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Views and Opinions.

Women and the Churches.

The other day Dean Inge informed a meeting of ladies that he considered some women were as qualified to sit on the episcopal bench as many bishops. That might have meant that woman were better or bishops were worse than many thought. For our part the degree of mental excellence achieved by the average bishop is such that "some women" would be well justified in calling upon the Dean for a public apology. For if that is all that the best of women are capable of they ought to be deprived of the vote at once. Take, as an illustration, the present incumbent of the see of the capital of the British Empire. When (about thirty-five years ago) we first came into personal contact with the Bishop of London, we were fascinated by his invincible and kaleidoscopic foolishness. Of course he could not avoid occasionally saying something sensible, but he usually saved his reputation by having a silly reason for doing so. And a few days ago the *Daily Express* published the following confession of faith from him, "I thoroughly believe in the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and all the miracles." Nearly anyone else would have been satisfied with the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. But not the Bishop of London. In case he may have overlooked a single absurdity he romps in with that magnificently comprehensive "All the miracles." All of them! He questions nothing. He swallows all. It is superb! That "all the miracles" is a gem. Bishop Ingram's appetite for the ridiculous grows with advancing years. We suspect his daily prayer to be, not "Oh Lord, help thou my unbelief," but "Oh Lord, give me a little more to believe." And Dean Inge says that women are qualified to be bishops. He should apologise at once.

* * *

Women in the Bible.

But women are not bishops; they are not likely to be allowed to be bishops, and Dean Inge belongs

to a Church that will not permit a woman to occupy the pulpit. This is not the case with his church only; it is the case with the Christian churches as a whole. Only the other day the Methodist Conference once again rejected the proposal to permit women to officiate in the pulpit. Why should they have acted otherwise. When Jesus selected his disciples he picked out no woman. He did permit women to minister to his needs and to bathe his feet, and few parsons or priests have departed from that example. But women were not endowed with the power to do mighty works "in my name," a woman was not allowed to touch him after the resurrection, although there was no objection to a man doing so. And Paul's dictum concerning woman was far more emphatic and precise than that of Jesus. Their place was the home, where they were to yield the same unquestioning obedience to their husbands as they gave to Christ. They were to keep silence in the churches, and the Christian Churches have, to do them justice, always been faithful to that teaching. They have talked of the dignity and the power of woman, they have also talked of the benefits conferred by Christianity upon women, while robbing them of the freedom, independence, and dignity which the more liberal laws of the later Roman Empire gave them. But the greatest of the Christian leaders were quite convinced of the need for the subjection of woman, however much they differed on other things. They would have quite endorsed the opinion of John Knox that to place a woman in any position of authority over man is "repugnant to nature, contemptible to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance," or Luther's opinion that to breed children, to attend to the house, and to obey her husband in all things sums up the whole duty of woman.

* * *

Stepping Backward.

The story of woman under Christianity has been often enough told, and we have set it out at some length in our *Woman and Christianity*, to which we must refer the interested for fuller treatment. The question now is: "Why should there be with Christianity this persistence of the teaching that woman is the inferior being, and must be so carefully excluded from the principal ministrations in the sphere of religion?" To say it is because Christianity is based upon the Bible and the New Testament, and that both adopt this attitude with regard to woman, does not take us very far after all. The question of the reason for this still remains, and we are merely shifting the ground of enquiry from Christianity as an organized religion to the Bible. But the problem of why the Bible teaches the subordination of woman still remains for solution. To read the Bible as the ordinary Chris-

tian does will not help. For, thanks to the influence of inherited teaching, forced interpretations, and misleading translations the Christian is the last person in the world to understand the Bible. The volumes of expositions of the Bible written by clerical commentators are not explanations at all. They are either ignorant or dishonest attempts to make the Bible mean something that it never did mean and never could mean. There is only proper commentary on the Bible, and this is found in the beliefs of savages to the culture stage of whom the Bible is properly related. For Christianity was essentially a reversion to a lower type of mind and belief, and it is in understanding this that we find the true explanation of the attitude taken up by the Christian Church with regard to women.

* * *

Is Woman Inferior?

The greatest obstacle to the social and legal equality of woman during the past two thousand years has been Christianity. The greatest obstacle that woman has had to fight through all history has been religion—although this last may be said of men also. And it is all, fundamentally, a question of mistaken notions concerning the nature of woman, and of the "taboo" to which these ideas gave rise. And the first step to the understanding of this is to get rid of the misleading notion that woman's position in the social group is determined by the fact of relative physical weakness. That explanation belongs to the same class as the explanation of primitive cannibalism as due to the economic necessity of primitive peoples who were driven to dine upon others when their food supply fell short. Cannibalism commences in religious belief, always and everywhere. We must also set on one side explanations in terms of "inferiority" and "superiority." These are derived from comparatively late ideas, not original ones. There is very little evidence that among primitive peoples women are looked upon as inferior to men. Among savages women are not so much better or worse than men as they are different from them. Superiority and inferiority are terms, so far as the relations of men and women are concerned, that belong to civilized times, and have been made sacred through the influence of Christianity. More than any other religion, Christian teachings abound in the doctrine of the moral and the religious inferiority of women, and they have, thanks to the power of the church, reacted disastrously on her social status. It makes one think of the zoological generalization that man is about the only male who ill-uses the female of his kind, and Byron's satirical comment that "Man is a rational being—and must get drunk."

* * *

A Question of Taboo.

There is agreement among scientists that many of the physical disorders from which man suffers is due to his forsaking the ancestral habit of walking on four legs and taking to progression by means of two only. The result was well worth the cost, but the fact remains. In like manner there can be little doubt that the price man has paid, and still pays, for the development of reasoning power is the growth of all sorts of superstitions and false ideas. One of these products of early thinking is the "taboo," a Polynesian word, meaning something set aside, or "holy," or religiously "unclean." The corresponding word amongst the Latins was "sacer," from which we have the words sacerdotal and sacred, again with the implication of something set aside with which the ordinary man must not dabble, or which it is dangerous to touch. "Unclean," it should also be remembered, has no hygienic significance whatever.

"Unclean" things are not avoided as articles of food because they are unhealthy, but solely because they are sacred to the Gods, reserved for the Gods, or have about them something of a "spiritual" power derived from their association with the Gods. The taboo may cover articles, animals, human beings, paths, anything and everything. Again, we see this in the "sacred" person of the priest, whom it is specially dangerous to touch, and lingering on in the so-called benefit of the clergy, and even in the special privileges reserved for the modern priestly class. It is seen also in the semi-sacred person of the King, who is developed from the primitive priest, and it lingers on with the court ceremonials, and the special ways of approaching the royal presence. Originally these are precautions that must be taken by the layman as a measure of self-protection. The modern priesthood and the modern court are, indeed, happy hunting grounds for the informed anthropologist who is able to see primitive superstitions peeping through their modern disguises. The taboo is the most powerful and the most universal of all primitive institutions. The mere consciousness of having broken a taboo has been known to have frightened a person to death, and the courage required in even these days, for perhaps the majority of people, to break a taboo is easily observable. With primitive mankind, surrounded on all sides by ghostly forces, each acting in a more or less arbitrary and irresponsible manner, the power of the "taboo" is very much greater. And it is in the taboo associated with the nature and functions of woman that we find the reason for the primitive treatment of women, and the reversion of early Christianity to the more primitive view, while its perpetuation by the Christian Church, gives us the principal cause of the view that has prevailed concerning women during the past two thousand years of European history.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Concluded.)

"The Faith of the Gospel."

THE Very Rev. A. E. Burn, D.D., Dean of Salisbury, recently preached in St. Paul's, Buckingham Palace Road, on the occasion of the sixty-second anniversary of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, and chose as his subject, "The Faith of the Gospel." The sermon was published in the *Church Times* of October 22, and is distinguished by its calm, unquestioned acceptance of the most orthodox Christology. The Dean regards the Four Gospels as entirely historical, and yet he asserts that it was Luke's "endeavour to supplement and improve on the work of others." "We thank God," he says, "for his Gospel of the Infancy, for the sympathy which brought him from his friend in the confidence of the Blessed Virgin the priceless details which he alone supplies about Bethlehem and Nazareth." Evidently this twentieth century Dean vouches for the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, an anti-natural, impossible event. A virgin, of course, has never given birth to a child. The credulity of Christians is illimitable, a fact which adequately accounts for the smallness of their number. The Dean's capacity for belief is simply amazing. Not only does he take the Gospels as purely historical documents, but he goes much further and sets his seal to the dogma that Jesus Christ was a Divine Being tabernacling in human flesh, and that as such he still lives and reigns. "Thus," he says, "the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. The verdict of the best informed criticism justifies the Catholic faith of the first age." The Dean's "best informed criticism" is certainly not

the criticism of ripe and impartial scholars, not even the criticism endorsed by many Liberal theologians, such as Professor Bacon, of Yale University, or Professor James Moffatt, which admits that much legendary matter is contained in the Gospels, and that it is often difficult to determine how much of their contents is historical and how much legendary. In our estimation, of course, the Gospel Jesus never existed at all, which implies that the Gospels are in no sense whatever biographical. Quoting Mr. Selwyn the Dean proceeds:—

What has been found is that each Gospel, and, indeed, each Gospel source, by itself is something more than a biography. It is the proclamation of a Faith and a Life to be believed and lived now. Each is fragmentary, in the sense that its outward limits are narrow and defined.....The Christ portrayed here is not the Carpenter's son, but the man of sorrows, the lion of Judah, the Judge of the world, and only Faith can see him. His biography is still being written not in print, but on the fleshy tables of the heart, in the history of the Church, and its Author is the Holy Spirit of God.

That may be good theology, but it is not even based on criticism. As a matter of fact, many theologians do not trouble their heads about critical questions. They are bibliolaters, with a vengeance. We once heard a London Baptist minister exclaim from the pulpit: "I believe that every word in this Holy Book came from God. Yes, from Genesis to Revelation the Bible is the inerrant Word of God."

To Dean Burn the adjective "holy" is of unspeakable value. He never gets tired of using it. Take the following sample:—

The Faith of the Gospel is enshrined for us in the Holy Gospels and in what we may call a Fifth Gospel, the Gospel which St. Paul preached, as learnt by him from the Apostles and others, its source partly the same and partly other than those which lie behind the canonical Gospels. But the light which shines, as it were, through the five facets of this precious jewel of our Faith is one. And it is focused for us in the holy faith of the one hundred and fifty holy fathers of Constantinople, in which they enshrined the central teaching of the Faith of the holy Fathers of Nicæa.

It would never occur to readers of Dean Stanley's *Eastern Church* to call the delegates to the Nicene Council holy. The majority of them were the very opposite of holy. They were constantly quarrelling with one another. On his arrival to preside at the meetings the Emperor found numerous letters from the assembled bishops in which they accused one another of all sorts of horrible crimes; and at the very first session "the flood-gates of debate were opened wide; and from side to side recriminations and accusations were bandied to and fro, without regard to the imperial presence." Later on, so heartily did they hate one another that they actually came to fisticuffs. Yes, the Council chamber was often the scene of a veritable pandemonium. Perfect agreement among them on any point would have been a perfect and most memorable miracle. Is it in ignorance or in defiance of this regrettable fact that Dean Burn calls those Church fathers holy? Or is he merely employing the adjective irresponsibly?

Take the following passage:—

The three centuries which had passed since St. Paul's martyrdom had witnessed the growth of the Catholic Church despite dire persecution. It had survived many perils, not least the peril of false teaching. But the iniquity of error lies always rather in the moral sphere than the intellectual, not in the question which an awakening human mind must ask in every generation: How can the Lord Jesus be both God and Man? It lies rather in the self-assertion which the pride of the human heart thrusts

into the demand for a new Gospel better suited to the needs of a new age. Arianism has been rightly called "an illogical compromise between faith and reason," although Arius prided himself on his logic. In reply, the central thought of the Nicene Creed was the confession of the only begotten Son of God, of one being with the Father.

To us the Nicene Creed is a wholly worthless product of a long, angry, and utterly worthless controversy. The doctrine of the Trinity is a metaphysical invention, treating of the essence and relations to one another of three purely imaginary beings. In the City Temple, in Dr. Parker's time, Henry Ward Beecher, at the close of an eloquent discourse, allowed himself to be catechised by members of the congregation. Many questions were asked and answered, and among them were some relative to the Trinity. The greatest American preacher of his day asserted that he believed in the Trinity, but confessed that he had no idea at all as to how the three persons got on together. The truth is that neither Beecher nor Parker possessed any knowledge whatever of a supernatural being called God, to say nothing of his existing in one or three persons, God being merely an object of belief, and not at all of knowledge. This statement is so frequently made in these columns that there is no need to dwell on it now.

We have seen that the Faith of the Gospel has almost always been a subject of bitter controversy in the Church. There has never been unanimity of opinion as to its nature and contents. Athanasius and Arius differed widely in their respective conceptions of it, and their descendants are with us to-day, differing as widely if not as bitterly as they did. Dean Furr is doubtless an Athanasian, though by no means a despiser of Arianism, and he ends his sermon on a purely devotional note. He thinks of Christ "who in the humble home of Nazareth and the carpenter's shop, manifested the beauty of a consecrated human life and the dignity of labour, who in the crowded months of prophetic ministry spoke home to the consciences of men, reigned from the Cross, died as the sacrifice for the sins of the world, rose again, and now liveth to offer that Sacrifice, Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest." Such is the Gospel which has been preached with more or less fidelity for nigh two thousand years; and with what practical result? The answer to that question is, from a religious point of view, distressingly sad and disappointing. The Gospel has proved the completest failure the world has ever seen. This is frankly admitted even by some Anglican bishops, and the reality of the failure is a source of great comfort and encouragement to Freethought advocates. But why has Christianity proved of absolutely no value in the history of the world? Simply because it lacks truth in the inward parts. Like God, Christ is a myth, and his Church is the most fraudulent institution in all history. Not only has the Church failed to redeem mankind, but it has also been a hindrance, an obstacle in the path of natural progress. Its doctrine of otherworldliness has led countless multitudes to neglect by denying their obligations and privileges as citizens of this world, an imaginary heaven driving real earth out of account.

J. T. LLOYD.

Socrates, indeed, when he was asked of what country he called himself, said, "Of the world"; for he considered himself an inhabitant and a citizen of the whole world.—*Cicero*.

Strive with just veneration for the future, first to do what is worthy to be spoken, and then to speak it faithfully.—*Ruskin*.

Bennett's Bubble.

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what people think.—*Emerson*.

In the smallest and greatest things a man should know and bear in mind his own measure.—*Juvenal*.

MANY years ago the reading public was startled by the appearance of a number of small books, which were dictatorial and interesting, two features not often found in common. One told a public, inclined to loaf and invite its soul, how to live twenty-four hours a day. Another informed a more limited audience how to discriminate between the literary works of William Shakespeare and the highly-coloured romances of Hall Caine; whilst a third gave advice to Mr. and Mrs. Everyman, telling them how to avoid the Divorce Court. Other booklets dealt with mental efficiency, the human machine, taste in books, and other stimulating subjects, and excellent reading they were. The author was Mr. Arnold Bennett, now one of the most distinguished of modern writers, and known wherever the English language is read.

During the past quarter of a century Mr. Bennett has written many novels and plays which have made his name one to conjure with in literary circles, and also secured him a vast reading audience on both sides of the Atlantic. This is the more remarkable because Mr. Bennett is so different from most other novelists. Sanity is the great virtue of all his writings; whilst so many of his contemporaries express themselves with a verbosity fatal to clarity. It is impossible to read carefully Mr. Bennett's works without noting the absence of caprice and eccentricity. In *The Old Wives' Tale*, one of his early novels, he deals with elemental emotion in a truly masterly fashion. Here is his picture of a woman seeing her husband lying dead before her:—

Sophia then experienced a pure and primitive emotion. She was not sorry that Gerald had wasted his life. What affected her was that he had once been young, and that he had grown old, and was now dead. That was all. Youth and vigour always came to that. Everything came to that. By the corner of her eye reflected in the mirror of a wardrobe near the bed she glimpsed a tall, forlorn woman, who had once been young and was now old. He and she had once loved and burned and quarrelled in the glittering and scornful pride of youth. But time had worn them out. "Yet a little while," she thought, "and I shall be lying on a bed like that. And what shall I have lived for? What is the meaning of it?" The riddle of life itself was killing her, and she seemed to drown in a sea of inexpressible sorrow.

This is fine writing, and as far above the verbiage of the idols of the circulating libraries as Helvellyn is above Highgate Hill. It is exhilarating. As the countryman said of the liqueur, "I'd like some of that in a mug."

Flaubert is one of Mr. Bennett's literary favourites, and from the great French writer he derives his dislike of verbiage and his fondness for the right word in the right place. Fortunately, Arnold Bennett is very keenly interested in contemporary life, the normal, unexciting routine of existence, and he has never yielded to the lure of mixing political propaganda with his art, a weakness shared by two such widely different artists as Bernard Shaw and Rudyard Kipling. On religion, a subject on which Shaw has been almost as expansive and emotional as Dean Inge, Arnold Bennett has been very reticent. Only recently has he unburdened himself, and his confession of faith, or want of faith, is worth recording. "I do not believe," he writes, "and never have at any time believed, in the divinity of Christ, the

Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, heaven, hell, the immortality of the soul, the divine inspiration of the Bible. These denials of belief are taken for granted in the conversation of the vast majority of my friends and acquaintances."

This is a truly comprehensive denial of Orthodox Christianity, and, if the Blasphemy Laws were administered impartially, would cause Mr. Bennett to reflect upon his "sins" in a little room. That neither Arnold Bennett nor Bernard Shaw are in the slightest danger of incarceration is another proof that the pen of a popular writer is mightier than the policeman's truncheon.

Mr. Bennett has been a journalist. Indeed, he forsook journalism to take to literature. Hence it is strange to find him prefacing his confession of faith with the words, "It is curious how bold some very ordinary statements seem when they are put into print in a popular newspaper." The "very ordinary statements" he refers to is his confession of unbelief, which, in an age of faith, would have cost him his life by burning at the stake. Were he poor and without friends, such writing would, even in a later age, have spelt imprisonment. So it comes to this, that the statements are not so commonplace after all is said, and that society journalists are not omniscient in private life, whatever they are in print.

There is, in this country, unfortunately, a press conspiracy to uphold convention at all costs. Journalists are not so unlettered and ignorant as to imagine that Freethinkers are simply candidates for Colney Hatch; but Freethought, and all relating to it, is conspicuous by its absence in the periodical press of this country. Even Mr. Bennett's remarks were prefaced by an editorial apology, as if its horrible heresy might set the paper alight and scare the patent medicine advertisers. And behind Mr. Bennett's plain statement lay a century of vigorous Freethought utterance, from the thunderous *Age of Reason* to the latest volume by Mr. Cohen.

What is the meaning of it all? The answer is that it is all owing to the scramble for huge circulations, and the necessity of not offending advertisers. Just as no newspaper editor would advocate prohibition for fear of offending the brewers and distillers; with the consequent loss of advertisement revenue, so editors boycott or insult Freethought to please church and chapel goers. One London newspaper during a period of a quarter of a century invariably referred to a great Freethinker as "Tom Paine," but never once did it refer to a distinguished politician as "Bill" Gladstone. The "glorious free press" of England is a monument of cant and humbug. The proprietors have only one end in view and that is money-making, and the unfortunate editors are their dutiful maids-of-all-work. Newspaper proprietors have no more consciences and principles than a goldfish. They print Sabbatarian weeklies and Sunday newspapers with the same disregard for principle as they publish lives of criminals and blood-and-thunder stories for those of tender years. They are the veriest weathercocks. Uniting the effrontery of Casanova with the oiliness of a Pecksniff, they proclaim their disinterestedness before the world. It reminds one of the agitator who, with outstretched arm, protested: "This hand has never taken a bribe"; and was nonplussed by a man in the audience shouting: "What about the hand behind your back?"

MIMNERMUS.

Where I am not understood, it shall be concluded that something very useful and profound is couched underneath.—*Dean Swift*.

The Making of the Gospels.

V.

(Continued from page 685.)

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

Two more Gospel events complete the life of the child Jesus—according to Matthew. These are the flight into Egypt and the return to Palestine, both suggested by Old Testament passages. As regards the first, the story ran that to escape the massacre at Bethlehem Jesus was carried by Joseph into Egypt, "and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. ii. 14-15). The passage here alleged to have been fulfilled is Hosea xi. 1—"When *Israel* was a child, then I loved him, and called *my son* out of Egypt." The reference is, of course, to the Israelites, who, when young as a nation, were called by the Lord out of the bondage of Egypt.

With regard to the return to Palestine, it was stated that the Carpenter "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a Nazorite" (Matt. ii. 23). The last word is mistranslated "Nazarene." According to the old legend preserved by Hegesippus, James "the Lord's brother" was a Nazorite. Jesus was also believed to have been a Nazorite, and is so styled (in the Greek) in eleven places in the New Testament. Mark is the only writer who invariably calls him "the Nazarene." As an illustration, in the first two Gospels a maid is represented as saying of or to Peter:—

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

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

The vow of the Nazorite (or Nazirite) is given in Num. vi. 2-6. The passage which suggested the Gospel story was probably Judges xiii. 5; but in any case a residence in Nazareth did not constitute the resident either a Nazorite or a Nazarene. The Gospel-maker's statement is pure nonsense.

To the foregoing events should be added the Magi and the Star—a story copied from the "Protevan-gelium of James" (par. 21). In the latter account, which is almost verbally the same as Matt. ii. 1-12, the star is described as resting over the cave in which the infant Jesus lay. Furthermore, a story of Jesus, when twelve years old, sitting in the temple questioning the Jewish "doctors," was added by Luke (ii. 41-52), who took it almost verbatim from the "Gospel of Thomas" (par. 19). The source of the stories in these two apocryphal Gospels is uncertain.

THE FORERUNNER.

According to the Mosaic ritual the Levites commenced their duties in the temple at thirty years of age (Num. iv. 3, 23, 30). In accordance with this alleged custom Jesus was represented as commencing his public ministry at the same age (Luke iii. 23). Furthermore, certain Old Testament passages were interpreted by the Gospel-maker as predicting a forerunner: Jesus Christ, therefore, must have had a forerunner, and who so likely and suitable as John the Baptist. It would appear from Josephus that the last-named personage was really an historical figure; but there is no evidence that he ever saw Jesus, or was anything more than a self-constituted street preacher who had a craze on the subject of baptism.

The passages selected as predicting a forerunner for Jesus were: Isaiah xl. 3-4, Mal. iii. 1, and Mal.

iv. 5. The first of these is quoted in all four Gospels and in one of them (John i. 23) John the Baptist is represented as claiming to be the person foretold. The passage in Isaiah reads:—

The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain, etc.

The reference in the foregoing passage is to the pioneers who prepared the way through a rugged or almost impassable country for the march of a king and his army. The king in this case was Yahveh, the god of the Jews, who was to bring back the Jewish captives from all the countries to which they had been deported.

The second passage (Mal. iii. 1) is quoted in the three Synoptical Gospels as a prophecy referring to John the Baptist, and in two of them Jesus is represented as publicly declaring the Baptist to be the person foretold. He is made to say:—

This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send *my messenger* before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee (Matt. xi. 10).

If we desire to know whom Malachi referred to as the Lord's "messenger" we have but to turn to Mal. ii. 7:—

For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth: for *he is the messenger* of the Lord of hosts

The third passage (Mal. iv. 5) reads:—

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

This prediction Jesus is also made to apply to the Baptist (Matt. xvii. 10-13). More than eighteen hundred years later a miserable old fraud named Dowie set himself up as the promised seer, and was received as a prophet by a considerable number of followers. The coming of Elijah was predicted, probably, because it had been recorded in 2 Kings that he had been carried up to heaven without dying, and could therefore easily return to the earth. The "day of the Lord," so often referred to by the Hebrew prophets, was the day when the god Yahveh should take vengeance on the enemies of his chosen people. This period was doubtless believed by Malachi to be close at hand.

The account of John the Baptist in the Gospels is a fiction from beginning to end, and was suggested by the passages mentioned and the Old Testament history of Elijah. The last-named prophet was bold and fearless; so also was the Baptist. Elijah reproved King Ahab; the Baptist rebuked Herod Antipas. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, slew the Lord's prophets and made attempts upon the life of Elijah; Herodias, the wife of Antipas, brought about the death of the Baptist. Even the dress of the hero of the fiery chariot was of assistance in making Gospel history. It had been written of Elijah: "He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins" (2 Kings i. 8). An alternative reading for "a hairy man" was, in some MSS., "a man with a garment of hair." This latter reading was in the Gospel-maker's copy. He therefore described the Baptist as having "a raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins" (Matt. iii. 4).

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

According to the Mosaic ritual, the priests were commanded to wash their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle or temple (Exod. xxx. 20); it was therefore deemed fitting that Jesus should wash, or be baptised, in the Jordan before commencing his public ministry. Amongst the Old Testament

passages selected by the Gospel-maker as predictions relating to Jesus Christ were the following:—

Isaiah lxi. 1-4.—The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, etc.

Psalms ii. 7-9.—I will tell of the decree: The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance.....Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

In the first of these passages the writer—who was *not* Isaiah—declares he is inspired by the spirit of God to proclaim the release and return of the Israelites who had been carried captive to Babylon and other cities. "And they shall build up the old wastes, they shall raise the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." This was his "good tidings."

In the second passage the Lord is represented as taking Israel, from that day, as his son (as in Hos. xi. 1), and promising to make the nation victorious over all its enemies. The Gospel-maker, however, following the custom of the time, selected just what he thought suitable for his purpose, ignoring all the rest. In the narrative of the baptism of Jesus "the Spirit of the Lord God" was described as descending upon him "as a dove" in the sight of the people, and "a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22). The account of this event in the primitive Gospel ran as follows:—

And when the people were baptised, Jesus also came, and was baptised by John. And when he came up from the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Spirit of God in the form of a dove, which descended and came upon him. And a voice came from heaven, saying, *Thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased: to-day have I begotten thee.* And immediately a great light shone round about the place. And John, when he saw it, said to Jesus, Who art thou, Lord?

The words italicized are quoted by Justin from his copy of an uncanonical Gospel (A.D. 150). At a later day the words "To-day have I begotten thee" were struck out, and the whole paragraph revised. It may also be noted that the "great light" which "shone round about the place" and the question "Who art thou, Lord?" were afterwards utilised in the fictitious history of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be Continued.)

The Execution.

THE priest administered the final dope;
And toned his spirit for the better land:
He felled the victim with a bag of sand,
To fall before the fellow with a cope:
For he repented him; and out of hand
His sins were all forgiven—with the hope
Of Heaven at last fulfilled—whose happy band
Welcome the new found saint who graced the rope:
So he was lifted with a sudden drop;
And borne to Abram's bosom with a jerk:
The crown and glory of that mighty work
Of God's creation hails a hurried stop:
He wronged the majesty of Man—and died;
And Heaven and Earth and All are satisfied!

W. J. LAMB.

"Progressive Assumptions."

A PROFESSOR at the Church Congress had a paper read wherein he propounded some weighty speculations concerning the existence of God. He admitted that in the ordinary way his existence could not be demonstrated, but then religion did not rest on reason; it reposed on faith, and the higher things of faith could be reached by a series of "progressive assumptions." Just as science rests on an assumption that the law of causation will always operate, although an actual demonstration of that, in the nature of things, can't be shown, so the belief in God's existence can start away from something similar and reach sublime ideas about a Heavenly Father without outraging the human faculty of reason. Had the professor adopted that line of reasoning a few hundred years ago he would have departed this life at the stake; indulging in it fifty years ago, he would have been the cause of a heresy hunt in which the bright particular stars of the Congress would probably have joined with gusto.

The argument has all the slimness of the attitude taken up by the Church when first it realized that science was going to destroy it if something wasn't done to divert the attack. The scientists who then clung to the Christian belief showed the parsons how it could be done. First of all, they hied back to that region where, as G. W. Foote once said, knowledge ends and ignorance begins, and proceeded to lay the foundations of their faith on chaos and old night. For ages the ideas relating to gods and the supernatural had flourished without the need for a base other than the unthinking need of the believers. But when science began to give proof of her all-embracing purpose; when a long series of experiments and observation had warranted the assumption that all things are subject to the law of causation, the church saw the necessity for an assumption with which to hold up the structure of superstition. There was no room for it within the circle of knowledge. The assumption made by science was the result of sober and careful reasoning, checked at every point by ascertained fact. Once that process was applied to religious belief there was eminent danger of collapse and the instinctive appreciation of danger in the mind of theologians is very acute, so they tripped over the borderland, beyond the boundaries of knowledge and discovered the assumption they were looking for.

There they felt perfectly safe. At a pinch they could claim to be scientific. True, they had reversed the scientific process, having first taken on board the fallacies they were seeking to pass as demonstrated truths, but their flocks could be trusted to overlook a trifle of that sort. They had spiked the guns of the enemy, and that under the banner of science. They took breath and congratulated themselves on attaining another lease of life. The Vicar of Newcastle sighed his relief at escaping the aggressive materialism that tormented his youthful days and unashamedly relegated science to the task of enabling them to more correctly interpret St. Paul.

Burying their heads in the sand is characteristic of ostriches and theologians. The latter take to self-deception as a young duck takes to water. They move and have their being in an atmosphere of mental debauchery, and never more so than at their annual congress. Diddling themselves with the idea that the existence of their own particular god can be demonstrated in the way science obtains its results and deluding themselves with the thought that their deliberations are something other than the mumblings of medicine-men, they go on their way paying pseudo-court to Reason and hoping, the more knowing ones, that the sceptical spirit of enquiry will pass over them and leave them free to propagate the most benumbing creed that has ever held the world in thralldom.

However, the spectacle of parsons invoking science in aid of their belief is a hopeful sign. They may but touch the fringe of it, but the leaven will work, and no amount of parsonic adaptability will then avert the day of doom.

H. B. DODDS.

No itch is more infectious than superstition.—*Jovian.*

Acid Drops.

The close approach of Mars to the earth has given our self-styled "psychic experts" a little more publicity. One of them has sent a message to Mars, and he evidently expects the inhabitants, if there are any, to understand English and the Morse code. But we shall be greatly surprised if a number of mediums do not receive messages from "our spirit friends" on Mars. If they do, we can safely defy anyone to prove that the messages have not come from Mars. That they will smell of the earth, does not matter in the least. Just as Socrates talks like the average sucking curate when he enters the seance room, and Shakespeare spouts poetry worthy of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, so we must expect the Martians to talk in the same strain as an earthly servant girl. As our Spiritualist friends kindly explain, if they talk on a higher level those present would not understand them.

We are just a trifle amused at the vogue of the term "psychic expert." At first glance one would imagine it meant one who had a very close and deep acquaintance with psychology—a scientific psychology. All it does mean is, one who has sat at a number of seances, looked at a number of "mediums," without the least conception of what is going on before him, and become proficient in detecting ghostly forms, and ectoplasmic emanations, of the reality of which no one is sure. But a name goes a long way, and the newspaper scribblers appear to have accepted "psychic expert" as connoting something as definite as an expert in astronomy or biology. It is a charming state of things in which spending a number of evenings with a medium enables one to rank with those who have spent their lives in exact, laborious scientific research—that is, with those who do not realize what "psychic expert" actually means.

In discussing the need for providing churches for the people in newly-opened-up residential areas, the editor of the *Methodist Recorder* says: "A hundred years ago Parliament voted a million pounds towards the erection of Churches (belonging, of course, to the Establishment) in needy districts. On this occasion no such aid would be forthcoming from the nation's exhausted treasury, even were it expedient to seek such help." We like this "even were it expedient." The implication is that, if it happened to be expedient, and if the Treasury was not exhausted, Christians would be quite justified in using State funds for building churches. Yet these funds come out of the pockets of citizens who, in the bulk, are indifferent to the Christian creed or are opposed to any creed or who profess a different religion! We fancy we understand our Methodist friend. He has no objection to State funds being used for church-building, so long as the Nonconformists are able to secure their share of the spoil. One other point may be mentioned. This Methodist editor gives one the impression that, in his opinion, to use State moneys in that way, even if available, is not expedient now. Why? We should like to have his reason for this. Can it be that he believes the bulk of the citizens would condemn the using of public funds in such a manner as being grossly unjust or ethically wrong? If that is his reason, it is a compliment to Freethinkers. For it is they who have enlightened the public on this particular point.

A Dr. Fitchett gives an enthusiastic account of Gipsy Smith's campaign in Australia. People, according to him, flocked in crowds to the halls where addresses were given, and thousands failed to gain an entry. Now, says the Doctor, "what form of entertainment, what subject of Science, or Art, or Politics, could attract and hold such audiences? Religion, it is clear, is still the strongest force in human life." This is merely another way of stating what most of us knew already—that the masses are still, at bottom, not a whit less primitive than their forebears of many centuries ago.

Faith in God has created all the good there is in the world, says "Woodbine Willie." As he obviously means faith in the Christian God, one is in no doubt as to the kind of impression "Willie" is attempting to create in people's minds. He is suggesting that there was no good in the world previous to Christian teaching. And he is also suggesting that there is no good done by people who are without faith in God. This practice of belittling the pagans and Freethinkers is getting played out nowadays. One would have imagined that even our sloppy friend would have sense enough to realize this. Seemingly he hasn't.

Shrugging our shoulders is the only gesture left us from our primitive ancestors, declares Dr. Lyttelton. The only one? Hardly. There's another, and it consists in grovelling on the knees in prayer—the primitive man's gesture indicating his fear of the unseen powers. This particular gesture serves one useful purpose; it enables us to sort people mentally into two groups—primitive and civilized.

The only people who really enjoy their religion are the members of the Salvation Army, affirms Mr. St. John Ervine. That may be. Unfortunately for non-Salvationists, one man's joy is another man's purgatory. We fancy Mr. Ervine would agree, if Salvationists made a point of holding meetings outside his study window.

If hell has gone west, thank God that the priest in charge of St. James Roman Catholic Church can have an effective say in the matter of sleeveless frocks. All is not lost.

Great thoughts from the press. Dr. William T. Grenfell, from Labrador, preaching at Camberwell Green, said: "God does not give us all forty-seven inches round the chest, but he does give us a big measurement for the soul." This is one of the dramatic tricks of the trade of saying nothing with a big noise.

There is no pleasing the *New Age*. Following a bumper crop of cotton in America, three million bales are to be put aside so that the price for the remainder is to be raised. Our contemporary, with the impotence of knowledge councils our religious institutions as follows: "Here is an opportunity for the Churches. Let them institute a *Boll-weevil Sunday* and pray like the devil for an early return of this beneficent pest." There is no immediate danger of the advice being taken, and if it is, nothing would happen from the efforts of a body of men who cannot agree that a biscuit is baked flour, which is on a level with the old ecclesiastical problems as to whether God could make a stick without two ends, or two mountains without a valley between, and what would happen to a mouse that had eaten the consecrated host?

Never was there a time, declares the Rev. A. W. Mason, of Plumstead, when people were so free as they are to-day to ask questions about religion. That is a significant admission. Freedom of speech, freedom to question, was not a marked feature of the Ages of Faith nor of a decade ago. Such freedom coincides with the dwindling of the Church's hold on the people. Cause and effect?

Nonentities seeking notoriety will do anything to attain their end. One man attempts to set up a new world's fasting record. Another swings clubs for five and a half days without stopping. A third shoots a thousand grouse in fourteen hours. Noting these facts, a weekly paper with a pious complexion is moved to ask: What benefit to humanity is there when these self-inflicted tasks are accomplished? With the disgust that prompts the query we are in sympathy. But it may well be pointed out that leaders of the Christian Churches have done as much as anything to encourage

and pander to stuntism. They have taught, and still teach as fact, the alleged miraculous happenings in the Scriptures. They amaze the credulous with tales of winking Madonnas and miracle-working relics. They hawk around various so-called spiritual healers. Thus they perpetuate the type of mind that delights in stunts of any kind. This, however, need not surprise one overmuch when one remembers that in this respect they are following the precedent established by the Great Exemplar himself. He was a great stuntist if ever there was one. He would goggle the eyes of the multitude with his miracles; and his last great stunt was to get himself crucified. And when one asks what benefit there was in this, we learn that it was to save people from hell. But as many Christian leaders now declare there is no such place, the Christly stunt would appear to be about as useless a benefit as the stunts of the aforesaid nonentities.

We have all been harking on the wrong track. The serious thing in this country is not the fact of there being over a million and a half unemployed, or the house shortage, or the amount spent on preparations for war, after the war that was to end war. The really serious thing, according to the Lord's Day Observation Society, is that there are 250,000 shops in England open on Sunday, 930,000 people attended the National Sunday League concerts in London last year, and 500,000 people visit cinemas in London every Sunday evening. We fancy the last set of figures must be an exaggeration, as we cannot believe that one out of every fourteen of the population of London and greater London are at the pictures every Sunday. But the L.D.O.S. wants to know what we are going to do about it? Those who are disturbed should attend the cinemas for a few Sunday evenings to see if it is quite so serious as we are told.

Sir Arbuthnot Lane will be getting himself into trouble with his new Health Crusade if he is not careful. In an article in the *Daily Mail* he complains of the lack of lavatory accommodation in preparatory and public schools. In one large public school, he says, he found that the average time spent by boys in the lavatory was thirteen seconds per day, the average time spent at Divine service was twenty minutes. He suggests a reversal of the times, as attendance to physiological needs is the more important. Now if that is not blasphemy, what is? To suggest that attendance on the Lord shall play second fiddle to attendance to the lavatory, is too much. Sir Arbuthnot Lane will next be suggesting that the scavenger is a more important member of the community than the parson. We are not surprised that the Medical Council does not like the spectacle of medical men writing to the newspapers.

Described as a small volume, *An Outline Introduction to the History of Religions*, is now added to other outlines by Theodore H. Robinson. This freehand drawing by writers is becoming an obsession; the ordinary man will soon be unable to see anything for a forest of outlines. The author provides material for those who are desirous of making a study of comparative religions, and, after examining animism, polytheism, monotheism, Islam and Christianity you will think that the subject would be left there. It is not. The conclusion is that the ideal for humanity is to be found in the Christian life and faith, and the little trick of superiority famous the world over, is neatly introduced to the glory and greatness of the old firm.

According to the latest statistics, eighty per cent. of the Portuguese nation can neither read nor write. What an ideal state of affairs for the propagation of the Holy Roman faith!

A pious Australian business man told an interviewer that Sunday-schools in Australia are experiencing a decline in membership to much the same degree as those in England. He cites the usual causes for this deplorable

state of affairs. But, like the rest of the religious explainers, he ignores the chief reason for the decline. This is that children do not attend because the parents themselves are indifferent to religion and regard it as something that can well be dispensed with. Thinking thus, they see no point in having their offspring taught what they regard as useless knowledge.

The Bishop of Zanzibar complains that Mohammedans are tolerant of witchcraft, and, for a Christian, magic is the enemy of religion. For a Christian bishop who is taking to the Africans a Bible which is filled with witchcraft, and contains the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and who is, moreover, the representative of a religion that has burned hundreds of thousands of the offence of witchcraft, to denounce it as a falsity and an idle superstition, is not bad. One would be surprised if one were not so used to the mixture of impudence and crookedness of Christian bishops.

A White Paper, recently issued (Kenya 2,747), announces that among the Government grants of land, the Scottish Mission has received 64,000 acres freehold. Quite a nice little present in a colony that has a commercial future before it, and we may rest assured that the Scottish Mission will see that it is exploited to the last penny.

The New Haven (U.S.A.) authorities have banned a play called "Red Blinds," and refused to permit its appearance. According to the *Daily Express* it is the using of two biblical words that is responsible for the unfit. It is not considered fitting that Yale students should hear them. The world is a queer place. To listen to some Christians our whole safety depends upon reading the Bible. Other Christians—or the same Christians, most probably—wilt quickly when some of the passages are read in public. And, as a matter of fact, the police in this country simply would not permit the reading of certain parts of the Bible in a mixed assemblage.

Major Wallace Blake, late governor of Pentonville, is, in the columns of the *Evening News*, narrating his experiences. Here is one of his stories that many of our readers may have heard before, but is worth telling again. One of the prison chaplains, very fond of his whisky, was visiting his parishioners:—

He entered the cell of an old convict, and the latter said, "Oh, chaplain, will you kindly read me that lovely long chapter we had as the first lesson on Sunday."

The chaplain sat down and read it to the prisoner, who gazed in his face as he was doing so, with a rapt expression. "Oh, do read it again, sir," said the man, "it's beautiful."

"I am glad you like it so much," said the chaplain, hoping he had gained a convert. "Yes, sir," said the convict, "sitting here while you are reading to me is almost as good as being in a public-house."

A brace of books noticed by the *Times Literary Supplement* are interesting, and, at the same time, useful in helping to show that much ground has still to be covered by pioneers. *The Escape from the Primitive*, by Horace Carneross, gets somewhere near the mark, according to the following extract: "The world is still adolescent, if not childish, and it can grow up only through human beings becoming conscious of themselves in the deeper sense." Next door to this is the second book, *The Shadow on the Earth*, by Owen Francis Dudley. This author advocates unconditional submission to the Roman Catholic Church, and there is a story on the mental level of a china dog about a young Alpine climber, injured in an accident and nursed by a priest-doctor in a monastery. The cripple is brought to an understanding of God's will and that pain and suffering are incentives to final victory. Perhaps this story is an answer to the question of why the world is still adolescent, if not childish? And God ought to pension off his professional apologists if this is the best they can do for him.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust and Sustentation Fund.

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Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, and addressed to me at 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Every contribution will be acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To Correspondents.

In response to many enquiries concerning the health of our contributor, Mr. Vincent J. Hands, his friends will be pleased to know that he is making progress, although it is necessarily not rapid. Still, he writes as cheerfully as ever, that he is on the mend, and that is something to go on with.

H. GARDNER.—Charles Bradlaugh took the Parliamentary oath on his explicit declaration that although the oath was quite meaningless to him, he would take it as embodying an affirmation pure and simple. No one but a fool or a liar would ever pretend that the oath was ever taken in any other sense by Bradlaugh. And it was only taken when the House of Commons declined to permit his affirmation. Afterwards Bradlaugh was instrumental in getting the Oaths Amendment Act (1888) passed, and that did away with the necessity for anyone taking the oath who did not believe in it.

R. BROWN.—We wish that all Freethinkers would follow your example in protesting against the encroachments of parsons and their instruments. The protests may have no immediate effect, but they tell ultimately, and if all Freethinkers protested, the effect would be shown more rapidly.

T. JENNINGS.—Mr. Cohen would have written you earlier, but he has only one pair of hands, and there are only a limited number of hours to the day.

A. B. MOSS.—Sorry you were unable to attend the last meeting of the Executive, but the night was enough to keep anyone indoors. We do take as much care as we can, but the work must be done, and we are keeping well up to now, with no immediate prospect of any other state.

H. C.—There is no need to apologise for not being able to contribute to the Sustentation Fund, although we quite appreciate your doing so. We hope better times are in store for you as well as for others who are in the same position as yourself.

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

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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.

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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.

To-day (November 7), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Stratford. His subject will be, "If Christ Came to Stratford." The Town Hall can easily be reached by 'bus, tramcar, or train, from all parts of London. The lecture commences at 7 o'clock.

On Wednesday evening (November 10), at the request of a number of West London friends, Mr. Cohen is holding a special meeting in the Kensington Town Hall, High Street, Kensington. Omnibuses from all quarters pass the door, and admission is free. His subject will be, "Do the Dead Live?" There will be discussion after the lecture, and we hope to be able to report a crowded meeting.

In consequence of the N.S.S. offices being temporarily closed for repairs and re-decoration, the last Executive meeting was held in the offices of the Pioneer Press. The Secretary asks the indulgence of her correspondents for any delay that may be caused by this upheaval.

It was bitterly cold at Glasgow on Sunday last, but in spite of this, the City Hall was comfortably filled to listen to Mr. Cohen's midday address on "The Press, the Public, and the Farce of Faith," and in the evening the hall was crowded to the doors. Judging from the laughter and applause the audience seems to have quite enjoyed itself. Mr. Parker occupied the chair in the morning, and the President of the Branch, Mr. Hale, in the evening. The Glasgow Branch appears have quite a number of active young men on its working list at present, and their efforts are evidently bearing good fruit.

On Monday evening Mr. Cohen lectured in the Empire Theatre, Motherwell, and in spite of a wild and wet evening outdoors, and the many meetings being held in connection with the Council elections on the following day, the hall was well filled. Mr. Higgins, who was mainly responsible for the meeting, must have worked well, and we were glad to see his efforts rewarded. Several friends came through from Glasgow, and the chair was taken by the energetic Secretary of the Branch, Mr. Mann. There seems some prospect of more active work being carried on in the district, and it is likely that Mr. Cohen will pay a return visit in the new year.

The Motherwell visit involved an all-night journey to London, and, to add to the enjoyment, the train reached its destination two hours late. Correspondents will, for that reason, excuse attention not being paid to many of the editorial letters in this issue. Some will be attended to in our next issue. The more imperative have been answered by post.

At the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester, the speaker in the afternoon, at 3, will be Mr. J. W. Gosling, of Bisley, who will speak on "Swinburne." Mr. Gosling is not unused to the platform, although he is a newcomer at our meetings, and we hope he will have a warm welcome. In the evening, the President of the Branch, Mr. F. E. Mouks, will speak on "Christianity and Progress." The meeting will commence at 6.30 p.m.

When Mr. F. A. Hornbrook lectured last for the North London Branch at the St. Pancras Reform Club he has a most enthusiastic reception. He is lecturing there again this evening on "Health and Exercise," and we anticipate there will be a "full house."

We again take the opportunity of informing those interested that we are still ready to send specimen copies of the *Freethinker* for six weeks, on receipt of names and addresses and threepence in stamps for each address

sent. There is no better way of introducing the paper to new readers and so secure regular subscribers.

"It requires great strength," said Nietzsche, "to be able to live and forget how far life and injustice are one." Mr. Patrick Braybrooke, in his recently published novel, *Cruelty* (C. W. Daniel Co., 7s. 6d. net), has very definitely grasped the religious problem and cast it in story form. We congratulate him for his courage, for most of our modern authors, if not dealing in salacity, are on the side of the institutions that will call a policeman to protect its religion. Mr. Braybrooke has a very deft touch in dealing with John Chatterton's life when a child, and his life story is marked by cruel events that will not fit the ready-made boots of religion. Our hero, disgusted with the Church, abandons the idea of being ordained and goes into business, following in his father's footsteps. He came to the conclusion that humility could be a virtue, but it was also a detestable vice; our mis-fire parson learned to dance, associated with his fellow-beings, married; and we are left to conclude that he was well rid of the jig-saw puzzle that comes along in the form of religion. Mr. Braybrooke is a pioneer and does not deal out the sugary nonsense so dear to the hearts of the admirers of W. J. Lock, Sir Hall Caine, Marie Corelli, and others, and for this we give him our thanks and wish him success.

A little book that will crease your face with smiles is *The Spokesman's Secretary*, by Upton Sinclair. In the reading of it we were reminded of the exasperation of Rabelais with the monks of France, and, doubtless for the same reason, Mr. Sinclair has given rein to his satire in this exposition of American politics. With the invitation, "Oh, Boy! Come and have a laugh!" we are told that it is about the Spokesman who lives in the big white house and tells the American people what to think. And the Secretary who writes the Spokesman's speeches! And the manicure girl who becomes the Secretary's lady-friend and has the whole job loaded on to her. With a £100,000 prize fight—or was it millions? the gentle Adamites in Tennessee, an abducted evangelist, and an accident in a village with poison gas after the last war finished, there is no doubt that America is a great country, and Mr. Upton Sinclair comprehends it with his smile. The book is published by the author at Pasadena, California (\$1.25), and you will, after reading it, be able to say whether the writer has treated trivial things seriously, or serious things trivially.

On Nature's Breast.

In Autumn when the leaves grow wan,
And flutter from the bough,
And to the sombre Pipes of Pan
Bestrew the woodland's brow.

All forebodings that distressed me
I forgot as joy carressed me—

NOT joy, indeed, nor perfect peace, but ease, change, solitude, rest—at all ages we need a lullaby, at times a rocking on the tree top. All duties, cares, utilities apart these suggested only by

The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
with paler questionings in this idleness—but go to, the eye tires of the printed page, the poor brain of absorbing knowledge, learning's dull despair. Freethought itself fails at times, while religion may remain a comforting illusion. As a shrewd little lady Freethinker said the other day: "The Christians have the best of it, they have something to look forward to, we have nothing; and if we have a heaven, it is as fanciful as theirs." So Freethought has nothing to offer us but an approximation to truth, a precious jewel, but a doubtful good. There steals into this peace also the distant noise of engines, hammers, and the wheels of Progress—from whence

to where? Ah! what a dusty answer gets the soul—and so we come out here, to-day, to look more directly through the windows thereof at the actual world and the present here and now. But even into this seclusion comes that other utility, that last infirmity of noble minds, a Freethought article is suggested. So even this Eden is corrupted, while the wind makes noble music in the wood, in the green leaf and the sere, while the massed foliage of a distant green wood tosses tumultuously under a brown hill—that little hill of a further aim, the excelsior spirit not lacking, but the choice is made in the cure of the perfect rest in the grassy glade:

In sun and shade, in wind and lee,
Unseen of all, yet all to see.

Seated here in this sweetest of seclusions we look down on the quiet pools of a little stream. Trees, rooted below, rise to our level and we have the impression of resting in their branches. In ones and twos and little showers the leaves are gently tumbled to the earth to the requiem of the wind. The skies above are cloudy but dry, with soft lights and shades, and here and there solemn little lakes of tranquil blue—what benediction of the skies, yet bodeful of the surlier wind and cloud of winter near at hand—but with spring behind and hope still regnant in the human breast. Thus poet, pietist, philosopher, and Nature herself would comfort us, though even the wisest counsel must inevitably fail us at the last. But away with all this abstract analysis and premonitory reflection, this valley of the shadow of the mind's despair. Let us for once be free and happy as the birds and taste their "ignorance of pain"; for are we not at the moment as buoyant on the wind, swayed in the tree top, caressed by the nodding broom and bramble spray, sheltered in the thick-set hedge, at ease upon the withered herbage and the dry green mould, in all the fairy tangle of the autumn wood. What sanctuary for the bodily man—would his spirit but be reconciled to such retreat—one such as city people dream of all the year—the source and inspiration of the annual exodus to the country—an impulse growing ever stronger with the emancipation of the mind—most hopeful sign of the times. City parks are but imprisoned bits of Nature invested far around with aggregations of brick and mortar boxes, mere compounds with which the walled-up millions, tamely and artificially bred, are so fain to be content, consequential even, like the Londoner who speaks of all outside his Big Noise as "the country!"

Our mind goes back to the little cemetery-garden at Kings' Cross, where lately we sat to seek rest and shade, while we noted pensively the gambols and prattle of some poor but pretty London children—what mites in a mighty city!—and conversed with a typical native, an old and poor, resigned, mild-mannered man, one in whom remained no shadow of resentment, who would help even the selfish and ungrateful, in the mere habit and pleasure of helping—the son of an Essex policeman—what distant date, what forgotten heat! the young of the human tree opening all about him, some thwarted in their bloom, he holding on to the end, sere-leaved amid the tender green.

ANDREW MILLAR.

North London Branch N.S.S.

On Sunday last Mr. R. B. Kerr gave a most excellent and interesting address to a "full house" at the St. Pancras Reform Club, which was followed by a lively discussion. To-night (November 7) Mr. Hornibrook is with us, and we hope our friends will come early to secure seats, as we expect a crowded audience.—K. B. K.

When One Has One.

THAT staid paper, *Truth*, devotes about a column each week to chatty paragraphs containing church news. We are told that the distinguished Rev. X is "filling the pulpit" at such and such a place; that Bishop Y has gone to his last rest; or—without the vestige of a smile—that the incumbent of Z has been "called to a wider sphere of influence" (and, incidentally, affluence).

Little did the readers of *Truth* anticipate the shock that awaited them in the form of an article headed "Ancient Faith and Modern Knowledge." This article, dealing with the questionnaire issued by the *Daily News* and the *Nation*, concludes that the vast majority either have no religious convictions or regard those convictions as nobody's affair but their own. Even editors are shy where religious matters are concerned. "This is a matter of business..... They leave this branch of editorial responsibility to 'the technical press'—with which, again, it is a matter of business. We none of us want to risk offending our customers."

Worse follows: "Everybody knows that the old religions are now in the melting pot.....this leads to a widespread indifference to religion; not knowing what to think, people end up by thinking nothing, unless in a very vague and unsatisfactory way."

The late Dr. J. G. Adami, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, may help the reader. His paper, which was read before the recent Southport Congress, is an endeavour to show that science and religion are "essentially, or shall I say basally? at one as regards the greater things." *Truth* recommends the paper, but spoils the effect—another instance, we suppose, of truth "outing"—by stating: "I pronounce no opinion on the argument, but coming from a man of scientific attainments, a Fellow of the Royal Society, it shows how easily a man *who cares to do so* may reconcile ancient faith and modern knowledge." (The italics are ours).

And now for the remedy!

Spiritual truths will need revision and readjustment just as Newton's laws needed modification at the hand of Einstein. If theology is to be scientific it must be periodically restated. The trouble is with the Churches; they are not disposed to restate their theology. The real conflict is between science and the Churches.

We want a new Church.

Despite the fact that readers of *Truth* must have been shocked, the idea is an excellent one. Let us have a new church; or one each if we wish it. And in a few years' time when the spiritual truths again need revision and readjustment, let us have another. And then another. Isn't the idea attractive? You can feel yourself humming with the Co-optimists: "When one has one, one wants one little more."

G. J. F.

New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason, but because they are not already common.—*John Locke*.

Learning should continue as long as there is anything you do not know, and if we may believe the proverb, as long as you live.—*Seneca*.

Suns can set and return again; with us, when once our short day has set, there is one everlasting night of sleep.—*Catullus*.

Maori Symbolism.

SOME years ago Sir James Frazer expressed the fervent hope that the British Government would take steps to collect and preserve the legends and traditions of the native races under its control. These legends are gradually dying before the advance of civilization; the longer the task of collecting them is delayed the greater the danger of their becoming adulterated with ideas from another culture. The suggestion did not lead to anything. Had Sir James brought forward a new device for killing people on a wholesale scale there is not much doubt that the Christian governments of the world would have been striving their hardest to secure a monopoly of the formula. But a device for the preservation of primitive culture records was clearly not worth bothering about.

For this reason anthropological historians should give a warm welcome to *Maori Symbolism, An Account of the Origin, Migration and Culture of the New Zealand Maori as recorded in certain sacred legends*, by Miss Ettie Rout (Kegau Paul, 32 plates and other illustrations, 21s.). Miss Rout modestly says she has played in this volume the part of a reporter, but her work has been far more extensive than this. The volume is enriched by her own notes, her observations of native life in New Zealand, and comparisons derived from an extensive course of reading, without which the work would be divested of much of its value. Usually tales of native beliefs reach us solely through Europeans, who have acquired their knowledge in a more or less haphazard manner, and, in the case of the missionary, who are badly equipped for giving a sympathetic ear to what they are told. Miss Rout has avoided this by taking the narrative from a Maori noble, one whose hereditary duty it is to act as a "legend-carrier," and to hand on the sacred knowledge intact and undefiled. This witness does, in fact, issue a certificate that the evidence given on "Maori History, Philosophy, etc., is true and faithful in word and spirit to the traditions of the Maori race." The result is the production of a deeply interesting work, and, taken as authentic evidence, fully justifies Miss Rout in saying that "If scholars had brought to bear on the relics of Maori civilization half the care they have given to the civilization of the ancient world they would have reaped an even richer harvest." "Years of study," she points out, "are devoted to deciphering the cuneiform characters; but it is seldom that any European outsiders take the Maori tablets seriously. A few members of the old Maori nobility yet live who could explain them correctly, but when they are dead, this Stone Age writing will be gone for ever."

The legends (we are reminded that "law" is the more accurate word) have not been handed down through the language of the people, the only one known to Europeans; and the popular versions do not convey the inner meaning of the "law." This was recorded in hieroglyphics, known only to the nobility, whom we take to be the equivalent of the ancient Egyptian priesthood. There was a picture language, as given in carving, images, etc., and a spoken language, also known only to such of the nobility as were entrusted with the handing down of the sacred legends. There are many interesting examples of the picture language given with, presumably, an esoteric translation such as would be understood by the nobility alone. Along with this, we may note in passing, go illustrative pictures of the carving and signs on the statuary of other peoples, all intended to make plain the relations of the Maori to other ancient cultures. Some of these illustrations are very striking, although we are unable to say how far trustworthy are the conclusions that are drawn from them. It is true that native oral traditions are wonderfully faithful in their transmission, but it is also true, and that fact is being forced upon us by the new school of anthropological history, as represented by Professors Elliot Smith and Parry, that one culture cannot come into contact with another without inter-mixture, and that some native legends have certainly been rationalized to fit modern and derived ideas.

The legends definitely recorded in this volume trace back Maori history for about 7,000 years. Their homeland is placed in Assyria, and they developed into a nation of builders and travellers and navigators. From Assyria, after a residence in Egypt, concerning which the definite statement is made that two pyramids were built by them, one dedicated to the Sun and another to the Moon, they returned to Assyria, and then entered Europe, ultimately reaching Portugal. After experiencing some hostility, some sailed westward, ultimately reaching Mexico, others settled in Morocco and the Canary Islands. From Mexico the legends trace their migrations to different parts of Central America and Guiana. They established a colony on Easter Island, crossed the Pacific, and finally reached New Zealand some 1,200 years ago about 800 strong. The definite statement is also made that their numbers afterwards increased to about one and a quarter millions.

It is usually claimed that the remains of previous culture found in New Zealand belong to those who were there before the arrival of the Maori. This is definitely denied; they are said to be due to the Maori settlers, and it is also claimed that the statues on Easter Island which have puzzled so many investigators and travellers, are also of Maori origin. Miss Rout offers much evidence in support of these claims by her comparisons of Maori inscriptions with those of other peoples, and it must be admitted that the resemblances are very striking.

The similarity of the Mexican and Egyptian pyramids have been stressed by Professor Parry, who attributes them to Egyptian influence. According to Hohe Te Rake, to whom this narrative is due, the resemblance arises from the fact that both had the same builders, and that these have also left the marks of their wanderings in many other parts of the world. Above all, connection is proved by the system of terrace cultivation of food-roots.

It would take far more space than can be given here to discuss the legitimacy of the claims made, and how far modern meanings may have been read into old records. But if the translation is a faithful one, the resemblances are of a most striking character.

The claim is also made that the Maori scientists had made great advances both in sociology and science, and that they have definitely influenced European thought within recent years. Maori scientists claim that both Darwin and Wallace were indebted to them for the fundamental ideas with which they startled the world. In this case, however, it may be shown that both the general idea of evolution and of natural selection had a European origin, quite independent of any other influence. A more interesting statement is the one that Samuel Butler's book, *Erewhon*, which was written—in part—in New Zealand was the outcome of Butler's conversations with Maori scientists, and that the ideas concerning health are precisely those which the Maori has taught for many centuries.

There is one rule of warfare which is said to have been practised by the Maori, which would certainly profit Europeans to adopt. In warfare the less fit men formed the first line of battle, and owing to the Maori devotion to health culture, these second-class men were not permitted to become parents. The result of this was just the opposite of our wars, where the fittest are killed and the weakest live on. If we would only adopt this plan, our wars would certainly be less foolish than they usually are, and if the old men were sent first of all, one imagines wars would seldom take place.

The Religion of the Maori is said to have been very practical, and to have aimed at the one thing—the procuring of a healthy, right-living race. A very full account is given of the methods adopted, the rules of marriage, courtship, begetting, and, above all, the native dances, which are said to have had as their main motif the perfection of the bodily functions. That they may have had this effect, that they undoubtedly had this effect, as native dances have all over the world, is probably true, but one requires more evidence for believing that the practice was originally adopted because of its beneficial character. Nothing is commoner than to find a very good practice followed for a very foolish reason. The common thing

in human evolution is for some one to discern a justification of a custom, long after the custom has been established, and the reason for its origin lost. It may also be noted, however, that a very interesting section on native dances is to be found in this book, and Miss Rout can be presumed to have established her claim as to the survival value of native dances.

We do not think that anyone who reads *Maori Symbolism* will fail to regret the passing of a race such as the Maori. They are admittedly a fine body of men, well developed mentally and physically, and it is at least clear that their "sacred law" contains much that gives them full claims to be called civilized. The greater the pity that they should be passing under the impact of Christian civilization. To the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which, in one of its publications, refers to the "mysterious ways" in which civilization has led to the decline of the Maori, Miss Rout replies:—

There is nothing in the least mysterious about the destruction of the unarmed Maori people by European bullets and artillery. And the Maori were slain by the thousand. There is nothing mysterious about the spread of syphilis, tuberculosis, and many other diseases introduced by the White Man and spread mainly by the abolition of the health parades and native dances.

It should be definitely recorded here that the result to the New Zealand Maori of their attempted Christianization is absolutely disastrous. The Maori people have been ruined and the Maori civilization reduced to wreckage and obliquity.....Actually not more than one in ten of the Maori is as comfortable and happy and healthy as under the ancient Maori civilization; the vast majority have been exterminated, and many of those who have survived are demoralized and deteriorated almost beyond recognition as members of a great and noble race.

We have to thank Miss Rout for a deeply interesting work, and if it encourages other workers to investigate along the same lines we shall be under a still further obligation to her.

C. C.

Books and Life.

If poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity, or the best words in the best order, how may we define a picture? The seasons come and go; we may sit round a cheerful fire in December, and, without effort, recall the beauty of Spring or Summer, but a picture is a crystallized memory and copy; time has been caught on paper. A spray of apple blossom, painted in water colours, transports us to the time when Spring was making a brave showing, and was reckless of what came before or after. Time stands still on a picture. A saunter round the exhibition of the Society of Graphic Art was a pleasure, combining instruction with interest, and, at the same time, showing that there is no end to man's fertility of ideas, and his methods of presenting them with pen and pencil. The exhibits were tastefully arranged, there was plenty of light and space, and the whole collection was a concrete effort and testimonial to true culture. Mr. Iain Macnab's "Seafaring Man" (No. 36) was arresting. Mr. E. J. Sullivan's three illustrations of Omar, in pen and ink, were graceful and characteristic of this industrious artist; Mr. H. Cutner was exhibiting four pictures: "Charles Dickens in Doughty Street" (No. 66), "Lights and Shadows" (No. 159), "The Bolsheviks" (No. 166), and "The Last Load" (No. 258). No. 166 is a small etching of five figures engaged in putting the world right, and, being privileged to know the artist in the pages of the *Freethinker*, this gave a finer appreciation of the quiet humour that lurks in this presentation of one form of social activity. As a matter of personal taste we prefer the firm outline of the illustration by this artist of "The Ruins of Empires," but it does not deny the genuine pleasure derived from "Lights and Shadows" (No. 159) and "The Last Load" (No. 258). Patience and industry—not many will trouble to think how much have gone to capture trees, boats, clouds and figures; out of the desire to enclose beauty, to hold her, there is hope for the human race, and encouragement for those,

who, in religious moments, think that man is going to the dogs. *Sursum corda*, which means pull up our socks is justified, and refreshed with a visit to this exhibition, we turn our eyes to Sloane Square, where only old age of the players will bring to an end that wholesome English comedy, "The Farmer's Wife." Mr. Eden Phillpotts has, with his pen, captured time—the time that makes us look with generous eyes on our own species and laugh pleasantly with the artist in what the Jeremiahs call "this vale of tears."

In most cases you will climb a hill to reach the pine trees. There is a symphony through the branches all the year round; you can, with a discerning ear listen to the past, the present, and the future. Where the grass-like foliage cleaves the air is the first movement; where it scurries to and fro to get out, the second; and its departure is the third. The south-west wind is strong to-day; it has nearly covered the blue sky with clouds of wondrous shapes, the heather is looking at its best—this is a day of compensation. Overhead is the Ride of the Valkyries, which dies down to the croon of a lullaby. Contention again; for what are the winds contending in the fretted boughs? Peace, say the quiet ones; War! say the fierce ones. We shall have pity for the old and infirm branches, say the first; the second say none, as a dying limb falls at your feet, and you can hear the dancing and racing feet of the freakish winds as they pass on to make an Eolian harp of the next proud defiance. This is Borrow's wind on the heath, brother, you will say; it is nothing of the kind. It has simply been written to introduce you to a good phrase of Mr. C. E. Montague's *Essays of Today and Yesterday* (Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1s.). In his short essay on *Up in the Alps*, he is speaking about the tuneful quality of names—Fontarabia, Vallombrosa, Bendemeer—"they make roses swing in your mind." With the sure aim of a master throughout this collection he picks up the just word, and the result is that you are never in doubt about his meaning. A frequent word of his is "heart"; was it not the counsel of Sir Philip Sydney "to look in thine heart and write"?

Nietzsche's opinion of newspapers is perhaps too well-known to need any repetition in this journal. He was keen enough to see that, in the words of Wilde, "Most people prefer to live in luxury, and to think with the majority." Another writer, V. Rosanov, a Russian, whose translated *Solitaria* is now appearing in the pages of the *New Age*, peeps into the idealist's future, and sees the beginning of the end. "It will begin, I think," he states, "with *disaccustoming* oneself to newspapers. Then people will begin to regard reading papers as simply indecent, cowardly." Here are the headlines of a few papers that live by shrieking on the top note of hysteria and sensation:—

London Cinema Watchman Stabbed.
Six Motorists Killed in One Night.
Man Shot in Blazing House.
Babies Thrown Through Blazing Window.
London Hotel Death Leap.

The eyes of the public are assaulted daily with these and similar notices; the population of the United Kingdom in 1911 was given as 45,216,763, and there is hardly a single instance where a brave deed is chronicled to send a gust of fresh air in the dwelling-place of the human race. The editors ought to be induced to join the Boy Scout movement, which, we are given to understand, gives prominence to untying knots for good deeds.

Perhaps the greatest event of the year 1926 will be the speech of M. Briand on the occasion of Germany entering the League of Nations. The French statesman is an old man as years go, and he was a friend of the late Jean Jaures. He has never disguised his views on Church and State, and, with a lightness of touch that can never be imitated by Labour statesmen in this country he suggested lending God assistance in the

following passage: "If the Creator's plan had really been that nations should not fight one another, nobody had taken much notice of it so far, but he hoped that they might help to put it into operation." That, fortunately for the human race, and as a right of the "first men," is at least getting affairs in a proper perspective. With a patron saint of Rabelais instead of John Knox or Calvin, and without fear of losing the P.S.A. vote, M. Briand breathes the rarer atmosphere of freedom, and our youth, let us hope, will enter their inheritance, laying the foundation of the United States of Europe: "It is finished. Henceforth no more war; no more vigils of suffering; but conciliation and peace." These are inspiring words from the representative of the French nation; they have received the freedom of utterance and cannot be recalled, and although they may only be the first glimmerings of international sanity, they make the year memorable to those who are waiting for mankind to grow up.

In a leisured hour we re-read Milton's *Apology for Smectynnuus*. The title is choc-taw, being composed of the initial letters of five names of various authors. Milton was thirty-three when, in this apology, he defended presbytery. Although it has now only an academic interest, the language and style may repay study. An editorial footnote reading as follows, was of special interest: "It has always been customary, as Locke observes, for men who are vanquished in argument to accuse their opponents of Atheism." In *Mr. Belloc Objects*,¹ by H. G. Wells, it is possible to find the level of polemic in a similar state and admiration cannot be withheld for the urbanity of the author's style; in parts, it reminds us of those ironic flashes to be found in *The Revolt of the Angels*, by the late Anatole France. The fury of "for and against" has died down; like a well-trained boxer who must of necessity govern his temper, Mr. Wells conducts his defence in a manner that justifies the belief that truth needs no defence. There is a smile and a laugh, and a joke on the way, and although none will deny that in other directions Mr. Belloc is a genius, his fixed idea of a "benevolent Catholicism" only exists in his imagination, and he presents a similar problem to Newton, when that scientist wandered into the desert of theology. To another battle royal at Stratford Town Hall, between our Editor and Canon Storr, our mind unconsciously reverted; on this level, we may take up the broken harp recording the triumphs of man in his process of settling down to the earth. And the music will be sweeter because it is unheard.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

SCIENCE AND FACT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—From the great respect that one must show to a reputable scientist it is difficult to repudiate opinions expressed by such a one on subjects outside the domain of science, but when he goes on to say, as Sir Oliver Lodge has done, "so far as he can gauge, the progress of science is tending towards a strengthening of theology in all its really vital aspects," ordinary intelligence, but endowed by nature with a power of thinking when evidence is put before him, rejects his theories on theology.

He would have been more convincing if he had told us what precisely he means by the "constant interaction of spirit and matter" and its "extension to human spirit," and, further, how he reconciles "the Incarnation as both a divine and human fact."

If this is the kind of doctrine offered to a decadent world by a great scientist, we may as well go back at once to the Dark Ages, and accept the doctrines of the Great Lying Church, Gipsy Smith, or the Salvation Army.

¹ Mr. Belloc objects to *The Outline of History*, by H. G. Wells. Watts & Co., 1s.

May one be pardoned for rejecting such teaching as standing on no higher level than that of the mediocre Sunday-school teacher who has wallowed in the Christian superstition all his life?

It would appear that there is a conspiracy to maintain the "darkness that shall cover the earth" by those who should lead us into the light of Reason.

SINE CERE.

"ROMAN CANDLES."

SIR,—As an enthusiastic supporter of Freethought, and being opposed to Clericalism in all shapes and sizes, may I be allowed to offer a few words of kindly criticism on the first paragraph of the article signed by "Mimnermus" under the above heading?

He states that, "although half the members of the Church of England, and all the members of the various Free Churches, are supposed to be anti-Catholic, they seem utterly incapable of effective protest, and have left the work of fighting the worst elements of Clericalism to the Freethinkers."

It seems to me imperative that, as Freethinkers, we should not expect the Free Churches or the Church of England to be violently opposed to the Roman Church to-day. Some dissenters and "Low Churchmen" may offer lip service to attacks on Rome, but, as Milton truly wrote, "Presbyter is but priest writ large," and we know that "Freethought" is the bugbear of all Christian denominations. This is one of the reasons why we must attack Christianity, "lock, stock, and barrel." All "Clericalism" is the antithesis of everything that is noble and true, and all sections of the "Protestant Faith" are equally superstitious, bigoted, and cruel as the Roman Church, whenever an opportunity arises for them to demonstrate to lovers of "Freedom" that "God is Love."

In conclusion, I hasten to assure "Mimnermus" that I always look forward to his excellent contributions. I have read "umteen," and this is the first occasion that I have felt justified in offering a few words of humble criticism. I, therefore, look forward with pleasure to a kindly word from him on my comments.

R. G. FOSTER.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY, HELD AT 61 FARRINGTON STREET ON OCTOBER 28.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present, Messrs. Clifton, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, and Miss Kough. The Secretary was still absent through indisposition.

It was explained that this meeting was held, through the courtesy of the Pioneer Press, in their offices, as the offices of the National Secular Society were closed for repairs and re-decoration.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. The pass-book was produced and examined, and it was reported that the Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd., had made a grant to the N.S.S. of £250 for general purposes.

New members were received for the South London Branch.

Correspondence from Glasgow and Swansea was received and dealt with. The action of the Birmingham Education authorities in refusing the use of the Schools to the local Branch of the N.S.S. was discussed, the Branch desiring to arrange for a Protest Meeting. The Executive finally resolved to advise the Branch to take steps to call a Town's meeting, in the carrying out of which they would be prepared to assist.

Mr. Cohen reported that he had engaged the Kensington Town Hall for a lecture on Wednesday, November 10.

The Executive expressed their pleasure on hearing that their fellow member, Mr. George Woods, was recovering from a serious illness, particulars of which had only just reached them.

Further matters of routine were dealt with and the meeting closed.

K. B. K.

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.

ESSEX HALL (Essex Street, Strand, W.C.): Friday, November 12, at 8, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Evolution of Civilization." (Lantern Lecture.) Tickets 1s. each, apply, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, to Mr. F. L. Monnaie, 87 Ashbourne Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey.

KENSINGTON (Town Hall, High Street): Wednesday, November 10, at 8, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Do the Dead Live?" Questions and discussion cordially invited.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road and three minutes from Camden Town Tube Station): 7.30, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, "Health and Exercise."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7, a Social, Grand Variety Entertainment by talented artistes.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. G. F. Hollaud, "The Drama of Noel Coward."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "General Smuts as Philosopher."

STRATFORD (Town Hall): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "If Christ came to Stratford." Questions and discussion cordially invited.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "The Church of Rome." Thursday, November 11, at 7.30, at the above Hall, Mr. Maurice Maubrey, a Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30 and 3 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Botting, Hart, and Peacock.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW (Bakunin House, 13 Burnbank Gardens, Glasgow): Thursday, November 11, at 8, Mr. Guy A. Aldred, "Carlyle and the Proletarian Period." Questions and discussion cordially invited.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mrs. M. MacCall, "Mankind Came Not First." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver Collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Amy Capenerhurst, A.L.C.M., Musical Lecture, "An Evening with Mozart." (Vocal and Instrumental Illustrations.)

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 130 Rusholme Road): 3, Mr. J. W. Gosling, "Swinburne"; 6.30, Mr. F. E. Monks, "Christianity and Progress."

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