should be recalled that for maintaining this position, or something near it, the author of *Supernatural Religion* was ridiculed by Lightfoot, Salmon, and other eminent theologians last century. The truth is that notwithstanding the confident assertions of modern religious writers to the contrary—and for that matter quite a few Rationalists—the four Gospels, in the state that we have them, are not earlier than 150 A.D.; and their authority not worth any more than that of the Apocryphal Gospels. In all discussions with Christians we Freethinkers should boldly challenge the so-called Canon of the New Testament. We should insist that there is no such thing; and it will be found that our opponents will have a very difficult task in maintaining any position with regard to "history" if we cut their props from under them in this way.

Scott has some valuable remarks on the discourses

of Jesus, far too long and detailed to quote here. He certainly believes that some of the parables were delivered, but that "portions have become dislocated and images from other parables have been introduced, the result being sometimes an incongruous medley." It seems rather curious that such an acute critic should not have seen that the parables could have been introduced into the narratives, and have got mixed up, as they were edited or as they passed through various hands without ever having been personally delivered. The fact is that Scott started with the preconceived notion of a real Jesus, whose discourses and actions were more or less faithfully recorded by the "Evangelists"; only, being human and having to trust their memory a great deal, they have forgotten certain things or events. Hence contradictions were inevitable. Thus of some of the discourses in the Synoptic Gospels he says, "There can be very little doubt that we have here a confusion caused by the Evangelists' memory recalling those sentences in which Jesus had spoken of the reception which ought to be given to his disciples in his name." Scott seems often to be making a distinction in the narratives. When he has to deal with "miracles," he has little difficulty in showing that the stories relating them are quite incredible; when he deals with possible things and events, such as discourses, he shows how the Evangelists' memory went astray. Of course it must not be forgotten that in all probability he had the Rev. Sir G. W. Cox at his elbow in the writing of his book. Heretical Cox may have been, but he would never have gone so far as to deny the actual existence of Jesus.

One of the best chapters in the *English Life of Jesus* is that dealing with the Johannine Discourses. Scott contrasts them with those of the Synoptics and the contrast is a valuable piece of analysis. He points out:—

Historically this contrast is of the utmost importance. Is it possible that two modes of teaching so utterly antagonistic should characterize the same teacher? Is it possible that one who had put forth in the Sermon on the Mount, a seemingly complete summary of his faith and a complete code of moral practice, should in that sermon make not the slightest reference to any of those great topics which form the burden of the Johannine discourses? . . . From the Synoptic Gospels we should never be led to expect the mysterious doctrines which form almost exclusively the topics of the fourth Gospel. We have nothing in the former about the Eternal Logos or the new birth; nothing about life flowing from God to believers in his Son and through the Son only; nothing of his pre-existence in glory before the world was. And while these high doctrines are absent from the former, it is singular that they should closely correspond with the philosophy which, before the lifetime of Jesus, had sprung up from the soil of Alexandria. It is also singular that the Evangelist who thus exhibits Jesus is an aspect unknown to the others, should also assign to him works and actions, of most of which the rest have seemingly never so much as heard.

This is putting the difficulties faced by believers in the Fourth Gospel very briefly; it is, at the same time, putting them in such a way as to be unanswerable. So far orthodox commentators have had to give up the Synoptic problem in its conjunction with John. Probably scores of well-meaning and earnest books have been written on the question and the result is simply nil.

It is quite impossible in these short articles to do anything like justice to the *English Life of Jesus*. But I hope that I have said enough to show we can worthily compete with Strauss and Renan. If the analysis had not been so keen and the reasoning so

close—and for that matter the results so drastic—Scott's book would perhaps have still been in circulation and read by more people than merely students. But it seems to have shared the fate of a book composed in the same vein, *The Four Historical Gospels as Historical Records*—an anonymous work, but written perhaps by Sir G. W. Cox.

Thomas Scott died in 1878. Though not altogether with us, he fought a brave fight for the best of all causes; and for that his memory should be kept green by all true Freethinkers.

H. CUTNER.

The Church Bluff Called in the United States

In the United States the churches have long boasted that their membership is increasing. They consider this a sufficient answer to their opponents. All alive to the situation knew this was false. They know that real religion in the United States was never at a lower ebb than it is to-day. Now we know the facts. They have been given by Roger W. Bahson, a Christian, at a meeting of the National Layman's Conference held at the Isle of Shoals, N.H., on August 9. Mr. Bahson says:—

1. The so-called "church membership" figures published annually by the *Christian Herald*, and broadcast by the press association are incorrect. They contain not only the names of millions who have repudiated the church which they joined in their youth—but also millions who are dead and buried physically.

Concerning church attendance he says:—

2. Protestant church attendance has been continually falling off for many years. This does not show by recent statistics on church attendance at the regular Sunday morning service; but in many churches this Sunday service has been kept alive only by omitting the mid-week services, the evening services and by closing up in summer-time. A record of the total number of Protestants entering the church during the year shows a tremendous falling off. This decline is notwithstanding the fact that the Protestant population of the United States is increasing each year.

Sunday school attendance likewise:—

3. Sunday school attendance is also falling off. The Congregational-Christian churches of which I am moderator have had a net loss of over 150,000 Sunday school scholars since 1925. This I assumed to be due to the serious falling off in birth-rate among us different Protestants, but study shows that the decline is due primarily to the loss of those of high school age and adults.

Concerning the cause of this condition Mr. Bahson says:—

Determined to find the cause, I devoted the month of May, 1937, to visiting 20 prominent Protestant colleges, most of which were started many years ago by ministers and earnest church people. To my great surprise, these colleges were having their troubles also. Attendance at chapel has fallen off tremendously, and there is an indifference toward religious instruction.

Concerning the falling away of young people from the church the writer is equally candid:—

I thereupon attempted to ascertain the reason for this collapse of Protestantism. Upon visiting the national headquarters of different denominations, the secretaries disputed my statements. When inter-

viewing parents, they blamed it on to the preachers, who, in turn, blamed it on to the young people and their parents. The only thing all groups seemed agreed upon is that "young people are more intelligent and enquiring to-day—they do not accept as readily what their grandparents did."

Unlike the denominational secretaries, and the preachers and parents, these young people gave me a definite reason for their lack of interest in me and the churches which I represent. They stated kindly and diplomatically that we churchmen appear to them to be a group of hypocrites! They cannot connect our mode of living and methods of doing business with the teachings of Jesus, whom we claim to follow. They do not understand how we can attend church, sing the hymns and make the prayers which we do on Sundays, and then act as we do the other six days of the week. As a result of this inconsistency on our part, they say "What use is the church?"

The troubles from which our churches are suffering are due to the fact that the Protestant young people are "getting their eyes open" and are beginning to think for themselves. Furthermore, the day is coming when Catholic young people will reach the same stage. In fact, the Catholic church probably has its troubles ahead so that they need do no bragging now.

Mr. Bahson thinks the Church still necessary. In the following we do not agree with him:—

Men must still be "born again." The "hearts" of people must be changed in order for any social or other system to succeed. This is a spiritual problem. Here is where America again needs the churches, family prayers, Sunday observance, Bible study and the Ten Commandments. Therefore, when we criticize the church and note how it is declining in behaviour and influence, we must not forget that the world still needs it. The church continues to be the basic agency through which civilization will be saved.

Of course the gentleman means the church as at present constructed. Yet he has himself shown the futility of this. Does he expect young people who are convinced of the absurdities of religion to return to it? Not as it is to-day. What has the church of to-day to offer in order to be rehabilitated? Does it need more miracles? Mr. Bahson fails to see that at the bottom of this decline of the church is the fact that as science has advanced and natural law established, the people have no further use of the supernatural. When this is gone the chief prop of the Church falls.

FRANKLIN STEINER.

"On Speaking One's Mind"

In this country we have free speech. Every one has a right to speak his mind, and generally does. But as everyone speaks and few listen, it leaves things very much as they were.

Of all institutions, the Church, has acquired that faculty of talking without listening, with the greatest ease. The national newspapers, from reading their contents, seem to be blandly unaware of the existence of any other publication. Each one speaks with the voice of omniscience. Few papers take the trouble to criticize the views of other papers; they merely ignore their presence.

But some section of the church talks inside as if the last three hundred years had never been lived. Sermons are preached, prayers uttered, as if Darwin and Lyell had never been born, as if learning had stayed in its narrow compass of the sixteenth century. Astronomy has not magnified the universe, biology transformed our knowledge of the creation, psychology, mythology and anthropology made the Christian conception of man

seem absurd, narrow, and petty. This they have to explain in newspaper articles or lectures. They have to reconcile twentieth century facts to sixteenth century dogmas.

Just as in politics, it is not a matter of laying fairly, before the public, national problems. The vested interests, through the press, find all sorts of reasons why it should benefit the country, meaning themselves. That is how British democracy works. Never yet has an election been fought on a direct and clear-cut issue. The real aims are smothered in a cloud of verbiage and misrepresentations, and wordy warfare waged over secondary matters.

Eminent statesmen have warned us against the danger of "Fascism." They tell us not to strain the democratic machine too far. As long as British democracy continues to vote for a "National" Government, then democracy will continue as a political system in Britain. In other words, democracy, according to these gentlemen, will only work as long as it upholds the *status quo*, and the interests of monopoly.

This sort of thing is not new to Freethinkers. We know that as long as we profess some sort of belief, some faint and shadowy conception, that can be enlarged by Christians into some sort of deity, we can still retain the respect of believers. As they are so fond of telling us, because he is not so cock-sure as an Atheist, they can respect an Agnostic. They feel there is still some hope for someone who believes in some sort of thing.

It is precisely because the uncompromising kind of Freethinker has nothing that can be twisted into a semblance of belief that he is so hated. It is to these that they shout, "blank Atheist," as if there is nothing in the world besides religion. Freethinkers have everything in the world that believers have—except a mass of superstition.

The Idealists taunt the Materialists by saying, they wish to destroy their conceptions of good and bad, black and white, and turn them into an indistinguishable grey. Because they do not accept such ideas of good and bad, they have no such measures.

The Materialist can well retort to this, that the sooner the religious standards are abolished the better, and ordinary human ones adopted instead. Material ethics have the disadvantage of being amenable to human reason and experience. The only method of propagating them is by argument and discussion. No one can be damned by denying them, and no one can be silenced by the cry of "blasphemy."

Unfortunately, that is the only real answer to the Freethinker. The most bigoted believer will argue up to a point, and then say it is a matter of faith, and it is not up to us to "question" the fundamental truths. Others take a high tone, as if they were in possession of knowledge of great worth. They behave as if they had obtained a corner in ideas; they have the real genuine truth, and all other brands are worthless imitations.

They are so sure of its value that they refuse to bring it out for examination. This is due, no doubt, to an unthought gnawing consciousness that their possessions are not quite as valuable as they think they are. When brought into the light, and examined by the remorseless instrument of reason, they shrink from a thing of beauty, to a drab and dingy piece of imitation. And that they cannot stand at any price. This proves that at bottom religion is not a set of beliefs but a state of mind. They prefer to keep this state of mind even to the extent of self-deception. And while they are in that state, their whole mind is governed by it, and their mental process but a rationalization of that state.

The great majority of people are not concerned with the truth of things, but with defending existing beliefs. To a great extent, we cannot determine our beliefs, as these are built up by the accident of time and circumstance. It is a bother, and liable to upset one's peace of mind, and for the majority, peace of mind is everything.

For most people, religion starts at adolescence. The emotional instability of that period re-inforces the beliefs instilled in childhood. Without these beliefs, the awakening emotions would be directed into other channels. Fortunately, some people get over this phase.

The average mind is like a jackdaw's nest, full of

brilliant and coloured rubbish. Few ever take the trouble to collate and sort out their mental wealth. They don't know where they are. Listen to the average speaker; one seldom hears a reasoned and well-knit discourse. It is mostly a farrago of platitudes and commonplaces, without any central unifying theme or order. A bad speaker does not think in words, but in ready-made phrases.

The decline of religion is as much due to old age as anything else. The old, old story is wearing thin. Even the Bible when expounded as literal truth gets found out in time. Freethinkers are sometimes accused of taking the Bible literally. It is the believer who does that, and the Freethinker who reads it as a piece of literature. They read it as they would Shakespeare, or the Indian sacred writings, entering into the spirit of the writer, taking the meaning literally where it is meant to be taken literally, and metaphorically where it is so intended.

The fact that it is being taken and read as an imaginative work by Christians is significant of the decline of religion. Religion is slowly being metamorphosed out of its former rigid pattern, and becoming loose and shapeless, the prelude to its final scattering and displacement.

IDRIS I. ABRAHAM.

Correspondence

THE POISON OF POETRY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Error, prejudice, and inconsistency disfigure Mr. Fraser's articles. Some of his numerous mistakes require correction. Prose is not "mainly unrhythmical"; but, unlike poetry, its flow is not measured in regular recurrence. It is not true that rhythm has no linguistic value. The meaning of words is not independent of, but is dependent on, rhythm. Aesthetic pleasure is not derived from rhythmic sounds, but from the perfect blend of meaning with rhythmic sound.

Selecting the name "poetry," and not "verse," to stand in opposition to prose, shows prejudice, or worse. Bestowing on hymns such as those lashed by "Minnermus" (in a manner, one thinks, Minnermus himself might have approved) the name of poetry is either to be wilfully prejudiced or crassly ignorant. It is bias as gross to give an Ezra Pound citation as illustrative of poetry as it would be to cite Mr. Fraser's articles as illustrative of Freethought. And the use Mr. Fraser makes of H. I. Mencken is an obliquity worthy of Leslie Stephen on Paine.

In condemning the lavish use of metaphor as dangerous to reason and right thinking, he is inconsistent. The title he uses is an alliterative metaphor, and his remarks are adorned with phrases such as "word of mouth," "labour under the delusion," "as though memory were a muscle," "admiration of cleverness which is blind," and so forth. He uses the things he condemns in the act of condemning them because he cannot help himself. Our language has been liberally endowed by the poets. He is unaware that the power which first freed man's mentality from its prison of real and apparent material needs, and so made Freethought a possibility, was the faculty of imagination nurtured by poetry. Mr. Fraser thinks Freethought is beneficial, but freedom of thought pernicious.

That writing and reading poetry are exercises liable to misuse and abuse may be true; a definition of any such liability might be of value. But Mr. Fraser's effort is worse than valueless.

"GOTH."

THE MOORS AND SPAIN

SIR,—I think the antics of Mr. Hilaire Belloc over the Fascist invasion of Spain deserve some attention. Mr. Belloc has consistently attacked the Moors for their great creative cultural work in medieval days; now he comes out as the champion of a Christian Crusade, which

depends on Moorish bayonets to restore prosperity to the Catholic Church.

In *A Catholic in Republican Spain*, by Prince Hubertus of Loewenstein (Gollancz), there is much interesting first-hand information of religious matters in Spain; and on page 92 there are quoted four absolutely definite pronouncements by Popes (Leo XIII., Pius X., Pius XI.) that rebellion against the constituted authorities is not permissible to Catholics under any conditions. When the Church's coffers are at stake, even papal infallibility seems to be of no concern.

If you feel inclined to satire—and I think your best work from a literary viewpoint is in that line, witness the magnificent picture of the Bishop of London you drew last year—you might consider Mr. Belloc.

JACK LINDSAY.

PERFUME AND MEMORY

SIR,—I am not aware of any thesis on this subject, but Mr. Budge will find in W. H. Hudson's *A Hind in Richmond Park*, several very interesting chapters devoted to it. Further information is to be found in Darwin's *Descent of Man*, chapter I.

Mr. Budge will find Hudson's book full of interest.

EDGAR SYERS.

[We are again obliged to hold over letters until next week.—ED.]

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

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Saturday night and Sunday night, Mr. J. W. Barker will speak at each meeting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond-Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson and Miss E. Millard, M.A.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. A. Kirby—"Spiritualism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Herbert Read, M.A., D.Litt.—"The Myth, the Dream and the Poem."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Mrs. M. Saran—"Recent Developments in the German Churches Conflict with Hitler."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton. A lecture. Literature for sale.

INDOOR.

BEDLINGTON (Reay Memorial Hall): 7.0, Sunday, December 12, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Room, Market Hall, Blackburn): 7.30, Tuesday, December 14, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Roman Catholic Menace. Local, National and International." Literature for sale.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Dr. Chas Rankin, M.D. (Liverpool).

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, The Talkie Picture "Kameradschaft." A peace film story dealing with a mining disaster in the Saar on the borders of France and Germany.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Capt. F. D. Russell—"Reincarnation."

(Continued on page 799)

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(Continued from page 798)

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Oxford Group Movement and Modern Problems."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place) : 6.45, Mr. F. Smithies, "Christianity a Comedy of Errors."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Miss Angers Smith, M.A., Edl.—"Psychology of the Crowd."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Malthus and Marx."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, G. Thompson (Liverpool)—A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road) : 7.0, Mr. S. Dalkin (Stockton-on-Tees)—"Christianity and Morals."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Carlton Hall) : 7.0, Wednesday, December 15, Mr. J. Clayton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Lord Nelson) : 7.0, Tuesday, December 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (General and Municipal Workers' Rooms, Ferry Street) : 7.30, Thursday, December 9, Mr. Dalkin.

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

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton) : 7.0, Tuesday, December 14, Mr. H. Dalkin—"Science and Religion."

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