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Views and Opinions.

The Value of Reiteration.

A listener to one of my recent lectures confided to a friend that he had heard some of the arguments used by me forty years ago. We are not surprised. Indeed, if by some miracle this hearer could carry back his personal experience two or three centuries we daresay he could make the same remark, and with equal truth. So far as we are concerned we should be the very last to claim that what we have to say in the course of a lecture has never been said before. It would be very little use if that embodied the truth. Originality does not consist in saying something that has never been said before, but in making what is said one's own before it is uttered. It is possible to make a parrot repeat a sentence which may embody a profound truth, but it is not the parrot's sentence, because we have no warranty for assuming that the parrot has made the sentence part and parcel of its own mental processes. Or to take an illustration from another department. The difference between healthy and unhealthy or useless feeding is entirely a question of assimilation. A food that is merely swallowed is of no use to the swallower, and it leaves the body much as it entered it. But a food that serves its purpose becomes transformed into part of me. It belongs to me; it is mine in the most intimate and most personal manner. It is inseparable from me. And none but a fool or a liar would claim that the thoughts he utters are his in any other sense. They are his because they are part of him, and whether they originated with him, is of no importance whatever. To strive after originality in any other sense is to end in being fantastic. And it is highly probable that if my critic had been attending lectures for eighty years, forty years ago he might have made the same remark, and with equal relevancy.

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The Old Fight.

To the comment, "You are using the old arguments," it would be a quite legitimate reply, "We

are still fighting the old beliefs." The theological world does not alter; it merely, at most, disguises the old beliefs under a new form of words, and it should be part of the business of a Freethought advocate to strip from it its disguise. And even the alteration in words applies only to the minority. That is a fact that very many appear to overlook. As we have so often pointed out, that a handful of leading Christians can create a furore because they deny the existence of a literal heaven and hell, or direct answers to prayer, or the veracity of the Bible story of creation, is in itself evidence that the majority of Christians are still where they were. If these things were not still believed their denial would create no stir, it would not even be worth the making. The Christianity against which Paine, and Carlyle, and others warred is not dead; it is only scotched, and is compelled to be less assertive in some directions than it was. Large audiences can still be attracted to listen to the fantastic absurdities of Miss Pankhurst on the second coming of Christ, and the press gives it respectful reports where Freethinking criticisms of Christianity are studiously ignored. The Roman Church makes steady headway—at the expense of the other Christian sects, and there is not a single form of superstition that does not meet with at least as great public respect as does the complete rejection of all religious beliefs. It will not pay for us to be too parochial in our outlook, and because our immediate circle of friends happens to be liberally inclined, and because Christians are not openly so ferocious as they were with regard to those who reject their superstitions, to imagine that Christianity is quite dead. It is still very much alive, and if it is less aggressive at the moment than it was, it is ready to show its aggressiveness whenever and wherever opportunity offers.

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Camouflage.

The vogue of psycho-analysis has made us familiar with the process of rationalizing. It is a name given to the practice—the unconscious habit—of finding some justification in reason for things we do from an entirely different motive. And in the pose of those non-Christians who do nothing to help Freethought on the ground that Christianity is dead, or that there is no need now to attack Christianity, one cannot help suspecting a form of rationalizing by which a man seeks to apologise to himself for his inactivity. To attack Christianity, openly, plainly, still involves enough inconvenience, social or economic, to daunt many. It is so much easier to hide one's hostility to Christianity by remaining quiet, or by finding some other name for what one actually does believe, a name that shall not deliberately involve a plain rejection of all forms of religious belief. There are many illustrations of this; at present we are concerned with only one. To

openly associate oneself with a declared war on Christianity may involve unpleasantness in one's business or social relations. To openly confess as much to oneself is to neglect one's duty with a degree of moral courage of which few are capable. It is so much easier to stand on one side and to explain to oneself that one is doing nothing because there is no longer the crying need there was to fight the Churches, or to denounce the falsity of Christian teaching. It relieves one from the due discharge of an irksome duty, and, at the same time, flatters one's conceit with a sense of superiority. It was Professor Huxley who said that our reason found excuses for our instincts, and, to illustrate it, coined the word Agnosticism in order to camouflage an Atheism he hesitated to avow.

* * *

Aggressive Christianity.

Two illustrations are to hand of what has just been said. First, as to the power of Christianity. London University was founded by Freethinkers, whose chief desire in founding it was to provide a University which should be free from theological influences. To-day Christian influences are stronger in that University than they have ever been. And on Armistice Day some parson was allowed access to the register of the University so that every student on the books might receive a particularly stupid tract, "Lest We Forget," with a card carrying the compliments of the Chaplain-General to His Majesty's Forces. It is a tract that carries us back to the most ignorant days of evangelical Christianity. As it is intended for Armistice Day, a day which should remind every intelligent person of the futility, the savagery, the wickedness of war, it is full of the war, with the lesson that the only reason why we won the war was because "God himself fought for us in answer to our prayer." And with the usual truthfulness and Christian suppression of facts the students are told that it was because a National Day of Prayer was instituted in 1917 that the war was brought to an end, and Germany was defeated. There are other illustrations of the same kind in the tract, and never does it dawn upon the primitive intelligence that dictated it that a God who could permit the slaughter to go on for four years, and do nothing to prevent it until the House of Commons announced a day of prayer, is one that deserves the contempt of all decent-minded men and women. At the side of that the worst atrocities recorded in the war were kindly acts. And the tract ends with the advice to students that if they have any intellectual difficulties on account of Christianity, the better plan is to ignore them and to throw themselves on Jesus Christ. And this is the kind of thing which the University authorities lend themselves to sending out to the students under their care! They can do this largely because of the inactivity of those who ought to be active, and who excuse themselves from being active on the ground that there is not the need to fight Christianity there once was. The need is the greater because Christianity no longer dares to work so openly as it once did.

Hiding the Truth.

And here is an illustration of the way in which men who do not believe in Christianity conceal their views for reasons, sometimes domestic, sometimes social, sometimes financial. There has just been published the diary of Mr. A. C. Benson, the novelist. One ought to say it is a selection from a diary, which, if it was all published, would fill about forty volumes. Mr. Benson was the son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the author of many religious novels. It is safe to say that every reader of his novels took him to be a thorough-going Christian, and that may even

have been the opinion of the circle in which he moved. The excerpts published from the diary—I have not had the opportunity to read the whole of the book—show that he had altogether got rid of the belief of his father, and of his own youth. He describes a church service as "dilletante and silly," and calls some prayers heard in his mother's house "damnable" and "ugly, untrue, nonsense." Of his own opinions he writes that he is "pure Agnostic," although he believes in "Christian principles." What he means by that is probably that he believes in right and wrong, etc., which is no more a Christian belief than is the belief that twice two make four. But here is a man who all his life passes as a Christian. We do not mean that he always told people he was a Christian; we do not know whether he did or not. But he evidently allowed people to think he was. He confesses it in his Diary, and one would like to know how much he does confess in his Diary. For it may be assumed that his editor will act as editors so often act in a community which has had its sense of honesty undermined by centuries of Christian teaching, and publish only so much as he thinks it wise to tell the public.

* * *

Helping the Enemy.

Now this kind of thing would be unnecessary, the sending out of tracts such as the one described would be impossible, if those who are not Christians said so plainly and publicly. It does not do to wait until one is dead to confess one's opinions; that only encourages others to act in the same way. It does not do to invent new names to cover up one's real heresy and to lead Christians to believe that one is very near them, and that one "regrets" one's inability to go the whole way. That encourages Christians in their policy of boycott, persecution, and impertinence. It is the disreputable intellectual character of Christianity that needs driving home. It is the poverty of its moral teaching that men and women must be made to realize. A. C. Benson's position is that of scores of our prominent men to-day. They do not believe in Christianity. They must feel a hearty contempt for its silly legends which it parades as historic fact, for its caricature of morality, for its attempts to foist upon the world a picture of another life that is both absurd and impossible. But they will not say so in a clear and unmistakable manner. And that is a direct encouragement to Christians to persevere in their present policy. Christians are noisy largely because Freethinkers are quiet. It is time we all made our unbelief definite and real.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Thomas Paine.

THE flush of dawn that overwhelms the night
 With pale dismay and bids the morning fan
 Her perfumed breath of freedom into man,
 And gilds the edge of day with promise bright,
 Adorns him like a halo, and the light
 Intensifies with time, nor ever can
 That radiance be extinguished by a ban
 Imposed by State or church with pomp or rite.
 His golden shafts pierce like the morning sun
 Through windowed saints, in many-coloured spears.
 The very crypt is smiling through its tears;
 The superseded taper flickers out,
 And glees supplant the chants of monk and nun
 As Reason lights the sombre mind devout.

TITOMAS C. FALCONER.

Can We Believe in God?

THERE are many people who regard that question as entirely superfluous. They take the existence of God for granted. This is practically what all the Churches do. They declare that "there is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions." Those who say there is no God are simply laughed at and dismissed as incorrigible fools. Such an attitude is wholly irrational and immoral. In the *Christian World* of November 11 a column is devoted to a consideration of Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick's treatment of our question. As is well known, Dr. Fosdick is at present the pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church, New York, where he preaches on Sunday mornings to overflowing congregations. As is also well known, Dr. Fosdick is hated and persecuted in a truly Christian fashion by the Fundamentalists of all denominations. To a certain extent he is a Liberal theologian. In this country he would be generally accepted as a thoroughly orthodox man. Be that as it may, on Sunday morning, October 24, this distinguished divine preached a sermon on the subject of God. "Plenty of other problems," he is reported to have said, "are being discussed, but they are subsidiary to this central matter on which all else depends. Many minds find so much difficulty with faith in God, especially if he be conceived at all in personal terms, that they are giving it up. Often our churches do not help such folk. We take God for granted. In public worship we talk about God and to him as if no question were involved." Dr. Fosdick, at any rate, frankly acknowledges that there are many grave difficulties with faith in God and honestly endeavours to remove them.

According to the *Christian World's* correspondent in New York, the preacher began by asking the following question:—

Do we think that originally there was nothing here except space, with innumerable electrons and atoms swishing restlessly around in it, and that through unplanned, accidental combinations of these electrons and atoms all that exists has come into being, from the sun in heaven to the Son of Man on earth? It is, as one philosopher put it, like supposing that the works of Shakespeare came from an accidental explosion in a printing shop.

Assuming the accuracy of the report, we are amazed at Dr. Fosdick's erroneous and misleading statement of the question. According to Genesis neither space nor electrons and atoms existed prior to creation, its assertion being that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now science teaches that absolutely nothing is in any sense whatever "accidental." The whole process of evolution has been governed by fixed, unalterable laws. "To stop believing in God in order to believe that," the preacher exclaimed dramatically, "is, so far as credulity is concerned, leaping from the frying-pan into the fire." That is a gross misrepresentation of the real facts. It is impossible to believe that an educated man like Dr. Fosdick does not know that science has no room whatever for "accident" in its scheme of the universe. Everywhere we find the reign of inexorable law. Things are what they are of absolute necessity. And yet of purpose or plan there is not the slightest trace at any point. How does Dr. Fosdick account for the endless waste that has occurred and still occurs in the course of evolution, or for the existence of numerous animals which are at once useless and instruments of injury and destruction to other living beings? Are they, too, creatures of the loving, heavenly Father? In spite of such facts the preacher calmly insists that "here is a universe saturated in its detail with pur-

pose, where nothing seems to be merely pulled up from below, but everything seems to be pulled up by an object—a goal." Well, what is the purpose served by the devouring bears of Russia, the venomous reptiles, and all other enemies of mankind? Have all these been pulled up from below by the hands of the God of love?

The *Christian World* correspondent adds:—

Dr. Fosdick declared that a man-made scientific conception of the world, that gives no credit to God and his Divine purpose, can leave little hope in the human heart. One of the most significant movements in the religious life of to-day, he said, is the attempt to build up a religion without God. He who does not believe in God thinks the universe is a gigantic machine, and would call religion nothing else than devotion to the ideals of the race. The trouble with so much of our doubt as to whether or not God exists is our preconceived picture of him. We picture him a king, a judge, a father, a high tower, and all religion accentuates these pictures. Then one day a colossus of interrogation comes crashing down on us. Does God exist? Does the God we have pictured exist? It would be a strange world that had come from ancient chaos to modern order, if there was nothing like a great purpose in it; if there was nothing that brought us music, mother's love, the laughter of little children, men who love honour, and homes on every obscure street, where love and sacrifice are exhibited.

That is beautifully eloquent, but by no means convincing. It is perfectly true that the scientific conception of the world gives no credit to God, or, in other words, leaves God out of account. Dr. Fosdick characterizes such a conception as man-made, which is quite true; but is not theology also, whether Fundamental or Liberal, man-made? Is not God himself man-made? The preacher speaks of different pictures of God; but they are pictures drawn from no original, but from the pure fancy of the painters. It is to his credit that Dr. Fosdick is an evolutionist; but he does not realize that the course of evolution has been marked by so much suffering and cruelty that if God had had anything to do with it his moral character would have been completely and hopelessly damaged. People who really believed in the perfect justice, goodness, and love of God could not possibly regard him as the designer and conductor of the tragic process of evolution. And yet Dr. Fosdick confidently declares that "we must realize that God is the powerful goodness that has brought us swinging up the strange spiral that is human history." Of course, he is thinking of civilized men, such as his American fellow citizens; but what about the millions of savages who are to be found in certain quarters and who are nearer the higher animals among which they dwell than their civilized and educated human brethren? Are savages also the offspring of God, who then must certainly be held responsible for the humiliating conditions under which they live?

The only conclusion to which knowledge of the course of evolution inevitably leads us is that the belief in God is doomed, or that Atheism is the only rational philosophy. Dr. Fosdick is not ignorant of the fact that the majority of people in America as well as in this country are drifting away from traditional religion and finding satisfaction in practical Secularism. Not long ago we met a lady who gloried in being a *natural* Atheist. That is to say, she never had any religious beliefs, but was an unbeliever from birth. There are not many such just now, but that is what we are unquestionably coming to. The tide is decidedly away from the supernatural and towards the goal of definite Freethought. This is the trend of present-day thought.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Comedy of Creeds.

We moderns must be open-minded.—*Israel Zangwill.*

Society often forgives the criminal; it never forgives the dreamer.—*Oscar Wilde.*

THE Church of England, although one of the wealthiest religious bodies in the world, is, perhaps, the most parochial and narrow-minded of them all. For generations it concerned itself only with home affairs, not entirely unconnected with matters of purely self-interest. So long as tithes, coal royalties, and rents from ecclesiastical properties were paid with regularity, there was nothing much to worry over. Even in political crises, this Church's duty was merely to buttress the existing social order. So sluggish, so reposeful, was the life of this church that it appears almost like the somnolent part of the life of Rip Van Winkle, a quiet American whose career was not consecrated to lustle and graft. Of late years, however, nasty things have happened. Naughty people have been bold enough to talk of the disestablishment, and even the disendowment, of this wealthy Church of England. The fate of the Anglican Church in Ireland and Wales were horrid examples of what worldly-minded men might be capable of. Hence the rousing of the religious Rip Van Winkle, and the tremendous happenings that followed. It was not the fault of Churchmen that these events had their humorous side, for ecclesiastics nearly always "live in balloons," as our French neighbours love to express it.

Firstly, to combat the association of parochialism, over-seas bishoprics were created. One proud prelate was made Bishop of Northern and Central Europe, and it is safe to add that this happy event was never realized from Marseilles to Moscow. Another estimable Anglican clergyman was placed in the giddy position of being Bishop of Gibraltar, a decision which did not affect the mortality statistics of the regiments of the British Army situated in that Mediterranean health resort. So the pretty parlour game went merrily on until the whole earth, and, perhaps, various planets of the Solar System, were provided with right-reverend pastors and masters to supervise their morals, and, incidentally, to accept gifts of money.

Then a new line of distraction was found, for the faithful Church folk, anxious to do the right thing for the salvation of their souls, if they possessed such things. The Archbishop of Canterbury began to be deeply interested in the sufferings of the Christians on the Iraq border. New atlases had to be consulted in order to follow his Grace's eastern pilgrimages. These Christians, it was recalled, had been conveyed, free of charge, but forcibly, by the Turks from the north to the south of the Brussels line, and this upset the distinguished tenant of Lambeth Palace. Speaking at a luncheon, the Archbishop suggested that the British Government should interfere on behalf of these Eastern Christians. Doubtless, the Archbishop's motives were pure and undefiled by worldly motives, but official interference undoubtedly implied a risk of war. And war is a terrible business, and far worse than making speeches at a luncheon party, or officiating at a royal christening.

If history is to be trusted, Christians and Mohammedans in Eastern Europe have "deported" each other for centuries. They appear to do it with the same regularity as Englishmen go to the races. If, on this occasion, the deportees have had a worse time than usual, the utmost sympathy will be felt for their condition, but, unfortunately, the logical outcome of the Archbishop's pious protest is that many more Christians would lose their lives. For

life is an inevitable concomitant of a war undertaken in their defence, a fact that even Army chaplains might realize.

Why is the Archbishop of Canterbury so anxious concerning these Eastern Christians? They belong to the Greek, and not the Anglican, Church. Such altruism, as Jago puts it, "is Greek to me." For the Greek Church is the oldest in all Christendom, and if the pretensions of the Patriarch of Alexandria are right those of the ecclesiastics at Lambeth Palace are wrong. Even his Grace of Canterbury cannot have it both ways. If the bishops of the Greek Church are in the direct line of apostolical succession, then the lawn-sleeved prelates who sit in our own House of Lords are nothing of the kind, and are taking the contributions of the faithful under false pretences. And the sooner that British Christians get confirmed by the Bishops of the Greek Church the better their chances of playing a harp in the next world. Otherwise they will spend eternity with the wicked readers of the *Freethinker*, and perspire profanity for ever and ever in an atmosphere of two hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

Priests know the value of an oft-repeated assertion, and Anglican clergymen are no exceptions in this respect. What, however, becomes of their boast that the Church of England is "the Church," when it is but a mushroom of yesterday compared to the hoary old Greek Church. English Sunday-school scholars may get the impression that the "twelve disciples" were as English as Yarmouth fishermen, but, from a European point of view, the Church of England is but a name to those fortunate enough to be able to read. For Europe is almost entirely in the grip of the Greek and Roman Churches, and these old-established merchants are none too tolerant to trade rivals, as colporteurs of Bible societies know to their bitter cost.

Blather concerning Mesopotamia may be acceptable at clerical luncheon parties, and in Mayfair drawing rooms, but this is England, and there are as grave problems here as anywhere awaiting solution. Statesmen used to divert attention from home crises by the simple device of a little war abroad. Is the Archbishop playing the same quiet game? The greatest humanitarian duty facing this nation's leaders is to solve our own problems, and not to worry over distant zones of disquiet. If the Archbishop is really anxious to succour distressed Christians, there are plenty much nearer home than Mesopotamia or Eastern Europe.

The cream of the jest is that, to the Greek Church ecclesiastics, the Archbishop of Canterbury is but a heretic, just a shade or two removed from a wicked Freethinker. If the Right-Reverend Randall Davidson had lived a few generations ago he would probably have been a candidate for the stake on a charge of heresy. Here is the highest-paid official of the Church of England, for King George as "head" is unpaid, challenging the tradition of centuries by mutilating the Holy Bible, and altering the Book of Common Prayer.

The challenge is significant, and symptomatic. Never since the Christian Era has there been so general a questioning of fundamental beliefs. The great difference is that whereas in Ages of Faith the penalty of denial was death, to-day the persecution is milder. It is a clear manifestation of the growing tolerance in this country. Nor is the portent unwelcome, for it is in the clash of opinion that the spark of truth is produced. It is a victory for the Freethought pioneers, whose devotion to duty is a phenomenon of courage and steadfastness unique in the history of the world.

MIMNERMUS.

Jesus in Faith and in History.

THE TWO GENEALOGIES.

IN any discussion on the Virgin Birth, the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke must be taken into consideration, and it need hardly be said that theologians and Christian apologists have made a deep study of them. I do not think it unfair to add that most of these estimable gentlemen would have handed over half the wealth of the Church rather than explain to their confiding flocks why they contain difficulties which only abiding Faith can overcome. The plain man, who first looks into these lists of Joseph's ancestors is naturally puzzled why, considering Jesus was born of the Holy Ghost and was very God of very God, he should burden his already large stock of Faith with more mysteries. How is it possible for Joseph to have—even in the inspired Word—two fathers? And, anyway, what has Jesus got to do with it? If the earnest enquirer ventures further and starts asking questions, he will soon find that, when a Christian apologist has his back to the wall fighting in the last ditch for his sublime religion, there is nothing too silly for him to defend, as will be apparent further on; and he will pour out such a maze of explanation that the poor deluded believer will find it easier to accept anything than venture to put a question.

In the Rev. Dr. Giles' *Christian Records* the reader will find the rational objections to the genealogies clearly and concisely given. There are five of these objections: 1. They do not agree with one another. 2. They do not agree with the genealogy found in the Old Testament. 3. They are not supported by probability. 4. The genealogy of St. Matthew is not consistent with itself. 5. They impugn the doctrine of the Church, that the Christ was to be the descendant of King David. Dr. Giles takes each point in detail and makes mincemeat of the lists.

Although Luke distinctly says Heli is the father of Joseph (or, rather, that Joseph was the son of Heli), some Christian apologists insist that Luke didn't mean what he said and that Mary, the daughter of Heli, is meant. If this is so, Dr. Giles says, "we are at liberty to give to words whatever meaning may best suit our convenience and the critical art, by which so many truths have been saved from oblivion, may be cast aside as no longer of any benefit to mankind." In other words, Christians have to face facts, which is about the last thing they like to do.

Dean Alford gives the genealogies up as hopeless, and he deems it "over-curious and uncritical to attempt to reconcile them." Not so Dean McClellan, in whose individual and interesting translation of the four Gospels (1875) will be found quite one of the most wonderful defences of them ever written. He devotes nearly fourteen pages of small type, closely printed, to their genuineness, and is obviously prepared to swallow anything in the "inspired" text. The "generations" in Matthew, if by "generations" is meant what is usually meant, total to forty-one, though Matthew distinctly says in verse 17 of Chapter i., there are three generations of "fourteen" each—which, to the plain man, should make forty-two. This doesn't trouble Mr. McClellan, who says, "We have no assertion by St. Matthew that the total number of generations in the entire preceding register is *forty-two*...." which ought to settle the wicked sceptic once for all—though how three times fourteen make forty-one I give up, and the solution offered by the worthy Dean leaves me more confused than ever. Matthew gives us twenty-eight generations from David to Jesus, while Luke

gives us forty-three, but, bless my soul, these little things don't worry the apologists. There are people in this year of grace, 1926, who believe the story of Jonah literally (see the Rev. D. Morse-Boycott's article in *T.P.'s Weekly*, November 6, 1926), so little yarns about one man with two fathers, or three fourteens making forty-one are mere trifles. You would think that when Luke says that Salathiel was the son of Neri and Matthew says he was the son of Jecheonias, you could floor our learned Dean. By no means. Nor could you when Chronicles say that Zorobabel's father is Pedaiah, while both Matthew and Luke say it was Salathiel. Mr. McClellan will take you through page after page of the most learned disquisitions to prove that the inspired text can never be wrong.

But I am not attempting in this little paper to go through a long argument about the genealogies looking at them from what one may call just a rational point of view. I have come to the conclusion that the final Gospel editors were not quite such fools as we suppose. I firmly believe there is a good deal of what is called *esoteric* teaching in the four gospels, and that this teaching, or symbolism, was lost through that terrible night of 1,000 years we call the Dark Ages. A good deal of it—far more than is now suspected—was re-discovered by Dupuis in his wonderful book, *L'origine de tous les Cultes*, and a good deal more by the Rev. Robert Taylor in the *Devil's Pulpit*. There is, of course, much more than just sun-myth in the story of Jesus, and increasing study of comparative religions may finally discover all that is hidden. But no one who makes the occult an object of enquiry can fail to miss striking examples of "mystery" in the New Testament. Let me, for example, quote the Rev. E. W. Bullinger's *Number in Scripture*. He has got together a wonderful assortment of "magic" numbers prevailing right through Holy Writ. He points out first that rhythmic numbers can be found in Nature designed expressly by God. Therefore in His Revelation God repeats the same harmony of numbers. And, as far as magical arithmetic is concerned, the author is quite right. The Bible is packed with the numbers seven and three and ten and forty and lots of others.

Mr. Bullinger shows us in his remarkable book (for it is a remarkable book) that the number six is stamped upon all things *human*, while the number seven upon all things *spiritual*. For example, in the genealogy in Luke we have exactly *seventy-seven* names—with God at one end and Jesus at the other—the two sevens denoting the two spiritual beings of course. If we go to Matthew we can reckon up the genealogy as follows: Forty-one names, plus four which are given in the genealogy in Chronicles, plus twenty-one names (from Luke iii.) before Abraham, which add up to *sixty-six* names. Now, as six is the *human* number, could anything be more wonderfully designed than this striking proof of Christ's double nature, *divine* from Luke and *human* from Matthew?

Moreover, Mr. Bullinger explains why there are only forty-one names in the genealogy in Matthew. "There are *three* divisions (the stamp of Divine Perfection) with fourteen names in the first, fourteen in the second, but with thirteen names in the third." Now thirteen is the number found in the Old Testament designations of God, who is, of course, Jesus. And also thirteen is the "all-pervading factor of SIN," and of sin's atonement. So you see how Jesus is not only God, but he was the atonement for sin, all beautifully expressed in the thirteen of the third group of fourteen generations! I hope sceptics are entirely convinced. I may, however, add another reason—my own—for that number thirteen. It is

simply seven plus six—seven being the divine and six the human side of Jesus. And I trust now we shall get no more enquiries from blatant Atheists or exploded Materialists about the discrepancies in the Genealogies.

One other quotation from Mr. Bullinger. He points out that in Matthew God says, "Behold thy King." In Luke, God says, "Behold the Man." In Mark God says, "Behold my servant," while in John God says, "Behold your God." Now, a *servant* and a *God* require no genealogy—while "a *King* must have one and a *man* should have one." That is why there are only two genealogies.

Moreover, Matthew's is the *Royal* one descending from Abraham, while Luke's is the *human* one ascending to God. The picture this gives of God carefully working out all these distinctions so as to impress notorious infidels as well as the faithful with the real truth about Jesus is simply delightful.

There is another gentleman who deserves a word before I close this paper. In a number of pamphlets Mr. Ivan Panin, of America, has demonstrated beyond all doubt whatever how the science of numbers proves absolute inspiration of the Bible. He contends that the first part of the genealogy of "Our Lord" contains, in the Greek, "a vocabulary of 49 words, or 7 by 7. Of these 49 words 28 or 4 sevens begin with a vowel; and 21 or 3 sevens begin with a consonant, seven end with a vowel, and 42 or six sevens end with a consonant." He gives quite a lot of other "seven" features, but the above is a fair sample of his discoveries, which ought to be tested by a Greek scholar. Anyway, his conclusion is simply that, as no man could possibly have written Greek with so many sevens in it (and he challenges any naughty sceptic to try) it is obvious that God himself inspired Matthew, and therefore the Bible is true from cover to cover.

Well, the best way to answer Mr. Panin is to put the following before him and ask him to explain it. I quote *Figureology, the Science of Numbers*, by C. M. Kelland. This gentleman shows how each letter in a name has a corresponding number, and in this way takes the word *Lusitania*, which adds up to 43—the first seven. The ill-fated ship was launched on the seventh of May, in 1906—that is $1+9+6=16=7$, and made her first trip on August 9, 1907—that is, $8+9+1+9+7=34=7$. Her length was 790 feet—that is $7+9=16=7$. Her breadth 88 ft—that is $8+8=16=7$. She was torpedoed on the 7th day in 1915—that is $1+9+1+5=16=7$. (There are some other "seven" coincidences in the *Lusitania*, but these will suffice.) What I want to know is, how does the divine number "seven" work in with what happened to the unlucky vessel? Surely God's own number should have protected it? If not, why not?

I think I have said enough to show how obviously man-made, with set purpose, were the genealogies manufactured. They have nothing whatever to do with a real historical Jesus, who could never have required such magical symbols to bolster up his claim had he really been the "Son of God." In short, the Jesus of the New Testament is simply a *myth*.

H. CUTNER.

Rumour is a sort of talk spread about without any author, to which ill-will has given a beginning, and credulity growth.—*Quintilian*.

Never therefore can philosophy be worthily praised, for he who obeys her can pass every portion of his life free from trouble.—*Cicero*.

Strange Stories.

PERHAPS the Religious Tract Society is mainly responsible for the fact that the Bible is not read by Christians as it ought to be. This Society has flooded the land with the Word of God to such an extent that we pay little heed to its teaching, and many of our young folk find it difficult to turn up Nehemiah.

It was different in the olden time. When Bishop Bonner set up the first six Bibles in St. Paul's, "many well-disposed people used much to resort to the hearing thereof, especially when they could get any that had an audible voice to read to them." This prelate filled the office now held by the Bishop of London, and it is to his credit that he not only allowed the Bible to be read, but took some pains to have it read properly.

There is such a thing as a privilege losing its value if it becomes too common. We have heard of "scarcity value." So we infer that if the Bible had still been chained to the reading-desk, and the number strictly limited, the desire to be made acquainted with its contents might have been keener to-day.

The translators of the Authorized Version had great hopes when they dedicated the book to "The Most High and Mighty Prince James, by the grace of God." After making due allowance for the divinity that doth hedge a king, there is sufficient in this dedication to turn the stomachs of the most self-respecting. It is to be hoped they were pleased with the result of James' later conduct. I fancy some of them would like to have it re-written.

Had the Bible been limited to the "breeches bible," the "treacle bible," and a few more special editions, we had prized it more, but since they are broadcast by the ton, we neglect its beauties. I am told the unregenerate in foreign lands even use it to sole their boots. Dreadful! Treading the Word of God underfoot!

There is a kind of romance about the stories in the Old Testament that appeals to the imagination. The story at the very beginning where the garden is hemmed in by four rivers with queer names is suggestive. The first was called Pison, "which compasseth Havilah where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good, there is bdellium and the onyx stone." There were also Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates.

You notice that the sacred historian is already—in 2nd chap. of Genesis—a good judge of gold. Not only was there gold in Havilah, but it was of first-rate quality. None of your imitation dross in Havilah. Good, sound, marketable stuff. Doubtless he yearned to form a limited liability company with Adam as chairman. The shares might be taken up by the people in the land of Nod. A gentle hint would induce them to work the claim. They could always say they accepted their shares "on the nod."

Of course, the reason I suggest Nod is because Cain—after his disgrace—went there with his brand from the burning to wed his wife. Up to that time the population was scarce in Eden. When the presence of the bdellium was noted our respected Mother Eve had not been carved. She was still in embryo at the side of young Adam. But there must have been some fair daughters then in Nodland, or how else could Cain be provided when he went in search of a sweetheart?

I am not irrevocably wedded to this theory. I like to preserve an open mind. Should any doctor of divinity have a more rational explanation I will consider it. One hates to be obstinate or intolerant.

ALAN TYNDAL.

Acid Drops.

It is perhaps worth noting that, in addition to the religious marriage of the Crown Prince of Belgium to the Princess of Sweden, a civil marriage took place in the throne room of the palace at Stockholm. In England the importance of the civil marriage is carefully hidden. The result of this is that the majority of people imagine that a religious ceremony is a binding one. As a matter of fact, it is not binding at all. The real marriage is the civil marriage. A parson is only permitted to perform a marriage ceremony because he is created by the civil State a person with the power to do so. But his sole authority is derived from the Secular State. Without authority the religious marriage is of no more value than jumping over a broomstick.

Dr. Maltby, President of the Wesleyan Conference, said the other day: "When people say I am a pessimist I reply that I never was an optimist, for I have too much sense; I never was a pessimist, for I have too much faith; I am trying to be a Christian." According to this, the reverend gentleman needs a special label. He might be called a Christian "pess-optimist"—a Christian who, in regard to the future of his religion, hopes for the best but fears the worst.

It was "a brave and optimistic note," says the *Sunday School Chronicle*, that Dr. Nansen struck when installed as Rector of St. Andrew's University. He took for his theme the "spirit of adventure," and urged students to do, not what others could do equally well, but the special work that enlisted their interest and enthusiasm. They should throw their whole self into the enterprise. There should be no wavering; for self-trust was the first secret of success. All this is well enough, but what here concerns us is that our contemporary did not express surprise at Dr. Nansen's being able to express brave and optimistic thoughts. For the Doctor is a Freethinker; and, as every true Christian man knows, the mind of a Freethinker, lacking the "uplift" of religion, cannot but be dreary and pessimistic.

Plans are being prepared for thirty-eight new churches in the Chelmsford diocese. The good people of the diocese who will subscribe for the new buildings evidently have a fine sense of the fitness of things. They clearly realize that the Most High is more important than man, and that therefore it is far better to erect a few mansions for God than it is to build homes for the many thousands of their unfortunate fellow-countrymen forced to exist in one room.

Are we losing Sunday? asks a Sabbatarian. Not a bit of it. All that we are losing is the horribly depressing and joy-killing Puritan Sabbath, and getting back some semblance of a Merrie England. But no one is lamenting the fact except the gloomy misfits who are never happy unless they are miserable.

From Dr. E. Lyttelton's point of view, prayer has been the great agency which has kept religion alive. We imagine that another factor counts that this broad-minded Churchman has overlooked. Existence has been uncomfortable for any and all who have actively opposed the gross forms of superstition, and for this reason alone we think the doctor's diagnosis is a trifle biased in favour of his profession.

"A man is not necessarily a fool because he is a bishop," says the Bishop of Lichfield. We rather like that word "necessarily." And we never suggested that every bishop must be a fool. There are exceptions in every generalization.

The *Church Times* is not quite satisfied with the

League of Nations. It complains that "it was called into existence by the first treaty in European history that ignored all religious appeal," and that the language used as its meetings is generally masonic, and little care is taken of Christian susceptibilities. This is very dreadful. But the *Church Times* can never lift itself out of the atmosphere of the fifteenth century, and cannot picture a world worth living in where superstition is not given a free hand and a privileged position.

Addressing the Head Teachers' Association, Lord Beaverbrook declared that there was to-day a tendency in the press to provide excitement and amusement rather than that general diffusion of knowledge which is the other side of its function. He suggested that the teacher, whose natural interest in life is to spread the light of sound knowledge, should associate himself more closely with the press. Journalism needs the teacher. The *Teachers' World* agrees with Lord Beaverbrook, and says:—

The lesson which the teacher quickly learns, that it is not enough to amuse, is one which will yet have to be learnt by the Press. The better the education given by the teachers in the schools, the more will the press have to minister to a public demand for contributory journalism that shall instruct as well as amuse. That will be the teacher-writer's opportunity.....

If the type of "amusing and educating" reading-matter patronised by ex-pupils is any criterion of the quality of education received, we should say that there is an urgent need for an improvement in the instruction (one can hardly call it education) now given. At present, the schools appear to be producing just the kind of reader our noble press delights to cater for. And that's no praise for our educationalists.

The Duchess of Atholl, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, said that in the vast majority of day schools, "moral and religious teaching" is provided; but she thought the half-an-hour a day allowed for this instruction was wholly inadequate. She felt, therefore, that the work of the Sunday school was absolutely necessary for supplementing the work being done in the day school. We notice the Duchess differentiates between "moral" teaching and "religious." We are glad she does so; for the two are not by any means the same thing, and the first is important, but the other is not. If the time to be devoted to moral teaching is inadequate, we suggest that the best way to devote more time to such teaching is for the religious instruction to be cut out altogether.

The Duchess also remarked: "The enemies of Christianity are out in the open to-day; and they do not hesitate to fight in the open." Out in the open to-day! Her Grace's education has, we fear, been somewhat neglected. She seems entirely ignorant of the Free-thought fight and how it has been waged. The enemies of Christianity—the Freethinkers—have always fought in the open. And they have never hesitated at fighting there, despite Blasphemy Laws and other exhibitions of Christian love and brotherhood.

A pious reviewer of H. G. Wells' *Clissold* does not take very kindly to some of the ideas expressed in that hard-hitting novel. The author's views, he says, gives him no satisfaction. His explanation of this sad state of things is that Mr. Wells' output has been prodigious, and it is no marvel that even his genius should show signs of weariness and exhaustion. Mr. Wells, the reviewer solemnly suggests, would do well now to let his mind lie fallow for a good spell. As the reader can see, it makes all the difference to one's estimation of a book whether or not the author's views agree with one's pet beliefs! Obviously the genius of Mr. Wells is exhausted and weary. An author always gets in a state like that when he is unable to speak reverently of God and Jesus, and scoffs at the various quaint institutions beloved by the multitude.

To understand one another is the secret of life, declares Marshal Foch. This statement will be hardly likely to commend itself to earnest Christians. For they believe in devoting their energies to understanding God. That pastime doesn't leave much time for understanding ordinary human beings. Therein lies the reason why the social affairs of Christian nations are in such an unlovely muddle.

The Bishop who conducted the Armistice service at the Cenotaph was guilty of one rather grave error of omission. He omitted to give special thanks to God for graciously decreeing that, during the war, he and his fellow priests should be incapable of bearing arms in defence of their country. To exhibit ingratitude to the Almighty is a dangerous thing. We shouldn't be surprised if the Deity shows his displeasure during the next war which our militarists are busily preparing for. He will probably shove all the parsons into the firing-line with a rifle in their hands. That will "larn 'em" to be grateful for the Lord's mercies.

George Lansbury is such a cheerful kind of person that one cannot help liking him. His talks (they cannot be called speeches) to meetings of Labour Party members and supporters are full of irresponsible kindnesses about everybody in general, and his fulminations are usually limited to the prevailing conditions in particular. Even his condemnations of Christianity, as practised at the present time, are always worded in a way that give offence to no one sect, and even when he charges the country with practising Atheism and therefore causing bad conditions for the people, it is quite impossible to quarrel with him. At the same time it is evident that "our George" knows nothing of either Christianity or Atheism, or if he does, he never displays a knowledge of them.

At Peterborough, last Sunday evening, we read, there was a crowded meeting and an overflow gathering. There Lansbury is reported to have said that, 2,000 years after Christ was on earth, there was going on the greatest class-war struggle the world has ever seen, and such a thing was not a sign of Christianity but of Atheism. In our opinion, it is nothing of the kind and nearly every word in the statement is false. Let us take the items seriatim. There is no unbiased student of the records of Rome and Judea who is able to prove that such a person as Christ, which Lansbury has in his mind, ever lived upon the earth. Indeed the evidence, such as it is, is sufficient to convince one that the whole tale of the New Testament is a fable. Then this struggle of the miners. It bears no comparison with the historical Peasants' Revolt of the Middle Ages, and which no doubt he clean forgot in the excitement of the moment. Through all the ages we have had the struggle of the one class against another, and neither religion nor Atheism has any more to do with it than the belief in sorcery or the science of astronomy. Probably there were Atheists in the audience who regretted the remark, but were not so foolish as to make any objection at the time, excusing the reference rather than making any sign of disagreement. But we put it to Mr. Lansbury, is it wise of him to give these outbursts in a place containing all shades of opinion upon religious questions? If there is one thing more than another which Christianity teaches it is obedience to the powers that be, and the right of a master to deal as he pleases with his servants, but we should not claim, therefore, that the condition of the miners is the result of Christian teaching. It is enough to say that Christianity has not presented these disturbances, or secured a reign of social justice.

The Rev. H. L. Hornby says that he represents the fourth generation of his family that has been in holy orders. That is a fine example of open confession, carelessness of consequences. There are not many people who have the moral courage to parade the family skeleton in this fashion. But we bid Mr. Hornby not to despair.

Many complaints skip a generation, and sometimes disappear altogether.

Now that the coal trouble is almost at an end we should like everybody to notice that we have here a clear answer to prayer. When it was made plain that there was trouble coming in the coalfields, prayers were offered on behalf of industrial peace. When the General Strike occurred, prayers in the churches were again offered. Twice since May the Archbishops have publicly advised praying to God to bring about peace. And at last there is hope. We do not feel justified in accusing God of dilatoriness. He may only have just heard about it.

The other day Justice Sankey had before him one of those cases with which the clergy are so often connected. It was a charge against the Vicar of Cadneycum of committing eight acts of indecency. Mr. Justice Sankey, in sentencing the man to six months in the second division (if it had been blasphemy there would have been no second division), said that these cases were mental ones, but the law decreed imprisonment, and there was no alternative. We agree with Mr. Justice Sankey, but it is just as well to bear in mind that the vicar was bearing the consequences of the attitude of his Church towards the problem of crime. Its great remedy was mere punishment, and there is no instance in the law, we believe, where the influence of the Christian Church has been used in the direction of the rational treatment of crime. Whatever work has been done in this direction has been originated by Freethinkers. Brute force is always the Christian remedy, in practice, against the wrongdoer—whether the wrong done be real or imaginary.

We wonder whether the Rev. Desmond Morse Boycott is quite such a fool as he pretends to be? We are led to ask because he supplies the press with the yarn of some ship in 1891, which captured a large sperm whale, and when cut open the stomach was found to contain a missing seaman. He had been missing about twenty-four hours. The man recovered his health at the end of about three weeks. We first came across this whale, with the missing sailor, about thirty-five years ago. Since then it has turned up every now and again, but generally in connection with religious bodies such as are patronised by Sir William Joynson Hicks and Gipsy Smith. But we should like to know whether the Rev. Morse Boycott really believes the tale. The answer would reply to the opening query to this paragraph.

Writing in a journal for woman teachers, a director of education says: "Let us admit that in the bad old days Fear, with its scholastic attendants, Obedience and Reverence, was the foundation of school and class government." He omits to mention that this "foundation" was devised from notions culled from the Bible. From what he says later, we gather that it was the modern discoveries of psychological science which led to a reaction against the old principle of Fear. That being so, we should say the modern child has one more blessing to thank science for, and the older generation has one more reason for disliking religion.

Mr. Arthur Evans, a well-known surgeon and a temperance advocate, says: The things humanity acquires last—self-judgment, self-criticism, self-control—alcohol destroys first. As Mr. Evans made this statement at a gathering composed largely of Sabbatarians, we will say that it is not only alcohol that destroys the things he mentions, but also religious fanaticism.

The editor of the *British Weekly*, Dr. Hutton, has published a book entitled *The Tragedy of Saul*. We should say that the tragedy of Saul-Paul is not one to excite pity. A far greater tragedy is that of the peoples who, throughout the Christian era, allowed themselves to be guided by the unlovely mixture of superstition and muddled ethics expounded by Jesus and Paul.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE purpose of the Trust, formed in August, 1925, is to raise the sum of at least £8,000, which, by investment, will provide enough to meet the annual deficit incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*, and so do away with the Sustentation Fund. There are five Trustees, of whom the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one, and their duties are strictly prescribed by the Registered Trust Deed. Fuller information concerning the Trust will be sent to anyone interested. The sum subscribed to date is £4,416 19s. 4d. In addition to this the sum of £1,300 is promised by various friends provided the total of £6,700 is reached by December 31, 1927. It is hoped that other friends will be able to make promises on this condition. It is understood that the redemption of these promises will not be expected unless the whole sum is subscribed.

The sum of £3,901 14s. 10d. was subscribed last year.

This year's subscriptions:—

Previously acknowledged, £510 17s. "Atheist," £1; R. Lewis, 5s.; W. McKelvie, £1; J. G. Ross, 10s.; S. Healing, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. F. Terry, £1; F. Taylor, 2s. 6d. Total, £515 4s. 6d.

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.

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

J. R.—Arnold Bennett's confession of faith was published in the *Daily Express*, and afterwards issued in book form, with articles by other writers, in that newspaper. The testimony to the actual existence of Jesus Christ is very scanty indeed, and quite unsatisfying. All the certain details concerning him are details of the God, not of the man. And the whole story is very much older than the date given for his existence. In the case of Mahomet the biographical note of an actual person is present in the writings concerning him. In the case of Jesus the purely biographical note is quite absent.

S. LOMAX.—A statement of what you believe is easy to make, and from some points of view, of interest. But it is why you believe that is important as a question of evidence.

R. W.—Thanks for cuttings. There is nothing surprising at a Christian bishop blessing the hounds before going out hunting. Kindness to animals has never been a strong point with the Christian Church. Does not St. Paul ask contemptuously, "Doth God care for oxen?"

"EDIFIED AUDITOR."—Getting people to give up the established churches is good work, but it is not the main aim of our work. Our chief work is to eradicate the superstitious type of mind on which the churches live. And from this point of view there is not very much gain if a man gives up Christianity only to straightway adopt some other form of religious stupidity.

R. ATHERTON.—We should not be surprised if Canon Mowl seeks refuge in silence. Otherwise he would be bound to confess his untruthfulness.

F. TERRY.—We have no doubt that very many intending subscribers to the Endowment Trust are holding back for a time until the financial outlook improves. Unfortunately bad times does not decrease the cost of running this paper. Rather the reverse.

A. E. POWELL (S.A.).—Sorry to hear of your wife's illness. Hope by the time you see this that she will have quite

recovered. Pleased to have your congratulations on the quality of the *Freethinker*.

H. ORGAN.—Excuse the misprint of your name. But you recognized it, so no great harm was done.

A. CLARKE.—We know of no decisive evidence in favour of Clairvoyance. You will find Mr. Cohen's view on Spiritualism set forth in the last two chapters in his *Other Side of Death*.

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

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

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

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

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (November 21) Mr. Cohen visits Nottingham. In the afternoon he will open a discussion at the Cosmopolitan Debating Society on "Freethought, Religion, and the Press." In the evening, at 6.30, he will lecture at the Victoria Baths, Sneinton, on "Things Christians Ought to Know."

On Sunday next (November 28) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Battersea. He is taking for his subject "The Passing of the Gods," and as there has been no Freethought lectures in this district for some time, we are looking forward to a crowded hall. Local Freethinkers will do good by advertising the meeting among their friends. Anyone who would care to help in this way would oblige by writing for a supply of literature to the N.S.S. Secretary.

There was only one fault to find with Mr. Cohen's meeting at Kensington Town Hall on November 10, and that was the walls of the building were not made of india-rubber. When every seat was filled, a number of chairs were found somewhere and crowded near the platform. Then the bookstall was moved out from the back of the hall to make room for people to stand. Then all that could, crowded into the doorway and approach. And, finally, many who wished to listen were compelled to turn back. Considering the weather, and the fact of the meeting being held on a week-night, those responsible for the meeting have every reason to congratulate themselves. The advertising had been well looked after, thanks to Messrs. Le Maine and Jones, and they were both happy at the result. Mr. Samuels was, as usual, busy about the hall, and Mr. Bedborough occupied the chair and discharged his duties with his usual good humour and effectiveness. And the audience appeared to enjoy itself thoroughly. So all was well. But it is an experiment worth repeating.

The West Ham Branch is repeating this year its experiment of holding meetings in the Bromley Public Hall. To-day (November 21) Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak there on "Nature, God and Man." Bromley

Public Hall is close to Bow Road Stations (London and North-Eastern and District Railways), and trams and omnibus-passes pass the door. We hope to hear that the hall was crowded. The lecture commences at 7.

We publish elsewhere in this issue a report of the complimentary dinner given to Mr. J. M. Robertson on attaining his seventieth birthday. His work for Free-thought deserves every recognition, and we are glad to note that a cheque for eight hundred guineas, which had been subscribed by those who appreciated his many years' service, was handed to him during the course of the evening. Both the compliment and the cheque were richly deserved.

We are asked to announce that a debate has been arranged between Mr. Guy A. Aldred and Mr. George Whitehead on the topic, "Was Jesus Christ a Socialist?" The debate will take place in the City Hall, Glasgow, on Monday, December 6. Tickets are 6d. each, and may be obtained from the Labour Bookshop, 13 Burnbank Gardens, or from Mr. F. Mann, 34 Trefoil Avenue, Glasgow.

There were very good audiences at Weston-super-Mare on Sunday last, and the new Branch members were quite delighted with their first effort. Weston is not the easiest of places to work up, from the Free-thought point of view, but there has been considerable advance during the last few years. One of the things that distinguish man from the animal world is his capacity for laughter, and on Mr. Cohen's first visit the Christians of the town had not, in relation to their religion, got very far from the animal stage. They were painfully solemn, and nothing seemed further away than capacity for a smile. On Sunday the laughter was frequent, easy, and prolonged. The Christianity of the place is being tempered by a dash of humanism, and if that grows religion is doomed.

The Making of the Gospels.

VII.

(Continued from page 715.)

CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.

As we have seen, Jesus was represented as going about the country working miracles and teaching the people. In the three Synoptical Gospels, whose contents were derived from the more primitive Gospel, the entire public ministry of Jesus, with the exception of a few days preceding his arrest and trial, is represented as confined to the northern province of Palestine—Galilee. And here the writer's almost complete ignorance of the geography of the province named is plainly apparent. Following Matthew's account, the places in Galilee which Jesus is stated to have visited are: Nazareth (iv. 13), Capernaum (iv. 13; viii. 5; xvii. 24), "his own city" (ix. 1), "his own country" (xiii. 54), "the country of the Gadarenes" (viii. 28), "the land of Gennesaret" (xiv. 34), "the parts of Tyre and Sidon" (xv. 21), "the borders of Magadan" (xv. 39), and "the parts of Cæsarea Philippi" (xvi. 13). These are all.

The expression "his own city" is generally said to refer to Capernaum, and "his own country" to Nazareth; but these are based only on conjecture. It is not stated in the Gospels that Jesus actually entered the towns of Tyre, Sidon, or Cæsarea Philippi—which, besides, were all three beyond the limits of Galilee—but only that he came into the neighbourhood of those cities. The towns or villages which Jesus is alleged to have visited are thus limited to two—Capernaum and Nazareth—the other localities

named being open tracts of country. But even this small number may be reduced to one; for "Nazareth" appears to be a purely imaginary place. The Jewish historian, Josephus, in his account of the War in Galilee and in his "Life," goes again and again over the place where the last-named town is marked on the atlas, but without ever once happening to stumble on it. The following are some of the cities and villages in Galilee incidentally mentioned by that historian:—

CITIES: *Sepphoris*, "the greatest city of all Galilee"; *Tiberias*, next in importance; *Garis*, near Sepphoris; *Scythopolis*, "the largest city of Decapolis"; *Tarichæa*, about four miles from Tiberias; *Bethmaus*, *Asochis*, *Besara*, *Zebulon*, *Saab*, *Gishala*, *Garisme* and others.

VILLAGES: *Japhia*, "the largest village of all Galilee"; *Arbela*, *Bersobe*, *Selamis*, *Jotapata*, *Caphar-echo*, *Sigo*, *Cana*, *Capharnaum*, *Jamnia*, *Meroth*, *Achabare*, *Dabaritta*, *Chabola*, *Ruma*, *Gabaroath*, *Simonias*, *Scph*, *Meloth*, *Xaloth*, *Baca*, *Sennabris*, etc.

Now, setting aside such Gospel statements as "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues"—which anyone acquainted with the name of a single town in that province might make—we find that only one of all these places appears to have been known to the three Synoptists—the little village of Capernaum, which they have transformed into a city of some importance. The author of the Fourth Gospel, it is true, mentions another village, Cana, and makes Jesus work a miracle there (the turning water into wine); but neither the miracle nor the place was known to the original Gospel-makers, otherwise the Synoptists who followed the primitive accounts would not have omitted the story in their Gospels.

If we attempt to follow the meanderings of Jesus in Galilee, as narrated in the Gospels, we soon come to an *impasse*. To take an example from the First Gospel, Jesus "entered into a boat" and arrived at "his own city" (Matt. ix. 1). After this, he "passed by from thence" (ix. 9) to some unnamed place, and again "passed by from thence" (ix. 27) to another nameless place; after which he "went about all the cities and villages" (ix. 35), etc. In reading a narrative of this character it soon becomes evident that we have nothing but a number of unconnected, undated and unlocated anecdotes clumsily pieced together; we have not a biography written by an eyewitness.

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD GOD."

A statement in the Book of Isaiah that "the spirit of the Lord God" was upon the writer (lxi. 1) was interpreted as a prophecy relating to Jesus Christ. In accordance with this perversion Jesus was represented as reading the passage in a synagogue in the mythical city of Nazareth.

And he closed the book....and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears (Luke iv. 16-21).

As a punishment for this blasphemy the townsmen "cast him forth out of the city" in order to "throw him down headlong" from the cliffs. "But he passing through the midst of them went his way."

SPEAKING IN PARABLES.

A passage in the Book of Psalms (lxxviii. 2), which the Gospel-makers twisted into a prophecy referring to the Jewish Messiah, suggested the kind of teaching to be attributed to the Saviour. This passage read:—

I will open my mouth in a *parable*; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

The word "parable" in the foregoing passage was not used to denote a short suppositional story like the "parables" found in the Gospels. It simply meant a rehearsal or recital of the wonders believed to have been wrought by the God Yahveh in leading his chosen people from Egypt. This small matter, however, had no effect upon the pious Gospel-makers. Jesus was represented as teaching by means of fictitious stories, suggested probably by Jothan's story of the Trees (Jud. ix.) or Nathan's fable of the Ewe Lamb (2 Sam. xii.). In one chapter in the first Gospel (Matt. xiii.) we find no less than seven parables arranged as delivered one after the other, namely: the Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Treasure hidden in a field, the Goodly Pearl and the Draw Net. After the fourth of these the Gospel writer says:—

All these things spake Jesus in parables.....that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.

The same writer makes Jesus tell his disciples that he speaks to the people in parables in order to fulfil a "prophecy" of Isaiah (vi. 9-10) "which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive," etc. Thus, though "God so loved the world" that he sent his only Son "to seek and to save" the whole human race, that Saviour, when he came, confined his ministry to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," fed those lost sheep on parables they did not understand, and withheld from the wanderers the spiritual meaning of his allegorical teaching, lest, perchance, too many of them might repent, "and it should be forgiven them."

JESUS REJECTED BY THE JEWS.

Had Jesus really gone about working miracles of healing and raising the dead, as narrated in the Gospels, the whole Jewish nation, beyond the shadow of a doubt, would have received and welcomed him as a prophet sent by God. Recognizing this fact, the Gospel-makers had to account for the rejection of their great thaumaturgus by his countrymen, and, as usual, found the answer in "prophecy." The author of the Fourth Gospel thus explains the matter:—

But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their hearts; lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and should turn, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory, and he spake of him" (John xii. 37-41).

The passages here cited (Isaiah liii. 1 and vi. 9-10) are not prophecies at all, but are statements of fact respecting the people of Isaiah's time. The blindness and hardness of heart refer to the making and worshipping of graven images (see Isaiah xli. 9-18). The "glory" which Isaiah says he saw was that of the God Yahveh (Is. vi. 1-3). Again, the veracious author of the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as giving another reason why many of the Jews could not believe in him.

All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me.....No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him.....For this cause have I said unto you that no man can come unto me except it be given unto him of the Father (John vi. 37, 44, 65).

According to this luminous statement, only those could believe in Jesus who were incited to do so by "the Father." The "mighty works" might just as well not have been performed at all; for those whom "the Father" intended to save would have believed without them. We have now three excellent reasons why the Jews did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah: (1) "the Father" would not permit them to believe; (2) Jesus taught chiefly by parables which they did not understand; (3) "the Father" had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that "they could not believe." Under these circumstances it must be a matter of profound astonishment to all except professional Christian advocates why "the Lord" sent his Son into the world at all. The only explanation I can offer is that "the Lord," if he exists, is a much-maligned personage, who was as innocent as the child unborn of the acts and inconsistencies attributed to him by the pious author of the Fourth Gospel.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be Continued.)

Our Friends Next Door.

It was a pretty trick to tumble down the Tower of Babel. Many interesting developments followed its destruction, with the result that different noises from the throat mean the same thing. The difficulties of language only add to the differences which must exist between one nation and another; the responsibility of patching, mending, healing, and straightening out was handed on to man after the divine scatter. It was a mean trick—if anyone believes it—which he may, together with the story of John and the Scarlet Runners.

The financial world had heard that we intended to renew our acquaintance with many friends in France, and squibs and newspaper fireworks were let off in papers old enough to know better but not wise enough to throw up the game of sowing dissension. However, the tales of disturbances only increased our desire to go and tell the French that they could have our particular prosperity in exchange for their own. We went, were received with open arms, and moved about freely among the atmosphere of politeness from all. Even the local butcher took the trouble to teach us the game of backgammon.

France is a country—like our own, full of contradictions. The Paris Express is escorted into Boulogne by a man walking in front of it carrying a red flag. The speed of motor-cars on the road is terrific, and in villages where electric light is used, two-storey houses are almost the exception, and water is drawn from wells. At Equihen, old boats that have finished their service on the sea are converted into living-rooms. Calais with its cobbled streets retains an ancient and leisurely grandeur that is still unspoilt by vandals of false progress in its main parts. Paris-Plage is ultra-modern and is pathetically smart with its show of geraniums, lawns, and rows of taxi-cabs and tired horses. It is simply ridiculous, and is neither French, English, nor Bashi-Bazouk. Hardelot Forest is enchanting, and so is the sound of the coalman's voice in the morning, singing of black diamonds. Two white lions surrounded by geraniums are on guard at Boulogne Casino, doubtless to protect the government's right to tax those who gamble, and running streams of ice into the steam trawlers in the dock dazzle the eyes. To Iceland and Newfoundland these trawlers sail, and from the quay, women are seen waving to them as they depart; white lions are useless for protection on the mighty sea from which the fishermen wrest their living. From

the small villages along the coast of Picardy the fishing industry is recruited by boys who are born within sound of the sea. All the family appears to work at some form of living from the sea. The women are lean and wiry, but very strong; with a load of mussels on their backs one would have to be very sentimental to say that the sea was kind.

What is the special charm of France to the gloomy Saxon? There is, for one thing, an absence of change. Old buildings remain; there is no feverish activity to fell trees and smother the earth with new houses, all of the same distressing type. There is, in their cafés, a better attempt at communal life than is to be found in the three and four compartment English public-house. The divorce of Church and State has not meant the end of the world to France, although there appears to be a pretty brisk business in candles. On the whole, we are inclined to think that there is better community sense at work—there does not appear to be anyone left out in the cold of isolation.

Monsieur Lemaitre kindly lent us Chateaubriand's *Essays*, and the one entitled "L'Extreme-Onction" was read and inwardly digested. A student, evidently note-making, against the phrase "*l'huile, emblème de l'incorruptibilité céleste,*" had written against it *sardines à l'huile, ca conserve*. This, we think, must be one of those jokes loved by the Gallic mind.

At our café-hotel the organ, on the front of which is painted a boat with golden sails, set many feet dancing. The skipper's mates can dance with the best, and their movements are graceful and a delight to the eye. Jan and Philomene can now say *verre goal*, but the aspirate in house to them is, like the Athanasian creed to us, beyond comprehension; let the drums and castanets beat time to "*Il suffit d'un rien,*" and their feet with English feet have no difficulty in picking up the language of the dance.

Our host, Monsieur Picard, busy and interested in every guest's comfort, is looking forward to a rest in the winter, but he will have his joke. Some veal, stuffed celestially, is brought to the table. "La Chasse," he says, but we reply *blague*, and for some unaccountable reason we remember Tartar of Tarascon, who went to Algiers to shoot a donkey. La Chasse—the season, is a fearful affair. Suppose you passed on Margate pier an old man coming off with a rifle over his shoulder. A few minutes after you hear the report of a gun; you would naturally wonder what had been shot. On the long breakwater that reaches out to the lighthouse on the right of Boulogne as you enter by boat, just such an incident happened. And we are left wondering to this day what the old veteran shot, among old boats, grey sand, trucks, and telegraph wires. It may have been a newspaper canard, but we do not know.

There was a calm sea, a gentle breeze, and, as the engine throbbed across the Channel, our little village faded into what it is now, a pleasant memory and a proof that the one responsible for upsetting the Tower of Babel should ask our forgiveness; failing this, the French Government should, by State action, make all their verbs regular.

WILLIAM REPTON.

If any clerk or monk utters jocular words causing laughter, let him be excommunicated—*Ordinance of Second Council of Carthage.*

If wisdom were offered me with this restriction, that I should keep it close and not communicate it, I would refuse the gift.—*Seneca.*

My Questionnaire.

RECENTLY, struck by the efforts of the *Daily News* in this direction, I endeavoured to discover the religious views of several young men of my acquaintance. I simply asked them (1) If they believed in the Bible? (2) If they believed in any form of Christianity? and (3) If they had any belief in a Personal God? They were between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and were all of the "working-class."

My enquiries were not confined to one district (although mainly in London; one friend replied from (as he called it) "priest-ridden Hungary.")

Of ten that I questioned, three firmly believed in the Bible and Jahweh (and, of course, in one of the many forms of Christianity), and seven did not. Of these seven, none believed in Christianity, and but one in a Personal God. (By Personal God I mean a Loving Father who looks after his children and rewards or punishes them, either in this world or the next.) All of the ten except one were far more interested in football than in the salvation of their souls!

One of those who accepted the Bible teaching was a member of the Salvation Army, and another was a member of a street-corner, banner-carrying Baptist Mission. The Salvationist (a likeable, unassuming fellow, and too young yet to rant of his lurid past) had, I suspect, been taught from his earliest days to accept, unquestioning, anything prefaced by the magic words, "The Bible says—"

The Baptist was impossible. I could get hardly any intelligent answer. "Sin" and "the Blood of the Lamb," I certainly heard—in every other sentence. He told me that the volcanic eruptions in Italy two or three years ago had been set by God to convert the wicked Catholics to Baptists!

The one who believed in a Personal God (he could not swallow the miracles in the Bible) seemed very shaky in his belief, and when I endeavoured to press the point, became nervous and changed the subject. Perhaps a specimen of those who must cling to something and who do not care to look too closely at what they cling to.

The general idea among the other half a dozen seems to be "that there must be something behind it all!" and as to what that something is, they are not particularly interested.

It must be understood that these young men have only had an elementary school education. They laugh now at the religious teaching they received, but as for further theological study, they have something better to do.

My opinion is that Christianity is fast dying out. The younger generation is three parts indifferent to the call of any religion, and the remainder only believe because it has been drummed into them that they *must* believe or God will strike them dead!

The last stronghold of Christianity (of the old sort—not the latter-day vapourings of the bishops) is in ignorance and fear!

But the marvel of it is, to me, that young fellows who would not injure any living thing or knowingly displease another person, can yet believe in a God with brimstone and lakes of fire, and the will to cast one therein for all eternity!

MICHAEL BLAKE.

The truth is bitter and disagreeable to fools; but falsehood is sweet and acceptable.—*Chrysostom.*

How vain is learning unless intelligence go with it!—*Stobæus.*

The Right Hon. John M. Robertson 70th Birthday Celebration.

ON Sunday evening last the Rationalist Press Association gave a complimentary dinner to the Right Hon. John M. Robertson on the occasion of his 70th birthday, when a large number of Rationalists and Freethinkers gathered at the Trocadero to show their appreciation of the life's work and character of this distinguished thinker, critic, and author. Professor Graham Wallas presided, and at once read two letters, one from Professor Gilbert Murray and another from Mr. Chapman Cohen, Editor of the *Freethinker*.

Professor Murray wrote:—

It is not often that I have regretted being unable to attend a public dinner, especially a complimentary dinner. But it is a real disappointment that my engagements in America make it impossible for me to share in this expression of public respect for Mr. J. M. Robertson. Mr. Robertson has lived a hard life, a life of high thinking and constant effort, with little care for rest or safety or personal comfort, and never a thought of popularity or material reward. Few men, indeed, have fought so steady and disinterested a battle for the causes which they believed right; few have fought so long and so hard with such a firm allegiance to Reason and such an entire absence of malice or personal pettiness.

Personally, I have derived great benefit as well as enjoyment from Mr. Robertson's learned books, especially those on Christology and on the Shakespearean canon. But I owe him even more gratitude for the example he has set as a fearless servant of humanity and soldier of the truth. If a view of the next world which Mr. Robertson has thrown some doubts upon should after all prove to be true, I have very little doubt what will happen to him there. He will be ushered forthwith, I feel sure, into the presence of the Archangel Michael, and, as soon as he has got over his surprise, will find that eminent Commander-in-Chief offering him a Commission on the Staff with every prospect of rapid promotion.

Mr. Cohen wrote:—

I regret that absence from London will prevent my being with you on November 14 to pay my tribute to the guest of the evening. But I take this opportunity of associating myself with the well-deserved things that will be said of the valuable services Mr. Robertson has rendered the Freethought Cause during his career; and I desire also to associate therewith the members of the National Secular Society.

It must be confessed that Mr. Robertson's path in life might have been what thoughtless people call pleasanter—had he not been John M. Robertson. With less brains and more hustle he might easily have risen to the highest position in the political world. A fondness for cant phrases and a readiness to exploit popular passion and ignorance might have made him one of the best-known journalists in Britain, and have set soap magnates and the like competing for the services of a purchasable pen. He might have been a great many things—had he not been himself. I congratulate him on his escape from being someone else. He has not lost, and all of us have gained.

Being what he is, Mr. Robertson was doomed by his natural endowments to be a fighter for minority and peculiarly unremunerative causes. For that he deserves our congratulations, and not our sympathy. Thousands of those living, and many more thousands who are yet to live, will feel the benefit of his writings and his unusual ability to throw light upon the varied problems with which he has dealt. And although I hope my admiration of his ability is this "side of idolatry," he has no greater admirer of his work than myself.

The cause to which Mr. Robertson has mainly given his life demands rare qualities of mind and character. It is one that tries men and women as does no other occupation. I am quite sure that his name will stand among the foremost of those who have, despite slander and misrepresentation, battled for the freedom and enlightenment of humanity.

Although absent, I beg to salute one of the soldiers in the army of human advancement.

There were also other letters, one from Lady Leon, Mr. Edward Clodd, and the Hon. Bertrand Russell.

Professor Graham Wallas began his brief speech by wishing their guest many happy returns of the day.

He (the chairman) was partly a Scot himself, but Mr. Robertson was wholly a Scot. Scotch people were always very thorough, and Mr. Robertson, as a true Scot, was one who thought that the free expression of thought was worth while, and was not afraid to encounter stern criticism in the pursuit of truth; and like a typical Scotsman he followed truth whither so ever it led.

As a very old friend of Mr. Robertson's, Mr. J. P. Gilmour (Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Rationalist Press Association) was then called upon to propose the toast of "The Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson in grateful recognition of his unselfish and untiring services in the Cause of Rationalism for a half century, and especially for the invaluable works he has written for this and future generations of enquirers." Mr. Gilmour recalled the time, close on fifty years ago, when he first met Mr. Robertson at Edinburgh when they both belonged to the Secular Society of that city and Mr. Gilmour was delivering a lecture. It was in these early days that Mr. Gilmour formed a friendship with Mr. Robertson that had lasted right through life. When Mr. Robertson lectured at Glasgow he was known as "the handsome Scot," and his lectures were much appreciated. As quite a young man he became acquainted with Mr. Bradlaugh, who thought so much of him as a man of ability that he appointed him as one of the staff of the *National Reformer*, and after Mr. Bradlaugh's death he became the editor of that journal. Mr. Gilmour thought that Mr. Robertson was very lenient with the contributors of that journal, gave them very good advice, and rarely blue-pencilled their MSS. (Laughter.)

With regard to the works of Mr. Robertson, they all found that whatever subject they touched upon he shed fresh light upon it. They admired his great critical powers, his wonderful research, his analytical mind, and, in the language of Voltaire, he shed "the light of reason" upon every subject he touched.

Dr. P. Chalmers Mitchell spoke eloquently and wittily in support of the motion, which was supported in excellent speeches by Mr. R. K. Ratcliffe, Mr. Sydney Gimson, who had a long and intimate knowledge of Mr. Robertson, both as a lecturer and as author, and, lastly, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, who although suffering from an affection of the throat, spoke with touching eloquence of her long association with Mr. Robertson and also of his association with her father—the famous Charles Bradlaugh.

Before the toast was honoured, the Chairman presented Mr. Robertson with a wallet containing a cheque for the handsome sum of 800 guineas subscribed by the admirers of Mr. Robertson's work and character.

Mr. Robertson, in reply, said that having witnessed others under similar conditions, he felt keenly the ordeal he would have to encounter, and at times he felt that he could have faced hostility more easily than such generous kindness. He might let them into a secret and tell them that the writing and production of such works as those from his pen, works involving years of study and research were not a good commercial speculation and did not pay for the labour of producing them, and therefore he owed a warm debt of gratitude to Mr. Watts for producing one after another his many works.

Scotsmen were supposed to have an economic intuition, and some people said that he ought to have been riding in a carriage before now; but he could not do that on Freethought publications. At one time he thought that if he had learned Spanish and gone into the copper trade he might have made a fortune, but that would have taken him twenty years, and he might not then have been able to have turned to his studies and have carried out his ambition. So he had the lure of Truth-seeking, also the aesthetic instinct and might have become an artist, or have written plays and novels, but finally he turned his attention to writing books, and that gave variety to his life and he found that that was worth while. The toast was then drunk, and friends shook hands, and this enthusiastic gathering of lovers of truth and progress separated.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Get your facts first, and then you can distort 'em as much as you please.—Mark Twain.

Correspondence.

MAORI LEGENDS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As it is impossible for anyone with a small income to buy all the books published on any one subject, a review such as that on *Maori Symbolism* in the *Freethinker* of November 7, 1926, is most acceptable.

If your reviewer is so disposed and you can spare him the space, for a subject that may not be of general interest to your readers, there are one or two points I should like him to expand.

"C. C." appears to be acquainted with the work of W. J. Perry, M.A., and, consequently, will be aware that Mr. Perry traces the migration of the Polynesians across the Pacific Ocean from West to East; whereas Miss Rout traces the migration from East to West. Will the chronological, ethnological, and archæological evidence fit either hypothesis?

With regard to my second point, there is a note in *Nature*, October 16, 1926, page 567, taken from vol. 35, No. 1, of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, to the effect that the Maori in former times were in the habit of burying their dead and, after a number of years, exhuming them, then re-burying the bones, using an elaborate ritual. This is of interest, because many of the long barrow burials in the Cotswolds are apparently reburials of a similar type, and also the internal arrangement of some of the barrows are similar to the Egyptian *mestaba* graves. (See *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds*, by O. G. S. Crawford, B.A., F.S.A.) Does Miss Rout give any information upon the practice of exhumation and reburial, especially its relationship to religious beliefs?

Third and final point: To which of the ancient scripts is the Maori script related?

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL.

RELIGION AND SEPARATION.

SIR,—Mr. Justice Hill's comment in the Divorce Court on Monday, "I have every respect for those with religious scruples, but it is not always easy to understand their using the Secular arm of the law," emphasizes one of the evils of the present system of separation.

The first Lord Cozell, President of the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce, 1909-11, declared that, in his opinion, after fifteen years' work in the Divorce Court, recrimination and malice played a great part in many cases, and our experience is that where it exists there is a deliberate intention to impose permanent separation on the offending spouse.

It was for that reason that Clause Six of our Bill, which Lord Buckmaster carried successfully through the House of Lords in 1920, provided that:—

If the defendant claims that instead of a decree of permanent separation a decree of divorce should be granted, the court may, in its discretion, refuse to grant a decree of permanent judicial separation, and may, if satisfied as aforesaid, grant a decree nisi of divorce, and the provisions of this part of the Act with respect to such decrees shall apply accordingly: Provide that before granting a decree nisi for divorce the Court shall permit the applicant to elect that in the place of such decree his or her application for judicial separation shall be dismissed.

M. L. SEATON-TIEDEMAN.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

Mr. Cutner's lecture on Sunday last on the "Claptrap of Communism" evoked a very lively discussion and resulted in a challenge from a member of the audience to debate the soundness or otherwise of Marxian economics with Mr. Whitehead. We hope to fix this debate for next session. To-day (November 21) Mr. Leonard Ebury will lecture, and we hope for a good audience. Mr. Ebury's addresses always stimulate controversy, and that is the chief function of a debating Society such as ours.

K. B. K.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Sunday, November 14, Mr. David R. S. Smith, Secretary of the Glasgow Psychic Investigation Centre, gave a challenging lecture to the Glasgow Branch on "The Romance of Psychic Science." Mr. Smith is a Spiritualist, and his lecture gave rise to so much opposition that the time allotted to discussion had to be extended. Even with extra time many who wished to speak had to be denied the opportunity. A debate between Mr. Smith and a representative of the Glasgow Branch has been arranged, and will take place early in 1927. As a result of an offer publicly made by a Spiritualist after the lecture, it is probable that a well-known Glasgow medium will give a "sitting" to a committee of members of the Glasgow Branch.

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 26, at 8, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "The Implications of Belief in Evolution." Tickets 1s. each, apply, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, to Mr. F. L. Monnaie, 87 Ashbourne Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey.

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. Leonard Ebury, "Socialism and Christian Ethics."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7, Mr. E. Baker, "The Fraud of Spiritualism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Dr. F. H. Hayward, Celebration—"Oliver Cromwell."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "The Material and the Spiritual."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "The Evolution of Man." Thursday, November 25, at the above Hall, at 7.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, "Is Materialism Rational?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bromley Public Hall, Bow Road, E.): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Nature, Man, and God." Questions and discussion cordially invited.

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 25, at 8, Mr. Guy A. Aldred, "The Agnostics." 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, Mr. W. H. MacEwan, "The Meaning of Secularism." Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver Collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Concert. "Arcadian Orchestra," etc. Silver Collection.

NOTTINGHAM (Cosmopolitan Debating Society): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 2.30, "Freethought, Religion, and the Press"; Victoria Baths, Sneinton, 6.30, "Things Christians Ought to Know."

TO CLIMB steep hills requires slow pace at first. It is a bit steep to think that without any try on and without seeing you at all we can fit you perfectly. It was wise to approach that slowly; it would be foolish to turn back now that you have breasted it. Write at once for any of the following:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to I Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' J to N Patterns, suits from 104s. 6d.; Gents' Overcoat Patterns, prices from 48s. 6d.; or Ladies' Fashion and Pattern Sets, costumes from 57s., coat from 53s.—MACCONNELL & MADE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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