

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN ■ ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLII.—No. 50

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1922

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>The Progress of Freethought.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	785
<i>The Virgin Birth.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - - - -	786
<i>Greasing the Fat Sow.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	788
<i>Pagan and Christian Civilization.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	788
<i>Book Chat.—George Underwood</i> - - - - -	790
<i>Emily Webb.—Howell S. England</i> - - - - -	793
<i>Circumstance.—Frank W. Robinson</i> - - - - -	794
<i>The Historicity of the Beloved Disciple.—C. Clayton Dove</i>	795
<i>Broiled Brains.—G. E. Fussell</i> - - - - -	796
<i>My Star of Hope.—Arnold Warren</i> - - - - -	797
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

The Progress of Freethought.

Ours is not a sensational movement. The Freethought cause stands apart from the sensational circumstances attending political life, and it lacks the immediate appeal to the prospect or the promise of material benefits which accompany the Labour movement. The Freethought movement is immediately one of the propaganda of ideas; its influence on the material advancement is more or less indirect—even though of primary importance—and for that reason, if for none other, its appeal is to the more discriminative intelligence. The historian of politics has most often to chronicle a series of rapid advances or a series of equally rapid retreats. The historian of Freethought has, on the other hand, to note the gradual growth of ideas that appear to be independent of local circumstances, and which appeal to a type of mind that can never be classed as common. For that reason the principles of Freethought do not arouse a quick response from the average man who has been nurtured in a Christian atmosphere with its insidious appeal to selfishness disguised under a cloak of altruism. To these an object that promises immediate gain—shorter hours of labour, a larger income, greater social prominence—will appear vastly more important. It is ever the few who are able to appreciate the fact that orderly and sustained progress is not to be obtained by a system of hand to mouth legislation, but only by the firm grasp of principles clearly conceived and intelligently applied.

* * *

The Test of Numbers.

Church, chapel, or party may be judged to a very considerable extent by the test of numbers. It is to numbers they appeal, and by numbers they apparently prefer to be judged. But this will not do when dealing with Freethought. If the Freethought type of mind must be regarded as, if not out of the normal, at least not common, the type that is strong enough to brave social ostracism on account of an opinion is still less usual. A few—reckoned in relation to the whole—will say plainly what they think on religion, but a larger number, while agreeing with them, will

keep their opinions to themselves and pride themselves on their superior wisdom in so doing. It is certain that at no time have Freethinking opinions been so common as they are now, nor have religious beliefs ever had less real hold on the masses than they have at present. Even religious defenders are compelled to concede quite as much as they conserve, and doubt is generally awakened as to the value of the residuum. Religions become liberal as misers become generous—on their death beds. The opinions the Churches have fought for are surrendered when it is no longer possible to hold them with the slightest degree of profit. And if it is true that large numbers of unbelievers are reluctant to sacrifice anything for the sake of their opinions, it is equally true, on the other hand, that religious believers will not fight for their beliefs once a certain degree of social disapproval against them has been excited. On both sides this may be taken as evidence of the power of the crowd-mind, which makes it more difficult for man to break out than it is to break him in. Man's nature has been moulded by the group, and it has left its impress on the whole of his mental and moral life. He lives in a crowd and prefers to think with the herd.

* * *

Do We Want Another Church?

It is also idle to test the strength of Freethought by mere organization. There has always been a tendency among a certain type of Freethinkers to carry over into the heretical camp some of the customs they have acquired while in the religious one, and among these has been the desire to build up another Church where the ritual shall not be exactly that of the orthodox conventicle. Nor is it at all difficult to establish a new sect. Sectarian feelings are ready to hand, and are easily manipulated. Only I have never been able to see in what way sectarian passions, while bad when associated with religion, become good when associated with Freethought. Indeed, I have some difficulty in realizing their association with Freethought; for to me that is something far too large to be confined within the bounds of a sect, even of the most liberal variety. And the advantage of conversion is slight if all we have done is to change a sectarian from one side of the hedge to the other. Organization is only of use as a means to an end, it is not an end in itself. The position is, however, that while religion makes naturally for the sheep-like tendency of people to move in crowds, Freethought tends to greater individuality of action, and so makes organization a task of much greater difficulty. In the main, sectarian organization depends upon two things—upon pressure from without, or the development of sectarian feelings. The latter, as I have said, Freethought properly tends to weaken. And the former Christians no longer openly supply us with. Persecution is not dead, but is tortuous and indirect in its operations. It effects its purpose in an underhand manner, and so does the least degree of injury to those who initiate it.

A Test of Progress.

G. W. Foote often said to me, "There is only one genuine test of whether we are making progress or not, and that is whether we are alive at the end of a year and with a little in hand." That seems to me an essentially sound rule to apply to a movement such as Freethought. And the evidence here is clear and decisive. Evidence of the progress of Freethought is to be found inside the Churches and outside them. Of themselves the Churches have no impulse to, and no interest in, moving forward. Whatever steps are taken in that direction are entirely due to pressure from without. Christian preachers of every school are quite content with their teaching so long as the congregations remain satisfied. It is when these begin to grow restive that concessions are made, and one may be quite certain that the ultimate cause of this restiveness is the work of those Freethinkers who have always striven to keep the results of modern criticism in front of the people. The great offence of writers like Thomas Paine, Carlile, Hetherington, and others was that they wrote and spoke to be understood by the mass of people. The fact of their being Freethinkers might have been forgiven them—the Churches have tolerated a fair amount of heresy among their own members, provided it was kept quiet—but to make Freethought common and popular, that was really the unforgivable offence. In the hands of government, whether the government be good, bad, or indifferent, no better instrument than religion has been found for keeping the people docile and obedient, and right through the history of Christianity that fact has never been overlooked. It is thus stating no more than an historical truism to say that Freethought has been one of the greatest of the seminal forces making for real progress; and it has been honoured by the hatred of those who have attacked it.

* * *

Freethought and Life.

Quite as important is the influence of Freethought in the social and political world. Short-sighted critics of Freethought who pride themselves on being practical, which in practice is often only another name for impracticability—often ask why Freethinkers do not cease their attacks upon theology and devote themselves to social work. A little deeper study would show that nothing has been more productive of improvement in social life than the work of Freethinkers. I do not mean by this only that very many social reforms—the rational treatment of the criminal, the legal equality of the sexes, popular education, etc.—have all originated with Freethinkers. Again, the work of Freethought is to be found in the general spirit it has created, and in the extent to which it has made betterment in this life a real living issue as against preoccupations with another life and with theological questions. Thousands of people pass through our hands year after year who have had a keener and a more intelligent interest in social questions created in them as a consequence of our liberative work. They come to us with their minds obsessed with theological questions. We rid them of their load of useless lumber, and they leave us ready to play a more intelligent part in the world's affairs, not always as avowed Freethinkers, but none the less witnesses to the influence our propaganda has had upon them. The relative interest taken in social questions to-day and a century since may be taken as a rough and ready gauge of the influence of Freethought on social life.

* * *

The Growth of Freethought.

Any Freethinker accustomed to taking broad and rational views of human progress will find every cause to congratulate himself on the advance made by Freethought. He will not look for evidences of that

advance in large organizations or in costly buildings, but he will look for it, and he will find it, in that gradual broadening of the mental outlook which in spite of all drawbacks and all set-backs is one of the unmistakable signs of our times. And it is, indeed, the fact Freethought does progress in this manner, that it influences for good even those who avowedly fight against it; it is this fact that makes the principles for which we stand practically indestructible. If Freethought depended upon one man, or upon a number of men banded together, if it were at the mercy of changing political conditions, or passing economic circumstances, its permanency might be questioned. But a principle that is in line with the deeper and more permanent social forces, a principle that derives support from every fresh invention and from every new discovery and gains strength from every widening aspect of life, can only die on the condition that human society itself ceases to exist. The Roman Church has often conquered an individual enemy or a hostile organization, because of all the Christian Churches it knew best how to wait. But in fighting Freethought the Churches are fighting an enemy that has time itself on its side. We know that civilization is with us. From the days when the cave-man stood quaking at the monsters of earth and air conjured into being by his own imagination, the story of civilization has meant very largely a discarding of gods and demons, and a surrender of all forms of supernaturalism. And the gains are to-day too deeply embedded in our lives for them to be ever again completely lost. Delayed the progress of Freethought may well be; but more than that would require a miracle; and miracles do not happen.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Virgin Birth.

II.

MATTHEW'S AND LUKE'S NARRATIVES.

IN these two Gospels the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is represented as an event that actually occurred. The passages in which it is so affirmed (Mat. i, 18-23; Luke i, 26-38; ii, 1-39) must now be critically examined. The first thing that strikes the thoughtful reader, on carefully perusing them, is the astonishing dissimilarity between them. In Matthew's narrative Joseph lives in his own house at Bethlehem, in which house Mary gives birth to her first born child, who is called Jesus, while Luke speaks of Joseph as residing at Nazareth, in Galilee, eighty miles away, and as being at Bethlehem merely as a visitor in connection with the census, and as staying not in a house at all, but in a stable, where Jesus is born and laid in the manger, through lack of accommodation at the inn. In Matthew's Gospel he is proved to be the Messiah by the star which guided the wise men of the East to his strange cradle where they offered him their adoration and costly presents; in Luke's his advent as the Saviour is announced by an angel to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, who immediately proceed to the stable and worship him. According to Matthew Joseph is warned by an angel in a dream that "Herod will seek the young child to destroy him," and in consequence he arises and takes the infant and his mother by night, and departs into Egypt, where the Holy Family abide till after Herod's death, while Luke describes them as returning almost immediately to their home in Galilee.

But there are deeper discrepancies still between the two narratives. Let us look more closely at the one presented by Matthew. While Joseph and Mary are engaged the sad discovery is made one day that Mary is already with child. Greatly chagrined, Joseph makes private arrangements to set the engagement aside, in

order selfishly to avoid any scandal for himself; but an Angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream and assures him that Mary has not fallen into sin, because that which is begotten in her is not of man, but of God the Holy Ghost. Accepting that dream-message as true Joseph takes Mary to his bosom as his lawful wife, and in due course the Divinely conceived child is born and named Jesus. Soon after the child's birth wise men from the East come to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we saw his star in the East, and are come to worship him." This inquiry causes the greatest consternation to the whole city from King Herod downwards. The king is troubled because he sees in such a birth a menace to his throne. He calls all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and inquires of them where the Christ should be born. They answer him, "In Bethlehem of Judea." Then he privily visits the wise men and learns of them all they know. Then he sends them to Bethlehem, urging them to make careful search concerning the young child, and when they have found him, to return and report that he, too, may go and worship him. They go their way, "and," as Matthew puts it, "lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was." What an amazingly accommodating star! The wise men find and worship the child, but, being warned of God, they do not return to Herod, but depart into their own country another way. Then follow the flight into Egypt, and the massacre of all the male children of Bethlehem and neighbourhood, from two years old and under, by order of the king, enraged at the non-return of the wise men.

Such is Matthew's story, and it certainly sounds entirely fantastic. You will notice that the visit of the Magi at the beck of a star, their interview with Herod, their adoration of the babe, their failure to return and report to the king, the hasty flight into Egypt, and the massacre of the innocents, are related only by Matthew, and bear upon their faces the unmistakable stamp of incredibility. This is frankly admitted to-day by many Christian scholars. It is well known that the advent of even great men was usually associated with the appearance of a shining star. Some such sign was declared to have been observed in the sky at the time of the birth of Alexander the Great, of Mithridates, of Cæsar, and of Augustus. But without a doubt the story of the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus is but a rather clumsy adaptation of an event which had actually occurred in the Pagan world, namely the visit of the Parthian king, Tiridates, and his magicians to the Emperor Nero in the year 66 A.D. The object of that visit was to pay the head of the Roman Empire the homage of the East. Tiridates, we are told, offered Nero the worship due only to a God, such as the sun-god Mithra. He journeyed to Rome with a great following, through the towns of Asia Minor; but Dio Cassius tells us that when the ceremonies connected with the act of worship were over, "he did not travel back by the way he had come," reminding us of Matthew's phrase that "they departed into their own country another way." We are also indebted to Dio Cassius for the very words Tiridates used in addressing Nero, namely: "I, my lord, a scion of Arsaces, the brother of Kings Vologæsus and Pacorus, am thy slave. And I am come to thee as to my God, worshipping thee, even as the sun-god Mithras." Pliny, a contemporary of Nero, completes the account by informing us that Tiridates was a Magus, and that "he had brought Magi with him, and had even initiated the Emperor into the mysteries of the (Mithra-) meal," which meal was doubtless the original of the Lord's Supper as conceived by the Apostle Paul.

Now the visit of the Magi to Nero is a historical event, abundantly attested by several accredited

Roman historians, but that they ever visited Bethlehem is in the highest degree improbable. It is certain that Matthew's Gospel was not written before the year 70 of our era, and possibly not before the year 100, and its author or late editor, having heard or read an account of the worship of the Pagan Emperor by Tiridates, took it for granted that the incident would be immeasurably more appropriate and sensible if related of the infant Saviour of the world, rather than of the wicked, anti-Christian Emperor Nero, and the story was accordingly transferred with such alterations as the changed conditions rendered necessary. As everybody is aware the whole incident as applied to Jesus is uncorroborated, and must therefore be characterized as purely legendary.

Examining Luke's narrative, we find that it differs on almost every point from Matthew's, but it is equally lacking in originality of conception. Instead of the house Luke has the stable and the manger; instead of the adoring Magi from the East, the simple shepherds of the neighbourhood; instead of the guiding star, the herald angels and their song; and instead of the flight into Egypt for the child's safety, the quiet return into Galilee, after the child's circumcision and presentation in the temple. Now, the angelic song of praise is certainly of non-Jewish origin. The angel who brought the good tidings of great joy to the shepherds, saying, "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," as well as the heavenly host who sang, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," are represented as using terms which had been frequently employed before in the Pagan world. As Wilhelm Soltau says:—

No Jewish-Christian would really have understood the idea that the birth of the Messiah heralded the dawn of a reign of peace for the whole world and of happiness for all mankind. Now, recent discoveries of inscriptions in Asia Minor have shown us the originals to which these ideas go back. In many towns of Asia Minor, as in Priene and Halicarnassus, edicts have been found (preserved in inscriptions) in which orders are given as to the celebration of the birthday of Augustus. These edicts date from the years 2 B.C. to 14 A.D. In them Augustus is glorified as saviour of the whole human race, as one in whom Providence has not only fulfilled, but even surpassed the wish of all men. "For," we read in one of them, "peace prevails upon earth, harmony and order reign. Men are filled with the best hopes for the future, with joyful courage for the present...." This and similar descriptions of the happiness of the world after the appearance of Augustus cannot, therefore, have been unknown to the Evangelist when he wrote the words found in Luke ii, 8-10. The writer transferred them to the times when his Saviour was born; for no one who decides the question from a scientific standpoint could really doubt the priority of the Asiatic inscriptions to the first beginnings of a history of the childhood of Jesus (*The Birth of Jesus Christ*, pp. 34-35).

No careful reader of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke can help noticing that, apart from the passages under consideration, neither of them furnishes the remotest suggestion that Jesus was virgin-born, for they both treat him as the son of Joseph and Mary; and, indeed, nowhere else throughout the entire New Testament, can we find the slightest hint that Mary was a virgin. Unquestionably, therefore, those passages are very late interpolations, but exactly how late it is impossible to ascertain, though probably they were not inserted till considerably after the middle of the second century.

Such being the facts concerning the birth-narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and bearing in mind the complete silence of the first century on the subject, a most interesting question remains to be discussed, namely, how did the belief in the Virgin Birth originate in the Christian Church? J. T. LLOYD.

Greasing the Fat Sow.

The services of the clergy are imaginary, and their payment should be of the same description.

—G. W. Foote.

MUCH space in the newspapers has been devoted lately to a perfervid appeal by the Bishop of London for a modest £30,000 for the relief of the destitute clergy in the London diocese. The appeal inaugurated a veritable advertising campaign, conducted with all the artless innocence of the patent medicine proprietors. Following the florid periods of the Bishop came columns of "sob-stuff," informing readers of the terrible sacrifices made by the poorest of the poor for the National Church. For instance, one hundred little children of an East End church are alleged to have given up their pennies for Christ, which would otherwise have reached the picture theatre owners. Other juvenile aspirants for the crown of martyrdom have sternly refused jam and cake for tea; and have denied themselves chocolates and sweets. Their elders, fired with emulation, have foregone the pleasures of strap-hanging and walked to work. Some acts of self-denial have risen to dizzy heights of sacrifice. One man, who has been ill in bed for years, and who has a family to keep on fifteen shillings a week, has sent a threepenny bit. A widow with an income of seven shillings a week has sent eighteenpence, presumably with the permission of her landlord. In other instances, housekeeping expenses have been rigidly cut down, and according to the advertisements, the East End is alight with enthusiasm for the Christian religion. It is even said that 250,000 people have taken official envelopes for their contributions. Sad to say, all this spiritual awakening has taken place east of Aldgate Pump. Westward, Satan seems to be holding his own gallantly. No duchesses appear to have sold their pet Pomeranians, or pretty Pekinese, for Christ's sake. No countess has pawned her rope of pearls, or parted with her jewellery for the salvation of what she thinks is her soul. No profiteer's wife has discarded her one hundred guineas costume for a three pound "ready to wear" creation in the same cause. It is all very sad and very worldly. Whilst the Mile End Road has showered its hard-earned ha'pence on Christ's altar, there is no similar response from Park Lane and Piccadilly. Mayfair is dancing the primrose path to Perdition. It is enough to make a bronze statue shudder. If England is to be saved, it will be to the pale martyrs in the Mile End Road that she will owe her salvation, and not to the pampered peers and peeresses in the wild and wealthy West. This is all the more sad because so many of the titled ladies mentioned in the Peerage were actually born in the East End, and only reached the sweet shady retreats of the West by means of the musical comedy stage. How can they be so hard-hearted? It is their young relations who are taking the sweets from their mouths in order to glorify God and the Bishop of London.

Why all this cadging in the name of Christ? Did not the Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, place coal in Durham many thousands of years ago in order that the Ecclesiastical Commissioner should draw royalties to the amount of £300,000 yearly to be used for his beloved clergy? Does He not graciously permit the Sacred Bench of Bishops to enjoy an annual income of £180,000? The bachelor Bishop of London himself basks in the sunshine of God and enjoys a salary of £300 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep fifty ordinary families in comfort. The Church of England is the wealthiest Church in the world. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have the control of millions of money, their net income for 1920 amounting to £2,250,300. Why is it necessary to take the sweets from a little

child's mouth in order to augment the stipends of the priests of such a Church?

The salaries of the rectors and vicars, often with residences attached, mentioned in Crockford's *Clerical Directory* show something of the vast resources of the Church of England, and of the comfort of its priests. The *Church of England Year Book* is a mass of clever camouflage, but a business man can easily see that, underneath all the verbal jugglery, there is the undeniable fact that the Church is wealthy beyond the dream of avarice. The 25,000 priests of the Church of England are not starving. Everyone knows that the average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable income and lives in a nice house. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in household expenditure.

These 25,000 men are, in reality, "medicine-men" in a civilized country. They are engaged in precisely similar work to their dark-skinned prototypes in savage nations. They tell us of gods who get angry with us; of a devil who must be guarded against; of angels who fly from heaven to earth; of saints who can assist if placated. And this happens in England in the twentieth century. And little children are bullied into going without sweets and picture-shows in order that these parasitical priests may live. How much longer is this to be endured, O Democracy?

MIMNERMUS.

Pagan and Christian Civilization.

XI.

(Continued from page 774.)

Considering that Christianity has commonly been represented as almost the sole cause of the mitigation and final abolishment of slavery in Europe, it deserves special notice that the chief improvement in the condition of slaves at Rome took place at so early a period that Christianity could have absolutely no share in it. Nay, for about two hundred years after it was made the official religion of the Empire there was an almost complete pause in the legislation on the subject.—*Westermarck, "The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas,"* Vol. I, p. 693.

The apostles absolutely command a slave to give obedience to his master in all things, "as to the Lord." It is in vain to deny that *the most grasping of slave-owners asks nothing more of abolitionists than that they would all adopt Paul's creed, viz., acknowledge the full authority of owners of slaves, tell them that they are responsible to God alone, and charge them to use their power righteously and mercifully.*—*F. W. Newman, "Phases of Faith,"* 1891, p. 112.

ANOTHER claim confidently advanced by Christians is that Christianity abolished slavery. A terrible picture is drawn of the horrors of Pagan slavery, and then we are told of the coming of Christ, of the establishment of Christianity, which raised the slave, knocked off his fetters and set him free from bondage. All this is a travesty of history and of the truth.

In the years immediately preceding the establishment of Christianity the lot of the slaves had been constantly improving. Renan says of this time:—

It was to the slaves especially that Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius showed themselves beneficent. Some of the greatest monstrosities of slavery were corrected. It was henceforward admitted that the master could commit an injustice to a slave.....The slave in time resorted to the tribunals, became a somebody, and a member of the city. He was proprietor of his own substance, had his family, and it was not allowable to sell separately husband, wife and children.....People placed humanity against the

rigour of the law, often against the letter of the statute. In point of fact, from the time of Antoninus, the jurisconsultate, imbued with stoicism, considered slavery as a violation of the rights of nature, and were inclined to restrict it. Enfranchisement was favoured in every way. Marcus Aurelius went further and recognised within certain limits the right of slaves to the goods of the master. If a person did not present himself to claim the heritage of a testator, slaves were authorized to divide the goods amongst themselves.¹

Far from abolishing slavery, or even improving the lot of the slave, Christianity worsened it. Renan says :—

St. Paul completely recognized the legitimacy of a master's position. No word occurs in all the ancient Christian literature to preach revolt to the slave, nor to advise the master to manumission (p. 347).

Christ never said a word in condemnation of slavery, although in his time it abounded on every hand. The Christians taught the slaves that it was not worth troubling about their freedom for the short time they had to spend on earth, what they had to do was to make sure of the salvation of their souls. We are not surprised to find, therefore, that :—

Under Constantine the favour of liberty appeared to retrograde. If the movement which dates from the Antonines had continued in the second half of the third century, and in the fourth century, the suppression of slavery would have come about as a legal measure and by redemption money.²

Constantine, of course, was the first Christian Emperor. The truth of the matter is that instead of suppressing slavery Christianity gave it a fresh lease of life. As Lecky, who is not unfavourable to the claims of Christianity upon this subject and performs a good deal of see-sawing from one side to the other, points out :—

Slavery, however, lasted in Europe for about 800 years after Constantine, and during the period with which this volume is concerned, although its character was changed and mitigated, the number men who were subject to it was probably greater than in the Pagan Empire.³

As for the claim made that Christianity "changed and mitigated" the severity of slavery, Westermarck comments :—

The assertion made by many writers that the Church exercised an extremely favourable influence upon slavery surely involves a great exaggeration. As late as the thirteenth century the master practically had the power of life and death over his slave. Throughout Christendom the purchase and sale of men, as property transferred from vendor to buyer, was recognized as a legal transaction of the same validity with the sale of other merchandise, land or cattle.⁴

The same historian observes that the claim that the gradual disappearance of slavery in Europe during the latter part of the Middle Ages was due to the influence of the Church "is hardly supported by the facts" (Vol. I, p. 679). The Church itself was one of the largest holders of slaves, and :—

As a matter of fact, the slaves of monasteries were everywhere among the last who were manumitted. In the seventh century a Council at Toledo threatened with damnation any bishop who should liberate a slave belonging to the Church without giving due compensation from his own property, as it was thought impious to inflict a loss on the Church of Christ; and according to several ecclesiastical regulations no bishop or priest was allowed to manu-

mit a slave in the patrimony of the Church unless he put in his place two slaves of equal value. Nay, the Church was anxious not only to prevent a reduction of her slaves, but to increase their number.⁵

Many causes operated to bring about the decline of slavery. The chronic wars that were waged all over Europe during the Middle Ages created a need for soldiers who must be free men. Again, the great famines and plagues which swept over Europe during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, accelerated the process by weakening the numbers of the free population. But, as Westermarck points out, "the chief cause of the extinction of slavery in Europe was its transformation into serfdom" (p. 701). And this took place, not through any religious or humanitarian feeling, but because, as Westermarck shows, serfdom became more profitable than slavery. This bears out the statement of the historian Finlay that :—

History affords its testimony that neither the doctrines of Christianity nor the sentiments of humanity have ever yet succeeded in extinguishing slavery where the soil could be cultivated with profit by slave labour. No Christian community of slave-holders has yet voluntarily abolished slavery. In no country where it prevailed has rural slavery ceased until the price of production raised by slave labour has fallen so low as to leave no profit for the slave-owner.⁶

After slavery had thus died a natural death in Europe it was revived again in a much more devilish form, upon the discovery of America. The Spaniards turned the natives they found in the new world—those they had not slaughtered—into slaves to work the gold mines, but they were quite unfitted for the work and perished miserably in thousands. In this emergency it was decided to import negroes from Africa, who were of much stronger physique, and thus was started the African slave trade. Later, when America was colonized by other Europeans, principally English, it was discovered that the rich and thinly populated territory of the West Indies and the Southern States of America could be profitably cultivated by slave labour, and negroes were imported for this purpose :—

This system of slavery, which at least in the British colonies and the Slave States surpassed in cruelty the slavery of any Pagan country ancient or modern, was not only recognized by Christian Governments but was supported by the large bulk of the clergy, Catholic and Protestant.⁷

The slave-holders justified their position by appealing to the Bible :—

The Bible, it was said, contains no prohibition of slavery; on the contrary, slavery is recognized both in the Old and New Testaments. Abraham, the father of the faithful and the friend of God, had slaves; the Hebrews were directed to make slaves of the surrounding nations; St. Paul and St. Peter approved of the relation of master and slave when they gave admonitions to both as to their reciprocal behaviour; the Saviour himself said nothing in condemnation of slavery, although it existed in great aggravation while he was upon earth. If slavery were sinful, would it have been too much to expect that the Almighty had directed at least one little word against it in the last revelation of His will?..... With the name of "abolitionist" was thus associated the idea of infidelity, and the emancipation movement was branded as an attempt to spread the evils of scepticism through the land.⁸

"The American Churches," adds Westermarck, "were justly said to be the bulwarks of American slavery."

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

¹ Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 16.

² Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 348.

³ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, p. 70.

⁴ Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, pp. 696-697.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 700.

⁶ Cited by Morley, *On Compromise*, p. 258.

⁷ Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, p. 711.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 711-712.

Book Chat.

A Poet-Moralist.

LIKE most who have reached the age of artistic discretion, I make a point of avoiding anything in the shape of sermons, ethical treatises, and emotional exhortations to righteousness. They invariably move me to more or less good tempered irony, when they do not induce weariness and vexation of spirit. Yet these books that are no books (Charles Lamb's *biblia abiblia*) I hold to be infinitely preferable to those wolves in sheep's clothing, the moral and sociological tracts that beguile us with the specious semblance of a poem, a story, or a play. It is not that I am so recalcitrant as to refuse point-blank to be improved or reproved, but I do prefer that instruction or reproof should come to me in a direct way. I enjoy the mental exertion of searching for it; I don't want it thrown at me. Now, it is obvious to anyone who is not an incorrigible supporter of the art-for-art theory, that every work of imagination which pretends to be more than the expression of a passing sensation or emotion, contains some sort of conception of man's relation to the world around him. But this conception should not be on the surface. It should be hidden at the very heart of the subject, and work upon us rather as a subtle implication than an everyday explication. Even if we miss, or even if we do not trouble about the deeper meaning we may not lose overmuch; we may indeed gain thereby, for the radiant beauty of the imagination will then be unclouded by the mists of moral theories. Those of us who appreciate *The Tempest* because it gives us an exquisite thrill of æsthetic pleasure may have a more complete conception of Shakespeare's mind than those who find it admirable mainly because it dramatises the permanent and spiritual truths that lie at the root of all religious systems.

Although I have no doubt that most of my readers share my detestation of social and moral tracts disguised as imaginative literature, I take it that they have no objection to the philosophic short story, to what has been called "truth in tale" literature. There are people, I believe, who are able to read *Candide* and *Rasselas* for the story, but in my opinion they are wilfully depriving themselves of nine tenths of the complex æsthetic pleasure of this kind of fiction when they ignore the deep social and moral significance which underlies, let me say, the sprightly movement of Voltaire or the leisurely and dignified expatiation of Dr. Johnson.

Another form of "truth in tale" literature is the parable or fable. From the earliest times it has been a favourite medium of teaching by way of pleasure. Its intention to teach is obviously quite open and above board, being implied in the form itself. It is rather out of fashion nowadays. This is due to the gradual separation of instruction and æsthetic pleasure, together with the modern lack of healthy simplicity. However, I came across an example the other day in *Man: A Fable* (Constable, 6s. net) by Miss Adelaide Eden Phillpotts, a young writer of great promise who is not unknown to the more literary Freethinker. Miss Phillpotts' excursion in philosophic fiction is as much a treasure of wisdom as it is a thing of beauty. It is a simple story of man's progress from childhood to ripe age told in such a way as to reveal the individual man, the men we are and those we know, through a generalized conception. The sixteen short chapters are headed: "Ambition," "Poet," "Friend," "Child," "Wife," etc., and in the charming one called "Dog" we get an exquisitely pathetic and tender picture of man's relation to what we are pleased to call the lower animals. Man is prompted by the desire of fame and other abstractions, such as beauty and the general good, to abandon those who have the first claim on his effort and thought, and selfishly to develop his own individuality. With the ingenuity of the true story teller Miss Phillpotts describes him as shrinking in bodily shape every time he satisfies his craving for egoistic development. And when at last he returns to his wife and child it is only by repeated acts of self-annihilation that he regains his normal shape. This decrease in bulk and stature admirably symbolizes the spiritual shrinkage

which inevitably takes place when our actions are self-regarding. The teaching of our youthful poet-moralist thus comes into line with that of the great thinkers of the past. "He only is great," says Schopenhauer, "who in his work, whether it is practical or theoretical, seeks *not his own concerns*, but pursues an *objective end* alone. Small, on the other hand, is all action which is directed to personal ends; for whoever is thereby set in action finds himself only in his own transient and insignificant person." And Goethe, who tells us that genius is simply the completest objectivity, has this reflection: "The whole art of living consists in giving up our existence in order to exist," that is, to exist more truly and on a higher plane. It is this teaching that Miss Phillpotts enforces with the clairvoyance of the creative artist.

Labour a Hundred Years Ago.

Our Labour friends are at last waking up to the fact that the pioneers of their movement have substantial claims to remembrance. The Labour Publishing Company issued a little while ago William Cobbett's *History of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom* (5s. net), with an excellent introduction and notes by W. J. L. Hammond. It is well worth the serious attention of every Freethinker who is also a freethinker in politics and sociology. Old Cobbett was a hard hitter, and the master of an English style as clean and sinewy as that of Swift. What an asset he would be to our labour friends if he were alive now! There would be no coquetting with parsons, no sentimental addresses to P.S.A. Brotherhoods on the essential socialism of the Gospel.

Another little book from the Labour Publishing Company is Thomas Hodgskin's *Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital* (1s. 6d. net). This was a pamphlet issued in 1825, and I fancy it is not easy to come across the original. I know that I have looked out for it for many years. Of Hodgskin you will find nothing in the usual books of reference, not even in the D.N.B. It has been left for a Frenchman, M. Élie Halévy, to write a study of his life and writings. Hodgskin could not quite escape the individualism of his time, but he succeeded so far as to advocate Trade Unionism, which then had a revolutionary sound. It is claimed that he exerted a powerful influence on the economic thought of his own and the next generation, and that he was the first to say plainly that "capitalism is exploitation, the appropriation by a privileged class, supported by the Government, of a part of the product of labour." It is far and away the ablest exposition of the anti-capitalist economic theory in English, and should be good meat and strong drink to those of our socialist friends who have been brought up on the vegetarian diet prescribed by Messrs. MacDonald and Snowden.

Socialism and Metaphysics.

Yet another valuable book from the same publishers is *Thinking: An Introduction to its History and Science*, by Fred Casey (4s. 6d. net). It is intended for students who have little or no time to waste on more elaborate preparations. It deals first, with the history of philosophy from the Greeks to our own day, and then proceeds to expound logic and metaphysics in such a manner as will arm the socialist reader against the attack of the rigid individualist. Mr. Casey's philosophy will commend itself to the Freethinker who is interested in metaphysics as a whole hearted attack on idealism in all its forms. I am inclined to agree with him that the only reality is unceasing becoming, but that is a philosophic notion not usually associated with Marxian Socialism, but rather with an individualistic idealism like that of Remy de Gourmont. However that may be, I can safely recommend the book to Freethinkers who will find him a trustworthy guide through the labyrinth of modern thought. GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

The utility of religion did not need to be asserted until the arguments for its truth had in a great measure ceased to convince.—John Stuart Mill, "Three Essays on Religion."

Acid Drops.

The psychology of the average clergyman is always an interesting study. It appears to move on quite different lines from that of the ordinary man. Absurd statements are made with quite a refreshing air of gravity, and fallacies propounded with the solemnity of the typical Solomon. So there is considerable interest to the student in an article by the Rev. James Colville in the *Christian World* for November 30. It is of course, nothing new to be told that "Agnosticism is dead. Materialism has largely passed away." One is used to such things, and it is likely that a man like Mr. Colville imagines that a very good way of removing something unwelcome is to deny its existence. In any case it encourages the more uneducated among his readers, while those who know better do not probably read his articles, or if they do are prompted by the same motives as ourselves.

But consider the type of mind that can perpetrate such things as the following:—

From science we have accepted its assured results, even where this acceptance has compelled a modification of our traditional religious belief.

That is very gracious, to accept the truth, *even* when it is against religion! Any one but a parson would see in that statement an admission that it is not truth, but a specific religious belief that is of importance. And how gracious to accept truth when it can no longer be denied! Or the absurdity of the comment that the preacher felt the uselessness of appealing to people when he was told that men's wills were not free to respond! Could there be a more hopeless misunderstanding of Determinism than that? An appeal to human motive is as valuable on Deterministic lines as on any other, and is, indeed, the only lines on which an appeal is reasonable. Or again, the proof of existence of a God derived from Mr. Hilaire Belloc's inability to understand the battle of the Marne except on the ground that both armies were in the hands of God. Such statements almost defy comment. Their protection is their absurdity.

The serious thing is that, although congregations are happily much smaller than they were, parsons still have the opportunity of vitally influencing men's minds, and in modern life the fool counts for as much as the philosopher at the ballot-box. People go to church, and in the state of semi-somnolence that church attendance induces, their minds are more susceptible to suggestions than they would be otherwise. And when they come into the world of action one finds them repeating these stupidities of the pulpit as though they were gems of purest wisdom. That is one reason why we decline to regard the parson who talks more about social matters than did his predecessor as altogether an advance. He is a social danger. Stupidity in the pulpit—so long as we must have stupidity—is all right. That is its proper place. But elsewhere it is apt to be very dangerous indeed.

Cardinal Bourne recently opened a Roman Catholic library at Duke's Lane, Kensington. The catalogue should prove interesting for its omissions. The *nil obstat* (no objection to publication) signed by a high dignitary of the Church, and still found frequently on the page facing the title-page of books written for Roman Catholics, is worth noting. The whole history of Christianity as a cultural force is condensed in the principle which underlies the words quoted.

We have referred on several occasions recently to the demolition of churches, or their conversion into places of amusement. Another is just announced from Crawley, Beds., where the Duke of Bedford has bought a Methodist Chapel, which is to be pulled down. And this in the county associated with the immortal tinker! Where are Nonconformity's "delectable mountains" to-day? The sad truth is the Nonconformist conscience has formed an alliance with the world and dividends, and

this necessitates a re-statement of "fundamentals"; and with a "progressive revelation" as the foundation of the faith there seems little ground to hope for better things in future.

A St. Leonards-on-Sea centenarian has a son, aged seventy-nine, who is a bachelor and lives with father. Compared with some of the Biblical patriarchs, however, the St. Leonards pair are only babes in arms.

The *Catholic Herald* (December 2) says that millions of Protestant children in the United States receive no religious instruction at all in the schools, and that all attempts to give this instruction after ordinary school hours, or on Saturday, have ended in failure. This is a significant comment on the contention that the child has religious instincts which are craving for satisfaction.

The *Daily Herald* thinks it is blasphemy to ask God Almighty to bless the labours of the House of Commons unless it deals with the problem of unemployment in the right way. That is really assuming that God Almighty is a Socialist or a member of the Labour Party, and we do not think either point has been proved. On the contrary, Mr. Scrymgeour seems quite certain that God Almighty is a prohibitionist and had a direct hand in returning him to Parliament. The *Daily Herald* solemnly adds that when legislators keep steadily before them the figure of the Man of Sorrows, then Almighty God will bless their deliberations. That is all really very stupid, and we would advise the *Herald* to leave all those imbecilities to the pulpit. If the Labour Party is to win and retain the respect of thoughtful men and women it must steer clear of the absurdities. A God who was worth bothering about would try to make the best he could even out of such poor material as a crowd of members of Parliament. But to wait for them to do what is right before he lends a hand to accomplish what has already been done, is ridiculous—religious, but ridiculous.

The cackle about Jesus is nauseating. How many of the Labour Party really do keep their eyes on the Man of Sorrows? Or will the *Herald* dare to plainly advise them to follow him? Does the editor believe in the policy of turning one cheek when the other is smitten, of taking no thought for the morrow, that angels are about men to help and devils to injure him? Will it hold up to its readers the ideal of a celibate religious fanatic as an example for Labour M.P.s to follow? Would it not be as well for the *Herald* to inculcate the importance of intellectual self-respect and to insist that the conditions of life in Judea have nothing in common with the life of to-day that can give us any material help.

Christian Scientists are building a church in Seymour Place, Marylebone. The Mormons have their own temple at Tottenham. The meeting place of the Christadelphians in Streatham is said to be packed every Sunday night. Many of the "orthodox" Protestant places of worship, on the other hand, are nearly empty. Of course, they look with some contempt upon the "fancy religions," but the success of the latter shows the type of "religious" question that is now agitating the man in the street, as far as he is capable of such agitation. He is not nearly so much concerned about his soul as he used to be. That's what comes of reducing the temperature of hell-fire.

The Sunday question is very prominently before the public just now in Australia and New Zealand. The Victoria College, Wellington, attached to the N.Z. University, recently passed a resolution permitting students to use the tennis courts on Sundays. The Presbyterian and some other religious bodies are protesting vigorously against the "desecration" of the Sabbath by a State-supported institution. Such courage and magnanimity are truly characteristic of organized Christianity. None of the students will be obliged to play Sunday tennis, nor will the public be obliged to watch

those that do play. In the meantime, the N.Z. Government continues to run railways on Sunday, and the churches and chapels in the Dominion continue to enjoy exemption from payment of rates and taxes. When a creed which is morally bankrupt and intellectually discredited can put forward such claims to recognition by the State, what must it have been when it really did control the secular authorities? One hardly needs to wade through ponderous volumes of historical details in order to answer that question.

The *Daily Mail* of November 28 reports the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham as saying, at the opening of a bazaar in aid of the church building fund, that the people should beg, borrow or steal to get necessary money. We do not imagine that the Bishop intended his advice to be taken literally, but, all the same, the Church has never been too particular where the money came from so long as it got it.

Some of the Labour leaders continue to hand out the same old religious twaddle that has been doing duty for generations. Opening a church bazaar at Derby the other day, Mr. J. H. Thomas said the world was suffering from lack of moral responsibility. "The Church needed strengthening for the task of re-establishing the world on a better basis." Mr. Thomas surely cannot believe nonsense of this kind. He must know that the Christian has—for long periods at a time—been the one dominant force in the Western world, and one would like to know when things were better as a consequence of the kind of moral responsibility cultivated by it. Was it during the Dark Ages or during the Mediæval period, or in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Mr. Thomas must be aware that the power of the Church and the sanction of the Church has always been used as a cover for the international piracy, the spirit of war, and the general rascality of which the world is now reaping the consequences. The Labour party in this country has now the chance of winning the respect, at least, of thoughtful men and women; but it will not do so unless its leaders cease sowing nonsense of the kind noted above.

An evangelist at Abertridwr, Wales, claimed that on one mission he made 700 converts. We have no doubt that all of these figured as converts in other missions. Anyway, this same evangelist has just closed a second crusade—total converts, six. The supply is evidently exhausted.

We have not referred of late to the lists published from time to time of those men of God who die and leave their gold behind them. The late Rev. S. A. Walker, of Blandford, Dorset, left £131,883. If he had been able to take his gold with him, we are sorely afraid that it would all have melted.

We are not at all inclined to attribute lofty motives to those who sentenced to death the six Greek officers and officials for the part they played in the war with Turkey. They were made to pay the price of failure. Had they been successful they would have been crowned with honour, and it is well for the world to realize that in war nations recognize only one thing as of value, and that is success. All the talk of righteousness, etc., in connection with war is little better than sheer cant. Apart from this we confess to not being altogether sorry that the executions have taken place. It may establish a precedent. If every nation would take it into its head to try and punish all prominent officials, in every country, who are in office when a war breaks out, we should probably have fewer wars and less talk of wars than we have now. But while we lavish praise on those who by their management of affairs create wars, and when war is declared cling to those responsible for making it as our only salvation, we shall keep on in the way we have hitherto gone. Wars must be made dangerous for war-makers as well as for the actual fighters if we are to kill the spirit of war in the nations of the world.

Without expressing the slightest opinion on the relative values of the Government that has just gone out and the Government that has just come in, we have not the slightest doubt but that had war broken out between Turkey and this country Mr. Lloyd George would have been returned to power. And the reason would have been that it is unwise to turn out a Government at such a juncture. Instead of counting war as a sign of failure, we too often make it a condition of perpetuating the power of a party or a man. We make these comments not as applying to one nation, but as applying to all. The avoidance of war must depend largely upon making it a dangerous game for all who play a part in bringing it about, whether by positive action or by mere bungling. The irony of the situation is that the difficulty of getting people to realize this does not lie so much with the soldier as with the civilian.

America seems to favour the existence of Christians with the mentality of men of the Stone Age, rather more than does this country—at least, they are less chary of exhibiting themselves in public. Thus we note that the Kentucky State Association of Baptists, representing 275,000 members, have solemnly denounced the doctrine of evolution because it contradicts the Divine account of creation as given in the book of Genesis. It also protests against public money being spent on institutions in which evolution is taught. And yet we believe that nearly everyone in the United States is able to read and write!

What peculiar ideas of evidence clergymen have! Canon Peter Green does not believe that the Church is in such a bad way as some would have us believe. And to test the matter he asked the Chief Constable of Manchester his opinion about the Churches. The Chief Constable replied that he thanked God every hour of the day for the work of the Churches. Now the Chief Constable happens to be a very good Christian, and may be expected to say exactly what he does say. And Canon Green must be far simpler than we take him to be if he did not know what the Chief Constable would say before ever he asked the question. We should like to see the Canon put the same question before a really impartial person.

Of course, it is just possible that the Chief Constable may have meant that he thanks God for the Church because it has helped to retain conditions that provide plenty of employment for him and his merry men. One wonders it does not strike these parsons that when they dilate upon the poverty and misery the Church relieves, upon the criminals they visit, and upon the vice against which they work, that all this is in a society that has been saturated with Christianity for many generations. The crime, misery, and vice is a product of a Christianized society. If Canon Green were dealing with a country where another religion was dominant he would not fail to use the facts as an argument against the value of that religion. Why does not the same argument apply to Christianity?

A spiritualist medium was charged the other day at Woking with burglary. Evidently his power to see hidden things did not extend to watching policemen, into whose arms he calmly walked. But that is characteristic of "seers" in all ages. They see so clearly things that are far off, and see so few things that are under their very nose.

Outside one of the Free Churches in Peckham there is an invitation for parishioners to make life worth living by "Counting God In," and becoming a member of the Church. During the air raids there can be no doubt that *God was counted out* by many of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood, for this so-called "Heavenly Father" allowed the German airmen to drop bombs on the workmen's dwellings in the vicinity of the church, and the only compensation these unfortunate people got for such cruel and unceremonious disturbance they received not from the Church, but from a fund established at the Borough Council, which as everybody knows is a purely Secular institution, and does not count God in.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 10, Leicester; December 17, Watford.

To Correspondents.

E. LANE.—We hardly know exactly what is meant by the yearly income of the Church of England. The property of the Church of England, real and otherwise, is managed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. An annual statement of their income and expenditure is published, but that does not include money raised by other means, including collections of various kinds and on various occasions.

H. S. MILLEN.—We agree with you at the imbecility of a Labour paper writing as though religion means kindness and charity. These are human qualities and have no necessary connection with any religion. If the readers of the *Daily Herald* took the pains to enlighten the editor as to what they thought of such childishness, less of it might appear in its columns. He probably prints it because he thinks it suits a lot of his readers, and they submit to it because they regard it as an amiable weakness of the editor. Mutual enlightenment would do good.

E. A. PHIPSON.—We should be pleased to consider an article on the subject named by you.

H. BAYFORD.—Glad to hear that Mr. Rosetti's lectures were so much enjoyed by those present.

MR. A. L. SEABORO' enquires which are the editions of "Omar Khayyam" referred to in the article by Mr. Moss and the letter from "Autolycus." Perhaps they will oblige by saying.

H. J. WESTLAKE.—Why not keep to your original intention and write the article? It is bound to be more to the point than an article by one to whom the idea has come as a suggestion from others. Your friend was probably repeating an alleged witticism by Bernard Shaw concerning vaccination and Christening.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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 "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

The Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society will be held on Tuesday, January 16, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras Station. The dinner, always an enjoyable affair, was suspended during the war and has not since been resumed. Circumstances appear to be now favourable to its resumption, and we shall hope to see very many of the old habitués of the dinner present as well as many newcomers. The menu is a very good one, and there will be an excellent concert as well as a few brief speeches appropriate to the occasion. The price of the tickets will be 8s. each, and the number will be strictly limited. Good notice has to be given of the actual number attending, and for that and other reasons we

hope that application for tickets will be made without delay. They may be obtained of Miss Vance at the Society's address, 62 Farringdon Street, or at the *Freethinker* Office. This is all the announcement we are able to make at present, but full details will follow in due course.

To-day (November 10) Mr. Cohen will lecture at 6.30 in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. His subject will be "Materialism," and we have no doubt there will be the usual good audience.

Mr. Cohen had a capital audience at Stockport on Sunday last. The lecture was followed with appreciation and apparently with enjoyment, and there were a few questions at the close. The local Branch of the N.S.S. contains some enthusiastic young members, and they are doing capital work. Mr. Cohen will visit Stockport again in March.

We are asked to again call attention to the social evening of the West Ham Branch, which is held on Saturday evening, December 9, at 7, in the Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate. There will be the usual varied entertainment and admission is free.

To-day (December 10) Mr. F. E. Willis will lecture in the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham, on "Prayer! Is it Helpful to Mankind." The lecture commences at 7, and admission is free. We hope that our Birmingham friends will see that the audience is sufficiently large to give what the Americans call a capacity audience.

A Discussion Circle has been started by the South London Branch of the N.S.S. The next meeting of the Circle will be held on Monday, December 11, at 8 o'clock at Trades Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. The speaker will be Mr. P. Wild. South London Freethinkers will please note.

Emily Webb.

EMILY WEBB was a Quakeress;
A character of note in the small Eastern town wherein she dwelt;

Her heart went out in love to all "dumb animals."

She always took off the check rein from every horse when left standing in the street;

Her house was a haven of refuge for every homeless cat;
And no stray dog was ever too disreputable, too full of fleas or too mangey

To find food and warmth and shelter

Within her little home:

She simply overflowed with sympathy for all suffering things in animate nature.

With unselfish devotion she took them in, nursed them, doctored them, mothered them.

Emily Webb grew old,

She felt her end approaching,

And she said,

"Death I shall welcome gladly,

For he will bring to me the opportunity

For which I have yearned unspeakably

Throughout these years of ceaseless ministration."

"For when I die,

I shall stand before my Maker,

And then I shall shake my fist in his face,

And tell him to his teeth

Just what I think of him,

For having put upon the helpless creatures that he made,

The burden inescapable, of filth and pain,

Hunger and homelessness and lingering disease,

That I have tried so hard, in my short life,

With these weak hands,

A little to alleviate!"

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.

Circumstance.

Under Heaven's high cope
Fortune is God—all you endure and do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.
—Shelley.

WHEN, in 1859, Charles Darwin introduced to the world his theory of the origin of species by means of natural selection he, concomitantly with his evolutionary colleagues, brought to light the fact that we had, in the past, been far too apt to regard life, with its many problems and apparently unfathomable meaning, rather from the point of view of a spectator instead of from that of an actual participator in its many actualities.

With the publication of *The Origin of Species* came the realization that we were part and parcel of life itself, and with that realization the knowledge that many, if not all, of our older ideas and even ideals in regard to it would have to be either thrown over altogether, or modified and altered to an almost unrecognisable degree, in view of the new facts so presented for our consideration.

Religion, for instance, with its professed altruism but practised egoism, was seen to be at variance with that equality of love of self and love of others which, in the light of such new conceptions, was seen to be not merely desirable but absolutely imperative if life was to run on at all smoothly, and if religion was wrong in one of its essential doctrines it followed as a matter of course that many of its minor ones were open to criticism and objection as well.

In ethics and politics, too, the old beliefs were found to present fresh and ever increasing difficulties, and the more conservative we were in relation to their continuance the more problematic and inexplicable they became.

Underlying the whole fabric of religious and moral belief, for example, was that obstinate conviction that throughout all the ages the one great motive power and cause of every action had been and was will-power—human or divine—and from that fallacy (and a fallacy it undoubtedly was) had consequently followed a still more absurd one, namely, that "consciousness" or "mind" had existed indefinitely, had been the one ruling factor of the ages, had existed before all else, and from which had proceeded, in some unintelligible way, all things material.

This kind of immortal brain-power had, for want of more knowledge, been deified and, one presumes purely for the sake of convenience, called God; yet such a theory was utterly contrary to any ascertainable facts, as Darwin's indefatigable searches proved.

The human brain has developed in the same way and under the same laws as any other human organ. It is merely a phase in the evolutionary progress of living matter on this planet, depending absolutely on the normal functioning of those same laws for its existence.

The amœba, one of the lowest of living organisms, possesses no eye (in the sense we speak of an eye). An exceedingly small and almost shapeless speck of jelly, it would seem to be devoid of any feeling or susceptibility to any outside stimulus at all, yet close examination reveals the fact that its whole being is nevertheless slightly sensible to light and shade and, as gradually in successive generations of amœbæ this vague sensitiveness becomes, by means of natural selection and use, localized, and a rudimentary eye formed, so the human brain in much the same way is developed by means of a long continual growth and adaptation to ever changing environment from non-conscious matter.

Man possesses a brain-power superior to that of an ape; an ape possesses one superior to that of a lemur,

and so on down to the lowly organisms like the amœbæ which possess practically no reasoning power at all, merely working by what is called "reflex action," and the only conclusion one can reasonably reach after consideration of all this is one diametrically opposed to that previously held, namely that the power to reason is the offspring of a pre-existing, non-reasoning entity which evidently fulfilled the laws of nature and "lived" without any reasoning power at all to guide its movements; and if this is so, which, in the face of modern learning, it is practically impossible to doubt, the mind is at once relegated to a much less prominent position than it hitherto enjoyed in our conception of things generally.

The one curious thing about it all is that, admittedly important as brain efficiency is in connection with our modern methods of going about things, we are, in spite of our so-called civilization, in many respects very little or no better off, especially from a health point of view, than were our ancestors, say, eight thousand years ago.

At the dawn of recorded history we find legends and myths abounding, and mingled with these are memories of what, before that time, would lead one to believe had been a greater and fuller life, but with the beginning of civilization we come across a legend which tells us of the growing of some remarkable "knowledge" fruit in a garden called Eden, which is said to have caused Adam to say, after partaking thereof, "I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Mankind, previously to that period and possibly to a great extent even then, had, one may safely assume, no qualms whatever about allowing the health-giving rays of the sun to fall unhindered on to their bodies. Some of them in fact worshipped the sun and to some purpose, but curiously enough nowadays we find that, with a brilliant intellect to guide our movement, the majority of people on this globe go about with their bodies encased in yards of wollen material plus the additional "protection" of being boxed up most of their lives in four walls, clustered together in suffocating and germ breeding cities, and many of them almost afraid to breathe the very air their life depends upon.

Along with this idea of clothing and the gradual evolution of the mind has grown the idea that the human body is too indecent to expose to the light of day, and along with the consequent general decrease in the physique of man caused by this kind of domestication the necessity for his mind to become more and more active in combating the various and ever-increasing ailments he finds himself subjected to has been gradually forced upon him, until at the present time we have a great part of our accumulated scientific knowledge directed towards the cure or rather patching up of humanity instead of being applied in a way calculated to prevent the existing wrongs being constantly perpetuated afresh.

It is only when we get down to the bedrock fact that life, whether exhibited in the fungus and steaming undergrowth of the world two hundred and sixty million years ago or in the movements of a modern professional footballer, is but an accident resulting from the chance interplay of certain indestructible elements, and the capacity to reason but yet another accidental result of that, that we are at all enabled to grasp the absurdity of our preconceived notions.

The German poet and philosopher Goethe possibly had something of this same idea when he said, in *Faust* :—

'Tis written : "In the Beginning was the Word."
Here am I balked; who, now, can help afford?
The Word?—impossible so high to rate it;
And otherwise must I translate it,
If by the Spirit I am truly taught;
Then thus : "In the Beginning was the Thought."

This first line let me weigh completely,
Lest my impatient pen proceed too fleetly,
Is it the *Thought* which works, creates, indeed?
"In the Beginning was the *Power*," I read,
Yet, as I write, a warning is suggested,
That I the sense may not have fairly tested.
The Spirit aids me: Now I see the light!
"In the Beginning was the *Act*," I write.

But nowadays we know that as matter is indestructible and consequently uncreatable, there never was a beginning, and the use of trying to decide what existed first becomes of no avail especially when we realize that everything that is now always did and always will exist in one form or another; and as change or mortality is, in a sense, Nature's only constant decree, "life" is seen to be just one of its many eternal shifting processes.

It follows, therefore, that mind can only be of any real benefit to humanity while it continues to act in conjunction with or adapt itself to the material laws around it.

The mind cannot make laws. It can only comprehend and act in conformity with those already in existence, and evolution, or to use a less controversial term, change has till now gone on practically irrespective of its working.

Undoubtedly primitive man, though ignorant, was far healthier and stronger than we are now, and we, having lost much of the physical prowess of our ancestors, have gained enormously in mentality, but the truth that, before any real progress can be made, we must at all costs have the former asset plus the latter, has only recently become patent.

Man never has been and is not now "master of his fate," and that long cherished delusion was, or should have been, finally exploded when, with the introduction of the doctrine of evolution, we learned that chance plays a far greater part in the shaping and controlling of human destiny than does ever human agency or design.

FRANK W. ROBINSON.

The Historicity of the Beloved Disciple.

II.

(Concluded from page 781.)

DID someone who posed as the Beloved Disciple act as voucher to the person who wrote the Fourth Gospel? The work does not say that the Beloved Disciple spoke to the author about himself, or about other people, but some of the facts which it reports in connection with him seem as if they were implied to have come from his own lips, and it certainly adduces him as a witness, if he be the one set forth as having beheld the flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus when stricken by the spear. This might suggest that perhaps he supplied materials to the author in question, especially with respect to things he pretended to have seen and done. The writer of the appendix, however, speaking of the Beloved Disciple, plainly says: "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things," thus making him author as well as voucher. The only way out of the difficulty is to suppose that the second of the above clauses was invented by some zealous but unscrupulous copyist who thought that the testimony of the Beloved Disciple would have more weight if he himself were believed to have written it down. The next words, "we know that his witness is true," certainly agree better with the first clause than the second, besides which they have a strong resemblance to those in the passage about the piercing and the flow of blood and water.

Critics who accept the present view will find themselves repaid for the sacrifice they have to make.

Among other advantages it does away with the serious objection that a person old enough to have been intimate with Jesus, would be too old to write the Fourth Gospel, a work admittedly of late origin, and very elaborate design. It also presents the author of the gospel in a much more favourable light, as regards the difference between his work and the Synoptics which would amount to a systematic falsification of the history and teaching of Jesus, if he had really known him and followed him as a disciple. On the present supposition, however, he had the oral gospel of his voucher as well as the written gospels or their sources, and having been brought up beyond doubt under the influence of Paul, and the Alexandrian School, it would be quite natural for him to suppose that Jesus taught the sort of doctrines which Paul and Apollos taught in his name, and that where the older gospels failed to show things testified to the contrary, they must be defective, or positively wrong. Hence he would feel no scruple about changing their statements. If, however, he had really known Jesus, and, nevertheless, acted in that fashion, his conduct would have been unpardonable.

With respect to the person, who, on this theory passed as the Beloved Disciple, and served as voucher to the author of the Fourth Gospel, it must be admitted that he told some untruths regarding matters connected with himself, but it does not follow that he told untruths only, or that he was responsible for the tremendous difference between the work and its predecessors. He may have been a very harmless and well-meaning sort of person, one who, like Tartarin of Tarascon, allowed time and fancy to reshape and retint his souvenirs, till at last he came to believe or more than half believe the things he had himself invented. We gather from the appendix that he lived to a great age. He may therefore have seen Jesus, and possibly been loved by Jesus, as a gentle child or amiable youth, and this is haply the substance of his dream. For the imagination, he is a patriarchal figure, with his long white beard, his mystic eyes, his deep furrows, and his snowy robes, as he sits there leaning on his staff amid a little band of hearers to whom he tells of Jesus and the days he spent with Jesus long ago. There is a disdainful sketch of Peter, an odious word for Judas, and ever more the personal note. It was to me he said this: I accompanied him when he came thither: I was present when he did that: Ah, if you had seen him then! And so as the monologue slowly proceeds with its deviations, and its pauses, and its repetitions, the things of that far-off time flow together vaguely in a dim shining light where fact and fiction are no longer distinguishable. "*Figurez-vous, disait-il, qu'un certain soir, en pleine Samarie.....*" It is thus we fain would think of him, and not as a villainous impostor, sitting in a study to coin lies by the midnight lamp. Still the point remains. Is this theory correct, or merely advantageous and agreeable?

We began with one objection and must end with another. According to all rules of logic, integrity, and common-sense, the author should have named his voucher. The obligation to do this would hold good in any case; but if the voucher were a venerable Father of the Church who had been the favourite disciple of his Lord, then to name him would be no less an honour than a duty. The early Christians held "witnesses" as they were called in high esteem, and the work before us attaches peculiar importance to testimony. Why, then, does it omit to mention the name of its principal deponent? To specify him would not have hurt his modesty for he had none, if he really told such tales about himself. To conceal his name could neither gratify his vanity nor that of the author, though it might if he himself had written the work. Finally there could be no danger of comprising him with the

authorities, for such a man must have been as far compromised as it was possible to be. The thing is so strange that one might well imagine either that the author invented the Beloved Disciple, and therefore thought it better not to name him; or else that he himself desired to pass for the personage.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Broiled Brains.

A SOMEWHAT dangerous, but very conventional habit of critics of literature and art is to take a personal idiosyncrasy of their subject and to use it as an indication of the kind of work to be expected from him. This is part and parcel of the commonplace theory that a man of genius is necessarily a human curiosity, and can only be expected to behave in an extraordinary manner.

Such a system of criticism has been applied to most famous people, and it is surprising that it receives so ready an acceptance, or it would be surprising were it not for the fact that the achievements of genius are so outstanding that they seem to imply something superhuman. The public being unable to realize truly superhuman character or qualities of work, and being interested always and only in personalities, has naturally affected the critics, so that demand has created a supply.

It is absolutely factitious to draw conclusions with regard to a man's art from the incidents of his life. Although experience plays a very great part in the understanding of other men and women, it does not necessarily play a very great part in the creation of an artistic unit. A man whose personal life has been responsible for the admission of his work as unhealthy, such as Oscar Wilde, will produce during his artistic career such divergent studies as *The Importance of Being in Earnest*, *Charmides*, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. On the other hand, a man like Walter Pater will produce uniformly beautiful work as a result of a life spent in uniformly respectable surroundings, and will draw his inspiration entirely from within, with the help, of course, of those objects of art and those parts of literature to which his natural inclination attracts him.

The most striking example of this method of critical examination of a man's work which can perhaps be found in English literature, is contained in John Addington Symonds' *English Men of Letters* study of Shelley. It is, of course, possible that Shelley was half mad in the manner described by Symonds—it is equally possible that his personal idiosyncrasies were just as peculiar as those described, and it is quite possible that if he had not been the man described he would not have produced a single work of genius. But it is not to be very readily believed that Shelley's falling asleep in front of a fire on an evening and exposing his head to the most intense heat during his repose, had anything to do with the quality of his mentality; nor does it seem particularly interesting or relevant in a study of his works to lay any emphasis upon the fact that he was extremely untidy in his appearance, and that he was very careless regarding the regularity of his meals and diet. It is common knowledge to-day that carelessness in hygiene and physical sustenance makes for ill-health, and indeed Shelley was quite unhealthy, which is perhaps one of the reasons why so many people regard poetry as unhealthy.

Another instance of emphasis upon peculiarities is to be found in the stories of Turner. These are probably apocryphal, although they may be true. Turner was reputed to be a very dirty man and to do his utmost to avoid selling any pictures. Presumably

his fault was the result of being so absorbed in his art that he had not time to wash, and the second idiosyncrasy is probably explained by pretending that he painted pictures to please himself, and not for a living, although this is not borne out by the evidence to hand.

Since so much emphasis has been laid by the critics of genius upon the idiosyncrasies of genius, it is well to consider whether the average man of any generation is turned out to a common pattern, or whether if he were examined in the same microscopical way, he would not show a sufficient quantity of idiosyncrasy to support the assumption that at any rate he was a genius, even if only a "mute inglorious Milton." Each individual of the community is peculiar, really most peculiar in his variation from every other individual, and if genius arises out of peculiarity, then the whole human race must be one huge collection of geniuses. Curiously enough, however, the output of really creative work appears ridiculously small in comparison and proportion to the number of the human race. This is what the scientists call significant.

The system of criticism which bases its conclusions on the fact that a man laid in front of the fire with his head towards it, instead of the usual way with his feet towards it, does not seem to be really adequate. There is, of course, a certain connection between the manner of a man's life and the kind of work he can possibly do, but this connection is relatively small, and the value of a man's work cannot be decided by recounting the curiosities of his behaviour. If that were possible, the village idiot would often be the greatest genius.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND MIRACLES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your remarks in the current issue of the *Freethinker* have, I think, materially clarified the issue between us, for they make it quite plain that we agree "that all human belief is based upon evidence," and that we only differ upon the necessity for, or the uselessness of, examining the evidence brought forward on behalf of the particular miracle which I have discussed in my book *Shaken Creeds*.

Your contention is that no evidence, unless it were evidence to show that a woman had been for a sufficient length of time carefully debarred from male access, would suffice to make a human virgin birth credible. With that contention I am prepared to agree, but I do not think that our agreement on that point relieves us from the necessity of examining the "evidence" which other people bring forward in support of this miracle. Pushed to its extreme, your theory that it is unnecessary to examine this evidence would mean that we need not even satisfy ourselves that the story told is not in fact a story of such seclusion. But, apart from that possibility, we have to recognize the fact that many people do believe that a Virgin Birth took place and that they base their belief on some alleged evidence for the occurrence. I again find myself in agreement with you when you state that you "fail to find that at any time people have accepted miracles after carefully weighing the evidence for and against," but this fact drives me to the very opposite conclusion to yours, as it appears to me to prove that the evidence is relied upon only because the believers have never carefully weighed it, and that therefore it is absolutely necessary to examine this evidence and show that it is not such as would convince any rational and unprejudiced person. You state that there is no evidence that Jesus walked on the water; but many men believe that there is such evidence, and if we desire to argue with such believers we must start by examining the evidence they produce, and must prove to them the fact that the alleged witness is an unknown author writing more than

a century after the supposed event, and therefore wholly unreliable.

You refer to a belief in a God who has the power to perform miracles, and imply that all that is necessary, if we wish to disprove any miracle, is to negate that conception. But this is merely an implication that I would have better employed my time writing a book upon another question instead of upon the Virgin Birth doctrine, for unless that matter was dealt with at considerable length, that very result would, it seems to me, have been brought about that you infer will come about from my method of arguing. The argument would "leave the sincere believer comparatively unaffected."

With the psychological aspect of the question I have, in the book itself, dwelt at comparatively great length, so we evidently agree upon the importance of that aspect, though I do not, as you apparently do, regard it as the only aspect worthy of consideration.

There is only one serious complaint I have to make with reference to your article. You have, inadvertently I am sure, misrepresented me by saying that I argue that there is "nothing *a priori* impossible in the [Virgin Birth] of a human being." In the very short chapter in which I discuss "the possibility and improbability of a virgin birth," I distinctly state that a human virgin birth is *primâ facie* impossible; and I have been under the impression that this difference of opinion between ourselves originated because I added that it was, however, "not inconceivable," and because further on I wrote that the *primâ facie* incredibility was not the only stumbling-block to belief but that the lack of evidence was the conclusive element.

In conclusion I must remind you that my book is addressed to people who do not already know the facts, and is not addressed to those who already know so much about comparative religion and biblical criticism as to require no guidance. I notice, after your remarks, with some surprise, a very interesting essay on "The Ignatian Epistles," immediately following your leading article in this week's *Freethinker*. On your theory, such an examination of the identity of a "witness" to the Virgin Birth, is an entire waste of time. I think, if you will excuse me saying so, that your practice is better than your theory! Or is it that your theory was really meant to apply to the enlightened and that we are, in fact, in agreement as to the necessity of examining evidence when we address ourselves to those who have not already learnt all the facts?

JOCELYN RHYS.

[I think all I need say in answer to Mr. Rhys' letter is that my main point in connection with miracles is that the question of evidence—using "evidence" in the judicial sense of the word—is irrelevant. The history of a belief is quite another matter, and is of considerable importance from more than one point of view. Again, my objection was not to the argumentative device of assuming the possibility of an occurrence, but the assertion of the principle that the credibility of miracles depended upon evidence. I need only say, finally, that nothing was further from my mind than the thought that Mr. Rhys' time was ill-spent in writing his book. It is a book well written, and calculated to do good.—C. C.]

CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

SIR,—At a revivalist meeting lately the lady missionary gave out that she would be glad to meet in the vestry anyone in trouble or distress and offer sympathy and advice. I informed her that a poor lady in the audience would be glad to avail herself of such helpful counsel. "Is it spiritual trouble?" was the question; and on my answering that it was temporal the retort came, "Then I have nothing to say to her."

E. A. PHIPSON.

"LABOUR AND THE PSALMS OF DAVID."

SIR,—It was with very great interest that I read the article by "Autolycus" in this week's issue—"Labour and the Psalms of David." As a young man keenly interested not only in the progressive movement in the realm of thought but also in the political field, this problem of the devotion of certain portions of the Labour movement to obsolete creeds and ceremonials, to Churches and sects, which ought to have been swept away long ago, is, to say the least, disturbing.

Of course, as "Autolycus" says, many of the Labour leaders are Atheists, but on the other hand, a great many are not. The late Mr. Keir Hardie was a decidedly re-

ligious man, though the Churches declined to admit it. The Chief Whip of the party, Mr. Arthur Henderson, is, I believe, a Methodist local preacher. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, only a few days ago, thought fit to invoke the blessing of the Deity on the Irish "Settlement." Mr. George Lansbury, late editor of the *Daily Herald*, and by common consent one of the most disinterested and sincere men in the movement, by some strange fatality, seems doomed to retain his faith in the Christian religion despite all the opposition and uncharitableness of its exponents. Naturally, the advances made by these men and others who think like them are welcomed by the clerics. A few years ago this was not the case. When the Rev. R. J. Campbell in his unregenerate days advocated Christian Socialism he was almost universally denounced. Now the world has changed. Labour has become a power, and the Churches are already, more or less furtively, angling for its support. We have in the religious camp such men as Dr. Orchard, with his strange combination of pacifism and childish devotion to Catholic toys and millinery, and others of the low Church evangelical type, who yet are equally concerned with the maintenance of the Christian faith amongst the masses. We might even add that the Roman Catholic Church in particular is hoping to use the Labour movement for her own ends, as her fight against Birth Control propaganda signifies. She hopes that every class of worker, save the Catholics, will restrict their families until the Catholic preponderance amongst lower classes is so great that the Church will be able to use the mass vote for the compulsory introduction of the mass.

I am one of those who believe that there is only one kind of freedom really worth the name. The people as a whole may win industrial emancipation; they may achieve political success; the time may come when the monarchy and the House of Lords will both be abolished; the time may come, even, when Soviets will take the place of Parliamentary government. But if the great mass of men and women are still slaves in their minds, then no amount of outward change will make them free. It is no good getting rid of the landlord and the capitalist and leaving the parson as before, or even strengthened by the collapse of the Churches' rival organizations. Only those men are slaves who blindly accept the dope poured forth from pulpit or platform, or in the newspapers, without question, without murmur.

It is for true freedom that the *Freethinker* and the *Literary Guide* are published, that the N.S.S. and the R.P.A. exist. I am not sufficiently well-informed to know what measure of success is achieved by the efforts of these societies, but I do know that there are many thousands of young men and women who are "fed up" with the old creeds and Churches, who have seen through the hypocrisy and the sham, and who would be only too pleased to help in the fight against everything that makes for a prisoned and cabined mind—if they knew how to do so. As it is they throw themselves into the political movement as "the next best thing."

E. ROYSTON PIKE.

My Star of Hope.

I LOOKED and saw a world in chaos laid,
A mighty caldron seething with the strife
Of countless gods—that foolish hands had made
To glut and batten on more humble life.

Where'er my eyes I turned an altar raised
To some gross deity I did espy,
Where knelt sad devotees and vaguely praised
Some senseless creed—some flagrant, brutal lie.

Then, as I watched, a shimmering ray of light
Cleft like an arrow through the baneful lease
Of minds distorted—through the fearsome night—
And rested on the holy shrine of Peace.

Fair star of Reason! Shine, O fadeless gleam!
Be thou the beacon that o'er Life's sad sea
Shall guide me to the haven of my dream.
Shine on for aye! Thou art the star for me!

ARNOLD WARREN.

Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Mr. George Henry Brittan, of 52, Snell Park, Edmonton, which occurred on Tuesday, November 28, in the 64th year of his age. Mr. Brittan was well known as a deeply convinced Freethinker, who availed himself of every opportunity to give expression to his views. For many years he was a loyal member of the N.S.S. and a generous contributor to its funds. He attended all Freethought lectures in his neighbourhood, and often acted as chairman. As husband, father, and neighbour he was deeply beloved and heartily admired. His sterling honesty, straightforwardness and courage won for him the respect of all who knew him, even those from whom he differed most widely in his views on religion. The interment took place on Saturday, December 2, in the Edmonton Public Cemetery, and a secular service was conducted at the graveside by the undersigned.—J. T. L.

It is with deep regret that I have to record the death of Mrs. Harriet Hollamby, the beloved wife of Mr. George Hollamby, of Rotherhithe, after a rather lingering illness borne with great fortitude. They had been married close on fifty years, were a most devoted couple, and had travelled together the thorny path of evolution from orthodoxy to Freethought. For many years they were ardent disciples of the gospel of secularism and great admirers of such Freethought Pioneers as Bradlaugh, Foote and the present Editor of the *Freethinker*. It therefore comes as a great blow to Mr. Hollamby to lose his beloved partner just at the time when her loving devotion to him was most needed, and all those who have the good fortune of knowing Mr. Hollamby will sympathise with him most deeply in his great loss. The deceased lady was buried at Nunhead Cemetery on Wednesday last, November 29, when a most impressive secular service was read by the undersigned in the presence of a large gathering of relatives and friends.—ARTHUR B. MOSS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 30.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Quinton, and Rosetti; Miss Pankhurst, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Swansea and West Ham Branches, and for the Parent Society; and correspondence with Plymouth, Manchester, Newcastle and Grimsby was dealt with.

The President reported successful meetings at Liverpool and Weston-super-Mare.

The report of the Propagandist Committee was received and adopted. Resolved: That the MS. of a tract by Mr. Whitehead be printed.

It was decided that the 26th Annual Dinner of the N.S.S. should take place on Tuesday, January 16, at the Midland Grand Hotel, adjoining St. Pancras Station. The price of the tickets to be 8s. The President to occupy the chair and a musical programme to be arranged. Intending visitors to be informed that as the number of diners must be limited, early application for tickets should be made to the Secretary.

The meeting then adjourned.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

Let all men freely speak what they think without being ever branded or punished but for wicked practices, and leaving their speculative opinions to be confuted or approved by whoever pleases; then you are sure to hear the whole truth, and till then but very scantily, or obscurely, if at all.—John Toland, "*Clidophorus*."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on post-card.

LONDON.—INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.1): 8, Debate, "Is the New Testament the Word of God?" Mr. A. Blady v. Mr. P. Pengelly.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. E. Baker, "Some Types of Christians." Discussion Circle, Monday, December 11, Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, 8 p.m. Opener, Mr. P. Wild.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "The Confession of a Liberal."

COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. F. E. Willis, J.P., "Prayer! Is it Helpful to Mankind?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Mrs. M. B. Laird, "The Problem of Poverty." (Silver collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Room): 7, Councillor Dr. Moorhouse, "Venereal Disease." Questions and discussion invited. Both sexes cordially invited. Will members please endeavour to strengthen our ranks by bringing new ones?

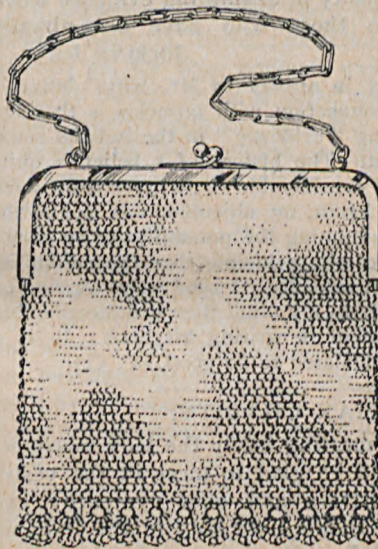
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Materialism."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Socialist Society's Rooms, 23 Royal Arcade): Tuesday, December 12, at 7.30, Mr. J. Bryce, "The Civilization of China."



LATEST N.S.S. BADGE.—A single Pansy flower, size as shown; artistic and neat design in enamel and silver; permanent in colour; has been the silent means of introducing many kindred spirits. Brooch or Stud Fastening, 1s. post free. Special terms to Branches.—From THE GENERAL SECRETARY, N.S.S., 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

A Suggestion for Your Present



The response to previous advertisements for these Handbags has been most gratifying. We are awaiting a fresh supply. Purchasers sending their orders can rely on delivery in time for their Christmas Gift.

A Diamond Ring is always acceptable; illustrated are five examples, which are sure to please. These rings are guaranteed good value, platinum set and 18 carat gold.

7 Stone Diamond Cluster Ring, £5 10s.

2 Stone Diamond Crossover Ring, £6

5 Stone Diamond Carved Half-hoop Ring, £4 15s.

5 Stone Diamond Coronet Half-hoop Ring, £5

3 Stone Diamond Crossover Ring, £4 10s.

Higher Priced Goods on application. Cash with Order. Money returned if not satisfied.

J. ROBERTS,
21 KING'S ROAD, FINSBURY PARK,
LONDON, N.4.

SPIRITUALISM AND A FUTURE LIFE

The Other Side of Death

A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Future Life, with a Study of Spiritualism, from the Standpoint of the New Psychology

By **CHAPMAN COHEN**

This is an attempt to re-interpret the fact of death with its associated feelings in terms of a scientific sociology and psychology. It studies Spiritualism from the point of view of the latest psychology, and offers a scientific and naturalistic explanation of its fundamental phenomena.

Paper Cover, **2s.**, postage 2d.; Cloth Bound, **3s. 6d.**, postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

Four Great Freethinkers.**GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE**

By **JOSEPH McCABE**

The Life and Work of one of the Pioneers of the Secular and Co-operative movements in Great Britain. With four plates.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

By **C. T. GORHAM**

A Biographical Sketch of America's greatest Freethought Advocate. With Four Plates.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH

By The Right Hon. **J. M. ROBERTSON**

An Authoritative Life of one of the greatest Reformers of the Nineteenth Century, and the only one now obtainable. With Four Portraits.

VOLTAIRE

By The Right Hon. **J. M. ROBERTSON**

In Paper Covers, **2s.** (postage 2d.). Cloth Bound, **3s. 6d.** (postage 2½d.) each Volume.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

For Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians

By **G. W. FOOTE** and **W. P. BALL**

NEW EDITION

(Issued by the Secular Society, Limited)

CONTENTS :

Part I.—Bible Contradictions. Part II.—Bible Absurdities. Part III.—Bible Atrocities. Part IV.—Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, Obscenities, Broken Promises, and Unfulfilled Prophecies.

Cloth Bound. Price **2s. 6d.** Postage 3d.

One of the most useful books ever published. Invaluable to Freethinkers answering Christians.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

Works by Sir WALTER STRICKLAND, B.A.

SLAVONIC FAIRY TALES. A Collection of Folk-stories, translated by SIR WALTER STRICKLAND, with Preface, Explanatory Essays, etc. Pp. 500, Cloth Bound. Reduced price 4s. 6d.

EPICUREAN STUDIES. Thirty Studies in Prose and Verse. Satire, Science and Philosophy. Cloth, 2s.

SACRIFICE. A Play, set in an early Polar civilization, exhibiting the cruelty of Sacrificial Religion. Price 1s.

SEVEN POEMS. Satirical Verse. Price 9d.

THE SMUGGLER'S DOG. Splendid Animal Study, and a pathetic story of life on the Italo-Swiss Frontier. Price 6d.

DRAMATIC PIECES. Orpheus and Eurydice, Dido and Æneas, The Glorified Thief, Aphrodite, etc. Pp. 380. Reduced price, 3s. 6d.

THE BLACK SPOT IN THE EAST. A scathing criticism on British methods in India. Originally written in reply to Lady Arthur Somerset. Pp. 100. Price 1s.

SEGNIVS IRRITANT. Eight Primitive Folk-lore stories, with two Supplementary Essays. Cloth. Reduced price, 2s.

VITESLAY HALEK'S STORIES. Translated by SIR WALTER STRICKLAND. Under the Hollow Tree—Our Grandfather—Poldik the Scavenger. The set of three, 1s. 6d., post free.

From the Publishers, by post only,

19 Richmond Gardens, London, W.12.

A BOOK THAT MADE HISTORY**THE RUINS**

A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE LAW OF NATURE

By **C. F. VOLNEY**

A New Edition, being a Revised Translation with Introduction by GEORGE UNDERWOOD, Portrait, Astronomical Charts, and Artistic Cover Design by H. CUTNER.

Price **FIVE SHILLINGS.** Postage 3d.

This is a Work that all Freethinkers should read. Its influence on the history of Freethought has been profound, and at the distance of more than a century its philosophy must command the admiration of all serious students of human history. This is an Unabridged Edition of one of the greatest of Freethought Classics with all the original notes. No better edition has been issued.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

By **CHAPMAN COHEN.**

- No. 1. WHAT WILL YOU PUT IN ITS PLACE?
 - No. 2. WHAT IS THE USE OF THE CLERGY?
 - No. 3. DYING FREETHINKERS.
 - No. 4. THE BELIEFS OF UNBELIEVERS.
 - No. 5. ARE CHRISTIANS INFERIOR TO FREETHINKERS?
 - No. 6. DOES MAN DESIRE GOD?
- Price 1s. 6d. per 100, Postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

A BOOK WITH A BITE.

BIBLE ROMANCES

(FOURTH EDITION)

By **G. W. FOOTE**

A Drastic Criticism of the Old and New Testament Narratives, full of Wit, Wisdom, and Learning.
Contains some of the best and wittiest of the work of G. W. Foote.

In Cloth, 224 pp. Price **2s. 6d.**, postage 3½d.

Should sell by the thousand.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

A Remarkable Book by a Remarkable Man Communism and Christianity

BY
Bishop W. MONTGOMERY BROWN, D.D.

A book that is quite outspoken in its attack on Christianity and on fundamental religious ideas. It is an unsparing criticism of Christianity from the point of view of Darwinism, and of Sociology from the point of view of Marxism. 204 pp.

Price **1s.**, postage 2d.
Special terms for quantities.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

BLASPHEMY A PLEA FOR RELIGIOUS EQUALITY BY CHAPMAN COHEN

Price **Threepence.** Postage **One Penny**

Contains a statement of Statute and Common Law on the subject, with an exposure of the fallacies by which they are defended, and a survey of the arguments in favour of their abolition. Orders for six or more copies will be sent post free. Special terms for larger quantities.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

Bargains in Books

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THEISM.
By **PHYSICUS (G. J. Romanes).**

Price 4s., postage 4d.

THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT.
By **KARL PEARSON.**

Essays in Freethought History and Sociology.
Published 10s. 6d. Price 5s. 6d., postage 7d.

KAFIR SOCIALISM AND THE DAWN
OF INDIVIDUALISM.

An Introduction to the Study of the Native Problem.
By **DUDLEY KIDD.**
Published 7s. 6d. Price 3s. 9d., postage 9d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

REALISTIC APHORISMS and PURPLE PATCHES

COLLECTED BY
ARTHUR FALLOWS, M.A.

Those who enjoy brief pithy sayings, conveying in a few lines what so often takes pages to tell, will appreciate the issue of a book of this character. It gives the essence of what virile thinkers of many ages have to say on life, while avoiding sugary commonplaces and stale platitudes. There is material for an essay on every page, and a thought-provoker in every paragraph. Those who are on the look-out for a suitable gift book that is a little out of the ordinary will find here what they are seeking.

320 pp., Cloth Gilt, **5s.**, by post 5s. 5d.; Paper
Covers, **3s. 6d.**, by post 3s. 10½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

A Bargain for Book-Buyers.

LIFE AND EVOLUTION

By **F. W. HEADLEY**

Large 8vo., 272 pp., with about 100 illustrations.
An Outline of the theory of evolution, with discussions of the later theories of Mendel, De Vries, etc., etc.

Price **4s. 6d.**, postage 8d.

Only a very limited number available.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

A FIGHT FOR RIGHT

A Verbatim Report of the Decision in the House of Lords
in re

Bowman and Others v. The Secular Society, Limited.
With Introduction by **CHAPMAN COHEN.**

Issued by the Secular Society, Limited.

Price **One Shilling.** Postage 1½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.