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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Evolution.

According to the newspapers the Dayton case has had the effect of creating a demand for books dealing with evolution. If that is so it is all to the good. That remark applies to this country as well as to the United States, for it is ridiculous to imagine that the mass of the people in this country are better informed on the subject than the mass of the people in America, or that we have not large numbers of Christians here as ignorant and as bigoted as there are in other countries, or that there is really greater liberty in the schools here than in America. And it will be still more to the good if the reading of books on evolution leads to a correct understanding of all that is implied by evolution and its real bearing on religious beliefs. It will not do merely to fill one's head with a catalogue of facts about evolution. That kind of information is not of very great value to anyone, if it stops there. It is the kind of scientific knowledge that any industrious journalist can "swot" up at a few hours notice, can produce a treatise on in a week, any lazy-minded reader can master at a sitting, and then persuade himself that he has an understanding of science. A man may have all the facts of a particular science at his finger's ends, and still remain supremely ignorant. An educated Christian may be quite capable of teaching an uneducated unbeliever evolution, without its disturbing his belief in religion. A few well digested facts with a capacity for clear thinking, and a fair appreciation of the nature of scientific method are what really matters. The other plan is like mastering the contents of one of Christie's catalogues with the idea that one is acquiring a knowledge of art. Too many writers and too many readers are led away by that method. Hence the half-baked, self-satisfied intelligences that surround us.

Fancies.

Ever since the Dayton trial commenced I have been receiving requests from readers to write a plain account of the meaning of evolution, and indicate its bearings on religious beliefs. And I think I may as usefully fill up the space at my disposal in this way as in any other. It is not the first time I have written on this topic, but one is always, it is good to note, getting new readers, and current events often

give a new importance to old topics. So I may commence with an attempt to answer the question, What is Evolution? It may safely be said that the majority of the public think of it as connected only with the development of living things. A very considerable number identify it with Darwinism. And apart from the general public, one often gets, from those that ought to know better, more or less fantastical theories about evolution as an "unfolding" of some cosmic purpose, or we are told that evolution is "working" towards some "higher" end, or that we must judge the "value" of evolution by the end achieved, etc., all of which proves that the writer has not yet outgrown that primitive form of thinking which is preserved in the religions around us. Theosophists, "advanced" Christians, and other dwellers in the twilight of the intellectual world, delight in this kind of verbal moonshine, and it is found with even some scientific workers who are still held in bondage by the religious teachings of their childhood. There is a rather unpleasant sense in which the child is the father of the man.

* * *

What is Evolution?

Evolution is not confined to biology; biology is but one department of the larger subject. Still less can it be identified with Darwinism. Darwinism might be altogether wrong, but it would not in the least affect the general truth of evolution. Of course, religionists have not been slow to use the discussions as to the adequacy of Darwinism as proof that evolution is not generally accepted by the scientific world, but that is just a characteristic piece of Christian trickery. Biological evolution, the emergence of all forms of life from a few primitive ones, is not a theory at all; it is as near a demonstrated truth as is possible in the circumstances. There is simply no room here for dispute, save with those who are too ignorant to be worthy of dispute. Every living creature does actually develop from a simpler form, and when the evolutionist makes that statement he is merely saying something that is true of every organism without a single exception. Darwinism is an attempted explanation of the way in which these changes have been brought about. But the two questions are quite distinct. If John Smith was in Manchester but is now in London, there may be a number of theories as to how he got from one place to the other, but the fact of the transference is not open to question. So it is with evolution. For a man to say that he does not believe in the development of one form of life from another is to proclaim his own ignorance. There is not a single scientific worker, with a reputation worth talking about, who questions it. There is no room for doubt concerning the fact of evolution. It is the "how" of the process that remains for discussion. Only that and nothing more.

* * *

Nature and Law.

Evolution rests upon two fundamental facts. These are change and difference—really the two may be

taken as one since change involves difference. Change is universal and ceaseless. Everywhere, in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, change is going on eternally. Nothing remains the same for any length of time. That is why certain philosophers have argued that the only thing ever present is the past. The future is always ahead. The present is gone as soon as it is realized. It is the past alone that is always with us. Change is the one constant fact in nature. But change involves a constant redistribution of matter and a constant redirection of motion. You cannot think of a thing changing without assuming a redirection of the forces of which it is, so to speak, the centre. And what the theory of evolution aims at doing is to lay down the "law" of the change that is everywhere going on. But a "law" of nature, it is important to remember, is never anything more than a description of the way in which things are observed to act. The "law" that iron sinks in water, or that wood floats, or that a current of warm air will rise above a current of cold air, is no more than a fact of observation, and the purely scientific formula describing these things is simply a summarised way of expressing what occurs. That is why the popular expressions that nature obeys law, or acts according to law, or is governed by law, are all so much scientific nonsense. Nature neither obeys law nor does it act according to law, because a "law" only tells us what it does. Natural law does not *prescribe*, it merely *describes*. It does not say a thing *shall* behave in this or that way, it simply says that it does so behave. Of anything more than this we have no knowledge. And if we could get any further knowledge in that direction it would not be of the slightest value to anyone.

* * *

Nature and Man.

The "law" of evolution is just a description—expressed in highly abstract terms—of the changes that are everywhere taking place. It does not assume a lawgiver, or anyone or anything above or behind evolution, and has not the slightest use for any such conception. "God" is as useless in theory as he is helpless in practice. Neither does evolution assume that things are either improving or deteriorating. The chatter about evolution making for higher things, or for a higher life, is mere unscientific talk coming from such as have not yet outgrown the infantile philosophy of Theism. "Up" and "down," "high" and "low," "good" and "bad" indicate standards of value which we create for our convenience. They are useful enough in their place, but they become sources of hopeless confusion when they are applied to nature as though they had an existence apart from us. Evolution may be in the direction of what we call high, or in that of what we call low. If a more complex form of life is preserved at one time, it is quite in accord with the law of evolution that a simpler one should be preserved at another time. In an African swamp nature appears to place greater value upon an alligator than upon a man. In the desert a lizard ranks as of higher survival value than a philosopher. If we may talk of nature "caring," then it preserves a noxious form of life with the same care that it does an admirable one. Its methods display no greater intelligence than does a hen when it is sitting on a china egg. And when there has developed what we are pleased to call a "higher" form of existence, there is straightway fostered the growth of numerous parasites and disease germs that tend to destroy it. We may go more thoroughly into this later. All that is necessary now is to see quite clearly what evolution is—and what it is not. It is a theory which describes the nature of the change everywhere in action. It

says nothing about purpose in nature; it knows nothing about purpose; it has no use for purpose. The assumption of purpose would not help us to better understand in the least degree the character of the cosmic processes. And if one were to admit, for the moment, the possibility of purpose in the universe, it is about as unintelligent as one could well conceive. It shows us waste, bungling, cruelty, to a degree that staggers the human imagination. Any human being who, with power and wisdom enough to select some other plan, deliberately adopted the one expressed in nature would be unhesitatingly condemned as an idiot or a criminal, or a mixture of both. And he would richly deserve the judgment.

* * *

Darwinism.

So much for evolution. What, now, is Darwinism? Darwinism, as I have already said, is solely concerned with the method by which from a few simple forms there may have originated a multitude of different ones. And it rests upon a few simple and quite indisputable facts. The first is that all forms of life vary. From high to low they present differences. There is not an organ in the animal body, there is not a quality displayed that does not differ in some respects from the same organ or quality possessed by the other members of the same species. The second fact is that more animals are born than can survive. The number that survive may be few or many, but the destruction is always there. But why do some die rather than others? That is the pressing question, and it was the reply Darwin gave to this which enabled him to propound an answer to the riddle of the origin of species. Looking at the methods followed by breeders of animals and plants, he observed that these operated upon the variations presented to them by nature. From these variations they select the ones that vary in a particular direction, reject or kill off the remainder, breed from the selected ones, and repeat the process over several generations. Finally, by the accumulation of these differences they manage to establish a new variety of animal or plant. Darwin's problem thus became that of finding something that would in a state of nature take the place of the conscious selection of man. And he found that in what came to be known as the *Survival of the Fittest*. The phrase is Spencer's, and it is more exact than Darwin's. If more are born than survive, if non-survival results from a comparative weakness of structure or of some quality necessary to survival, then, said Darwin, we have ever present a constant struggle for existence which plays the part that conscious selection does with man. Hence he called the process Natural Selection; not the most accurate of phrases, but it must be borne in mind that Darwin never intended it to be more than an analogue. It was left for religious trickery to read into it a meaning that it will not stand, and which it was never intended to bear.

* * *

The Fact of Natural Selection.

Now there is simply *no question as to the truth of Natural Selection*. The facts are well known, their operation is indisputable. No one in any part of the world questions them. The only question at issue is whether Natural Selection alone is adequate to account for the production of new species. Of late years the adequacy of the theory has been seriously questioned, and between the date of the *Origin of Species* and to-day many alternative theories have been propounded. And they have been propounded in the name of evolution, not as antagonistic to it. But evolution does not depend upon the adequacy of Darwinism. If this were universally rejected, it would only leave us looking in other directions for

an explanation of the beginnings of new varieties. And as a matter of fact our knowledge of the machinery of evolution is to-day so far advanced that experimenters in various parts of the world actually do produce new varieties of plants and animals almost to order. But if the reader will bear in mind what has been said he will be well guarded against the stream of fallacy which is being constantly poured out in connection with religion, and this not by the professional champions of religion alone, but by those who, quite without justification, pride themselves as having outgrown the primitive philosophising which meets us in crystallised form in the religions of the world.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

The Christian Church.

SECULARISTS generally condemn the Church because of the irrationality and absurdity of its doctrines. Such dogmas as those of the Holy Trinity, Incarnation of the Second Person, the Atonement, and the Resurrection are held up to ridicule because, taken as events, they are beyond the bounds of possibility, or taken merely as objects of belief, they reach the very acme of ridiculousness. The arguments against their truth are absolutely unanswerable, as is proved by the fact that the Church in all ages has been doing its utmost to defend itself against all attacks. Works of an apologetic character have been exceedingly numerous, and some of them exceptionally clever, in most ages. Two of the most successful of them all appeared not many years ago, the one being *What is Christianity?* by von Adolf Harnack, and the other *Apologies*, by the late Professor A. B. Bruce, of Glasgow. The fact remains, however, that such works have never proved of any great benefit to the case for Christianity. Numerous and able replies to each of them are speedily published and widely circulated, with the inevitable result that not a few Christians who read them lose their Christian faith and join the ranks of the Secularists.

The Church is condemned not only on account of the beliefs it holds, but also because of its conduct in the world. The behaviour of the Church has often been deeply blameworthy and through all the ages of its history it has allowed its members to commit disgraceful deeds apparently unrebuked. For example, in the year 366 the Bishopric of Rome was vacant, for which Damasus and Ursinus were rival candidates. Damasus was elected, but at the cost of the cruel murder of one hundred and thirty-seven persons. And yet Damasus is called a great pontiff and a friend of Jerome. In official Church histories no reference is made to the wicked corruptions that characterized his election, their one ambition being to dwell on his saintly character and the noble deeds done during his reign.

When Christianity came to power under Constantine the Great what the Church conceived to be its first duty was the destruction of Paganism. In Church histories we read much about persecution, but almost without exception it signifies the persecution of Christians by Pagans. Prior to the Nicene Council in 325, we read of ten more or less fierce persecutions under Pagan emperors. It is positively certain that the number ten is an exaggeration, and that the orthodox account of the various sufferings endured is also largely exaggerated; but the fact remains that the Christians were persecuted during the early centuries. But the Christian attitude to and treatment of Pagans are not styled persecution. It is quite true that at first, after his conversion to Christianity, and

while the Pagan Licinius was still his colleague, Constantine, as Lecky says, "showed marked tolerance towards the adherents of the old superstitions, and when his law against private or magical sacrifices had created a considerable panic among them, he endeavoured to remove the impression by a proclamation in which he authorised in the most express terms the worship in the temples." Later the emperor changed his mind, for "about 330 he prohibited the temple worship." Lecky says:—

This enactment has not come down to us, but the prohibition is expressly and unequivocally asserted by both Eusebius, Sozomen, and Theodoret, and Libanius tells us that the penalty of holding converse with the old gods was death. Eusebius notices some temples that were at this time closed, and speaks of similar measures as being very common; but, at the same time, we have decisive evidence that the Pagan worship was connived at in many and probably most parts of the Empire, that temples were dedicated, and the ceremonies performed without molestation or concealment (*The Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, vol. ii., p. 15).

That was possible under Constantine, of whom it must be said that neither his renunciation of Paganism nor his belief in Christianity was in any sense an undoubted reality. He made laws which were never rigidly enforced, particularly those against Pagan worship. But Theodosius the Great was a radically different character. He became Roman Emperor in 379, and almost at once his savage temper had full scope. Lecky says:—

The Theodosian code, which was compiled under Theodosius the younger, contains no less than sixty-six enactments against heretics, besides many others against Pagans, Jews, apostates, and magicians..... First, the Pagans were deprived of offices in the State; then their secret sacrifices were prohibited; then every kind of divination was forbidden; then the public sacrifices were suppressed; and finally the temples were destroyed, their images broken, and the entire worship condemned (vol. ii., p. 17).

A few pages later on we are informed that "under Theodosius the Great all the temples were razed to the ground, and all forms of Pagan and heretical worship absolutely prohibited." The only plausible excuse for the persecution and forcible suppression of Paganism was the firm conviction cherished by Christians that in their religion alone was the salvation of the soul rendered possible; but for that conviction neither reason nor history offers the slightest justification.

This leads us to another argument against the Church, namely the fact that it has never shone as a reforming institution. It is not our point that the Church has accomplished absolutely no social good whatever. We are fully aware that members of the Church have rendered the highest service to the age and generation in which they lived. Our point, however, is that the Church is not a human institution founded for the benefit of mankind in the present world, but a supernatural organism placed between God and mankind, the supreme purpose of which is to bring heaven and earth into a peaceful and happy relationship through the ministrations of the priest. That is the Catholic conception of the Church, and assuredly the Catholics are by far the most numerous Christians in the world. We refer to this definition of the Church in order to explain its non-interest in purely earthly problems. When it is asked, why did not the Church abolish slavery? the true answer is, because it was not its business, its business being to get all people into right relations with God in order to entitle them to a life of complete happiness in the presence of God hereafter. What does it really

matter if a man is a slave or in some other miserable condition for forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years in this world, when, if he believes, there awaits him an eternity of ideal blessedness after death? Besides, if there be a God, the present conditions of life in this world are of his ordaining, and the attempt to interfere may be or must be an act of gross impiety.

In any case, the Church has never been a socially improving institution, and it can never become such save at the expense of relinquishing its claim to supernaturalism. The truth is that the Church has totally lost its grip on the world to come. The preacher knows so well that his sermons do not drop down from heaven, but are elaborated compositions of his own brain, at which he works hard for several days each week. To be successful the Church must have a powerful pulpit and a social life well ordered, but at the very best it lacks and always will lack what at one time it was believed to possess and utilize for the world's redemption—Divine Fire.

J. T. LLOYD.

Imaginary Conversations.

There is no darkness but ignorance.—*Shakespeare.*

For I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,

And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

—*Tennyson.*

Religions do not die, but they change.—*Bradlaugh.*

SIR OLIVER LODGE has been unburdening himself in the press concerning the controversy over Evolution which has taken place recently in an obscure township in the United States. Curiously, as a scientific man, or, rather, as a man holding a scientific position, Sir Oliver has dissembled his love for science itself. He has treated the crude Mosaic legends of the Old Testament with a touching tenderness, and all his frigidity has been reserved for the Darwinian Theory. Throughout he has written as the Rector of Birmingham University, instead of writing as a scientist jealous for the honour of his profession. There is, however, one point worth noting in Sir Oliver's criticism of the Darwinian Theory, and that is his admission of the flimsiness of the evidence for Spiritualism, which, of course, involves the question of human survival. Writing of the opposition to Darwin's ideas, Sir Oliver says:—

The opposition is probably due to the fear that half-fledged theories, imperfect and possibly mistaken, shall be inflicted on youth by teachers with inadequate knowledge. We are always jealous of what shall be imparted to youth. We do not wish children to be troubled prematurely with certain facts, nor do we wish them to be introduced to a subject—to take one example, that of psychical research—the truths of which have not yet been thoroughly explored and accepted by science.

Sir Oliver Lodge did not always write in this guarded manner regarding psychical research. In 1916 he published a volume, entitled, *Raymond: Or Life and Death*, which contained some truly extraordinary features. His son, Raymond, was killed in Flanders in September, 1915, and it was claimed that members of his family were in communication with the young man after his death. The book contained a record of these alleged conversations between the living and the dead, and is of interest because it raised the old, old question as to whether human personality persists beyond the grave.

For a scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge gave very little evidence for so momentous a matter. One point related to a prophecy of Raymond's death made at a seance in America a month before he was killed.

Another referred to a "sitting" shortly after the young man's death, in which an alleged message from Raymond was conveyed to his mother, containing the words: "Good God! how father will be able to speak out! much firmer than he has ever done, because it will touch our hearts." Further "conversations" with Raymond gave alleged descriptions of life in the next world, such as:—

There are men here, and there are women here. I don't think that they stand to each other quite the same as they did on the earth plane, but they seem to have the same feeling to each other, with a different expression of it. There don't seem to be any children born here. People are sent into the physical body to have children on the earth plane; they don't have them there.

Another piece of information followed:—

People here try to provide everything that is wanted. A chap came over the other day, who would have a cigar. "That's finished them," he thought. He meant he thought they would never be able to provide that. But there are laboratories over here, and they manufacture all sorts of things in them. Not like you do, out of solid matter, but out of essences, and ethers, and gases. It's not the same as on the earth plane, but they were able to manufacture what looked like a cigar. He didn't try one himself, because he didn't care to; you know he wouldn't want to. But the other chap jumped at it. But when he began to smoke it, he didn't think so much of it; he had four altogether; and now he doesn't look at one.

Why haven't these excellent psychical folk a sense of humour? I cannot read that passage without recalling my own first big smoke, a wondrous thing made of brown paper and oilcloth, and entitled, if I remember rightly, *La Favorita*. "It looked like a cigar," to quote Sir Oliver's book, but I looked like tripe and felt like a corpse after smoking it. However, the rector of Birmingham University insists that alleged heart-to-heart talks such as this prove survival after death. Personally, I have my doubts about the cigars, but perhaps the Imperial Tobacco Company might pursue the matter. It ought to be a business proposition to find another world to conquer, especially as I waive the question of commission.

There are other matters included, which have less value as evidence, such as exalted visions, and a statement that Raymond had seen "Christ," whether smoking a "Corona Corona" deponent sayeth not. It all sounds very odd in the face of the familiar clerical argument that the surgeon's knife cannot find the "soul." For, in a sense, Spiritualism does try to find the "soul" with the knife—that is with material means. It wants to get as good evidence for the existence of Josiah Buggins after death as it had for the existence of Mr. Buggins before death. The supposed "spirit" of Buggins is required to prove his existence and presence by making himself audible. He must show that he remembers "Aunt Eliza," or "Grannie," or he must play a concertina, or look pleasant and have his photo taken.

Now, what is there in Sir Oliver's evidence to convince the world, or even to carry conviction to the minds of plain men and women? The prophecy of his son's dissolution was not improbable, for he was a soldier and sharing a soldier's constant risk of death. And what are we to make of the "revelations" of the "hereafter," with its "laboratories," its "cigars," and its "factories?" Are we to suppose that all life is indestructible? In that case we have still to ask where life begins; and, wherever the line may be drawn, it is manifest that the jellyfish, the oyster, and the lodging-house flea are on the

hither side of it, and have "souls." All these, and a thousand other difficulties, encounter us where we try to consider Sir Oliver's account of the "beyond."

Whilst "Raymond's" description of an alleged future life seems absurd to us, there is one point well worth noting. Life after death is not painted as being horrific, but as a continuation of life on earth, such as Shelley's sarcastic description of "hell" as a place "very like London." Apparently, even religious folk now-a-days are getting ashamed of the old, old theological theory of heaven and hell. Unconsciously, their ideas are becoming more and more secularized. Their ideas may be childish, but it is gratifying to find that they are more humane. There is an enormous difference between Sir Oliver Lodge's farcical views of a future existence, and the tragical views of orthodox Christians, whether they be in Mayfair or Minneapolis, U.S.A.

Another important point to be noted is that behind Sir Oliver Lodge's semi-scientific vocabulary there is always "sludge the medium." For this reason the new spiritualism gives no better answer than the old, and the later messages from the "other side" are as unconvincing as the earlier.

MIMNERMUS.

The Gospel History a Fabrication.

V.

THE NAZARENES.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, as we have seen, the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ is narrated as having taken place at three different periods of history. We have also seen that the Virgin Birth story had no place in the primitive Gospel from which Matthew, Mark, and Luke copied the main portion of their narratives. That this story is an early Christian fabrication is further proved by the following facts relating to the Nazarenes.

1. The Christian religion took its rise amongst the Jews; its first believers were also Jews. This fact is admitted by all critics.
2. The name by which these primitive Jewish believers were first known was "the sect of the Nazarenes"—as stated in the Book of the Acts (xxiv. 5). It must not, however, be thought that in citing "the Acts" as evidence I thereby assume that book to be historical. I do nothing of the kind: but this particular fact is not dependent upon the accuracy or veracity of Luke; it is one that would be known to all Christians of any standing in Luke's day. This name, too, was employed from the earliest times throughout the entire East to designate believers in Jesus Christ and is still applied to Christians in some Eastern districts at the present day. We are also incidentally told in the Acts (xi. 26) that these believers were first called Christians at Antioch. This may be true; but the name was applied only to Gentile Christians, and at a much later period than that implied in the Acts. The primitive sect of Jewish believers were known from first to last (i.e. to the fourth century A.D.) as Nazarenes, though those of the sect who remained faithful to the Jewish ritual received the name Ebionites (from *ebion*, poor). It was probably the latter who were referred to in the text—"Blessed are ye poor," etc.
3. Before the appearance of the Greek canonical Gospels, the Nazarenes had a Gospel of their own, in Aramaic, called the "Gospel according to the Hebrews," which was also the Gospel of the stricter members of the sect who were called Ebionites.

Now, we have evidence that this Gospel contained no Virgin Birth story, but commenced like the canonical Mark, with the preaching of the Baptist. We also know that the Nazarenes and Ebionites believed Jesus to be merely a man, begotten by Joseph. Thus, speaking of the Ebionites, Eusebius says (*Eccl. Hist. iii. 27*):—

They cherished low and mean opinions of Christ. For they considered him a plain and common man, justified only by his exalted virtue, and that he was born by natural generation.....They use only the Gospel according to the Hebrews, esteeming the others as of but little value. They also observe the Sabbath and other rites of the Jews.

Treating of the same subject, Irenæus, who first mentions the four Gospels, says (*Her. v. i. 8*):—

Vain also are the Ebionites.....who do not choose to understand that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and that the power of the Most High did overshadow her.

Thus, these two kindred sects, that had been the first to embrace Christianity, came to be regarded by the Gentile churches (in the last quarter of the second century) as heretics. They were quite aware that a Virgin Birth story was recorded in the Gentile Gospels; but they could not be induced to believe or adopt it: so that in the time of Epiphanius (A.D. 374-377) their Gospel commenced, as at the first, with the preaching of the Baptist.

Looking now at the foregoing facts, there cannot be the smallest doubt as to the deliberate fabrication of the story of the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ. The first generation of Jewish Christians, who for some unknown reason revered the name of Jesus, knew nothing about a Virgin Birth, and gave no credence to it when they afterwards heard the story. And no other early Christians, save the Nazarenes, were in a position to judge of the truth or falsehood of that alleged event. If they rejected the story, it was because they knew it had been concocted after their Gospel was written, and concocted by Gentile Christians who knew nothing about Jesus. The sect, it is true, narrated stories of that personage working miracles; but this was because it was believed that the "spirit of God" had descended upon him at his baptism: then he became a prophet like Moses and Elijah—who were reported to have come down from heaven to converse with him.

Christian apologists and reconcilers, as might be expected, assert that the Nazarenes were a sect of heretics that arose after the appearance of the canonical Gospels; but the fact that "the sect of the Nazarenes" is named in "the Acts" as the first society of Christians proves the assertion to be a Christian misrepresentation. The name "Christians" had, of course, come into general use in Luke's time; but the appellation "Nazarenes," which preceded it by many years, was known in that day to have been the original name. The Nazarene sect appears to have been a branch of that of the Essenes, whose doctrines and practices upon many points were in agreement with those afterwards ascribed to Jesus. The Nazarenes were therefore practically Christians before they knew anything about that personage—the belief in the latter as a prophet being probably the only new matter added to their articles of faith.

JESUS THE NAZARENE.

One of the most important facts in connection with Jesus Christ is that he is called in the Gospels and in the Acts "Jesus the Nazarene"—a title which is mistranslated "Jesus of Nazareth." In no less than seventeen passages the Jewish Saviour is called "Jesus the Nazarene," the words employed in some places being Nazoraios; in other Nazarenos. By a

comparison of parallel passages, we find both referring to the same person or sect, as in the following examples:—

Matt. xxvi. 71.—This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene (Nazoraios).

Mark xiv. 67.—Thou also wast with Jesus the Nazarene (Nazarenos).

The first appellation might be translated Nazarite, and the second Nazarene; but Epiphanius, in his book on Heresies, quotes both as the names of two distinct sects among the Nazarenes of his time—one of them, apparently, being the proper name of those called by the Gentiles "Ebionites." Hence, in conformity with Matthew's statement—"he shall be called a Nazarene"—Jesus is so called in the Gospels. The only question remaining is the origin of the name. Was Jesus a member of the sect when he first appeared? or, Did his Essene followers give themselves that appellation to glorify his name?

Well, in the first place, there can be no doubt that "Jesus the Nazarene" was in some way connected with "the sect of the Nazarenes." Why, otherwise, have our translators and *Revisers* deliberately mis-called him "Jesus of Nazareth"? We may be quite certain that this was not done without some good reason. In the next place (as will be shown later) there appears to have been no city in Galilee called Nazareth, from which "the Nazarene" could take his name—and the latter appellation *has to be* accounted for. Why, then, was Jesus so called? To this there can be but one answer: Jesus must have been a member of the sect, and possibly one of some authority in it. The name "Jesus the Nazarene" was evidently employed in the same way as that of "John the Essene," who is mentioned by Josephus as a general in the Jewish war. Had the Jewish historian had occasion to refer to "Jesus the Nazarene," it would have been *by this name*; but his not having done so clearly shows that Jesus must have been almost unknown outside his own sect. The Gospel of the Nazarenes was not composed until some years after the death of Jesus, and the latter, being then esteemed a prophet, it is not surprising that in those times fictitious sayings and doings were ascribed to him. It should, however, be remembered that miracles were then believed to be possible, either by magic, the agency of Satan, or the power of God. Why, then, should not Jesus be credited with the power to work them?

Assuming the Epistle to the Galatians to be authentic, Paul refers in it to James, John, and Cephas, who, he says, were "reputed to be pillars" of the primitive Jewish church, the president being "James, the Lord's brother." These—whom we may assume to be historical—were, of course, Nazarenes: from which fact it appears evident that these three so-called "apostles" of Jesus were simply elders of the sect—the society having arisen some time before Jesus came to be regarded as a prophet. The other "apostles" named in the Gospels were probably only ordinary members of the sect, of whom nothing was known except the names. As to Peter, it is doubtful whether he was the same person as Cephas (John i. 42); for the Synoptists appear to have never heard of the latter name.

The Nazarenes, being Jews, required their converts to be circumcized and to conform to all the Mosaic ritual—except animal sacrifice. These conditions Paul found to be a stumbling-block to the would-be Gentile converts; he therefore set them aside as unnecessary—making the simple belief in Jesus—whom he exalted into a divine being—the sole condition of salvation. Needless to say, that "apostle" had no authority for so doing: for one of the traditional instructions of Jesus to his disciples was to go only

to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; while the last twelve verses in Mark's Gospel—including the command to go to "all the world" and preach salvation by faith only—were a later addition to that Gospel, written long after the time of Paul. The last-named "apostle" was an unscrupulous innovator, and the real founder of Gentile Christianity, which in a short time spread from Asia Minor to Greece, Rome, and Alexandria; but the first sect of Christians, the Nazarenes, who merely regarded Jesus as a prophet, "having remained beyond the reach of the great current which had carried away all the other churches, were treated as heretics" (Renan).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS.

The Biblical critics who admit that the narratives in the Synoptics were drawn from a primitive *written* Gospel make no attempt to identify the latter Gospel; but it appears that it was the "Gospel according to the Hebrews," used by the Nazarenes. Epiphanius says in his work on Heresies (xxx. 13) that the Ebionites had a Gospel "called the *Gospel according to Matthew*, not entire and perfectly complete, but falsified and mutilated, which they call the Hebrew Gospel"; after which he quotes the opening paragraph—of John baptising in the Jordan, and of the baptism of Jesus.

Again, Jerome, presbyter of Antioch, who lived at the same period, says in his Commentary on Matthew:—

In the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Ebionites use, which I lately translated from the Hebrew into Greek, and which is called by very many *the original Gospel of Matthew*, the man with the withered hand is described as a mason, etc.

This statement is in agreement with the fact that the canonical Matthew (omitting he first two chapters) is considered to be nearer to the primitive Gospel than any of the other, besides containing more Hebraisms. Moreover, the Gospel of the Nazarenes appears to have contained all the three-fold narratives which the Synoptists took from the Common Source, besides several others not found in the canonical Gospels. This statement of Epiphanius that this Gospel was "falsified and mutilated" refers to its not containing the Virgin Birth story, which, as we know, the last-named editor added from an apocryphal source. All the so-called Christian "fathers," from Irenæus downwards, assumed as a matter of course that the canonical Gospels were written in apostolic times, and were the originals from which all other known Gospels were derived; whereas, as a matter of fact, they were the last written.

ABRACADABRA.

TO AGE.

Welcome, old friend! These many years
Have we lived door by door:
The Fates have laid aside their shears
Perhaps for some few more.

I was indocile at an age
When better boys were taught,
But thou at length hast made me sage,
If I am sage in aught.

Little I know from other men,
Too little they from me,
But thou hast pointed well the pen
That writes these lines to thee.

Thanks for expelling Fear and Hope,
One vile, the other vain;
One's scourge, the other's telescope,
I shall not see again.

Rather what lies before my feet
My notice shall engage.
He who hath braved Youth's dizzy heat
Dreads not the frost of Age.

—Laudor.

Acid Drops.

Christian missionaries are getting very much alarmed at the spread of Mohammedanism in Africa. Even in Capetown there are no less than 23 mosques, and in all parts of the Continent Islam appears to be making greater headway than is Christianity. The *Evening Standard* says this is "a matter for vigilance, if not for concern. Islam in many ways improves savage races, rescuing them from fetishism, and teaching them cleanliness and abstinence. But it raises a race of believers who, whatever their creed or colour, are extraordinarily creed conscious, and whose faith does in the last resort teach that there is considerable merit to be attained by the extermination of Christians." The last sentence contains the customary falsehood, unless it means by the extermination of Christians the conversion of Christians. In that case it is on all fours with Christianity. And it is interesting to note that Islam teaches the African to be clean and sober, which are two virtues Christianity certainly has not taught them. If Christian missions wished to better the natives merely, one would think that would be enough and they would leave Mohammedanism alone. But that is not their aim. Their aim is to make *Christians*, and a missionary would far rather see a native drunken, and dirty, and a Christian, than clean and sober and a Christian.

The *War Cry* thinks we have paid a compliment in saying that it is probably near primitive Christianity than any other body of organized Christians to-day. In case it may mistake the nature of the compliment we beg to add by way of footnote that we think it nearer primitive Christianity than any other, because of the ignorant quality of its teachings. It still preaches a literal heaven and hell, salvation by being washed in the blood, and no salvation outside of Christianity. This talk of being washed in the blood, and of sinners going to hell, belongs properly to savages, and of this form of belief we know of none better than representative of the Salvation Army.

A friend sent us a copy of *Saved to Serve*, a magazine issued by the Army, telling of the wonderful converts it has gained here and there. And it is as truthful as such productions usually are. We are astonished to learn that the people of France know nothing of the Bible and wonder what the Roman Church and the other Churches in France are doing. There is also a tale of some unnamed lieutenant in the Salvation Army, whose father was a Freethinker, and who had never seen a Bible till he opened one in a Salvation Army hall, when, of course, he was converted. We have heard of that Freethinker before. He is always turning up, but never appears to have a name. The Salvation Army in the circulation of pious lies is quite as good as the primitive Christians were, which, I fancy, they will also take as a compliment. And there is in the magazine an account of the wonderful work the Army is doing in China. But it is quite silent concerning the terrible conditions of child labour in British factories in Shanghai. Perhaps it has not yet noticed them. Finally there are the usual accounts of how much the very poor are helped, but nothing is said of the conditions of labour in the Army workshops, or the fact that they are run so as to produce a profit. The recital of the food distributed or sold is intended to act as a spur to induce subscriptions. We went fully into this question some years ago, and we are not aware that any substantial alteration has occurred since.

Mr. H. W. Nevinson writing in the *New Leader* on the Dayton trial, says that mental backwardness and insensibility to ideas leads to belief in the literal truth of the Bible, to belief in the Flood, the confusion of tongues, the sun standing still, and to Jonah's big fish. Quite so, but we may remind Mr. Nevinson that this is genuine Christianity, the Christianity believed in by

the New Testament writers and by the Christian Church through the ages. It is hardly fair of Mr. Nevinson to pour scorn on Bryan, while saying nothing about the equally ridiculous beliefs in which present-day Christians believe.

After all, is the belief in the things mentioned by Mr. Nevinson essentially more ridiculous than the belief in some supernatural power ruling nature? Or in there being in the body some second thing called a soul which can exist in the absence of the body? Or that prayers are answered? Mr. Nevinson must know that the same mental darkness that gave the belief in the confusion of tongues, and the Flood, gave birth to the belief in Gods and ghosts and souls. If these had never existed, the other beliefs would never have existed. The one was born of the other. And if one can accept the belief in a God there should be no great difficulty in accepting all the rest. Voltaire's remark of the saint who walked one hundred paces with his head under his arm, that he could believe in ninety-nine of the steps; it was the first one that presented the difficulty, contains a lesson we advise Mr. Nevinson to ponder.

Meanwhile we are waiting for Mr. Nevinson, and Mr. Bernard Shaw, and the rest of our British press, to give their opinion about the Bootle case, where a teacher in a secondary school has been getting into trouble for doing what the Christians of Dayton did. Bootle is much nearer than Dayton, and it is rather cheap to pour scorn on a small town over 3,000 miles away and remain silent over affairs of the same kind that are occurring at one's door. And we are still waiting for the name of the school in this country where a teacher would be permitted to teach his pupils the theory of evolution and to tell them that the Bible story of Creation was pure myth. After all, we are more concerned with Daytonism in England than with Daytonism in the United States.

The Bishop of Manchester has now discovered that there is nothing in the Lord's Prayer "that would have prevented an Englishman and a German kneeling down side by side during the war," and repeating it. That comes rather late, but it is not worth much even at that. During the war Germans and Englishmen did offer up the same kind of prayers, if not side by side, at any rate, to the same God, and each prayed for the same thing, and each believed their prayers were answered. Perhaps it might dawn on the Bishop that when two people striving after different conflicting ends, each believing the other to be villainy incarnate, can join in the same prayer, that is quite enough to prove it quite valueless as a guide to anybody.

The really important thing is that both the English and the Germans were professedly Christian, and had been Christian for many centuries, during which the Lord's Prayer had been offered up many millions of times. The Bishop can hardly deny that its repetition did not prevent the war, and one would like the Bishop to explain precisely what the value of the prayer was. Would things have been worse had the Lord's Prayer never been said at all?

Mr. Godfrey Elton has published poems under the title of "Years of Peace." From the lines quoted below, it will be seen that he has shot at the pigeon of political economy hit this wild fowl, but at the same time has also killed the crow of theology. For "professors" substitute recruiters, such as the Bishop of London together with the thousands of exempted soldiers of Christ and the picture is complete. The day after to-morrow is a day of reckoning, and French cemeteries cannot be removed from Europe with a sponge:—

Tell the Professors, you that pass us by,
They taught Political Economy,
And here, obedient to its laws, we lie.

The Rev. Dr. Selbie says that the religion preached in the churches to-day is the "sheerest travesty" of the religion of Jesus Christ. We quite agree with Dr. Selbie. The churches do not preach a literal hell; they do not tell the people that water can be turned into wine, or that insanity and epilepsy are caused by demons who are to be expelled by prayer and fasting; they do not preach the end of the world is at hand; they do not advise people to turn one cheek when the other is smitten, and they do not tell them to take no thought for the morrow. Certainly the religion preached in the churches is not that of Jesus Christ. We suggest to Dr. Selbie that the proper place to find that sort of religion is either in a Salvation Army hall in a poor district or among a tribe of savages in Africa.

Dr. Selbie complains that a great many people still worship the Jehovah of the Bible instead of the "God and father of Jesus Christ." Well, well, we have had doubts cast on the parentage of Jesus before, but now we have Dr. Selbie questioning whether the God of the Bible is his father after all. And after that we are not surprised at Dr. Selbie informing his hearers that we were living in "a law-ordered universe." So that Dr. Selbie thinks of the world as run much as a London policeman runs the city traffic. One wonders when this class of people will begin to do a little thinking on reasonably scientific lines.

When many eyes are turned towards Italy, either with envy or jealousy of all the good things the country enjoys under Mussolini, Mr. Joseph Warren Beach has given us a few pictures that are most interesting. In his book, *Meek Americans and Other European Trifles*, he writes of the trade of beggary as follows: "From time immemorial the Italians have made a fine art of begging. They have been brought up to it from infancy. They have put into it all their gaiety, all their pathos, all their dramatic art." That is the state at one end of the social scale. The treasure of the Vatican was once computed as being sufficient to pay the national debt—and that is at the other end of the social scale. Was the injunction of the Bible mentioning "moth and rust" a diabolical joke flung at people who had nothing? And were the flingers suffering from the de-humanisation by religion that gives us the pestiferous figure of a Wesley, Baxter, Cardinal Wolsey, and the choice collection of ruffians known as Popes? Religion without humanity is less dangerous than humanity without religion; let no man who desires the best for his species look at history through his own heart.

At a time when an American can find nothing better to do than try to shoot the moon, a reviewer in the *Daily Herald* has a good phrase in his notice of a book on Carlyle. The Scotch philosopher did not find a country house much to make a song about, and preferred the life of a ditcher. "For on the fact of this present universe alone can we find anchorage," writes the reviewer. The book of history tells that this lesson is still unlearned, and certain mist-gulpers, past and present, are determined that it shall not be.

Southend Free Church Council has been infected with the hullabaloo raised by American advertisers. It has issued thousands of stamps in connection with a cleaner Sunday, which, being translated, means that business is bad.

To the controversy of birth-control in the *Daily Herald* a Catholic priest contributes the usual squint-eyed views of religious protest. With Jesuitical reasoning this priest now asks how the extermination of the British worker will exterminate Capitalism, and, to answer a fool according to his mental folly, the answer is a lemon. In birth control quality stands a chance, and this, no doubt, is distasteful to representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, who flourish on numbers and ignorance. Casuistry is second nature to the priest; this

particular representative states that artificial birth control is exceedingly evil. With dogmatic assertions of this kind that are hatched in the pulpit the worker and Lord Dawson have no concern. The housing problem could be settled by birth control, and thus leave speculators in bricks, mortar, and timber ample leisure to grow beards during their wrangling with trades unions and statesmen—some of the latter apparently suffering from the rabbit-hutch complex—for others.

On the question of "Sabbath Observance," Lieut-Gen. Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, M.P. for Bute and North Ayrshire, has been recalling some Sunday memories of fifty or sixty years ago, in a local paper, and, I fear, finds himself in hot water—even generals must respect the Church. The General, writing of his childhood, informs us that:—

We certainly hated the Sabbath. And small wonder! Interminable and senseless prayers at home, and interminable and senseless services in the church. And what services they were! How they and their concomitants are bitten into our memory!.....Then the prayers and sermons! Interminable, pointless, full of repetition and stuffed with trite and meaningless quotations, their only idea of structure being to divide them into First, Secondly, Thirdly, and sometimes up to Thirteenthly. The chief characteristics of many of the preachers of those days were the sudden shouting to arouse the congregation from their slumbers, the thumping of the pulpit to attain by physical action the emphasis which they were unable to attain by intelligent verbal presentation of their argument; and the conversion of The Almighty from a monosyllable to a long drawn-out vocable which, from the tremolo imparted to it by the wagging of chin and beard, became a polyphonic polysyllable.

A local and indignant patriarch calls the unwary General to account thus:—

If General Hunter-Weston had been attempting to describe Sabbath observance as practised in Scotland two or three centuries ago, there might possibly have existed some grounds for regarding his criticism as resting on even a slight basis of creditable fact. But in offering it as an accurate description of what has actually come within the experience of himself (a man who has not yet completed his sixty-first year), he is not only guilty of gross and unpardonable misrepresentation, but offers a deliberate insult to the memory of deceased local clergymen, whose names are still affectionately remembered and whose labours are gratefully recalled to mind, by many of the older parishioners.

"Wise if a minister, but if a king?" Why should not a patriotic and honourable General be included in Pope's immunities of the great? Ah—*nemo me impune lacessit* is still the Church's warning. Let the General beware, especially if, as we are sure he is, saying what is the simple truth. The more 'tis a truth, sir, the more 'tis a libel.

The Dean of Bristol is hoping that before long New Zealand will re-establish religious instruction in the schools, as a Bill is to be again introduced for its establishment in the colony. We can quite understand the Dean's feelings in the matter. So long as another country sticks to the policy of Secular Education there is always the danger of our own country adopting it. Common sense is sometimes catching, and even British Christians may not be always proof against it.

The Dean speaks of the "frightful obstacle" which Secular education offers to the Church in New Zealand. But why a frightful obstacle? The children are not taught anything against Christianity in the schools; they are simply given a fair education with Christianity left out. And if that is a "frightful obstacle" it really means that education given to children who have not at the same time been dosed with Christianity, offers a "frightful obstacle" to their accepting Christianity when they leave school. We quite think it is so, but when the Dean says so quite plainly, it ought to make those Christians whose brains have not quite ceased to function put their thinking caps on.

The National Secular Society.

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

E. SMEDLEY.—Mr. Cohen intends writing a pamphlet on the subject of Evolution and Religion, and hopes to have it ready in the course of the next few weeks, but his regular work takes up most of his time, and there are only twenty-four hours to the day.

J. M. SUMMERS.—We can do no more than invite Freethinkers who are interested in forming Freethought athletic and other societies to get together in various localities and do so. If all interested will send their names and addresses to the Secretary of the N.S.S., everything will be done to place them in communication with each other.

W. SISSON.—Pleased to learn that you have been holding good meetings at Stockport. Moderation, good sense, and good temper are likely to render ineffective any tricks the bigots may play.

F. B. HUMPHREY.—Pleased to hear from an old reader of the *Freethinker*. The best plan would be to return the walking stick to the authorities and let them return it to the owner, who may return yours. An advertisement in this paper is very unlikely to meet his eye.

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

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

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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 the 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 "Midland Bank, Ltd., 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 at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

The love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves.—Hazlitt.

Sugar Plums.

An article on Paine appears in *John O'London's Weekly*, from the pen of Lord Riddell. As is to be expected from the character of that journal, it is written so as not to offend public prejudice, although it does admit the importance of Paine as a political force, and that is something of which the general reader of newspapers is quite unaware. Christian slander, and lying, and pious misrepresentation have combined to prevent the real man from appearing before him. But if these repeated recognitions of Paine continue, we may before long see someone trying to let a little light in on as to the value of the services of such men as Carlile, Patterson, Haslam, Hetherington, Bradlaugh, Foote, and others. And, who knows, some of the papers instead of stealing from the *Freethinker* without acknowledgment, may one day develop enough courage to mention it by name.

We do not know what Lord Riddell means by saying that Paine had a personal hatred towards England. He had nothing of the kind. He had hatred towards many of the institutions of England, but that is quite a different matter. As a matter of fact, Paine's suggestions for an old age pension scheme, the extension of the Franchise, etc., were all propounded for the benefit of England. It is not true that Paine was responsible for the ill-feeling of the Americans towards England; it was the English attitude towards the American colonies, now admitted by all to be a thoroughly bad one, that was responsible for this ill-feeling. Paine in America, as in France, was a voice in favour of moderation, justice, and common sense.

Lord Riddell ought to have known better than to have cited from Miss Wilmot's diary the peculiarly offensive and untrue description of Paine given by her, a description that was clearly built upon hearsay and personal prejudice. She says that Paine was dirty in his person and habits—a sufficiently exposed slander—but as Paine when she saw him had on—so she says—a clean shirt and his face was not dirty, the comment that this was in her honour, is clearly due to a determination to find the Paine of the Christian caricature a real person. Lord Riddell should read Conway's authoritative life of Paine, and forget that he is writing for *John O'London*.

It almost looks as though we shall have to revise our opinions concerning miracles. At any rate someone has been found who is prepared to champion the doctrine of Special Creation against Evolution. Professor McCready Price, of Nebraska, will debate with Mr. Joseph McCabe on September 6, in the Queen's Hall, the subject of "Is Evolution True?" The discussion will commence at 7, and full particulars will be found on the back page of this issue. As the leader of a forlorn hope Professor McCready commands our admiration. As the discussion is to take place on a Sunday, there should be a "full house."

Mr. Whitehead is continuing his meeting at Leeds during the present week. We hope that Leeds Freethinkers will make the most of these meetings, both while they are in being and for building up future propaganda.

A religion that holds forth a bundle of dogmas, and requires an implicit subscription to them on pain of future damnation that marks out the limit of human thought, and declares "thus far shalt thou go and no farther"; that sets up as an infallible standard and guide to action, the writings of men who lived centuries ago; that devotes its attention not to the encouragement of temporal employments, but to the contemplation of a future life, is one of the greatest enemies of human progress, and it should be the effort of every good man feeling the force of this fact to labour for the restriction of its deadly influence.—Lester F. Ward.

The Oriental Mysteries and Christianity.

V.

(Continued from page 518.)

THE Mysteries of Isis, as we have seen, were known to Egyptians from the earliest times. "Isis," says Dr. Budge, "was the great and beneficent goddess and mother, whose influence and love pervaded all heaven and earth and the abode of the dead." She personified the great creative power. "What she brought forth she protected, and cared for, and fed, and nourished, and she employed her life in using her power graciously and successfully, not only in creating new beings but in restoring those that were dead."¹

The worship of Isis was introduced into Greece in early times. "In Menander's day the gilded youth of Athens swore 'by Isis' or 'by Horus,'"² and Menander wrote more than 300 B.C. We do not know exactly when it was introduced into Rome. There was a Temple of Isis at Pompeii, about 150 B.C., which town was a fashionable seaside resort of the Romans. Somewhere about 80 B.C. it was introduced into Rome itself, and although its temples were more than once thrown down by order of the consuls, they were always rebuilt. The cult must have been well known and popular in 43 B.C., for in that year an aedile Marcus Volusius, who had been proscribed by the triumvirs, escaped from Rome in the disguise of a priest of Isis.³ It is not likely that he would have adopted this disguise if it was something new, as it would only have attracted the attention he wished to avoid. A priest of Isis must evidently have been a familiar sight in the streets of Rome at that time.

No religion, not even Christianity itself, aroused a greater degree of passionate love and adoration than did this mother goddess and her divine child.

The spirit which animated the cult of Isis shows singular resemblances to that of Christianity. The goddess was regarded as the supreme deity, and yet such was her tender care for her initiates, that the humblest of them could address his prayers directly to her.....The words of Jesus, "Take my yoke upon you.....for my yoke is easy and my burden is light," would have sounded with a familiar ring in the ears of an initiate of Isis.⁴

Every day in the temple there was a solemn service of opening; "an elaborate ceremony in which the white curtains which hid the statue of Isis from the gaze of the worshippers were drawn back, and it was displayed blazing with actual robes, gems, and ornaments, like a Madonna in Southern Europe at the present day."⁵ There were Matins and Vespers, just as in a Catholic Church.

Matins.....at "the first hour" and Vespers "at the eighth hour," or two o'clock in the afternoon, the chants of which were audible to passers-by. These services were performed by white-robed priests with tonsured heads, by whom they were made very impressive. Apuleius describes the morning service, which consisted of hymns, adoration, sacrifice, and prayers, at which a liturgy was used.....the priest made the circuit of the altars, reciting the morning litany and sprinkling before them the holy water from the sacred well within the temple precincts, and solemnly proclaiming the hour of

prayer. The office concluded with the chanting of the morning hymn by the temple choir, in which probably the congregation participated antiphonally, and with a Mass or dismissal of the worshippers.⁶

Nor were the votaries to the mysteries wanting in martyrs to testify and to suffer for their faith; many, and severe, were the persecution inflicted by the government, who were suspicious, and disapproved of all secret societies or meetings, and, in fact, such societies and meetings were illegal according to Roman law. Many of the worshippers sealed their faith with their blood; but the mysteries grew in such public favour that at last the government was compelled to give way and recognize their legality. After this the Mysteries of Isis, says Frazer, became "one of the most popular at Rome and throughout the empire. Some of the Roman emperors themselves were openly addicted to it." We need not wonder, continues the same writer, that when traditional faiths were shaken, when men's minds were disquieted, when the eternal empire itself began to show visible signs of decay, that

the serene figure of Isis with her spiritual calm, her gracious promise of immortality, should have appeared to many like a star in a stormy sky, and should have roused in their breasts a rapture of devotion not unlike that which was paid in the Middle Ages to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, her stately ritual, with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and vespers, its tinkling music, its baptism and aspersions of holy water, its solemn processions, its jewelled images of the Mother of God, presented many points of similarity to the pomps and ceremonies of Catholicism.⁷

Nor need this resemblance, says the same author, be purely accidental. "Ancient Egypt may have contributed its share to the gorgeous symbolism of the Catholic Church as well as to the pale abstractions of her theology." And further points out, "in art the figure of Isis suckling the infant Horus is so like that of the Madonna and child that it has sometimes received the adoration of ignorant Christians."⁸ Upon this point we may cite the testimony of the archæologist, Mr. C. W. King, who says: "The 'Black Virgins' so highly venerated in certain French Cathedrals during the long night of the Middle Ages, proved, when at last examined by antiquarian eyes, to be basalt statues of the Egyptian goddess."⁹ Mr. Legge observes, "Professor Drexler gives a long list of the statues of Isis which thereafter were used, sometimes with unaltered attributes, as those of the Virgin Mary."¹⁰ One hundred years ago the same fact had not escaped the sharp eyes of Godfrey Higgins, who, in his *Anacalypsis* (vol. i., p. 138) says, "There is scarcely an old church in Italy where some remains of the worship of the black virgin and black child are not to be met with." He adds that, "they are generally esteemed by the rabble with the most profound veneration." In this case Christianity not only took over the rites and ceremonies of the drama, but the stage properties as well.

The Vatican itself, the seat of the Pope at Rome, is built on the site of a sanctuary of Attis, a Saviour-god of similar characteristics to Adonis. For when St. Peter's was being enlarged, in 1608 or 1609, many inscriptions relating to the rites of Attis were found.¹¹

The charge, which Christian apologists are never tired of repeating, that the Pagan Mysteries were the

¹ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. ii., p. 203.

² Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 53.

⁴ Ross, *Antecedents of Christianity* (1924), p. 111.

⁵ Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 66.

⁶ Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 125.

⁷ Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, p. 285.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁹ King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 173.

¹⁰ Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 85.

¹¹ Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, p. 173.

scene of unbridled, profligate, and licentious orgies, is just the reverse of the truth and a flagrant libel. Their aim was purification from the lusts of the flesh. Ascetic practices of all degrees of rigour were practised, fasting, continence, mutilations, flagellations, pilgrimages to holy places; "in fact, nearly every form of self-mortification and renunciation practised by the saints and mystic of all ages."¹² Even the morose and cynical Juvenal testifies to this; of the devotee of Isis, he says, "She will break the ice and plunge into the river in the depth of winter, or dip three times in Tiber at early dawn, and bathe her timid head in its very eddies, and, emerging, will-crawl on bleeding knees, naked and shivering."¹³ The mysteries would be the last place in the world a pagan would choose to indulge in licentious orgies. Not that we approve of these self-mortifications, any more than we do of the similar practices of the Christian hermits and monks, but the point is that the mysteries were not instituted to encourage vice, but to eliminate it.

Between the hours of the temple service, the temple of Isis remained open for private worship, which took the form of meditation or silent adoration before the statue of Isis, just as in a Catholic church to-day. Apuleius, in his *Metamorphosis*, makes his hero, Lucius, repeatedly speak of the pleasure that he derived even before his initiation, from the prolonged contemplation of the goddess's image.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

Thomas Hardy Rediscovered.

THERE is a stupid question that most of us are asked with depressing frequency. Whenever it is addressed to me, it never fails to raise the choler in what is, I hope, usually an amiable and kindly nature. The innocent query which causes this sudden transformation in my natural disposition is simply, "Can you recommend me a good book?" A "good" book, forsooth! Would that I could live long enough to read all the "good" books of which I have knowledge. To say nothing of the infinite number of which I have never heard—a store that is being continuously added to—nor of those which are eternally new, books that, however frequently they are consulted, remain an inexhaustible storehouse of literature in themselves.

That is what makes, to those who are interested in literature, the inexhaustible mine in which they delve so full of amazing, thrilling discoveries and also vain regrets; discoveries of gems of thought, of exquisite phraseology, of jewel-like word texture: regrets that so much treasure must for ever remain hidden from them like jewels hiding their beauty in the bowels of the earth.

If the vastness of the literary storehouse is considered, a discovery by a successful explorer may not appear a cause for particular wonder. Nevertheless, among so much that is excellent the genius of the master-artist blazes out like a rare sun among a myriad of lesser planets, and it is the occasional discovery of art of outstanding merit which affords the student of literature such supreme satisfaction.

One realizes the limitations of one's own range of reading when, curiously enough, one rediscovers an old favourite in a new aspect. It was thus that I rediscovers Thomas Hardy. Not as Hardy, the novelist-philosopher whom I know so well, but Hardy the poet-philosopher. I was well aware that he was

among our songsters but, as one cannot read everything, I had never read his poetry until some years ago. Then chance placed his *Wessex Poems* into my hands. To think of this prize, besides all his other poetical works, lying hidden from me and that I might have died without enjoying them!

Coleridge once said that "No man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher." A comment which one feels inclined to paraphrase thus: "No man was ever yet a profound philosopher without being at the same time a Freethinker." Thomas Hardy is an excellent example of the truth of both assertions.

I have written elsewhere in these columns on Hardy as novelist: how, in his characters, he represents the finite consciousness struggling heroically against the infinite and inevitable world-process, and thereby evolves what Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie terms a tragic metaphysic. Yet, as I also intimated, Hardy is never pessimistic in his attitude towards life, for where there is no resistance there can be no tragedy, and his characters certainly live to the full, for the quintessence of life is strife.

In his poetry, the same philosophic mood obtains. Combined with this is a superb mastery over words and sentences and a remarkable dexterity in manipulating the most complicated rhythm. I will quote a paragraph on "Hardy's Poetry," from the late W. N. P. Barbellion's self-revealing book, *The Journal of a Disappointed Man* :—

You did not come
And marching time drew on and wore me numb—
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make,
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure loving kindness sake
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
You did not come!

"I thoroughly enjoy Hardy's poetry for its masterfulness, for his sheer muscular compulsion over the words and sentences. In his rough-hewn lines he yokes the recalcitrant words together and drives them along mercilessly with something that looks like simple brute strength. Witness the triumphant last line in the above, where the words are absolute bond-slaves to his exact meaning, his indomitable will. All this pleases me the more, for I know to my cost what stubborn, sullen, hephaestian beasts words and clauses can sometimes be. It is nice to see them punished. Hardy's poetry is Michael Angelo rather than Greek, Browning not Tennyson."

The above quotation has my most hearty agreement, both as regards Hardy's poetry and the difficulties surrounding word-weaving. Examples of this mastery over words and forcefulness of sentences could be quoted interminably. Here are a few examples chosen haphazardly which would strike the eye of the most casual reader :—

The smile on your mouth was the dearest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die.....
Let me then feel no more the fateful thrilling
That devastates the love-worn wooer's frame,
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling
That agonises disappointed aim!
So may I live no juncture law fulfilling,
And my heart's table bear no woman's name.

Or consider the amazing conception embodied in his poem, "Nature's Awakening," from which I venture to quote three stanzas :—

Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?
Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?.....
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

¹² Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, p. 84.

¹³ Juvenal, *Satires*, p. 59 (Bohn's Edition, 1860).

Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of evil stormed by good,

We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?

Again, consider the poem in which he asks God "Why shaped you us?" then puts into the mouth of Deity the following reply:—

.....My labours—logicless—
You may explain; not I:
Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess
That I evolved a Consciousness
To ask for reasons why.

Strange that ephemeral creatures who,
By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew,
Or made provision for!

Space will not permit here a detailed analysis of the beauties of Hardy's epic poem, "The Dynasts," in which is embodied the whole of his philosophy. Those who are interested could not choose a more learned, painstaking guide than Mr. Abercrombie.

W. THOMPSON.

Deeper Truths in Tennessee.

FOR a long time I have thought that Christians should find out who first spoke of the "deeper truths" of Christianity, and, having done so, erect a monument to him.

That particular nostrum has undoubtedly saved Christianity from a serious decline in health, and, indeed, given the patient a new lease of life. The merits of the phrase, from the Christian point of view, are very far-reaching. In the first place it carries with it the suggestion that there is something deep about Christianity, and, of course, the deeper you go, the deeper it goes, so that in the endeavour to bring it once and for all to light, you find yourself enjoying great speculative liberty. The interpretation of true Christianity remains for ever a shifting problem, and all the interpreter has to do is to review the established facts of his age and then, finding that the Christian interpreters of the preceding age had not gone deep enough, discover that these facts are not really inconsistent with the "deeper truths." He not only scores a victory for the time being, but leaves it open to future exponents to go deeper still, when the advance of science becomes embarrassing. And all the time controversy is handicapped because there is no precise truth to argue about; it lies very deep and, even if you got down to it, would probably go deeper as soon as you got there. Someone should certainly have a monument in connection with this business.

Its usefulness, however, does not end here. Those who are asked to embrace the deeper truths perhaps feel a little flattered. There is a suggestion that they themselves must be rather deep—not quite so deep as the truth, of course, but nearly as deep. It would not do to be quite so deep, because then there would be nothing deeper and the whole truth would be brought to light and available for the philosophic dissecting table. The farmers of Tennessee are clearly not very deep—not even as deep as the soil they plough—so it is not surprising to find that they are determined, at any rate, so far as the Bible is concerned, to "cut out the deep stuff." They are anxious to be able once more to read the Bible as one would read "John Smith walked down Regent Street," which means that John Smith not only walked, but walked down Regent Street. It means what it says. It is simple, direct, and clear. It has only the disadvantage that there is nothing deep about

it. The advocates of Mr. J. T. Scopes on the other hand are deep—too deep for Mr. Bryan and the Tennessee farmers. They can see, for instance, that to say the first woman was made out of the first man's rib while he slept, if interpreted deeply enough, is not inconsistent with the scientific conception of evolution. The first man, you see, might have evolved from a lower species (evolution proceeding in this case only on the male side) and then Woman, one supposes, would be spontaneously created and have no hereditary connection with the mate of Man's anthropoid ancestor. Or perhaps there was no mate at all, any only the "male" anthropoid existed and propagated. In any case, Scopes' defence is to be that Genesis and Darwin are compatible when combined in the wonderful medium of "deeper truth."

And therein lies one reason why Mr. Bryan and I are agreed that Mr. Scopes' acquittal would be harmful to mankind in the long run. If Mr. Scopes is acquitted, it will not be because Tennessee is thoroughly ashamed of itself and its barbarous attack on Freethought, but because Christianity will have imposed once more upon an ignorant public the sophistry of its "deeper truths," and this with the aid of scientific experts.

A public which is ignorant enough to tolerate the prosecution is *a fortiori* ignorant enough not to see that the fact that an evolutionist can believe the Bible proves nothing about either the Bible or evolution, but only something about the evolutionist. With every personal sympathy for a man on trial, I am forced to the conclusion that Mr. Scopes' acquittal would not involve any impetus to Freethought, but only a considerable set back to clear thought.

MEDICUS.

Correspondence.

TRAINING ADVOCATES FOR FREETHOUGHT.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As supplementary to my "Plea for Freethought Social and Athletic Clubs" (August 2), please permit me to voice the following as being helpful to those who may intend forming debating clubs:—

The rank and file of the Freethought movement are inarticulate. Week after week correspondence columns of local papers present fine opportunities for uttering Freethought ideas and ideals, for refuting current fallacies, and for implanting the demon of doubt in the minds of the conventional; the only proviso being that the writer shall be concise, clear, tactful (urbane, rather), and not dogmatic. Furthermore, the debating societies of churches and adult schools largely go unchallenged. Why are these opportunities for helping Freethought allowed to pass? Because Freethinkers in the mass are inarticulate. And why so? Because so many of them erroneously believe that ability to express one's ideas coherently and acceptably is a gift; whereas a fair ability to do so can be acquired by any earnest and intelligent person. So many, too, do not know of the few essential books, a study of which would enable the inarticulate to overcome their defect. For the benefit of such readers I should like to suggest a few manuals helpful to aspiring speakers or writers.

Now, the average Freethinker—perhaps because he is one—is poor. He individually cannot afford all the books I name. But he can afford a few; and members of N.S.S. Branches could collectively purchase some of the other books, which would be accessible to all for study and reference. Possibly some books might be gifts from the well-to-do.

The reader who wishes to write and speak acceptably should acquire: (1) *The Use of English*, Part I., by Dr. R. Wilson (Macmillan, 4s.); a manual designed for those whose schooling finishes at fourteen years, who wish to study without a teacher. This gives instruction in everyday grammar; simple word and phrase study and

composition. The more advanced reader should get from Macmillan (Publisher, London), a selected detailed list of books on English, and select from Prof. Nesfield's works. As book (2) *Thought-building in Composition*, by R. W. Neal (Macmillan, 6s. 6d., 175 pp.). This is a compact, practical manual on method and order in thinking over and planning any composition. It supplies simple formulas, founded on clear thinking, for building-up thought coherently. It does not deal with matters usually covered by formal books on composition, to which it is supplementary. Book (3) Woolley's *Handbook of Composition* (Harrap, 7s. 6d., 240 pp.), gives for reference and practice a compendium of rules of good English, structure of sentences, punctuation, and spelling, arrangement of MSS; an appendix gives exercises on the rules. Book (4) *How to Prepare Essays and Speeches*, by Eustace Miles (Rivingtons, 6s., 400 pp.), is a highly original manual showing how to collect, select, and arrange ideas; it has chapters on expressing ideas to make them assimilable to readers or hearers. These last three books are unique of their kind; they furnish information and methods not to be found in the usual books on grammar or composition; they do not overlap each other; they are intensely practical.

The student with limited cash should make certain of (1) and (2), and then acquire (3) and (4) later. He should possess the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (7s. 6d.), which gives examples of the use of words.

Each N.S.S. Branch, I suggest, should purchase books (2), (3), (4), supplemented by Roget's *Theasaurus* of classified synonymous words (Longmans, 7s. 6d., or Dent's *Everyman* series, 2 vols., at 2s. 6d. each). Also (5) *Practice and Theory of Argumentation and Debate*, by V. A. Ketcheman, LL.B. (Macmillan, 10s. 6d., 366 pp.), which shows practically how to analyse a proposition, collect evidence, and construct the argument. It also gives chapters on fallacies and the application of logic. This would prove more serviceable than a formal book of logic. Book (6), Gibson's *Handbook for Literary and Debating Societies* (Hodder & Stoughton, 6s.), which gives fifty-three examples of questions for debate with summarized arguments on both sides, references to works furnishing information on subjects debated, an extra list of questions for debate, and instructions for chairmen. This book gives no instruction on how to debate nor how to prepare debates.

In conclusion, I urge that every N.S.S. branch ought to me a miniature training college for Freethought advocates. The cost of endowing each "college" would be 30s. to 40s.; but the value to our Cause would be exceedingly far-reaching.

DOUGLAS P. STICKELLS.

CHRISTIANS AND FREETHINKERS.

SIR,—The Rev. Dr. E. Lytton's letter under the above heading in the *Freethinker* of August 16 may open the eyes of your deluded and dull-witted readers who may find that in all your writings you are trifling and superficial. Cannot you realize how risky it is for you to publish letters of such profundity and of such an authority as the late Headmaster of Eton, whose wisdom is apparent in the mentality and knowledge of many a public man of to-day? I feel particularly alarmed, because I am in the habit of giving a copy of the *Freethinker* to anyone I meet who I judge to be a bit soft, whose mentality does not rise above your contributions. But when will your readers wake up to the fact that the "world has developed such anxieties and imminent perils" as a reason for Dr. Lytton's inability to waste time taking seriously your superficialities, the condescending and chivalrous admission that you, poor thing, "seem to be seeking the truth" will not help you.

I have been reading the *Freethinker* for years, and have not noticed that you or any of your contributors are clear about "some conduct of life being good, some bad," whether love of beauty can be explained by Atheistic evolution, or what your "fundamental belief is as to how this world came to be what it is." If you or your contributors know anything about these startling problems it was mean of you to keep them from your readers. And if you don't know these things you are an ignorant, superficial lot, and we will have to turn to the wise men who know.

JOHN'S GRANDPA.

SIR,—Atheists, above all others, ought to be exact and correct in their statements. They generally are. That is why they are not loved by Supernaturalists. For this reason, I venture this correction of one statement made by F. J. Nance in his letter in last week's *Freethinker*. He wrote, "There are many Socialists who are Atheists (Bradlaugh, e.g.)" and I must point out that Charles Bradlaugh was not a "Socialist." He was a Radical—and a real Radical at that. The political reforms for which he fought so grandly were all necessary, and the Labour-Socialist Party in Great Britain is still fighting for some of them. On the economic side, however, he never accepted evolutionary economics; and he opposed Socialism as advocated on a scientific basis by Social Democrats. He remained, to his death, an "Individualist." The industrial, commercial, and financial development since then has changed the conditions and the nature of the political fight. Nationalization, or socialization, of various properties and industries is now urged as the only way out of the only practical remedy for the damnable mess into which blind economic evolution has landed us. It is interesting to speculate—in a leisure moment—whether Bradlaugh, were he still alive, would be in the Labour Party or not. Be that as it may—or "might have been"; it is not good for his glorious memory to claim him for what he was not.

The motto of the *Freethinker* is "*La verité oblige.*" Hence this correction; which, I trust, F. J. Nance will accept in that spirit.

ATHOS ZENO.

FALSIFICATION AND ITS USE.

SIR,—"Trepn" obviously cares not a straw whether man is, or is not, a machine. His sole concern is to find a quibbling peg on which to tag one of his bumptious effusions. And so determined is he to secure one that when his hunt proves barren, he goes to the length of falsifying a statement for the purpose. To take *one-half* of the term I used and make the stump serve as a text for a "tall" lecture on an a b c fact calculated to make me appear an arrant ignoramus, was either deliberate or is an extraordinary instance of culpable stupidity.

The reader will find on page 429 of the issue for July 5, that the term I used was "steam-engine," and not "steam," as he quotes me, and takes as his text—a fact that makes his conceited diatribe recoil upon his own head. I refrain from commenting upon the superlative bumptiousness implied in it, lest I be tempted to pass the bounds of parliamentary diction. Unfortunately I ascribed to his remarks *re* the conservation of energy a certain degree of sanity and honesty, and the word "admit" was, in consequence, the befitting and courteous term to use. Now, however, I know that through having perused the paragraph too carelessly I missed the absurdity of his argument. Had its sophistry dawned upon me I should have certainly used a more apposite term, but one that would scarcely have served him as a peg for such a fatuous piece of rodomontade as the term "admit" did, so I hardly think an apology is due.

KERIDON.

NAMES OF THE BIBLE.

SIR,—Mr. J. Ireland, in your issue of July 19, states that "the names of the characters are scarcely ever duplicated." First of all he should mention which Bible he refers to, as the same name is printed differently in various translations. There is one glowing example that immediately occurs to me, contradicting his statement, and doubtless there are some, if not many, others.

The name Abijah and its other forms as Abiah, Abia, Abijam, occurs no less than nine times in an ordinary Bible I now have. The following are the references, and only two, if I am not mistaken, refer to the same person: Abijah—2 Chronicles, chap. xiii. 1; 1 Chronicles, chap. xxiv. 10; 2 Chronicles, chap. xxix. 1; 1 Kings, chap. xiv. 1. Abiah—1 Chronicles, chap. ii. 24; 1 Chronicles, chap. vii. 8; 1 Samuels, chap. viii. 2. Abia—Luke, chap. i 5. Abijam—1 Kings, chap. xiv. 31.

H. R. WRIGHT.

THE ORIENTAL MYSTERIES AND CHRISTIANITY.

SIR,—Professor Burnitt is concerned—and quite rightly, from his point of view—lest my quotation of his statement that there were no “communities” of Christians in Galilee, after the crucifixion, should lead my readers to think that he also endorses my thesis, that there were no communities of Christians at Jerusalem.

It never occurred to me that they would think so, or I should have made the necessary qualification. Now that the Professor has pointed it out, I think it possible that a hasty or careless reader may have acquired that impression. I make many quotations, and I am sure that my readers do not take it for granted that every writer I cite holds the same opinion upon all points as myself. Moreover, to make a qualifying statement of the author's position, along with every quotation I make, would be farcical. I do not observe that Christians are over scrupulous in their dealings with Freethought works, although, of course, that is no reason why we should follow their example. We should show a better.

Professor Burkitt maintains that all the followers of Jesus in Galilee, after the crucifixion, removed to Jerusalem and settled there. This does not appear, from a common sense point of view, very probable. In the first place there is no adequate reason why they should, and every reason why they should not; for the scribes and priests who had brought about the crucifixion of Jesus would not be prepared to deal any the more tenderly with his followers. And, secondly, the followers of Jesus—according to the Gospels—were drawn from the labouring classes, mostly fishermen. How could they suddenly give up their occupation and travel to Jerusalem (about sixty miles away), and how could they earn their living when they reached there, where there is no sea?

Eusebius, and other earlier Christian apologists and writers, may say that there was an early Christian community at Jerusalem; but it is clearly recognized now that these early Christian apologists and historians were wholly credulous and uncritical, ready to make any statement that would redound to the credit of the Church, and not to be believed unless supported by independent testimony; and where is this testimony? The Jewish writers and historians of that time know nothing of any Christian Church, or community, at Jerusalem.

W. MANN.

Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

In spite of bad weather Mr. Whitehead reports five successful meetings at Nelson and two at Blackburn. There was slight opposition from the Nelson Spiritualists, who seem to have displaced the more conventional religionists. Mr. F. Metcalf was most helpful, giving active assistance at every meeting. From the 15th of this month to the 20th, Mr. Whitehead will be at Leeds, where it is hoped great strides will be made towards consolidating the Branch and establishing a regular meeting-place.—E.

Obituary.

The funeral took place on Saturday last of Mr. Joseph Boston, of Selby. Mr. Boston, who was in his seventy-fifth year, had been a regular reader of the *Freethinker* for many years, and was respected by his mates and comrades as a steadfast upholder of Secular principles. Mr. Greevz Fyshier, of Leeds, who, with his son, Mr. Aubry Fyshier, attended the funeral, read the Secular Burial Service at the graveside. Mr. Boston leaves a widow to mourn his loss, to whom we extend our sincerest sympathy.—E.

For as it is the chief concern of wise men to retrench the evils of life by reasonings of philosophy; it is the employment of fools to multiply them by the sentiments of superstition.—Addison, “Our Popular Superstitions.”

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 postcard.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. J. Marshall, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH N.S.S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, Mr. White, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. H. C. White, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3 and 6, Mr. C. Baker will lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Amersham and Chalfont. Conducted by Mr. and Mrs. F. James. Train Baker Street 9.58 a.m. Cheap return to Amersham, 2s. 11d. Will all ramblers bring lunch and verify times of trains please?

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BOLTON SECULAR SOCIETY (The Town Hall Steps): Friday, August 21, at 7.30, Speakers: Messrs. Addison, Partington, and Sisson.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Square): Every evening, Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Freethought Chat.

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