

# The FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

*Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper*

VOL. XLVI.—No. 38

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1926

PRICE THREEPENCE

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## Views and Opinions.

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### Christianity and Its Defenders.

In discussing Dr. Gore's *Can We then Believe?* last week we dealt at some length with the intellectual character of such efforts. For all who really understand the nature of religion, and who are not interested in the fruitless discussion of theological nightmares, this constitutes their chief interest. The issues raised are both intellectual and social. Given, on the one hand, a number of religious beliefs that unquestionably had their origin in savage modes of thought, and on the other hand an established Church with wealth and power, and a body of men whose whole importance is bound up with the retention of these primitive beliefs, we have at once self interest and conservatism running in double harness, and truth and reason are both heavily handicapped. And when we add to this a Church in which intellectual integrity has always occupied a subordinate position, the outcome of it all is current Christian apologetics with its forced interpretations, its readiness to grasp at any excuse that will serve to the needs of the moment, and even the positive falsification of historic facts. The curious thing is that all this goes on with men who claim to be morally above their fellows. And we have already suggested that the explanation of this is that there has grown up in connection with religion a rule of ethics that has standardised and legalised a method of going to work which would ruin a man's credit in the commercial world, and in politics would mark him as one unfit to hold a responsible position in public life.

### Fast and Loose.    \*    \*    \*

Almost any volume of apologetic Christian literature will illustrate the truth of what has been said, but we are now chiefly concerned with Dr. Gore. The essential aim of Dr. Gore is to show that, properly understood, modern science offers no obstacle in the way of Christian belief—also rightly understood. And his method of doing this is the radically unsound—one might almost say radically dishonest—one of seeing how far we can read modern ideas into primitive thinking. Granted that method, one can prove anything one likes. If we are to say that when the Bible talks of the creation of Adam and

Eve it means the appearance of the human species only, or that when the New Testament speaks of Jesus ascending into heaven in the full sight of his followers, it means only that he underwent a state of spiritual exaltation; if we are at liberty to read ancient religious teaching in this way, then we can prove just what we set out to prove. But is there any reason why this method should be limited to Christianity? Why should not the Koran be treated in the same way? Or the Hindu sacred writings? Why not go lower still and treat existing savage beliefs in that way? It is quite clear that the only reason why Dr. Gore pursues this plan with regard to Christianity is because he is a Christian; and, secondly, because modern thought has made it difficult for a man to profess certain beliefs as originally held without making himself a laughing stock. One imagines what Dr. Gore would have done with Old Mother Hubbard had that ancient story appeared in the Bible? His plan would have been as suitable to the reading of it in terms of spiritual development as anything with which he deals. So that whatever the value of Dr. Gore's method, it is certainly not new. It is one of the oldest of plans for adapting convicted falsehood to established truth.

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### Ancient and Modern.

The proper method of applying modern knowledge to early beliefs is one that Dr. Gore never once makes use of. The first thing here is to ascertain the facts upon which even savages build their beliefs. These, whether mental or physical, are now fairly well known. The next step is to take these facts and see what light modern knowledge can throw upon them. The final step is to contrast the two explanations, the primitive and the current, and see how far they agree. To take a single illustration from the New Testament. Here we find certain facts of disease sufficiently described for any medical man to recognize their nature. Among existing savages we see the same things, and in each case we have the explanation offered that the sufferer is ill because some evil spirit has taken possession of his body. Of these complaints modern science offers quite a different explanation, and one that is universally accepted. But we do not try to make "demons" read "germs," or lesions of the nervous system; if we did we should have to say that savages and the New Testament writers were as well informed as we are, only they preferred to express themselves in a symbolical manner. We say that they expressed themselves in that way because their knowledge concerning the facts were inadequate. The rule, then, is to take early writers as meaning just what they say, and to read what they say in the light of what was then known concerning the facts with which they are dealing. We do not read our own experience in the light of what earlier generations thought, we read their teaching in the light of our own knowledge. But of this rule Dr. Gore takes not the slightest notice. He does not show the slightest

appreciation of what modern knowledge has to say concerning the origin and nature of religion, or that there is as much reason for dealing with the beliefs of the inhabitants of Borneo on his lines as there is for reading modern meanings into the Bible. At least, the nearest he comes to this is in the remark that while in "barbarous days" men believed they could become at one with their god by eating him, there is no justification for assimilating the Christian Eucharist to the practice. But the truth here is that we can actually trace the Christian Eucharist back to the primitive religious cannibalistic rite of eating the God, and from thence to its survival in the Christian practice of symbolical god-eating, just as we can trace the current practice of burying coins beneath the foundations of buildings back to the custom of killing and interring a human being. And one may remind Dr. Gore that the Roman Church actually teaches that by the magic of the priest the wafer and wine becomes the actual body and blood of their God, and thus preserves the meaning of the cannibalistic ceremony in all its original and disgusting obscenity.

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#### Supernaturalism.

There is one passage in Dr. Gore's book in which he states the Christian position very fairly. Here it is:

The New Testament claims to be the record of the fulfilment of how God's disclosure of himself was fulfilled in an historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, believed to be the incarnate Son of God. Everything depends upon whether this single person did live, and did so teach and work as is recorded of him, and did so die upon the Cross, and was so raised from the dead, and did so pass to the throne of God and send down his spirit upon the Church. This series of particular facts passed into the creed of the Church. The Church not only witnessed to the doctrines, but appealed to the facts—what God had actually done in human history. It staked its all upon this appeal. If its appeal is not verified, if the alleged facts, some of them supernatural or miraculous, can be shown to be untrue or improbable, to be no more than a reflection of the credulity of the disciples, the credit of the Gospel would be infinitely weakened. Christianity from its origin appealed to facts and to the bar of history, as well as that of general experience, it must go.

That is the most comprehensive statement in Dr. Gore's book, and it states the genuine Christian position. Christianity rests upon the historic accuracy of the events narrated in the New Testament. It must prove that a certain person was miraculously born, that he performed a number of miracles, that he rose from the dead, these and the other miraculous events described must be established as historic facts, or the whole scheme of Christianity crumbles to the ground. There is no middle course. It will not do to confuse the issue by saying that some good man might have lived, and that his admirers created miraculous legends concerning him. As Dr. Gore says, "Christ is essentially supernatural and super-historical." The natural Christ will not do—and the supernatural one is supremely absurd. That is the real dilemma of present-day Christianity. It has to choose between a useless Jesus and an impossible Christ.

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#### How to Make Christians.

Dr. Gore nowhere establishes an even reasonable presumption in favour of believing that this supernatural Jesus ever really existed. In the end he makes it an act of faith. Just as he says that he could not believe in the existence of a good God in the absence of a revelation, so he says that "to

accept the evidence of the Gospels we need a readiness to believe in the idea of God the Creator as being also God the Redeemer—we need some sense of man as a sinner against God, and of sin as having so disturbed the world as to require some redemptive and creative act of God." And he speaks of Christianity as a something which "bows a man down in utter self-abasement as a creature before his Creator and a polluted sinner before his awful Judge," and then lifts him up and sends him on his way rejoicing. So that in the end Dr. Gore's reconciliation consists in saying that you must first of all be ready to believe, and then belief will come, and this will be helped by a sense of complete self-abasement such as Christianity induces. No doubt. If you demoralise a man mentally and morally, he will be ready to believe anything—he may even accept as a thinker a man who tells you as an argument against Determinism that we have a real power of choice, as though there was ever any question of this by Determinists. Better expressed, and with a greater flourish of scholarship, there is no more in Dr. Gore's gospel than there is in that of a street-corner Salvation Army preacher. He does not deal with the fact that the stories told of the New Testament are told of scores of other saviours—the same miraculous birth, the same miracles performed, the same story of a crucified God, the same story of being raised from the dead. He does not say why we must accept the one story while rejecting the others. He is not conducting a scientific enquiry, he is merely writing for those who already believe, and furnishing them with excuses for not giving up their beliefs. Like the Deity and forgiveness, that is his trade. But it is a trade that caters for a diminishing number of customers. And Dr. Gore assures these that so long as they can feel themselves filled with a sense of "utter self-abasement" and are ready to believe before they examine, belief will come. Of that we have not the slightest doubt. Rob a man of his independence, reduce him to a condition when he is anxious to grasp at anything that will give him the promise of peace of mind, and he will be likely to become a good Christian. But what a creed!

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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### Church-Going.

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In the *Christian World* there is a column entitled "Our Question Box," under the charge of the Rev. John Bevan, M.A., of Balham, S.W. In the issue for September 2 three anxious mothers write about their sons who have entirely given up going to church. One says of her son: "He has married and settled down. He is a good son, a good husband and father, but he never darkens the church doors. It troubles me, and I don't know what to do about it." Another writes: "My son used to be a regular teacher in the Sunday-school. Since he was demobilized, from Mesopotamia, he absolutely refuses to go back to the Sunday-school, and has no use at all for our church or any others. He is a dear boy.... but I can't persuade him to come back." The third mother's complaint is exactly the same; but concerning her son she adds that "he has thrown himself into public work, and is keen on all kinds of charitable service; he says he has no religion now." Our object in thus retailing the three mothers' trouble is to call special attention to Mr. Bevan's treatment of it. It is well worth quoting, coming, as it does, from the pastor of a Congregational church. It is as follows:—

Many mothers in our churches are troubled in the same way as are those dear women mentioned

above. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the anxiety that is most widespread in the home life of English religious people centres round the indifference to and alienation from church shown by young men and women who were brought up in the church, and who formerly loved it.

We can but conclude that they do not need the Church. It does not help to say that they really do need it, but are not conscious that they do, for we are seldom unconscious of our real needs. The Church and its formularies, the Church with its stereotyped repetitious services, the Church with its hymns expressive largely of notions that have dropped out of present understanding, the Church with its pathetic platitudes is felt to be a picturesque survival, but not a living, inexorable, indispensable necessity. These young people can do without it. They know they can, because for years they have done without it.

So far, we are in complete agreement with the reverend gentleman, and we heartily congratulate him on his courageous expression of so heterodox a view. As a matter of fact, in this country only very few comparatively pay any heed whatever to the Church and its doings. By many millions it is totally ignored, and only about twenty-five *per cent.* of our population take the slightest interest in religious questions. Of course, we thoroughly understand that, whilst Mr. Bevan condemns the Church as he finds it to-day, and probably holds it largely responsible for the existing indifference to religion, he yet believes with all his heart in an ideal Church, which, as he puts it, "must be the living embodiment in fact, principle, and practice of the Jesus Spirit." Speaking of the absentees from Church services, he says: "We have got to show them a Church they cannot do without. If we cannot, we shall for ever keep on limping painfully in the rear of life and progress." We contend that such a Church cannot be shown. It exists and can exist only in his own imagination.

We do not for a moment doubt Mr. Bevan's sincerity as a religious writer. His theology must prove "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to the old-fashioned, orthodox divines. Almost every article he writes illustrates the genuine breadth of his religious views, but liberal as they are, we cannot share them. The Jesus in whom he so ardently believes has no existence for us. To us the Gospel Jesus is a purely legendary character. Human beings are not born of virgins, do not perform superhuman deeds while they live, nor burst out of their graves in three days after they are dead. Yet the Gospel Jesus is reported to have accomplished all those things, and, in addition, to have founded a Church which, he was made to predict, would conquer the world and bring all mankind unto himself. Mr. Bevan knows as well as we do to what extent the Church has fulfilled that glowing prophecy, and he is as familiar as we are with its history of never-ending controversy, cruel persecution, and bloody wars. Even to-day it is at sixes and sevens within itself, as a man in Mr. Bevan's position must be painfully aware.

In the *Christian World* of September 9, Mr. W. Stanyon, of Birmingham, admits that Mr. Bevan's reply to the three troubled mothers "makes splendid reading," but complains that "one feels strongly that it skilfully evades the essential point," and adds:—

Surely the crux of the problem is the average man's distrust of the Church both during and after the war, especially in regard to its attitude to war itself. Not all young men left the Church, but many did—perhaps the majority. A few were unable to retain their belief in a Father-God at all, and for many the nightmare of the experience

made so deep a mark on their souls that they cannot yet see the face of God except through the smoke of an earthly hell.

Mr. Stanyon is doubtless right in believing that the war converted not a few Christians to Atheism, and considerably weakened the influence of the Church, but he is certainly mistaken when he affirms that war is anti-Christian. The Gospel Jesus says: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." At the very end he is represented as saying to the disciples: "He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloke, and buy a sword." "And they said, Lord behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough." It is perfectly true, however, that the war convinced multitudes that the Church is a fundamentally fraudulent institution, and that the Prince of Peace has always been a wholly fictitious character.

What the clergy of all denominations need to realize and lay to heart is the undoubted fact that Church attendance is steadily on the decline because the Christian faith is in the process of dying out. If people still believed in the Divine origin and character of the Church, and that the clergy have been divinely appointed to make the only possible way of salvation known to the world, there would still be crowded places of worship every Sunday. The truth is that God and Christ are no longer real, living beings to the present generation. The belief in life beyond the grave is also dwindling away. Is not the present life the only thing to which we can intelligently attend? Its duties, obligations, enjoyments, trials, sufferings, joys, and sorrows, are not these the only realities which it is worth our while to consider and try to understand and turn to social use? Mr. Bevan admits that the Church is a colossal failure, and yet claims, with the utmost inconsistency, that "nothing but the Church can do for us to-day what we so urgently and desperately need." Then he significantly adds: "But what the Church can do the Church is not doing." How on earth can he tell what the Church can do when it does not do it? Curiously enough, he blames the world for the Church's impotence. In the issue of the *Christian World* for September 9 he says: "You know that the problem of problems is this, that the Church of to-day has to deal with a world made up of people who are conscious of being neither 'weary souls' nor 'seeking sinners.'" A truer sentence he never wrote, and in its truth lies the one and only hope for our times. People are beginning to discover that glorious, practically inexhaustible resources lie dormant within their own nature, and that these, called forth into active operation, would inevitably result in the world's emancipation from the tyranny of wrong and injustice and its establishment in right, true, and orderly social conditions.

J. T. LLOYD.

THE CORRECT USE OF WORDS.

In endeavouring to reason correctly, there is nothing more necessary than to use words with care. *The meaning of a word is that thing which we think about when we use the word, and which we intend other people to think about when they hear it pronounced, or see it written....* Yet there is no more common source of mistakes and bad reasoning than the confusion which arises between the different meanings of the same word.... Whether we are writing, or reading, or speaking, or merely thinking, we should always be trying to avoid confusion in the use of words.—*Prof. W. Stanley Jevons, "Primer of 'Logic.'"*

## The Wonder of Wells.

There's nothing right or wrong, but thinking makes it so.—*Shakespeare*.

Life to me is a spectacle, a show, with a drive in it.—*H. G. Wells*.

There is no wealth but life.—*Ruskin*.

MR. H. G. WELLS is a genius, but he is erratic. Possessed of enormous talents, he should be the foremost of living authors using the English language. In *Tono Bungay* he gave the world a novel of outstanding value; in *The Hole in the Wall* he wrote a perfect short story. Despite lack of exact scholarship, his *Outlines of History* was daring and original. And now, with charming and characteristic inconsequence he has written what promises to be a masterpiece of autobiography, which he insists is a novel pure and simple.

*The World of William Clissold*, the first volume of which has just been published, is just a monologue with a slight thread of story, but the writing is so brilliant and illuminating that it must rank as a first-class literary work. In the preface Mr. Wells tells the reader that "William Clissold" is a fictitious character and his thoughts and ideas throughout are those natural to his mentality and social type. All the same, Clissold is as much like Mr. Wells himself as Box is like Cox in the famous farce. And Mr. Wells disarms criticism by claiming Clissold as a "distant relative," and by reminding the reader that "all novelists use actual experience in their work," which is rather severe on some of our lady novelists.

Mr. Wells is as discursive as Laurence Sterne or Anatole France, but, like those two very distinguished writers, he is as delightful. Out of nearly 250 pages only 50 are devoted to actual narrative, and the story, so far, is trite enough. The book, however is so threaded with the gold of genius that its splendour marks it out as prominently from the "best sellers," and other favourites of the circulating libraries, as the Himalayas tower above Highgate Hill.

Here, for example, is a description of a winter's day in London:—

Outside it is not so much day as a saturated piece of dingy time, a stretch of chewed and damp and dirty fourth dimension between two nights. It rains fitfully now in fine clouds, now in hysterical downpours, now in phases of drizzling undecided intermission; and the shops are lit and there are lights in the windows. There is a sort of grey discolouration filtering down from above that I suppose one must admit to be daylight. Wet omnibuses, wet taxicabs and automobiles splash and blunder by; there are a few reluctant foot passengers under wet umbrellas. Everything shines greasily with the rain like the backs of rolling porpoises.

One of the striking features of this book is the introduction of real people. This is the way Dean Inge is introduced:—

I find Dean Inge particularly sympathetic. He is a great modern Churchman, entirely honest but extremely devious. He is elaborately uninforming about the Virgin Birth and courageously outspoken about Birth Control. His Gifford Lectures betray in every passage his preference for the light Moselle of Neo-Platonism to the emotion-loaded Port of Catholic mysticism. I suppose if he and I were handed over to some tremendous spiritual chemist and each ground to powder and analysed to the last milligramme of his being, the report in each case would tail off with: "Belief in a living personal God—slight vestiges?" I met him a little while ago at a dinner party, and I found him all

I had hoped to find him—liberal Anglicanism incarnate, lean, erect, and—a little discoloured.

The "I" in this case is the supposed William Clissold, but it fits Mr. Wells like a glove, for did he not write *God, the Invisible King and Mankind in the Making*? Now, listen to Mr. Wells criticising himself:—

I had already talked about that with Wells himself, and it was plain to me that this god, this Invisible King of his, was not so much god, in the sense in which people understand that word, as Prometheus: it was a titanic and not a divine being.

His views on the question of immortality are of great interest, because of their transparent sincerity:

When the curtain of death comes down, is the revue over? So far as William Clissold goes, I think it is, I think that death is a thing I shall never experience, for when it comes to me I shall be dead.

In this connection it is worth recalling that Epictetus expresses the same thought in the *Enchiridion*, albeit in more dignified language. This is no dispraise of Mr. Wells, who is writing a work of *belle lettres*, and not a philosophic treatise, or book of aphorisms.

"Clissold" has a high-sniffing contempt for the Roman Catholic Church, which he regards as an anachronism and worse. He is vitriolic in his criticism of this buttress of superstition: "Were someone to discover some interesting, well-paid employment for ex-priests.....I believe it would collapse like a pricked sawdust doll, its personnel would come pouring out."

Concerning the various phases of Protestantism, he says: "I do not know how Protestantism will end. But I think it will end."

"Clissold" declares himself a revolutionary, but he "wears his rue with a difference." He realizes the limitations and dangers of democracy, and he points out that "the multitude can upset anything, but I do not believe that it can create anything whatever," which is a hard and true saying.

To turn to less debatable ground, Clissold tells a story concerning Mr. Wells which is far too good to be missed. He says that one of the American film producers once entertained the stupendous notion of filming the *Outlines of History*. The negotiations broke down because the impresario insisted that the introduction of a romantic love story would provide the necessary human element.

The present volume of *The World of William Clissold*, packed with interest, is the finest flower of the author's rare genius. Volumes two and three, to be issued later in the year, will decide whether the complete work is to be regarded as a great novel or a great autobiography. After so splendid an opening, few will doubt that it will be a masterpiece. Most discriminating readers, like Oliver Twist, will "ask for more."

MIMNERMUS.

Civilization is the result of highly complex organization. In the snake, all the organs are sheathed: no hands, no feet, no fins, no wings. In bird and beast, the organs are released, and begin to play. In man, they are all unbound, and full of joyful action. With this unswaddling he receives the absolute illumination we call Reason, and thereby true liberty.—*Emerson*.

Random Reading.

POLITICAL biography is the very Sahara of literature. For sheer aridness the record of the political life of some highly successful statesman takes a lot of beating. Chapter after chapter is crowded with worthless letters from some other equally successful statesman, and with records of debate and intrigue that long ago lost what little consequence they ever had. Functioning among the lowest common factors that dominate crowds, the politician soon loses all hold on the common virtues and prejudice and party feeling masquerade as sound judgment and love of country. Naturally he carries his spurious thinking and mob outlook into his private life; it is hardly possible that one given to the usual political methods could be honest with himself, even when alone; the same pandering to the crowd spirit operates, and a typical example of it is in the *Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, the famous radical of the Bradlaugh days. Speaking of the fight over the oath-taking, his biographer says:—

Sir Charles never took part again in any debate upon this once famous struggle. He supported Mr. Gladstone's views in favour of allowing affirmation, but he did so without heartiness, disliking the trade of living on blatant Atheism and finding in himself tendencies which led him to fear that he was clerically-minded. He always had an extreme dislike of talk or writing that offended legitimate susceptibilities.

"The trade of living on blatant Atheism" is quoted from Dilke's private journal, so that was evidently how he summed up the life and work of Charles Bradlaugh. It is the old Christian way of belittling what was really feared. It is, at bottom, an attitude of cowardice and shoddily cheap. Bradlaugh was fighting the battle for that honesty in politics which Dilke professed to have at heart, but co-operation with an Atheist on any fundamental principle was not to be thought of.

One is struck when reading the story of the Crusades with the habitual breach of faith on the part of the Christians. The Muslim occasionally broke faith; the spirit of militarism would see to that, but among the warriors of Christ the breach was regarded as a virtue. The high dignitaries of the Church who accompanied the Crusaders preached it into them day and night that to keep faith with the enemies of God was the unforgivable sin, and Christian kings and dukes were very willing to gain some advantage over the Saracen by swearing a lie on one of the innumerable bits of the true cross or some other relic of the Church. Saladin over and over again put his trust in the word of some pious prince from Christendom, and was again and again deceived. Modern Muslims are more knowing, as witnessed the following from Hogarth's *Accidents of an Antiquary's Life*:—

In the stormy history of Levantine religious warfare you may note an unvaried law of consequence. Where the Muslim has prevailed the votaries of the two creeds have resumed peaceful life as of old, the Christians knowing that Muslims act under orders as one man and that when Islam is triumphant its Gibconites are secure of their lives. But if Christians gain their freedom the Muslims leave the land of their birth. For whatever pledges the new authorities may give, he knows for his part that since Eastern Christianity supplies no social discipline each Christian will act on occasion as seems best in his own eyes.

As a gesture of contempt the Muslim action could not be bettered. Moving from the neighbourhood of the Christian was his only refuge, for the task of

civilizing the Frank was beyond the patience of even the long-waiting East.

Cunninghame Grahame describes in one of his stories the activities of an estimable old dame who superintended an establishment of easy virtue somewhere near Gibraltar. She was very philosophic in her outlook on things and totally innocent of shame about her occupation. That may be pardonable in an individual; it is more or less a matter of geography, for human nature is very much the same, in Aberdeen or Suez, but when a Christian league of nations assumes the rôle and even descends to the more degraded sphere of it—from our respectable national point of view—the procurement of the raw material, as it were, the temptation to speculate on the precise value of the appropriate Christian doctrine is very insistent. It was during one of the periodical diplomatic manœuvres of the civilized nations along the Mediterranean that there was trouble about naval men going ashore.

The Cretan Muslims were too jealous of their women for bluejackets to be let loose, and more than one French crew went to the verge of mutiny. Later on, when Latin troops came to be quartered in Canea, things reached such a pass that it was thought well to send overseas for a bunch of less forbidden fruit. It came in charge of a portly dame. But the Turk, who was still in nominal command of the port, refused in the name of Islam to admit these earthly houris and the great Christian powers, by their representatives assembled, invoked the Concert of Europe to secure the landing of four Levantine light o' loves.

So, according to Hogarth, and then, presumably, there was peace, although the potency of four light o' loves seems to be slightly exaggerated.

I once started keeping a note of anything relating to the moral standing of natives converted to Christianity. It was so obviously one-sided that I gave it up. Hardly a traveller among the peoples of Africa or the East but what has something severe to say about the detrimental effect of missionary effort among the native races. I copy the following from J. G. Millais' *Far Away up the Nile*:—

A merry fellow questioned by Captain Warne said he was one of twelve Christian converts, but did not think much of Christianity. It had, however, its advantages, for he and others received five shillings a month for attending prayer morning and evening. Otherwise, he stated, he would not go. It seems strangely useless to try and impart religion to a thoroughly well-behaved nation like the Shulluks. We admire the real and excellent example of the missionary, but not his common sense, since from the first these nations are not intellectually fit to receive the method of instruction in the way it is given, and so nothing results but deception, sham modesty, and conceit induced by wearing clothes. No Sudan official will ever employ a mission boy if he can help it, and this is not because of prejudice, but the result of bitter experience.

Long ago an old Sunday school superintendent had me persuaded that I shared the responsibility for the salvation of the natives of Old Calabar, and on Sunday afternoons I planked down my penny with a full appreciation of the duty due from young Christians. But not always. I defaulted now and again. In those days Satan lived down the street in the form of an old lady who sold butterscotch, but I suppose that taking it first and last, I am responsible, to the extent of that covered by a few shillings, for converting decent niggers into canting chapelgoers. It lies heavy on my soul.

Sir Richard Burton was in many respects a turbulent character; prone to go his own way whatever the opposition and not over respectful of the conventions of the class to which he belonged. There was an element of hostility around him, due either to his Freethought or his sympathy with Islamic peoples, but I have never seen it suggested that he lacked honour or was anything other than a gentleman. So I was intrigued, as they say, when I came upon the following note in P. B. M. Allan's *The Bookhunter at Home*, an expensive volume dealing mainly with rare and worthless books. It is referring to the publication of the *Arabian nights* :—

There is no doubt that Burton was largely indebted to Payne for his translation; indeed, he is said merely to have paraphrased and rearranged the version which Payne had just previously prepared for the Villon Society, adding explanatory notes of a character which rendered it essential that his edition be kept under lock and key. It was issued to subscribers by Burton himself in London, though ostensibly by the Kamashastra Society at Benares .....Ex inform E. H. A., one of the original subscribers and a friend of Burton.

If the testimony of his more open friend is taken into account the foregoing note is three parts fiction. The Kamashastra Society had no existence outside the prospectus of the *Nights*, so much is admitted, but everything else goes to show that Burton spent the leisure time of thirty years in translating the tales. He was perfectly acquainted with them in the vernacular, and was, in fact, the man best qualified to portray the life of the Arab as seen in the stories. That he would take the version of another in a matter in which he was vitally interested is unlikely; he was far too assertive and positive a character for that. And the explanatory notes, along with the terminal essay were written with the sole object of conveying an accurate picture of the Muslim to the reader. The fact that the volumes had to be kept under lock and key is no reflection on Burton; it simply means that nineteen hundred years of Christianity had failed to establish in the West that discipline which was lacking in the East.

H. B. DODDS.

#### THE VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY.

One considerable advantage that arises from Philosophy consists in the sovereign antidote which it accords to superstition and false religion. All other remedies against that pestilent distemper are vain, or at least uncertain. Plain good sense and the practice of the world, which alone serve most purposes of life, are here found ineffectual: history as well as daily experience furnish instances of men endowed with the strongest capacity for business and affairs, who have all their lives crouched under slavery to the grossest superstition. Even gaiety and sweetness of temper, which infuse a balm into every other wound, afford no remedy to so virulent a poison.....But when sound Philosophy has once gained possession of the mind, superstition is effectually excluded, and one may fairly affirm that her triumph over the enemy is more complete than over most of the vices and imperfections incident to human nature. Love or anger, ambition or avarice, have their root in the temper and affections, which the soundest reason is scarce ever able fully to correct; but superstition, being founded on false opinion, must immediately vanish when true philosophy has inspired juster sentiments of superior powers. The contest is here more equal between the distemper and the medicine, and nothing can hinder the latter from proving effectual but its being false and sophisticated.—*David Hume, "Essay on Suicide."*

#### Acid Drops.

The *Daily News* has commenced reviewing the answers to its recent Questionnaire on the subject of religious belief. We shall probably deal with the matter as a whole when the analysis of the returns are complete, but for the moment it may be interesting to note that just over one-fourth of those who took the trouble to reply disowned belief in a personal God—the only kind of a God that is not a pure verbalism. Assuming this to be a fair average of the whole of the population, it would give us about twelve to thirteen millions of non-believers in the country. The vast majority of these are probably not actively interested in Freethought, but it is quite certain that a very large number would be if they could only be got at. We suggest this aspect of the matter to all those who are interested in Freethought and its extension among the people.

A little more than one-fifth rejected the idea of personal immortality. So that we should not be far from the truth assuming these figures to fairly represent the whole of the people—in saying that there must be in this country at least six or seven million convinced Freethinkers. The *Daily News* gives its analysis the heading of "Disbelievers 1 in 4." And then Christians sometimes ask what progress we are making? Well, to have one-fourth of the population definitely over from the Christian faith is not so small an achievement, and when we bear in mind that they who have been primarily responsible for this—men like Paine, and Hetherington, Carlile, Patterson, Place, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Foote, etc., have been men without money or position, it is one of the most remarkable occurrences of the past century and a quarter. We deliberately exclude the influence of the many eminent men of science that might be named, because they were never the pacemakers. It was the changed atmosphere created by these pioneers that gave many scientific men the opportunity of speaking out more boldly than they otherwise might have done.

Even then these leading scientists are apt to be very timid. Thus, in the *Weekly Dispatch* for September 12 there appears an article from Sir William Gregory dealing with a future life. Sir William is the editor of *Nature*, and a well-known scientist. But he manifests that marked desire not to say anything that might offend the religious world, the lack of moral courage, that is the bane of our prominent men where religion is concerned. He leads off, for instance, with a remark that while "it is permissible for anyone to believe that individual existence ends with death, but not to intrude this negative proposition upon the attention of others." If that means anything, it means that although a man may be "permitted" to believe that the belief in immortality is a delusion, and although he may believe it to be the source of a terrible waste of time and energy, and of actual evil, he must not call the attention of others to this fact. Now, we wonder what would be the present state of the world if the men we have named above had acted upon this advice? One thing we are certain of, and that is Sir William would not have said all he has said in this article, because it would not have been safe for him to do so. We venture to remind Sir William it is the highest of social duties that when one finds public attention wasted upon something that a man believes to be false, it is his primary duty to call their attention to it.

Sir William says, "It is now possible to deny the Virgin Birth of Christ and his actual physical resurrection and ascension, and yet to remain a member of the Established Church." We like that, "It is now possible." It means that they who have spoken have made it possible for timid people to deny the truth of certain Christian teachings. So Sir William does "intrude these negative propositions upon the attention of others." It has enabled Sir William to be thus far

outspoken, and we shall keep on till we make it safe for these timid creatures to speak about religion with the same freedom that they do about other matters.

To be just to Sir William, he does go on to point out certain things which knocks the bottom out of the belief in a soul and its survival. He points out that belief in the existence of a soul that is independent of the body was created in primitive minds by the phenomena of dreams. And that this led to a whole host of burial customs which have lingered on to our own time. "The belief in the reality of a soul that could wander away during sleep, naturally gave rise to that of the continued existence of the soul after the sleep of death." But if that is so, what becomes of the veracity of the current belief?

And then as is the custom with writers who are permitted to appear in the chaste pages of the *Weekly Dispatch* and similar papers, something must be said at the end sufficiently silly to satisfy good Christian folk. Here is the sop to the pious cave men:—

All that can be said is that, so far as we know, there is no actual annihilation in the natural world, but only change, and that mind or consciousness may similarly not cease at death, but continue to develop independent of the body.....It used to be held that the creation of substance out of nothing was unthinkable, but that could not now be said by any philosopher familiar with modern science. The substance of the sun and stars is continually being transformed into beams of light and other rays, and it is possible that in the depths of space these beams are creating new matter.

It would take far more space than we have left to disentangle one of the best specimens of confused thinking and unscientific statements we have seen for some time. We may briefly note that "no actual annihilation" means scientifically that all that takes place is a change of form. The analogy that emerges from this is that the force we know as consciousness changes. But if it changes it does not remain the same, and if it does not remain the same, it does not persist as consciousness. Things cannot change and remain the same, even in the pages of the *Weekly Dispatch*. The statement that something can be produced out of nothing is as nonsensical as it ever was, and Sir William must be using the words with some concealed meaning. The creation of new "matter" does not mean out of nothing. It only means that which we know as "matter" is not an ultimate substance, but is evolved. It would take too long to further analyse these confused sentences. They are obviously written for Christians, and Sir William must have a fine contempt for their intelligence to risk passing it off on them.

Finally, if Sir William means that if you do not believe in a life after death it is not permissible to say so, we may not trust his suspension of judgment. He may be acting upon his own advice. And that is the crowning charge against advice such as that. It makes every man suspect his neighbour of being a liar, and destroys the value of truthfulness as one of the cardinal virtues. Sir William says he was brought up as a Wesleyan Methodist. That perhaps explains a lot. It is a terrible thing to have to outgrow a Christian childhood.

It encourages one to believe that there is still some amount of mental honesty left in the Christian world to find the *Christian Herald* declaring, apropos of the *Daily News* enquiry, it has disclosed an "almost hopeless confusion of mind as to what constitutes religion. The truth is that we are losing sight of the fact that the religion of the Bible is the only true one." It says that preachers have forgotten the gospel of Jesus, and are preaching ethics and philosophy, forgetting that creed comes before character. Now that is quite good Christianity, and we respect the honesty of conviction behind it.

It is not our fault that practically the only believers with clear honest convictions nowadays are the more ignorant ones; it was so in the days of the apostles, and it will remain so to the end. There is first-class (Christian) authority for saying that it is always to the foolish that God declares himself. We cannot recall a single philosopher who has ever had a heavenly vision vouchsafed him. Nature is full of compensations.

Only a newspaper could be capable of such a Janus-like attitude contained in the following specimen. In the Continental edition of the *Daily Mail*, August 31, a leading article is devoted to the Germans entitled, "Still Goose-stepping." In an English edition, August 28, the same paper has a column entitled, "War Among Corn Stacks," and is descriptive of the Army manoeuvres at Salisbury. The writer of the latter tells us that "Tanks, screaming along at twenty-five miles an hour, engaged in line, broadside to broadside, spitting flame from the six-pounders and crackling two hundred shots to the minute from their machine guns." There is more of this in the war style, but, as a test of the sincerity of organized religions we suggest that the incongruity of the above is more pressing in its demand for a speedy solution than the administration of the sacrament or the reform of the Prayer Book.

The Rev. Prebendary Henry Elliott Fox has left a fortune of £103,308. With this announcement, we read that Mr. Nouroji Merwanji Tarachand, medical practitioner and barrister, left £14,130. The late gentleman was formerly plague officer in India and medical officer of the Port of Bombay. The other world business seems to be a more profitable affair than that of patching up an imperfect universe.

We were under the impression that only one public man had proprietary rights in the word "wizard." We are mistaken. The *Daily News* describes Dr. Campbell Morgan as "a Wizard in the Pulpit." And just to show, in true perspective, how the Lord may be followed in comfort, we step aside to let the doctor's fogleman speak:—

One more Spurgeon similarity. Campbell Morgan appreciates a good cigar. He studies modern life at the theatre. He races about the country in a motor car just as keenly as the old General Booth, and he manifests a liking for long-distance travelling by steamer and train. After all, however, England is home, and he loves England.

There is not the least doubt that the eminent preacher is a very human being, and can tell without looking, on which side bread is buttered, but the thing does not fit in with the New Testament injunctions.

Sanction was given last week by the Barnsley Council for the opening of children's playgrounds on Sunday in the public parks. The local Sunday School Union, of course, lodged the usual protest when the matter was mooted, but the Council moved that no action should follow the protest. When the question came before the Council the champions of Killjoyism were in full force and the usual arguments for Sabbatarianism forthcoming. One anxious gentleman declared it would be a sorry day for England when it ceased to realize the blessing that accrued to mankind from the Sunday rest day. Another thought all the councillors would admit that we owed much of our English character to the influence of the Sunday-school and that the nation owed a very great deal to the English Sabbath. It would be a great mistake to weaken that institution. From all this it is clear that these clerical cats'-paws were not at all concerned with the benefit the open playgrounds would confer on the children by keeping them out of the streets and by giving them something better than the slums to play in. These godly gentlemen were anxious only that the Sunday-schools should not lose any clients.

Commenting on this decision of the Barnsley Council, a Sunday-school journal dolefully remarks: "What will be the harvest of this seed-sowing?" Well, whatever may be the "harvest" we are certain it will not be anything nearly so harmful as that which results from the closed playgrounds. What this is was clearly shown by Dr. Cyril Burt in his address to the British Association. He declared that one of the chief causes of crime among the young was lack of provision for recreation during the leisure hours. The child requires wholesome outlets for its instinctive energies. The largest number of offences were to be found where there was no opportunity to use playing-fields. If the Doctor is right, then our kill-joys must be held responsible for much of the delinquency that results from their policy of the closed playground on Sunday.

The distinction of being the only Welsh Wesleyan minister who hitherto has associated himself with the Boy Scout movement falls to the Rev. J. Meirion Jones. This gentleman, it appears, fought hard for his country during the war—he had charge of a scout troop at Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancs. Mr. Jones, we are told, is an enthusiast for the Scout movement; he believes it has great possibilities for Christian work among young men and boys. In other words, he sees in Scoutism an excellent opportunity for safeguarding the Christian industry. A man of vision, is Mr. Jones. Viewing with alarm a probable client shortage in the future, he thinks it wise to "Be Prepared." We hope he is discreet enough not to say too much about Christ's teaching that one should turn the other cheek to the aggressor. Otherwise he may experience some difficulty in getting his boys to give Jesus a place in the Scout's gallery of heroes, who are mainly fighting men.

Is the Christian religion too exacting? queries a leader of Methodism. Well, as it doesn't ask of a man that he shall be educated, and as it is quite easily acceptable to any half-wit, the answer to the reverend query is in the negative. For fairness' sake, however, we haste to add that in one sense it certainly is exacting. It requires of the believer that he shall dispense with his reason. And that stipulation is a little too rigorous for the majority of people nowadays to comply with.

The late Prebendary Henry E. Fox, for fifteen years Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, left behind him a nasty materialistic accumulation of £103,308. We hope this follower of the poverty-stricken Nazarene had a good excuse ready when he met St. Peter.

A League of Nations' sub-committee has lately been discussing the proposed reform of a fixed date for Easter. Industrial and scientific organizations have given their approval, but the Roman Church has not yet endorsed the proposal. The League is requested to wait until 1930 when an "Ecumenical" Council of the Church will sit and incidentally discuss the matter. We wonder how the more civilized members of the League like the notion of having to hold back an obviously useful reform while a collection of shaven-top medicine-men solemnly try to discover whether or not there is any biblical, or uncivilized, objection to the reform!

According to a pious contemporary, a "solemn crisis" will shortly arise in the Church of England, in regard to the "Reservation of the Sacrament in the proposed revised Prayer Book." Anglican evangelicals favour the idea of an appeal to Parliament when the measure is introduced; and Free Churchmen have suggested they should support their Anglican friends. The Revised Prayer Book, we learn, is sure to pass the Church Assembly, and so the really serious stage for the book will be its passage through Parliament. This is a dreadful plight for any church to come to with its old age. We wonder what the Lord thinks about the sad fact

that the Prayer Book of his pet institution on earth has to go before a mixed assembly of indifferentists, Jews, Freethinkers, and what not, for approval.

The *Church Times* cites a speaker at the Modernist Conference at Oxford as saying that "Reasonable men found it hard to understand how anyone in his senses could suppose that by eating bread and wine he consumed the body and blood of a deity." We are not so concerned with this particular speaker as with the fact that (1) in an age that calls itself civilized the Christian world is divided as to whether it does or does not gobble the actual flesh and blood of a God or not—a conception that should make decent people physically sick; (2) that for centuries this was the universal belief of Christians; and (3) that this belief is a plain heritage from savages where a man is made into a God and actually eaten by his worshippers in order that they may partake of his nature. Of course, the *Church Times* would say that Christianity had "refined" this idea. But refined or not, there is the fact that the Christian belief is essentially a form of pure cannibalism. And "refined" only means that the Christian religion gave its beliefs another form when the growing decency of mankind made it impossible for it to teach the more brutal and revolting form. And, finally, there is some significance in the quality of primitive Christianity to know that one of the charges against them was that they indulged in the actual practice. This may or may not have been true, religious fanatics have been guilty of stranger things, but it does at least prove the essential nature of the belief.

The *Church Times* also notes that many preachers are finding encouragement in the findings of Psychology that the "number of people whose thinking and conduct are based upon logical and rational processes of the mind are comparatively small." It hardly needs a scientific psychology to prove this. The prevalence of Christianity is enough. And Lucian cheered up the religionists of his day by pointing out that even though a few wise men disbelieved in the Gods, all fools and knaves believed in them still. It is true that Zeus replied that he would sooner have one wise man with him than a thousand fools, but then Zeus was a pagan deity. Christian leaders know better the value of mere numbers.

Seeing is believing, is an old adage, and on that basis we must accept the testimony of a lady writer, Mrs. Irene Hallam Elliott, who advertises a book, *In Converse with Angels*. This lady, says the advertisement, has "seen, and heard, and spoken with angels." Well, if we take that kind of evidence into consideration, many men and women have seen, and spoken, and heard all kinds of queer things. In this case, the lady's vision is backed up by Dr. Horton, the Bishop of Guildford, Bishop Weldon, and other dealers in the ghost-business. Those who want to get into touch with pre-civilized aspects of mental life need not travel far to get what they require. And all these people have votes.

The Catholic Church used to be all-powerful in Mexico. It held the wealth and the learning, and the priests preyed upon the people as well as prayed for them. They were taxed to the utmost, and "Pay or Pray" was the motto affixed to the cross by the priests .....poor peons—and they are vastly in the majority—went clothed in rags that the Church might be benefited. The favourite method was by the sale of indulgences. General Thompson, U.S. Minister to Mexico in 1845, wrote as follows: "As a means of raising money, I would not give the single institution of the Catholic religion (in Mexico) of masses and indulgences for the benefit of the souls of the dead for the power possessed by any government."—Nevin O. Winter, *Mexico and Her People of To-day.*"

**To Correspondents.**

**Q. J. RIORDAN.**—The subscription to the *Freethinker* is 15s. yearly. Pleased you were so interested in Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*. It is a work that is naturally taboo to the ordinary press. It was refused by one of the largest of London's publishers on the ground that it would offend too many of his "patrons." Evidently he did not care to undertake the task of educating them.

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

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.

**Sugar Plums.**

On the back page of this issue will be found an announcement of four volumes of interest to all who care for sound studies in scientific and philosophic subjects. Whatever modifications time and further knowledge may make necessary in the study of psycho-analysis, it remains one of the most important contributions ever made to the study of psychology. The books advertised apply this in all directions, and none can read them without being stimulated and informed. The Pioneer Press has managed to secure a limited number of copies, and they are being cleared at less than half the published price.

Some years ago a well-known Labour leader, who just then was receiving attention at the hands of some well-known Christians, said to us: "I now realize what it is that you Freethinkers have been fighting for so long." Our reply was that if he had studied Christianity instead of preaching it, he would have known what to expect from the outset. Presumably Mr. H. G. Wells has just passed through the same experience. It all happened thuswise. Mr. Hilliare Belloc, who, along with Mr. G. K. Chesterton—thanks to having a number of friends on the press, have managed to pass themselves off on the public as serious thinkers—contributed a series of articles to the Catholic newspaper, *The Universe*, criticizing Mr. Well's *Outlines of History*. Mr. Wells offered to reply to Mr. Belloc's flagrant misrepresentations in the same journal. The editor declined to accept the reply. Then Mr. Wells offered the articles to other papers. Again he was met with a refusal. The Catholic Church has its force well organized, and that it can manage to keep a well-known writer from being heard in the press when he is likely to expose the crass dishonesty of Christian defences, should awaken all who think that we have anything like free speech in this country where Christianity is concerned. We keep on pointing this out, and, in a way, we are pleased to see our warning so well justified.

But Mr. Wells has not been silenced. Under the title of *Mr. Belloc Objects to "The Outlines of History,"* Mr. Wells now issues through Messrs. Watts & Co. (price 1s.), the articles which the newspapers refused a hearing. Mr. Wells has little trouble in exposing Mr.

Belloc's ignorance—real or assumed—of evolution, and his falsification of facts in relation to Christianity. He accuses Mr. Belloc of quibbling, of falsification, of inventing incidents and teachings to enforce his case, and says he is "careless and ignorant as to his facts, slovenly and tricky in his logic." And we think he proves his case. We do not wonder that Christian editors refused the reply. For what it said of Mr. Belloc in defence of the Catholic Church and Catholic teaching particularly, is true of the defenders of Christianity as a whole. We wish we were quite sure that Mr. Wells realized this. At any rate Mr. Belloc receives a thorough trouncing, and he richly deserved it.

Mr. Wells, however, has not yet quite freed himself from the old habits of thought. He refers to the "immense importance and the profound necessity of religion in human society," and to the necessary part played by religion in the transformation of human society. That is reading evolution under the influence of religious apologists instead of reading it in the clear light of science. Religious ceremonies and beliefs have done about as much harm to human society, and have offered as great hindrance to its development as anything with which we are acquainted. Mr. Cohen has discussed this aspect of the subject in his *Grammar of Freethought*, and all that one need say here is that religious beliefs are only of service when they are in line with preservative customs and habits, and these customs and habits are there independently of religion. Where religious beliefs seriously threaten the existence of society they are gradually eliminated, and in the long run the result is to keep religion down below the mark of serious danger. But the persistence of religious beliefs marks one of the most dangerous survivals that threaten social well-being. And to ring the changes on the word religion, to make it mean something that it has not meant in order to preserve the name, is to commit one of the offences of which he accuses Mr. Belloc. One must cleanse one's mind of it altogether if one is to be quite safe.

We are asked to announce that in order to conform with the new regulations re sale of literature in Hyde Park, the *Freethinker* and other Pioneer Press literature can now be purchased on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday evenings, from 8 till 9 o'clock, from Mr. Carter, outside the Non-Political Metropolitan Secular Society's office in Bryanston Street, corner of Edgware Road.

One of our correspondents writes us from France, protesting against the title of "The World's Classics" given to a well-known series of books. He points out that in this list all the authors are British, with the exception of five, and some of these have no genuine pretension to be called great writers when compared with the world's best. We are afraid we must plead guilty to the charge of insularity. It would have been far more correct to have called the series British classics. But we are afraid that a great many Britons really do think that when we have placed on one side the English-speaking world, the balance are chiefly there to afford material for a volume on "Manners and Customs of the People of the World." And, after all, we have the high authority of very eminent representatives of the English Church for believing that Providence did specially select us to guide the rest of the world. And in that they had the hearty support of Mr. Horatio Bottomley, of pious memory.

Once again we remind readers that we are ready to send copies of this journal to selected persons for six weeks on payment of postage—3d. This is a cheap form of propaganda, and leads to many new subscribers.

At very short notice Mr. F. Mann, Secretary of the Glasgow Branch, gave a lecture to the Glasgow Psychic Investigation Centre on "Secularism and a Future Life." The address gave rise to many questions and much discussion.

## The Exodus from Egypt.

### III.

(Concluded from page 571.)

THE brickmakers in this illustration are not Israelites; they are not even Semites. They have the slim build of the native Egyptian workers who were employed on the buildings as well as the captive slaves.

Another example of false suggestion is tucked away in a footnote to page 219, where we are told:—

The well-known scene picturing the arrival of Hebrews in Egypt, which is taken from the tomb of Khnumkotep at Beni Hasan, is generally thought by some to represent the arrival of Abraham in Egypt.....the scene gives us a good idea of what the arrival of the Israelites would look like. It describes the coming of thirty-seven Syrians or Aamu.....Some of them have "coats of many colours".....They are evidently men, women, and children of Hebrew race.....When we read in the inscription that Ibsha brought some valuable eye-unguent to the chief of the land, we are reminded of Jacob's speech to his sons: "Carry down a present to the man" (Gen. xliii. 11).

It is difficult to characterise this statement. For Mr. Jack must know perfectly well, with the knowledge he possesses of the subject, that it represents nothing of the kind. Chilperic Edwards says the discovery was announced as "a representation of the arrival of Joseph's brethren in Egypt." But this is impossible: "The occupant of the tomb was his Excellency Noom-Hotep, governor of the province Sah, in the reign of his glorious majesty Amenemha II., of the twelfth dynasty, who lived about 2800 B.C., five hundred years before the time of Noah, if we are to believe Bishop Usher. The picture represents the arrival of thirty-seven of the Amu; that is, Arabs, in Noom-hotep's province.....The name of the people, their number, and the date of the tomb, render it quite impossible that they could have any connection with Israel."

Mr. Jack points out that some of them are wearing "coats of many colours" as a further proof that they are Hebrews! Now it states in the Bible that Israel loved Joseph more than all his other children and made him a coat of many colours as a sign of his favour, thereby arousing the hatred of his brothers, whose coats were of one colour. (Genesis xxxvii. 3.) Mr. Jack was evidently relying upon the general ignorance of the contents of the Bible, when he cited this as a proof.

We have seen how the generally accepted date for the Exodus had to be abandoned through the discovery of the stele of Merenptah recording his conquest of the Israelites in Palestine. Mr. Jack now attempts to prove that the Exodus occurred during the reign of Amenhotep III., about 1400 B.C.; that is, about 187 years earlier. The reason is that during this reign the hold of Egypt over Palestine was considerably weakened. This is the time during which the celebrated Tel el-Amarna letters were written. A large number of these letters are written to the King of Egypt, from governors, or representatives of the Egyptian Government, imploring military aid against a combined attack of Hittites, Amorites, and other surrounding peoples.

Mr. Jack invites us to see, in this invasion, the first appearance of the Israelites after their Exodus from Egypt. The letters say nothing about any Israelites being among the invaders, but Abdi-Hiba, the Egyptian governor of Jerusalem, refers to the invaders as Habiru; he is the only one who does so. This name is claimed to be the equivalent of the word Hebrew.

To the ordinary uninspired Bible reader, this shifting back of the date of the Exodus only adds more complications and difficulties than there were before. It is true that during this period, the end of the eighteenth dynasty, there was a weakening of the Egyptian hold upon Palestine. But with the commencement of the nineteenth dynasty came two of the most powerful rulers Egypt ever had—Ramesses I. and Seti I. As Prof. Peet, who declares that, "Neither school has the evidence to prove its case, and both may well be wrong,"<sup>2</sup> observes, if the earlier-date school claim that their scheme fits in better with the Biblical chronology,

the Merenptah school reply, "We may do violence to Biblical chronology, which is a thing of very uncertain value. You ask us to believe that the period of the judges covers the years between 1400 and 1000 B.C., and that although Israel was in Canaan all this time yet her records have not preserved a single hint of those numerous campaigns which the great Egyptian conquerors, Seti I., Ramesses II., Merenptah and Ramesses III., carried out in Palestine and Syria during those centuries." (Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, p. 121.)

Seti I., about 1321 B.C.—1300 B.C., soon set about the re-conquest of Egypt's lost colonies, and systematically reduced the countries around to his rule. Among his conquests he mentions Canaan, Migdol, and Kadesh, and other names mentioned in the Bible. "This," says Mr. Jack, "would be about sixty or seventy years after the Habiru (Hebrews) had entered the land."<sup>3</sup> He established a line of fortresses along the coast as far as Gaza. He then led his armies up the coast of Palestine, capturing the towns of the plain of Megiddo. A stele of basalt, engraved by him, was excavated at Beisan in 1923—the ancient Beth-shean of the Bible—recording victories over Syrians, Canaanites, Bedouins, Aperu, and Tuirsha. There is no mention of Israelites; Mr. Jack claims that the 'Aperu represents them, but Edwards says: "Lenormant has shown that the Aperu were an Egyptian tribe mentioned as early as the sixth dynasty (3700 B.C.)"<sup>4</sup> Long before, according to the Bible, the time of Abraham, the reputed founder of the Hebrew nation, and we find them still settled in Egypt, at Heliopolis, in the reign of Ramesses III., long after the time of the Exodus. They are not slaves either; they are described as "Knights, sons of kings, and noble lords of the Aperu, settled people, who dwell in this place."<sup>5</sup> Now the Hebrews had no kings until long after this. Moreover, is it likely that the Egyptians would have permitted any Hebrews to remain in Egypt in this high position, after all the fearful calamities they had brought upon them?

Mr. Jack tries to throw doubt upon these victories, or some of them, of Seti. Mr. Jack himself mentions the Beth-shean stele, and "a tablet of victory," erected by Seti, in the Decapolis, near Lake Tiberias, also a monument at the Lake of Homs, where it is supposed that Kadesh was situated. So there is no doubt of Seti's conquests in Palestine.

Ramesses II., Seti's famous son and successor, led the Egyptian armies to countries they had never entered before. He may be termed the Napoleon of Egypt. Gathering all his forces, by rapid marches he reached Kadesh on the Orontes, where he was met by a powerful army commanded by the King of the Hittites, who tried to deceive Seti with false information. We have pictures of this great battle, showing the configuration of the ground, the posi-

<sup>2</sup> Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Jack, *The Date of the Exodus*, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards, *The Witness of Assyria*, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Monuments*, p. 59.

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, *The Witness of Assyria*, p. 70.

tions of the brigades, and the incidents of the battle. The Hittites delivered a surprise attack, and by a furious charge, throws the Egyptian line into confusion. Ramesses himself was cut off from his soldiers. However, he cut his way back, rallied his troops, called up his reserves, and defeated the Hittites, with tremendous slaughter. The details of the battle of Kadesh, says Mr. Edwards, "are as well known to us as those of Sedan and Waterloo."

Now is it likely that this warrior king would have neglected to call upon the Israelites, if they had been there during his campaign in Palestine? We may say, for the benefit of the curious, that the name of Ramesses II. is engraved upon two sides of "Cleopatra's Needle," and the magnificent marble sarcophagus of Seti can be seen at the Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Marepnah, the successor to Ramesses II., actually did meet the Israelites and defeated them. Yet we find no mention of all these campaigns in the Bible.

Mr. Jack's explanation is that only a small part of Palestine was in the hands of the Israelites; that instead of Palestine being overwhelmed and taken by the Israelites, as recorded in the Bible, is only taken by degrees, "extending doubtless over two or three centuries.....only a small amount of territory was under Israelite control for many ages, and that the Israelites were only a handful in many places in comparison with the Canaanites" (p. 73). He deals similarly with the figures of the Exodus, of which he observes: "Instead of the vast multitude, which has always been a difficulty, we need not suppose on this theory that more than six thousand people were involved." Was it worth all this labour and wangling to produce this poor mouse?

Mr. Jack claims that the higher criticism of the Bible bears out this claim. The Bible appears to be something like a conjurer's hat—full of things undreamed of. If the tales of the *Arabian Nights* had been written at that time, and incorporated in the Bible, I have not the least doubt that Mr. Jack would have been able to produce an equally learned work to substantiate them by the ancient monuments. We greatly regret to see such time, labour, and erudition wasted in this shovelling of sand.

W. MANN.

### Bernard Shaw, the Catholics, and Penal Reform.

MR. BERNARD SHAW'S "Preface" to Mr. and Mrs. Webb's book on *English Prisons* contains some of the most poignantly serious opinions ever uttered by that exceedingly capable author. It is inconceivable that Shaw's studied indignation against our senselessly savage penal system, backed as it is by irresistible arguments, would be dismissed in a sentence by serious students.

This must be my introduction to a review of the seventeenth issue of the *Catholic Social Year Book*, published at the Catholic Social Guild, Oxford. In some respects it is an admirable treatise on "The Community and the Criminal." It is, I think, in every way superior to the C.O.P.E.C. Report on the Treatment of Crime—the Church of England volume which I recently referred to in these columns. The Catholic "Annual" is, as one would expect, more dogmatic, but it has an excellent summary of Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise's rather chaotic volume on *The English Prison System*. It describes the Borstal system and has a short chapter on Preventive

Detention. Chapter IV. is a most attractively written description of "A Day in a Prison Priest's Life." It has a host of information interesting chiefly to Catholics, in addition to an inadequate but quite useful "Bibliography."

Here are two comments from the "Bibliography":—

George Ives, *History of Penal Methods*. The standpoint of the author is far removed from that of Catholics. The book, however, contains much information on points of fact.

Webb's *English Prisons*. Mr. Bernard Shaw's Preface must not be taken seriously.

One must acknowledge the fairness of the reference to Mr. Ives's book, a reference all Freethinkers will be glad to note. But what can one think about the "Shaw" criticism? I have quoted the whole of the reference to Webb's magnificent work! What did Shaw say, to account for this Catholic show of temper?

Shaw's Preface cuts like a knife into the basis of Catholic teaching about crime and the criminal. He refers to the "Catholic Church which insists literally on absolute obedience to the (Sixth) Commandment and condemns as murder even the killing of an unborn child to save the mother's life." The *Year Book* no doubt wishes Shaw's references to the Inquisition "not to be taken seriously." "Threats of hell after death" as a deterrent, no doubt, is another thing to treat as a joke, but Shaw was never in more serious mood. "We must get out of the habit of painting human character in soot and whitewash," is Shaw's answer to the "sinner and saint" view of life. Shaw quotes with approval H. G. Wells's statement that our Statute Book dates its fundamental items from the Mosaic period, when modern Capitalism, involving a totally new morality, was unknown. Mr. Shaw commits the unpardonable crime of mentioning Mr. Foote (by a printer's error called Mr. G. V. Foote), the Blasphemy Laws, and a host of other things never to be found in orthodox books and newspapers. All these hurt the Catholic, but probably the real ground of Shaw's condemnation is the basic philosophy of the whole preface: Shaw attacks "the pseudo God-Almighty," who imagines that human beings can be aborted into what the "philanthropist" calls a Model Citizen. "Child-training (or rather taming) as we practise it produces moral imbecility"....."And what is at the bottom of it all? Just the belief that virtue is something to be imposed on us from without, like the tricks taught to a performing animal by the whip. Such manufactured virtue has no ethical value whatever."

It is interesting to study the contrast which this sound sanity offers to the equally "serious" views of Rev. Francis Day, the R.C. Chaplain at Brixton Prison, who is responsible for the *Catholic Social Year Book*, 1926. He cannot oppose the "retribution" which modern reformers are fighting, because "clearly the most perfect instance of the right and power of retributive punishment is seen in that inflicted by Almighty God Himself, whether in the world, in purgatory, or in hell." Throughout the book there is constant emphasis on "the necessary place of religion in penal discipline." Just as Christians have determined to strain every effort to keep religion in the schools, we see here the strenuous steps taken and contemplated to prevent religion being separated from prison treatment. It pleads for Catholic priests, doctors and lawyers to come forward, not in order to strengthen any of the existing reform societies, but to endeavour to obtain the international organization of Catholics to meet at the same time and town as the International

\* Edwards, *The Witness of Assyria*, p. 75.

Prisons Congress, entirely in the interests of Catholicism. Catholic delegates attending the Congresses would be more completely than ever under the direction of an outside body with an axe to grind.

Catholics are warned in this pamphlet that they dare not oppose Capital Punishment as an institution. "It is clearly the teaching of Holy Scripture" ..... "the continuous tradition of the Church is in the same sense."

There is an instructive statement of how Catholic prisoners are served by friendly priests. No Free-thinker begrudges this help, which must mean a very great deal in sympathy and human kindness, apart altogether from its sacerdotal significance. But it is a ghastly reflection on our citizenship that a prisoner can only obtain this friendliness by professing one or other of the Christian creeds.

Apart from the mere exchange of conversation with somebody who is not a warder, which, in itself, is a much appreciated privilege, a prisoner can obtain special books and other benefits through a friendly chaplain. The mere break in prison monotony represented by a visit to the chapel is something. But Father Day reminds us of the wholly admirable work done by priests "with proper authority," in connection with a prisoner's family and other affairs. He gives instances which, while reflecting the highest credit on the priests' humanity, cannot fail to elicit both envy and indignation on behalf of prisoners who have no religious or sectarian claims on equally needed services.

As to the chapel, its appointments, ornaments, pictures, etc., Father Day admits that "all necessities are provided by the Government."

An Appendix gives addresses of six Catholic organizations, hostels, etc., for aiding discharged prisoners, finding them employment, etc. These sectarian societies receive monetary grants from the Government "equivalent to one-half the amount of local subscriptions," and the Government stipulate that the prison priest shall be an *ex-officio* member of these Prisoners' Aid Committees. "Thus, so to speak," says Father Day, "ten shillings may be made into a pound, and the prisoner has the advantage of being brought under the influence of his own Faith."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## Ladies' Dress in Ancient Jewry.

As might have been expected, it was after the establishment of a court that female elegance attained its just proportions among the Chosen People. Saul, a very handsome fellow, of truly royal disposition, put his ladies into scarlet and gold. David introduced the fashion of a gay frock of many colours for his maiden offspring. As to Solomon, if, as is probable, his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter is the one splendidly portrayed in the 45th Psalm, his bride, attended by princesses, and having at her right hand "the queen" (probably her mother) "in gold of Ophir," wore a ceremonial robe "inwrought with gold"; and was brought to the nuptial couch in garments of "broidered work." To our great loss "the pencil of the Hoy Ghost" has not "laboured to describe" the toilets worn by the Queen of Sheba during her famous visit to King Solomon. But the grandeur of that monarch's court is finely suggested by the intimation that "he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines" (1 K. ii. 2). Long after Solomon's kingdom of Israel had been divided, soon after his death, into the rival states of Judah and Samaria, there was a prophet

who had a singular antipathy to the belles of Jerusalem, the ancient capital of Israel and the existing capital of Judah. He solemnly declares that because these ladies walk with outstretched necks, "mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet," the Almighty will put "a scab" upon their heads, and show them a most signal mark of his disesteem. Moreover, he adds, that upon this day of wrath, the divine hand will remove

the bravery of their anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the mufflers; the headtires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the rings, and the nose jewels; the festival robes, and the mantles, and the shawls, and the satchels; the hand mirrors, and the fine linen, and the turbans and the veils (*Is. iii. 16-24*).

This is, indeed a precious inventory of the *tra-al-lahs* in vogue among the Jewish ladies of that day. What a superb collection! How modern the "satchels" and the "hand mirrors"; and how suggestive their juxtaposition on the list. The only dissonant note is supplied by the "mufflers." It is unimaginable that such graceful and tasteful charmers would don the coarse habiliment of that name which is now associated with night watchmen and rude toilers of the deep. From the word he uses in his Latin translation, Beza appears to have taken the original term as meaning neckerchiefs of gold filigree. He was of gentle blood and French descent. The tinkling, which got so badly on the nerves of the prophet, and which, according to him, the ladies made with their feet, was due to the shaking of bangles and chains worn over the ankles. As far as I know, this is the only passage in the Old Testament which blames feminine adornment irrespective of age or other circumstances. The prophet must have been a crank. Indeed, he himself appears to have worn nothing but a sort of kilt; and even this he discarded for three whole years, going about freely in the city all the time, doubtless much to the entertainment of the tinkling belles.

Jeremiah, a seer of later date, whom the present Dean of St. Paul's is said to resemble, took milder views than his predecessor with regard to the conduct of ladies in the matter of dress. He simply disapproves of elderly ones assuming the garb proper to their daughters and granddaughters and employing aids to beauty at too late a period. He says:—

When thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do?  
Though thou clothest thyself with ornaments of gold,  
though thou enlargest thy eyes with paint,  
in vain dost thou make thyself fair thy lovers despise thee (*iv. 30*).

After the kingdom of Judah became tributary to the Babylonian Empire, Jehoiachin, a youth of eighteen years who had reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, was, together with the pick of his people, removed thence to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar for insurrection. Among those transported was a priest named Ezekiel, who appears to have been quite contented with his exile, and very polite to his new master. He did his best to keep his fellow captives in tranquillity, and to deter their friends at home from risking any movement of rebellion. It was, he affirmed, the indifference of his people to the practices of their church that had brought them into captivity. The Babylonians, according to him, were only the passive instruments of divine wrath. Ezekiel, as becomes one of his profession, displays a profound knowledge of the fair sex, particularly of its frailer members. His elaborate parable of the two sisters, Aholah and Aholibah, who typify Samaria and Jerusalem, sorely taxed the discretion of our translators even at the time of the old dramatists, when pudicity was much less in vogue

than it is at present. Like the abbés of the Grand Age, he was evidently a connoisseur in female attire, and found it quite agreeable to the designs of Providence that lovely creatures should have lovely adornments. This gallant disposition is proved and exemplified by a remarkable passage in his book. Then the Lord reminds Jerusalem how he had found her cast out in filth and blood on the day of her nativity; how he had washed and anointed her; and how he had brought her up till she became his own. Then he goes on to say :—

I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with seal skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel upon thy nose, and earrings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thou wast decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work (xvi. 10-13).

The only reproach that he makes her is, that of using his gifts for the delectation of her paramours, the false gods who had seduced her from his bed.

In later times we find two Hebrew ladies, Esther and Judith, rendering signal services to their people by the aid of charms which art had skilfully increased. Of Esther it is said in the Greek text, that, having resolved to venture a request to her lord and master, King Artaxerxes, she "put on her glorious apparel, and being gloriously adorned.....she took two maids with her: and upon the one she leaned, as carrying herself daintily; and the other followed, bearing up her train." On reaching the throne where he sat in severe and terrible majesty, she "fell down, and was pale, and fainted, and bowed herself upon the hand of the maid that went before her." This worked like oil on troubled waters, for the king immediately "leaped from his throne, and took her in his arms, till she came to herself again, and comforted her with loving words."

As to Judith, when a warrior named Holofernes, attended by his army, was inconveniencing Bethulia, her place of residence, she determined to end the nuisance; and took the following measures in pursuit of her design :—

She washed herself all over with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment, and braided the hair of her head, and put a tire upon it, and put on her garments of gladness.....And she took sandals upon her feet, and put about her her bracelets, and her chains, and her rings, and her earrings, and all her ornaments, and decked herself bravely, to allure the eyes of all men that should see her.

Then she set out for the tent of Holofernes in company with a maid and an escort of one hundred armed men. As she passed through the ranks of the enemy "they wondered at her beauty," and conducted her with joy to the tent of their leader. "Holofernes," it is said, "took great delight in her, and drank much more wine than he had drunk at any time since he was born." This caused him to lose his head; for Judith cut it off and took it away in a sack.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

The sensibility of a nation is indicated by the fineness of its customs: its courage, continence, and self-respect by its persistence to them.—*Ruskin.*

Liberty of speech inviteth and provoketh liberty to be used again, and so bringeth much to a man's knowledge.—*Bacon.*

## The Making of the Gospels.

ACCORDING to the orthodox or traditional view of the Gospels, the Jesus portrayed in those books is a strictly historical personage, who said and did everything therein recorded of him, and much more which has not been recorded—an omission for which we ought to be truly thankful. The statements which we hear continually advanced in support of the authenticity and credibility of the Gospel narratives may be briefly summarised as follows :—

1. That the four Gospels are authentic apostolic writings composed by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, two of whom (Matthew and John) were apostles and witnesses of all they record; while, of the other two, Mark was a companion of Peter, and Luke one of the fellow-labourers of Paul.

2. That in the four Gospels we have four independent accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus; the First Gospel recording the events and circumstances witnessed by the disciple Matthew, the Second and Third Gospels representing respectively the substance of the preaching of Peter and Paul, and the Fourth Gospel being written by the disciple John to supplement the other three.

3. That these four Gospels were written under the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost, which informed and directed the writers, and kept them free from error; so that the accounts contained in those books are perfectly trustworthy and true in every particular.

These extravagant views are still held and taught by a large number of Christian teachers and preachers, and are implicitly believed by the majority of church and chapel-goers. Only a small minority of Biblical scholars have completely given them up, and of these but a comparative few have the honesty or courage to admit that the old orthodox position is no longer tenable. The Christian advocates and apologists who still hold and believe the foregoing unwarrantable statements, when pressed for corroborative evidence, have nothing better to offer than the following so-called "testimonies": (1) The existence of ancient MSS. of the Gospels; (2) the internal evidence of authenticity and credibility contained in the narratives themselves; (3) the testimony of ancient Christian writers called "Fathers"; and (4) the evidence derived from recent discoveries. When, however, we come to examine these wonderful "testimonies" we find that they furnish no proofs whatever. There are no manuscripts extant of an earlier date than the fourth or fifth century; the Gospels contain no internal evidence of the truth of the narratives; we have not the testimony of a single ancient writer which proves the existence of the four canonical Gospels within a hundred years of the traditional date of the alleged crucifixion; nothing recently discovered proves the Gospels to have originated in the first century. Furthermore, an examination of both the internal and the external or historical evidence relating to the Gospels yield abundant proof of the fictitious character of the narratives. From these sources we learn that the Gospels were not written in apostolic times; that the first three (the Synoptics) are not independent accounts, but are compilations made from more ancient Christian writings, whose authors (or concoctors) are unknown. In short, we find that the events recorded in all four Gospels are nothing but baseless legends, collected and written during the first half of the second century.

The Rev. J. J. Scott, late Canon of Manchester, tells us in the plainest language possible that "Scholars are now of opinion that the likeness between the Synoptic Gospels is due to the fact that

St. Matthew and St. Luke wrote with St. Mark's Gospel before them, and embodied in their Gospels such portions of St. Mark's Gospel as they deemed suitable for the purpose." Also, that the portions of the First and Third Gospels which were not copied from Mark's Gospel were derived from some unknown pre-existing writings: "Generally it is believed that St. Matthew and St. Luke made use of a Gospel or fragment of a Gospel that is now lost." So much for the Gospels being independent histories or accounts written by eye-witnesses.

The traditional view is thus seen to be a mere theory which may, without the slightest hesitation, be set aside as erroneous, there being no evidence of any kind to support it, but a great deal that may be adduced to prove it both untenable and ridiculous. Anyone is therefore free to propound a new theory which may accord better with all the evidence we possess, and this I propose to do in the present series of papers. Of course, if any reader can show that my presentiment of the Gospel "history" is at variance with proved facts, he is at liberty to do so. I am always glad to be set right upon matters I may have misconstrued or overlooked.

Before coming to the thesis to be propounded, it will be necessary first to consider what portions of the New Testament (if any) may reasonably be accepted as evidence relating to an historical Jesus or the early Christian Church. Well, foremost among the writings mentioned are the Epistles ascribed to Paul, the authenticity of some of which—say, the first four—is admitted by nearly all critics. We may, I think, take those which Renan classifies as "Incontestable" and "Undoubted," as in all probability authentic, notwithstanding their rejection by Van Manen. Whether the writer's name was Paul or not, does not matter in the least; nor is it of much consequence whether the letters were addressed to the churches to whom they were attributed. It is sufficient that the Epistles referred to bear internal evidence of having been composed by a popular Christian teacher who lived and wrote before the Gospel stories and legends had come into circulation. It is, in fact, now admitted by all Biblical critics that the four canonical Gospels were not composed until after the time of the writer of the Pauline Epistles—a fact which enables us to see how much (or how little) of the Gospel "history" that writer was acquainted with. The authentic Epistles are: (Incontestable) Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Romans; (Undoubted) 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and Philippians. In receiving these (or some of them) as genuine, we have at the same time to reject all manifest interpolations, of which 2 Cor. xi. 32-33 may be cited as an example.

One other book in the New Testament may be accepted as probably authentic. This is the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse, which was composed in the last quarter of the first century—and before the appearance of the Gospels. We may, furthermore, obtain some kind of evidence from some of the other New Testament books, but not of a strictly historical character. Thus, though the "history" recorded in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles is undoubtedly fictitious—that is, as regards the sayings and doings attributed to Jesus and the apostles—these books contain evidence of what was believed, at the time those books were written, of the supposed observances of the primitive Jewish Christians. This may not be apparent to many at first sight, but the fact is beyond all doubt. We have, then, to see what historical facts (if any) are derivable from the two sources named. This done, we shall have a clearer idea of the circumstances connected with the making of the Gospels.

ABRACADABRA.

### Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission.

We were rained off at Bolton on one evening, so we had to be content with six meetings, all of which passed off successfully. On the Sunday afternoon, I spoke in Stevenson Square, Manchester, to enable a local lay preacher to reply to my attack. He was allowed half an hour, and his speech enabled me to rub in our own point of view to the delight of a good-sized crowd. Stevenson Square should be systematically worked every week, for there is obviously a good amount of sympathy with Secularism which ought to be organized in the Society. The Ashton members are very willing and my special thanks are due to Mr. Owen Connelly, who is always eager to help. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, September 16-18, I shall speak on the Town Hall Steps, Bolton, on Sunday, September 19, at 3 p.m., and 7 p.m. on Blackburn Market, and for a week commencing Monday, September 20, at Chapel Street, Nelson.

G. WHITEHEAD.

### 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.—INDOOR.

**SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY** (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "What I saw in Bavaria."

#### OUTDOOR.

**BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.** (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

**NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY** (Hyde Park): Every Tuesday and Thursday at 7.30; Sunday at 11, 3.30, and 6.30; Lecturers—Messrs. Hart, Howell Smith, B.A., Hyatt, Botting, and Saphin.

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

**SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.** (Brockwell Park): 3 and 6, Mr. A. D. McLaren will lecture.

**WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.** (outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. J. Hart, a Lecture.

#### COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

**GLASGOW** (Bakunin House, 13 Burnbank Gardens, Glasgow): Thursday, September 23, at 8, Mr. Guy A. Aldred, "The Greek Atheists."

**LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S.** (19 Lowerhead Row): 2.45, Important Business. Will all members and those interested make a special effort to attend?

#### OUTDOOR.

**GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY** (Branch of the N.S.S.)—Ramble to Crookston Castle. Meet at Crookston Toll at 12 noon. (Via Green (Paisley) car "22 B" to Crookston Toll. Join car at Glasgow Cross, Jamaica Street, or Paisley Road Toll.)

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