

A CHRISTIAN CRITIC CRITICIZED.

THE

FREETHINKER

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

A Christian Critic Criticized.

THERE are a great many Christians who have a very convenient habit of disposing of an awkward enemy. They decide he doesn't exist. If he persists in existing, they conclude he is "no gentleman." We all know the Christian who first of all says that Atheism is dead, but afterwards discovers that it is very much alive, then propounds a very ancient and a very stupid argument against it, and goes to sleep with the soothing reflection, "Well, it's dead now, anyway." When the Atheist is a very inconvenient person, they decide that he never did exist. That was the attitude taken up many years ago by the dear, good *Daily News* with regard to Charles Bradlaugh. At a time when Bradlaugh was appearing week after week in the courts, fighting one legal battle after another, debating with prominent clergymen all over the country, filling the largest halls in the country with people to listen to his "horrible" addresses, the *Daily News* decided that so far as its columns were concerned "there weren't no sitch person." The late G. W. Foote was another person who had no existence. A number heard of him when he died; but that opens up another phase of the Christian character.

So it was quite on orthodox lines—apologetic Christians are often very stupid persons, and show remarkably little originality—to find a "Special Correspondent" of the *Church Times* discovering the *Freethinker* was still alive. He says:—

I had imagined that this periodical, the editor of which was once prosecuted for blasphemy, was dead long ago. It is associated in my mind with Bradlaugh, an honest, narrow-minded bigot, who is now hardly a name. Bradlaugh's own paper, *The National Reformer*, stopped soon after its founder's death, though its last editor, Mr. J. M. Robertson, still preaches unbelief, dully, and at portentous length. But atheism has become *demodé*.

The description of the man who was hounded to an early death by Christian bigots of the most contemptible type, as "an honest and narrow-minded bigot" reminds us that Christian malice is not dead, whatever else is. But it is something to be informed by one who is so closely in touch with Freethought as not to know the *Freethinker* is alive, to be told that Atheism is not dead, it is only "*demodé*," it is just out of fashion. One wonders when it was in fashion? Certainly not in Bradlaugh's day, and most certainly not in ours. There is far too much mortal cowardice about a community where the Church is strong for this to be the case. One can quite believe that it is a matter of sorrow to this unnamed gentleman to find that the *Freethinker* did not die with G. W. Foote, nor do I imagine it will cheer him up to know that it is as much alive to-day as ever it was, and with less chance of its dying than it ever had.

* * *

Why Give Reasons?

This Special Correspondent's chief criticism concerns myself. He tells his readers—and readers can imagine how downcast I feel over it, valuing the high opinion of Christians as I do—that I have "all the characteristics of later nineteenth century criticism." I am "very free in assertion and abuse," and "Mr. Cohen certainly does not shine as a thinker." Poor me! Readers must imagine a break here, during which I retire to a couch in order to express my sorrow that a writer in the *Church Times* does not think much of me.

I should have had a better idea of the intelligence of this anonymous writer if he had not proceeded to give some reasons for his judgment. I am quite sure that his readers did not need them, and now with such as have a fancy for facts, or a habit of thinking carefully, he runs great risks. His judgment is based upon one of the volumes of my *Essays in Freethinking*. I have space for but one or two examples of my shortcomings, and I had better give these in his own words:—

"Historically," writes Mr. Cohen, "there is scarcely an improvement in the human outlook that has not met with opposition from religion." There, as Mr. Squeers would remark, is "richness for you." It would be easy to fill columns refuting this absurdity. The fathers of English agriculture were Cistercian monks. The medieval Universities were founded by Churchmen. A new humanism was brought into the world by the Franciscans, and, centuries later, by John Wesley's preachers. It was the English Church that first provided elementary schools for the English people. It was a pious Churchman who was responsible for the passing of the Factory Acts. Really, Mr. Cohen, really!

Mr. Belloc could hardly do better—or worse; a Christian Evidence lecturer could hardly improve

upon it for misrepresentation. The Cistercians were the fathers of English agriculture. Really, Mr. Special Correspondent, really! The Cistercian order was founded in 1098, members of it came to England some sixty years later. Is it possible there existed no agriculture here before the latter part of the twelfth century? We must assume not, and we must assume also that the accounts of early agriculture in England compiled by such men as Thorold Rogers, and De Laveleye, and others are no more than fancies, and that the laws which laid down the portion of labour on the land which the peasant was to give his Lord were no more than intelligent anticipations of what was to come. So too were the old manorial rights over land, and the right to Common land, etc. Evidently Thorold Rogers is also in error when he gives accounts of the extent of land under cultivation before there existed any Cistercian organization in this country.

* * *

Giving a Sprat—

Let us be generous to this particular writer. Perhaps he did not mean the Cistercians; perhaps he meant the monks generally. But, somehow or the other, we have it in our mind that agriculture was a well understood art in the ancient world, long before there existed a Christian monk of any kind. What became of the art of agriculture? Is it possible that men forgot it, that the very art of securing the means of keeping alive was lost under Christianity, and had to be rediscovered by the monks? I do not see how he is going to get his thesis established otherwise. Well, let us be still more generous. Let us assume that he has expressed himself so badly, that all he meant was that the monasteries taught agriculture to the people who needed instruction, and showed them how to get more out of the land than they were getting. That is likely; only let us always bear in mind that the Church acted in the capacity of landowner and feudal lord. The Church grabbed land in all directions and by any means. It acquired it by grants from the King, by service to this or that noble, by legacy paid to secure ease and comfort in the next world. And with this went the right to the serfs, or slaves, possessions which multiplied as the Church's wealth multiplied, for the children of serf and slave remained serf and slave. In this direction the Church gave up none of its feudal rights, although it did manage to shelve many of its feudal duties. But from its tenants it demanded its tithe in kind, and its portion of labour. Nor, judging from the cases where the serfs wished to be transferred from Church to King, did it appear to treat them better than secular owners. The Church became one of the largest, if not the largest landowner in Europe. It traded in all directions, and many were the complaints from secular traders of the unfair competition to which they were subjected. Eventually it was the wealth and the rapacity of the Church that served as a powerful cause of its fall.

Other owners could dispose of their land and their serfs if they thought fit. They could give them their freedom as they thought fit. But the Church could not act with the same freedom, and there were actually fewer cases of manumission with the Church than with others. The Church bought cattle and sold them, it bought serfs and bred them, it bought debts and lent money, it traded in all sorts of ways, and was very keen indeed to see that it got the most out of its land and fisheries and in all other possible directions. There was a direct incentive for it to see that the serfs used their land in the best way, and this was also the case with many ordinary

landowners. The *Church Times* "Special Correspondent" would have been telling the truth had he said the Church taught its serfs and slaves to labour so that it might profit from their toil, and taught men agriculture as the factory owners of Lancashire at a later date taught children the art of weaving. And he would have been telling the whole truth had he also said that what they gave the labourer was but a small part of what they took from him.

* * *

The Church and Reform.

I have left myself with but little space in which to deal with the other points raised by this critic. Seeing that no one but Churchmen were allowed to open schools—as late as the end of the eighteenth century, Hannah More got into trouble for doing so without getting permission from the vicar of the parish—one would be surprised if the universities were not founded by churchmen. But the value of the education given by these monopolists may be seen from the fact that, as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, about fifty per cent of the people could neither read nor write. A little earlier, a government commission reported that the government was not getting value—in the whole of the country—for the annual £30,000 it was paying. But, bless the man! does he imagine that Freethinkers believe that no one who called himself a Christian ever did a useful action? And does he also believe that anything a Christian does must come from his Christianity—when it is good, of course? Is there not usually a man somewhere there beside the Christian believer? He may not believe there is, because I see he reads with "astonishment" my saying that, "apart from Society, the individual ceases to be"—it would not have been in accordance with Christian truth to have pointed out that the statement is just half of the proposition that Individual and Society are two halves of a single fact, and that the words immediately preceding the ones quoted are, "apart from individuals, society has no existence." And yet if the somewhat embryonic judgment of my critic can be quickened, he may be able to see that as Society gives man his language, his manners, his beliefs, etc., etc., if you take all these away, he really does cease to be a man in the social sense of the word. Anatomically he may remain a member of the *genus homo*, but he would hardly do for human society, not even for a Church Congress.

I do not think I need follow my critic any further—at least in detail. He affects surprise at my statement that "real Christianity has not survived." I advise him to take early Christianity with its expected end of the world, demonic possession, miracles, a red-hot hell and a literal heaven, its cosmical theory as a whole, its belief in revelation, and the power of faith to cure all disease, and ask himself how much of that survives, what class it survives with? The exercise should be beneficial. The pose that the modern Freethinker is terribly old-fashioned is hardly amusing after G. K. Chesterton has worked this particular piece of foolery for so long. After all, real Christianity itself is very old-fashioned, so old-fashioned that nearly all educated Christians are ashamed of it. But against the old creed the old arguments still stand, and I suspect that my real offence is that I am not easily blinded to this fact, and do not forget that the new forms of argument that are invented from time to time are only camouflages of the original thing. My critic thinks I am unhappy because certain labour leaders and certain public men make profession of belief in prayer, or some kind of religion. But I am neither surprised nor unhappy about it. It is what I expect. Christianity has for so long

made honesty of speech and fearlessness of thought where religion is concerned one of the deadliest offences, that mental and moral cowardice is stamped pretty deeply on those who either have to live, or wish to live by public favour. I am neither unhappy, nor surprised, that things are not different from what they are. In an environment saturated with Christian influences, my only surprise is that they are not worse.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Shelley the Sempiternal.

"Sun-trader, life and light be thine for ever."

Robert Browning.

"The drowning of Shelley on that fatal July day in 1822 was, in all probability, the heaviest loss that English literature has ever sustained."—G. W. Foote.

Few writers have suffered the extremes of fortune so much as Percy Shelley. During his lifetime his works were treated with the utmost contempt, thus giving point to Theodore Hook's caustic jest that Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* was likely to remain so. Now, over a hundred years after his death, his fame is so firmly established that he appears to be one of the fixed stars of the literary firmament.

Nor is this all, for personal relics of Shelley have fetched enormous sums. The poet's own copy of *Queen Mab*, with his manuscript revision, realized £13,600 at the Kern Library Sale at New York. Only one other poetical work has ever exceeded this amount, and that was Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, which fetched £15,000 at the Britwell Court Library Sale. At the Kern auction, a copy of Shelley's *Adonais* brought £1,200, which is a phenomenal advance on its original cost of a few shillings.

Byron, writing to a friend, said, "When Shelley is found out, where shall we all be?" The amazing thing has happened. Shelley is in the full blaze of his literary glory, and Byron, the curled, perfumed darling of his generation, is in eclipse, whilst some of their once-popular contemporaries have faded into mere names. Even Byron's own reputation has undergone a remarkable change. It now rests securely on *Don Juan*, fragments of *Childe Harold*, and his incomparable correspondence; but his own generation went wild over *The Bride of Abydos*, *Parisina*, and suchlike dregs of his genius. And Byron is one of the select British authors who actually have a European reputation, an honour he shares with Shakespeare, the Rev. Laurence Sterne, and Bernard Shaw.

Shelley's *Queen Mab* is not a great poem, but it is a very notable one. Written in the poet's early manhood, it has the immaturity of youth combined with splendid promise, and a still more splendid audacity. Its publication revealed its author as a militant Atheist, and that was too much for Georgian England. The society of Shelley's day was perfectly agreed that such ideas were but a mad illusion. And society denounced him accordingly, and actually fined and imprisoned the men and women who sold the awful *Queen Mab*. Florence to the living Dante was not more cruelly unjust than England to the living Shelley. Not until a full generation after the English poet's death was his rare genius acknowledged, and even at the centenary celebration at Horsham, most of the speakers referred discreetly to Shelley's Atheism, and emphasized his claims on the Sussex county families, worthy folks, as uninterested in literature as the labourers they employed.

Shelley was just as much an aristocrat as Byron, his father being one of the richest landowners in Sussex. But Shelley looked at life from a very different angle

to that of his friend Byron. Shelley's subjects were not hours of idleness, nor the love-affairs of Don Juan, but Atheism and Republicanism. It is, indeed, the alpha and the omega of his poetry. It is seen in the splendid rhetoric of *Queen Mab*, in the nobler music of *The Revolt of Islam*, and in his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*. And Shelley meant every word that he wrote. In *Queen Mab* he bolstered his poem with lengthy prose disquisitions which would not have disgraced a German professor. Because of Shelley's Atheism, society gave the poet a bad name and a worse time, and would gladly have imprisoned him, as it did scores of other Freethinkers who challenged the lie at "the lips of the priest."

Shelley was the poet of revolution, and, curiously, the poet and the revolution were actually contemporary. On Shelley's birthday, August 4, 1792, it was decreed by the French National Assembly that all religious houses should be sold for the benefit of the nation, and Louis XVI was no longer recognized as the sovereign of France. It was on this same day of August that the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia issued their notorious manifesto announcing their mission to put down the Revolution, and "console mankind" by giving up "the city of Paris to the most dreadful and terrible justice." At this time Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Shelley's Mary, had just published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. This was the first work proclaiming the complete equality of the sexes, and it was written a hundred years before Mrs. Pankhurst led the last crusade.

Talk of miracles. In that room, in that quiet country house, from a rustic squire, and from a mother who was unremarkable, sprang *Adonais*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and some of the loveliest lyrics of a thousand years of English literature. If, instead of Shelley, an infant Squire Western had been produced on that August day, everyone would have thought it natural, but instead of a country squire we have a master of poetical music, and a thinker five hundred years ahead of his own time. Georgian England hated him, trampled upon him, and cast him out, but in the wilderness of exile he sang his songs which a few brave spirits heard and treasured, and which now command a wide audience, and which will be hailed ultimately as the Gospel of Humanity.

Dead at twenty-nine, posterity has but the outcome of Shelley's cruder years; and the assurance of something nobler and wiser was stopped by the tragedy of his untimely end. Had Shakespeare died so young, he would have been remembered to-day as the young author of "Romeo and Juliet," and a few early poems. "Hushed is the harp, the minstrel gone," but the spell holds. The name of Percy Shelley still carries far. These European critics who study literature know it well enough. In the New World it is known as a most famous name. As for English folks, it dwarfs for us most of the nineteenth century writers, although they are some of the most considerable in our literature.

Dead at twenty-nine years, Shelley had challenged comparison with the great masters of his craft. "The Cenci" is the finest tragedy written since Shakespeare dropped the pen. If you doubt it, read again that last scene where the unhappy Beatrice goes to her death. In writing, Shelley was inspired by the lovely portrait of the real Beatrice painted by Guido Reni, but the tribute of the young English poet is as exquisite as that of his brother artist. Shelley's elegy on John Keats, *Adonais*, is noble music, and stands beside Milton's *Lycidas*, which is praise indeed. As for Shelley's incomparable lyrics, are they not in every anthology, and echoing in the mind of all lovers of poetry?

"Jewels, a few words long,
That on the stretched forefinger of all time,
Sparkle for ever."

What Shelley might have been we cannot conceive. While still a young man he was drowned in the sea he loved so well. His ashes rest by the Appian Way, beneath the walls of old Rome, and "Cor Cordium" ("Heart of Hearts") chiselled on his tomb well says what all who love Liberty feel when they think of this young Atheist who gave his life to Humanity, and whose splendid genius was as free as an eagle with outstretched wings above the clouds.

MIMNERMUS.

A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 68.)

WHAT OF THE CHURCH?

THE state of the Church was no better. Indeed, we may go so far as to say that the one was a reflection of the other. The old chronicles still extant—it is a wonder they were not suppressed—tell us that the cardinals all had either wives or mistresses, and haunted the churches for any women who might be found there at night, and then raped them. There was a saying that few women pilgrims returned from Rome as virtuous as they went. Popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, had scores of illegitimate children. It was said at the time of the Reformation, that the clergy had ruined 100,000 women in England. We know that the Church derived part of its revenue from the public brothels. That horrible disease attendant upon sexual vice, syphilis, was the great scourge of this pre-eminently Christian period, in Rome particularly; and it was carried by Christians to Heathen countries which had never previously been thus afflicted. Dirt and holiness were synonymous terms, for it was necessary for a man to be verminous before he would be regarded as a saint. Plague, consequent upon the incredibly filthy conditions under which the people existed, decimated whole countries, and leprosy was also rife, until sanitation took the place of sanctity.

It is related of Pope Leo X that, when dining with his cardinals and other Church dignitaries, he gazed round the table, loaded with costly gold and silver plate, rich viands and rare wines, and exclaimed: "We owe all this to the fable of Jesus Christ!" Here, at least, is one instance of a Pope speaking the truth. *In vino veritas, if not ex cathedra!* Pope Leo XII was officially proved to have "turned the Lateran Palace into a brothel, outraged his two sisters, emasculated his male enemies, raped girls who came to pray in St. Peter's, gambled freely, and drank the health of the devil." "Rome was more generally corrupt than it had been in the days of the insane Nero or the feeble-minded Elagabal." The artist, Guilia Orsini, painted a portrait of the Virgin Mary, his model being the Pope's mistress. One Pope used to amuse himself by having ladies of easy virtue to dance naked before him. The Papal banquets, in which cardinals and bishops took part, frequently ended in orgies of debauchery. These things would be incredible were it not that they are recorded by contemporary witnesses.

The history of the Papacy is one of unscrupulous intrigue, treachery, murder and bloodshed, with only two ends in view, power and money. These ends, and these only, the Church pursues to-day with single-hearted intent. Many of the Popes were monsters of depravity, licentiousness and cruelty. Some were deposed because they outraged even the in-

credibly brutal and evil times they lived in. Some usurped the Papal chair and murdered their rivals or were murdered in turn. There were no less than thirty-six "anti-popes" set up in opposition to the Pope in power at various times. In 687 there were two against Sergius I, in 1101 three against Paschal II, in 1138 two against Innocent II, in 1168 there were two against Alexander III. All these claimed to be the rightful Pope, the "Vicar of Christ," the Vicegerent of God on earth.

These facts are simply staggering to the Heathen mind. We do not know whether Christians generally are aware of them. We imagine not.

The fiendish institution known as the Holy Inquisition is peculiar to Christianity. This alone is sufficient to condemn the religion which drenched Europe with blood, and has held back civilization for 2,000 years. I need say little about it here. Every English reader, I suppose, knows something about its ghastly horrors. If not, particulars may be found in any reference library. There are those who seek to show that the Inquisition was not an institution of the Church. They do not write the truth, in view of what the Church's own records say about it. The Church should have destroyed these records as it did the literature of the ancient world. They say that the Church only handed its victims over to the secular power. They know that the secular power had frequently to be made to act against "heretics" by threats of excommunication. But it was the priests who did the "questioning" and presided over the tortures.

What was the object of the Inquisition? Not only the suppression of heresy, but *plunder*. The victim, once marked down as a suspect, had no chance. He was not allowed to know who were his accusers. He was tortured until he confessed what it was intended to make him confess. Then his property was confiscated, part by the Church and part by the State. This was one reason why the Church was able to persuade greedy and unscrupulous kings and princes to tolerate the Inquisition. They got part of the spoil. It was an age of terror, when no man's life and property were safe from the rapacity of the Church on the one hand and the brigand-like nobles on the other.

What other religion in the world has ever burned thousands of people alive because they did not accept its dogmas? No Heathen religion has ever burned one on this account. There have been many cruel tyrants among the kings and princes of the Heathen East, but they were never quite so bad as those of Christian Europe.

When Christianity extended its tender mercies among the Heathen, it tried the same thing. It did not succeed in the East. The people were too numerous and too warlike. But we know what Christianity did in Southern America. It blotted out two civilizations, both better, more humane and more moral than its own. And it destroyed all their literary records, just as it had done those of the ancient civilizations on its own side of the world.

Even as late as thirty-five years ago, it exterminated the last remnant of the pure Aztec race. In 1893, there was a small remnant of them, who still retained their old traditions, at a place called Tomocno, in the province of Chihuahua in Mexico. President Porfirio Diaz sent orders to them that they were to conform at once to the religion of the Roman Catholic Church. There can be no doubt that the secular power acted under the orders of the Church. One would need to be as credulous as a Christian to suppose otherwise. The Church owns sixty per cent of the wealth of Mexico, and this is an example of the way the Church acquired it. The Aztecs refused to

obey the order. The President therefore sent General Ranjel with orders to bring them under subjection, or to *destroy them utterly*. Ranjel and his troops marched off with the blessings of the Church, openly boasting of what they intended to do. When they reached Tomocnio, they found the Aztecs gathered in their temple, but unarmed. The General gave his troops orders to attack, and to *show no quarter*. They did so, and slaughtered all the Aztecs, men, women and children, without mercy, not one being left alive. Then General Ranjel marched back, and was received with ovations by the Catholic laity and the further blessings of the Church which held special services to celebrate the foul crime. This occurred, not in the dark Age of Faith, but late in the nineteenth century. No word of protest was forthcoming from any part of Christendom.

Knowing all these things, as we do, is it surprising that the Heathen, who are not savages, refuse to have anything to do with a religion which has such a black record of crime and cruelty, and which would repeat that history if it ever regained its power? It will never regain its power. The trend of civilization is away from it, but can never advance as it should until it shakes off this frightful nightmare.

We are told by the Christian clergy that modern civilization is due to Christianity. This statement, to put it bluntly, is a Christian lie, than which there is none blacker.

We find that the attitude of Christianity has always been one of persistent enmity against freedom, knowledge and progress. There is not one single step towards civilization that has not been taken in face of the determined opposition of organized Christianity; there is not a single advance in science, in *real* knowledge, that has not been denounced by organized Christianity of *all* denominations and sects, as we see at this present day. The horrible witch superstition and its attendant horrors, slavery, prison conditions, social conditions of all kinds, the death sentence for trivial crimes, flogging, torture, lack of liberty of conscience, the position of women: always and everywhere, it is Christianity that has endeavoured to maintain the old, evil conditions, and has defended them on the authority of a "faked" collection of documents called the Holy Bible.

Those who have been ever in the van of progress have been the sceptics, denounced, slandered, misrepresented and persecuted by the clergy of all denominations. It is said that the way of the reformer is hard. But what makes it hard?—It is organized Christianity in the West, and, in India, a somewhat similar organization of the Brahmin priests, though these are as angels of light compared with the black priests of Christendom.

E. UPASAKA.

(To be concluded.)

On Gathercole, an Aristotelian.

Ah, weary, weary, weary is my soul,
I have been listening to Gathercole;
How much I wish I could the fellow throttle,
With all his foolish talk of Aristotle.
He says this Grecian proved by x plus y
That men are equal; he as good as I.
If true, the sage has much to answer for,
Thus to encourage this dogmatic bore:
Who would have guessed the great Stagirite
Would be invoked by such a blatherskite?
Oh, dreadful thought, perhaps when I am dead
Some Gathercole will quote what I have said,
And prove, to his entire satisfaction,
That I was a supporter of reaction.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Faith and Knowledge.

ONE of the measures extensively adopted to arrest the decay of religious belief and observance, including church-going, is constant suggestion by means of advertisement and other publicity. A recent extension of this practice consists in the display on notice boards in front of churches and chapels of aphorisms, some of which are of theological, some of moral, and others of mixed significance.

Having been considering the question of what is known as "faith," I was interested to see the following, on a board (carefully disposed so that it is conspicuous to all who pass along the main street, and to all who turn into or out of the by-street in which I reside): "*Faith is a principle by which to live, and not a problem to be solved.*"

Those of us who attended churches and chapels in our youth heard much of this topic. We were told, and we read in the Bible, that faith will, or once upon a time would, remove mountains, effect the cure of bodily diseases and deformities ("thy faith hath made thee whole," said Jesus to the woman healed of an otherwise incurable "issue of blood"); we were exhorted to "live by faith," to "walk by faith"; and so on.

A great deal of matter has also been written by way of definition or description of faith. But the writers have not yet reached agreement. Long ago the word was defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But whatever else faith may be, it cannot be "substance" or "evidence." Of the alternative words suggested by the annotator of my Bible, "grounds" and "confidence," the former is equally inadmissible, though the latter comes somewhat nearer the mark, as it suggests an attitude which is evidently associated with faith.

It seems clear, however, that those who hold, or have held, that faith is primarily belief in certain propositions (e.g., heaven and hell exist, we shall all go to heaven or hell) are right. This view was held by early Christian writers, and it is borne out by a number of passages in the New Testament, including the following drastic utterance: "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatever is not of faith is sin."

During the Middle Ages of Europe faith was regarded chiefly, if not exclusively, as belief in the Church and its teachings. But with Luther and other later exponents a more nebulous significance appeared. Faith was defined as a "vision, quality or capacity whereby spiritual truth is apprehended"; and this capacity was associated with such notions as "surrender" to, and "living reception" of, the transcendental notions involved.

In spite of the barrenness of all this—which is characteristic of the whole realm of supernaturalism and other mysticism and occultism, and is in sharp contrast with the definite progress of that real knowledge and thought which flows from ordinary experience and from scientific investigation—some few writers, other than theologians, still cling to modes of thought that are substantially identical. Of these we may instance Dr. Rudolph Steiner, the leader of the anthroposophists, whose method of arriving at what he calls "spiritual truth" is intuition, which is, of course, practically identical with revelation and inspiration; and he evidently expects us to receive his statements "on faith." In his book on Goethe, the Doctor quotes from the poet the following patently true statement: "Man knows himself only to the extent that he knows the world . . . Every fresh object contemplated [we should now rather say observed and investigated] with deliberation, opens up

a new faculty [we should rather say additional power and outlook] within us." The author's comment on this is, "The truth is exactly the reverse"; and this means that, in his view, truth, including self-knowledge, originates in the mind without reference to objective reality.

From such sources we get the baseless idea, expressed on the notice mentioned, that faith is a "principle," that is, a wider sort of truth from which more detailed truths can be drawn and applied to action, that therefore we can and should live and walk by faith, and, as one writer adds, "not by sight." This notion, in its application to ordinary life and activity, is too preposterous for serious consideration, and is practically identical with the faith of the savage in his totem or fetish, and of the ancients in their familiar spirits and oracles.

We may now fairly hold that faith is, in essence, belief in anything for which there is no real evidence. Faith differs, of course, from rational "trust," though the two are often confused. The latter, if ordinarily intelligent, is based upon some real knowledge of a person, of a given set of circumstances, or the like; while the beliefs of faith are devoid of any such basis.

As a consequence of this unreality, the countless vagaries of religious and allied doctrine and practice arose. These the Freethinker rejects on various grounds, and the more confidently because some associated ideas have been clearly shown to be false, as, for example, the belief in Providence, the belief, that is, that individuals or sections of a community receive benefits or are subjected to injuries which do not come about in the ordinary course of natural events. We now know that supernatural "blessings" and "visitations," or "acts of God," do not happen, and that the old notion that righteous persons are never reduced to penury—"begging their bread"—is as untrue as the belief that a shaman or prophet can make rain or stop the sun in its course. And we relinquish such beliefs the more readily because we see their disastrous effects in turning attention away from real things, intellectual, moral and social, in discouraging effort, and, consequently, in impeding the progress of civilization.

J. REEVES.

Books and Life.

THE farmer's boy, when asked what he liked best in the world replied, "Swinging on a gate while eating fat bacon." A book lover's answer might be one of many (1) reading in bed; (2) finding a choice or scarce edition; (3) finding some memorable passage in a book that made reading worth while. When the thousand distractions of a day are ended, and there is not that complete tiredness to bring sleep at once, there are worse avenues to slumber land than that of a book. *David Copperfield* was revisited, and the charm of clarity and good writing was enjoyed. Betsy Trotwood was again put on a pedestal, and although Dora was rather tiresome, Dickens assessed her value—a pretty, helpless thing, but this in her favour—she knew it when she confided her secret to Agnes. Rosa Dartle, James Steerforth, Mr. Dick, Aunt Peggotty with "checks and arms so hard and red, that I wondered the birds didn't peck her in preference to apples." Uriah Heep, Micawber, all stand out as characters very much alive. Dickens gives Aunt Betsy some noble lines to speak; when she is telling David of a prospective meeting with the father of Agnes she says: "Neither will you find him measuring all human interests, and joys, and sorrows, with his one poor little inch-rule now. Trust me, child, such things must shrink very much, before they can be measured off in that way." Here then is, to one at least, an example of a character living, as Mr. Thornton Wilder has it, in his novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, "in noble weather." Another "Charles" comes to mind in con-

nexion with this atmosphere so concisely described; it is Charles Bradlaugh. And he was one of Nietzsche's first men in one respect; he had voluntarily taken upon himself the burden of truth-speaking. The novelist and orator as forces in the making of civilization would make an interesting study. On the old standard in Dickens' time of prison for debt, it would be good form to know what countries in the world at present are prisoners, and what countries are gaolers. The decision should be referred to Colney Hatch, as statesmen cannot settle it.

A very pleasant collection of short stories entitled *Sasha*, may be found in the International Library, edited by F. L. Lawson-Johnston, B.A., Stanley Paul & Co., Ltd., London. The author is Alexander Kuprin, a modern Russian, born in 1870, and, according to Prince Mirsky, emigrated from his own country after the fall of the White Army, and is now living in Paris. Kuprin was a member of Gorky's group in the publishing business bearing the name "Znanie" (knowledge). On the authority of Mirsky, Kuprin was a man of no culture, which remark seems as low as the controversial methods of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. If we may take from Matthew Arnold a definition of the word culture—"the best which has been thought and said in the world," there may be found in *Sasha*, many fine thoughts to prove that Mirsky's judgment has no foundation in fact. The main story in *Sasha* is a tale of a Jewish violinist at Gambrinous, which, in the port of Odessa, was a popular beershop for sailors and adventurers from all parts of the world. Here the musician plays any national air by request from his mixed audience. Kuprin's description of a pogrom in the town shows a sympathy with the Jews; he writes, "these very people were now going to kill, not because they had been ordered to kill, not because they had any hatred against the Jews, with whom they had often close friendships, not even for the sake of loot, which was doubtful, but because the sly dirty devil that lives deep down in each human being was whispering in their ears, 'Go, nothing will be punished: the forbidden curiosity of the murderer, the sensuality of the rape, the power over other people's lives.'" This, to us, seems like knocking a six inch nail into a beastly fact—well worth doing, irrespective of the yardstick of the professor. *Sasha* is maimed; his priceless left hand was damaged, but, with his healthy hand, and at the conclusion of the story, he produces a whistle, and all the customers were forced to dance. Kuprin remarks: "You may maim a man, but art will endure all and conquer all." *The Army Ensign*, told in letter form, is another good story, not altogether flattering to Petersburg nobility. *How I Became an Actor* has the same qualities in accuracy of observation as George Moore's *The Mummer's Wife*. *Autumn Flowers* lets fall a curious little thought, nicely caught, and well expressed: "God or Nature—I really don't know which—after giving man an almost God-like intelligence has, at the same time, invented for him two torturing traps: ignorance of the future and the impossibility of forgetting the past, with the equal impossibility of returning to it." The photograph of Kuprin in this volume bears a remarkable likeness to that of Stephen Mallarmé; the author of *Sasha* has found a home in exile in Paris, and the pleasure derived from the reading of these stories make us hope to see more, as for the moment, there is no international law against Russian imports via Paris.

WILLIAM REPTON.

WINTER.

For Winter came; the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip;
He had torn the cataracts from the hills,
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;
His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, and in his chariot-throne,
By the ten-fold blasts of the Arctic zone.

Shelley.

Acid Drops.

Perhaps it was only a gentle sarcasm that made Mr. Baldwin say, at a Baptist meeting, "We are still in the experimental stage of Christianity. We have only been trying two thousand years." It *must* have been sarcasm, for Mr. Baldwin is not such a fool as not to be able to see the absurdity of such a statement. Just consider the number of men who have been employed in teaching that Christianity is the only thing that can save the race; the hundreds of millions of money that has been spent in teaching it to the people; and the fact that Christianity is a revelation from God Almighty himself. Moreover, he was addressing an audience composed largely of Christian ministers. But Christianity is only in an experimental stage! If words mean anything, it means that we are still trying to see whether it is any good or not! Mr. Baldwin *must* have been poking fun at those present, and as most of them were parsons, and all of them Christians, he knew that any kind of nonsense would do so long as it had a religious look! Two thousand years of a revelation from God, and we are still experimenting to find out if there is anything in it! An excellent joke, and not one of those present saw it.

The Rev. H. E. Fosdick is an "advanced" Christian—that is, one whose advancement consists in admitting things to be probably false which we know are certainly untrue, and offering a set of religious beliefs which are declared to be up to date because they are so indefinite that no one can be certain as to what they mean. But get him back to rock bottom and he is just a Christian. For example, Mr. Fosdick sets out, in a leading article in the *Christian World*, to discover why it is that so many people will not call themselves Christians. When he asks people, they reply, "I do not believe what Christians believe," and that seems to us quite a reasonable and proper reply. But Mr. Fosdick says that is not the reason at all, because he himself does not believe in the infallible Bible and Bible legends "from Adam and Eve to Jonah and the Whale." Neither does he believe in the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection of the body. These be great and daring heresies, and the tremendous mental power shown in not believing these things entitles Mr. Fosdick to be called a thinker—in a Christian Church.

So one begins to wonder, what is the real reason why so many do not profess Christianity? Here is the answer; people will not profess Christianity because, "Down, underneath, you know that Christianity means a way of living seven days a week." The secret is out. People will not become Christians because, if they do, they must lead a superior kind of a life; and although Mr. Fosdick is gracious enough to admit that this does not hit every non-Christian, still, he thinks it does hit somebody. And one wonders whether it does really take such a marvellous development of character to become a Christian, and if being a Christian does, then one's next wonder is, how many Christians are there in the world, and where on earth do they live?

Long ago, the general account the Christian gave of the heretic was that he was a blackguard, and professed disbelief in order to get an excuse for his ill-deeds. Owing to the multiplication of disbelievers that kind of thing has gone out of fashion, and now Mr. Fosdick presents us with a modified form of it. People will not profess Christianity because its demands upon them are too great; they are afraid of its moral excellence. And that only adds humbug to the original ruffianism. The man who can say that Christianity has ever at any time made moral excellence the condition of salvation, ought to get on in the pulpit. There is no other direction in which such talents would find profitable employment.

Just one other word. If Mr. Fosdick is right, then it does not matter in the least what one believes, it all turns on how one behaves. A man may believe that Jesus never lived, he may be without belief in a God, or

a soul, or in a future life, but if his behaviour is quite good then he is a good Christian, and will be saved in spite of himself. Now, if Mr. Fosdick can summon up enough courage to put what he means in plain English, he will soon find the columns of the *Christian World* closed to him. He is there at present because he says one thing and means another. If he really believes that religious beliefs do not matter a "twopenny damn," his place is in the *Freethinker*. We offer him our columns to say precisely what he means.

A notice of *Studies*, an Irish Quarterly, is conspicuous in the *Times Literary Supplement*, January 24. It seems more like a joke in the wrong box, but, in an extract from the contribution "The Anglican Crisis," by Father Joseph Keating, the reviewer gives the following extract:—

As you cannot have a ruling Church if the civil power holds the reins, so you cannot have a teaching Church if the individual reason is to be the final judge . . . of revelation.

That is Father Keating's view of reason, it is interesting for anyone who imagines that priests and parsons are actually living in the twentieth century.

Advertising religion in the press has not yet finished. The Rev. C. A. Alington, Headmaster of Eton College, writes in the *Evening Standard*, under the heading "Confessions of Faith." He believes that the world was made by a Loving Personal God (it is from Eton College, not Tennessee, that this is written) and one has only to consider how animals kill and eat each other to approximate the value of this confession of faith. Anyway, Freethinkers do not saddle God with nonsense of this kind, neither do they annoy him by putting him in such impossible positions as those who are his spokesmen. He must want to sack the lot of them sometimes.

Professor Eddington, who is a member of the Society of Friends, says that all his scientific studies have not removed him from the simple Quaker faith. A more important point would be to know whether his scientific studies have given any support to his simple Quaker faith. He is not the first eminent scientist whose religious beliefs have been in palpable conflict with his scientific knowledge.

Mr. Leyton Richards suggests that a catalogue of war lies, such as the Belgian baby that had its hands cut off, or the Germans boiling their dead, might go a great way towards stopping war in the future. We doubt it. Directly war broke out the same old lies would be told, and they would be circulated widely, and anyone daring to contradict them would be exposed to private and probably legal prosecution. We never remember a war in modern times when the people we were fighting were not brutal criminals, and other countries play precisely the same game. The distinction of the last war was that the Government deliberately sanctioned the crusade of lying, and men like the late Lord Northcliffe threw themselves into it with all their strength.

Mr. Leyton Richards is a very strong Christian, and we would support what we have just said by another branch of professional and interested lying that has been carried on for centuries and is still going strong, but which has never been quelled merely by exposure. We refer to the good old practice of lying for the glory of God. There were, of course, religious lies told on behalf of the war. The Germans, one of the most Christian peoples in Europe, were painted as anti-Christian and godless. The Kaiser, who appears to have had a kind of religious mania, and was a most fervent believer in the Bible, was depicted as anti-Christ or as an Atheist. The angels of Mons was backed up by the Bishop of London and other parsons who must have known the tale was pure fiction. And there are all the lies told about dying, dead and living unbelievers. Mere exposure does not and did not prevent their being told. When the late W. T. Stead, after reading G. W. Foote's exposure of the Evangelist Torrey, wrote to a large

number of leading clergymen, pointing out the man's capacity for sheer lying, there was not one of them who would say a word to discredit the so palpable a liar. We can find Mr. Richards other examples if he needs them, and we would ask him, quite plainly, what has he ever done to expose such lies as those we have named? Or does he think that lies told about unbelievers do not matter? There is only one way to stop lies told to foster war, and that is to make war known as the cowardly, brutal, and unclean thing it is. And the only way to stop lies being told on behalf of Christianity is to stop people believing in it.

Seventeen members of the Salvation Army Band at Newton Abbot, have thrown in their trumpets and drums (they all belong to General Booth), and have decided that they will go to the pictures, and smoke, and look at a football match, in spite of the "Army" regulations governing bandmen. Ordinary members of the Army may smoke—but not bandmen. Hence the row. We suppose there are limits to the degree of excellence of which human nature is capable, even in the Salvation Army, so these men long for a wild career of vice, and intend to go to a football match and smoke fags. They say they'll be damned if they won't. And the Army officials say they'll be damned if they do. So there it is!

Another item concerning the Salvation Army appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* for February 1. A man applied to the Southwark Guardians for relief for his wife and child. He was not out of work himself, being employed by the Salvation Army at their shelter in Spa Road, Bermondsey, where he was cooking for 250 men at a wage of six shillings per week. When he gets to be head cook he will get 10s. per week. Those who know Salvation Army methods will not be surprised at this. In its reports of the good done, the Army tells its supporters of the millions of meals "supplied" but does not explain that these are nearly all paid for, nor does it mention that its rate of pay is far below that any secular business would dare to pay. It is the same with its emigration business. The other day we saw a letter from Commissioner Lamb saying how many emigrants they had assisted to go abroad, and saying the Army could do more if more money came in. It would have been as well, although not in accord with Army methods, if Commissioner Lamb had explained that the "assistance" consisted of loans towards the fare, loans that are nearly always repaid, for the Army follows up its debtors with unsleeping vigilance, and often enough there is a security held in this country also. It might also be explained that the Army charges what other shipping companies charge, that it gets a capitation fee from the countries to which the emigrants are sent, and also makes a profit on them from the shipping companies. We are not surprised to know that the Army is ready to do more business. So are all the other agencies, only they are more straightforward about their methods.

The Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal Churches of America have decided to amalgamate. It is a case of hanging together to prevent their hanging separately.

This is the way the *Methodist Times* records the great religious revival of which we have heard so much:—

The Methodist Churches have largely ceased to function as soul-saving institutions. The cry of the penitent is seldom heard within their walls. Conversions do not take place. The spiritual miracle has ceased to happen. What is worse, there is no expectation that it ever will happen.

Truth crushed to earth, but that is getting up in a devil of a hurry.

The Rev. A. E. Whitham was recently asked whether it was true that no one accomplishes anything unless he is a religious fanatic. In a sermon at Wesley's Chapel, he replied to the query. The fanatic, he said, is generally narrow-minded and obsessed with an excess of en-

thusiasm. The rev. gentleman gave as instances of fanatics who did much harm, the Spanish Inquisitors, the Jesuits, and John Knox. What Mr. Whitham could, quite truthfully, have told his hearers is that the religious fanatic appears to have a genius for doing more harmful and cruel deeds than any other kind of fanatic. Religion tends to breed that type of fanatic. Once a man gets sure he is right with God, and is doing the work of God, he lets no humane or ethical consideration stand in the way of achieving his purpose. Anyway, that is the conclusion forced upon the average reader of religious history.

Immense swarms of locusts are invading Palestine. We fancy that, just at present, the afflicted inhabitants will not be in the right mood to listen to missionary tales of the loving-kindness of God to man.

A wireless listener from Bexhill tells *Radio Times*: "Sunday is everybody's free day. Why not give those who appreciate dance music their due? Why cater solely to the likes of a section of your audience?" Why, oh why! Well, the B.B.C.'s committee of parsons are the chief bosses of Sunday broadcasting. The listeners pay their money and the parsons call the tune. Isn't this nominally a Christian country?

"As a nation," says the Rev. R. H. Edwards, of Cardiff, "we owe more to the Bible than we can tell." Never mind. Let us as a nation agree to let bygones be bygones. Let us console ourselves with the thought that, owing to the growth of intelligence and the spread of education, the Bible cannot do anything like so much mischief nowadays.

Once upon a time dancing was, in the eyes of Methodists, a sinful practice. Trust deeds of Methodist Churches still forbid it on Church property. But nowadays, it appears, there is a divided opinion on this subject. Thus, the Rev. Shirley Herrick addresses an "open letter" to a brother Methodist cleric who has banned dancing. He says:—

On what grounds is dancing forbidden there? (on Church property). Is it sinful? Does the Church forbid it its members? If not, has any section of the Church any moral right to forbid it its members? The Church has to face this question: Our present position is neither honest nor dignified.

What Mr. Herrick appears to desire is a public acknowledgment that dancing is "a perfectly innocent form of enjoyment." But he wants it carried out under "suitable conditions." Most dances, and dance-halls, he insinuates, are not quite nice. If only Methodists will organize their own dances, he seems to fancy the young people of his Church will be ready to listen to his advice to beware of other dance-halls. Not only that, but the Church will win "the respect and confidence, and therefore the following," of the young people, "whereas now it is in danger of losing all three." One can read between the lines of all this. The younger parsons can see that if the Church does not permit ordinary harmless amusement to its youthful members, there is a real danger of losing large numbers of clients. Obviously, the only way out is to effect a compromise with His Satanic Majesty. Another win for secularism!

A reader of *Radio Times* was pleased with the beautiful prayer offered on behalf of the Fireman and Policemen during a broadcast morning service. We're afraid neither the reader's gratitude nor the prayer will help firemen or policemen. The accidents and casualties among these will be no fewer than when no prayers are offered.

Manchester Watch Committee has refused permission to the Playgoers' Association to produce plays in licensed theatres on Sundays, although the Committee was assured that arrangements could be made by which the theatre staffs would not be required to work more than six days a week. The matter is to be raised at the next meeting of the City Council.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THOSE SUBSCRIBERS WHO RECEIVE THEIR COPY OF THE "FREETHINKER" IN A GREEN WRAPPER WILL PLEASE TAKE IT THAT A 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.

W.P.B.—Thanks for cuttings. We note your remarks about the "King of Kings" film. Of course, it would never do to divest the subject of Jesus of its customary solemnity. Once let people approach it with the same openness of mind as they would other subjects, and the whole thing breaks down.

H. E. LATIMER-VOIGHT.—Thanks. It would have taken too much space to have dealt with all the points raised by the *Church Times* writer, but we have taken up enough to show his quality. We should liked to have dealt with him in the *Church Times*, but we do not expect that would have been permitted.

R. R. WHITCOMBE.—We are quite ready to publish such "live questions" in ethics as occur to Freethinkers, and to have them thrashed out. Such an issue has been raised by Mr. Kerr on the question of how far we are to assume that the end justifies the means. Unfortunately, some of those who have replied do not keep to the straightforward issue, but discuss other points. We wish correspondents would bear in mind that the question set was: Assuming that human life could be saved and human welfare promoted by the sacrifice of the lives of animals, would that end justify the means used? That is the question to which correspondents should address themselves.

P. V. MORRIS.—We are glad to have your opinion that our article in the *Controversialist* "clarifies an atmosphere that so many reputed thinkers labour so assiduously to fill with fog." Pleased to know that our books and articles have been of use to you.

V. NEUBURG.—Shall always be pleased to hear from you whenever the "spirit" moves.

H. A. KERR.—You are right. The clergy take very good care that, whenever possible, they retain a dominating hold on the machinery of education. Glasgow is no exception in this direction.

MR. J. M. STUART-YOUNG writes from Nigeria, pointing out that several misprints occurred in an article of his on "From Spiritualism to Freethought," which appeared some time ago. In that article, in the sentence, "sufficient flexibility and verve," the last word was printed "verse." "Frozen music" also appeared as "frozen mncis," and the author was made to refer to "my half-trained mind" instead of "a half-trained mind." None who are acquainted with Mr. Stuart-Young's writings in prose and verse would question the inapplicability of the last blunder.

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

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

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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, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums.

Owing to a slight indisposition, probably a touch of the prevailing 'flu, Mr. Cohen is having to edit this issue of the *Freethinker* from his home. This is not a convenient way of doing business, and several letters and other things have to be held over for a few days.

Mr. Cohen has been taking an unusually long rest from the platform, but he has had a number of other things that needed attention, and he took advantage of Christmas to make a break in platform work. However, he starts again at Bolton on Sunday next (February 17).

Father Pope (R.C.) does not think much of the *New Commentary on the Bible*, recently issued, and edited by Bishop Gore. He says the writers tell the people, in effect: "As men of the twentieth century, we must accept the findings of literary criticism, and these findings have destroyed the historical Bible; therefore the Bible is not true." Father Pope considers the *Commentary* the most dangerous book issued in the last fifty years. We imagine that any book that tells the truth about the Bible is dangerous. The only safe book is the Bible, and that is only safe so long as the reader of that does not read any other book, and goes through the world with his eyes shut. Father Pope says that "God is the author of the Bible." In that case we can only say that he is the most glaring example of failure in authorship that we have ever come across. He wrote a book, and then required hundreds of discordant commentators to puzzle out what he meant by it. Pity there was no School of Journalism in heaven! Quite a lot of trouble would have been avoided if a proper course of preparatory studies had been taken by the author of the Bible.

The West Ham Branch of the N.S.S. has arranged another visit to the South Kensington Museum for Saturday, February 16. Members and their friends will meet the guide outside the main entrance to the museum at 3.30. The number of the party is limited to thirty. Station: South Kensington, District Railway.

Mr. Cohen's *Four Lectures on Freethought and Life* is now on sale, price 1s., by post three-halfpence extra. The lectures cover a very wide scope, and we hope will have a very wide sale. Those who wish for a volume discussing the relation of Freethought to some of the leading religious beliefs, as well as depicting the part played by Freethought in relation to life in general, would do well to have a spare copy of the work to hand to Christian friends. A review of the book by Mr. Cutler will appear in an early issue.

Mr. E. C. Saphin pays his first visit to Glasgow to-day (February 10). He will lecture at 11.30: on "The Phallic Element in Christianity," and at 6.30, on "The Solar Element in Religion." Both meetings will be in No. 2 Room, City Hall, and will be illustrated with lantern slides.

Mr. F. P. Corrigan visits Plymouth to-day (February 10), and will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street, Plymouth, at 3.0 and 7.0 p.m. Mr. Corrigan, we understand, always has very appreciative audiences at Plymouth, and we hope to hear that the present visit will attract larger and even more appreciative audiences than usual.

A man's vanity tells him what is honour; a man's conscience what is justice.—*Landor*.

That only can with propriety be styled refinement which, by strengthening the intellect, purifies the manners.—*Coleridge*.

Protestantism and Catholicism.

(Concluded from page 69.)

It has been our melancholy fate to have to read a good deal of the literature—or rather, we should say, printed matter—put forth by Protestants in defence of their faith, and in attacking that of the Church of Rome. What impressed us most about the latter was a feeling of its ineffectiveness, as though its exponents were fighting with one hand tied up. There was a great deal of sound and fury, but the attack never seemed to be pushed home to its ultimate possibility.

The Protestant attack on the Church of Rome, indeed, reminds us of the Chinese attack on the Foreign Legations at Peking during the Boxer rebellion of 1900. There was a tremendous bombardment and expenditure of ammunition, and the garrison often feared that the final assault was about to take place. But just as they had given up all hope and prepared to meet their fate, the attack would die down, no attempt was made to push on to ultimate victory, and they would experience a reprieve. It transpired afterwards that some of the better informed higher officials, who knew what would be the result to China of the destruction of the Legations, always intervened at the last moment to prevent a successful assault. The bombardment and heavy firing was to impress the Court with the desperation of the attack, and the strength of the enemy. They did not want to proceed to extremities for fear of the fatal consequences to themselves.

So it is with the more advanced Protestants of today, who now occupy the position taken up by Paine in *The Age of Reason*, and for which they so heartily denounced him during most part of the last century. Their aim is to attack Catholicism without injuring Christianity. So that a great deal of weighty and damaging evidence used by the unbeliever is not available to the Protestant because it tells equally against his own faith.

Moreover, the advanced Protestant has to fight on three fronts. While he is attacking Catholicism, he is also engaged in a rear-guard action, on the retreat, before the forces of science and Freethought, while the Fundamentalists attack him on the flanks as an infidel who has given up the infallibility of the Bible.

Charles Bradlaugh used to say that the final fight would not be between Protestantism and Catholicism, but between Atheism and Catholicism, and that Protestantism would be crushed out between the two; for there is no logical standing place between them. Singularly enough, Dr. Cadoux, who, of course, does not mention Bradlaugh, has gone to the trouble of collecting several instances of religious authorities, Protestant and Catholic, to the same effect. Cardinal Newman, for instance, declaring: "There are but two alternatives, the way to Rome, and the way to Atheism: Anglicanism is the halfway house on the one side and Liberalism the halfway house on the other." And Dr. Pusey, who says: "Rejection of Catholicism ends, in the long run, in Rationalism, and . . . it is an inclined plane on which generations cannot stand." Dr. Cadoux, being a Protestant, of course, does not agree with this view; yet he does not trouble to refute it, but merely observes that it is but an easy step from this position, "to declare that only those who are within the Catholic Church can be saved,"¹ and the rest of the chapter is, for the most part, taken up with quotations to prove that this is the teaching of that Church.

Those who have any acquaintance with Catholic papers will be aware that they are always boasting

of the increase of their numbers, and pointing with triumph to the admitted decrease in the yearly membership of the Protestant Churches, all of which signs they regard as a prognostic of the coming victory of their Church over the world. The explanation is, that those brought up in the old faith—which is fast evaporating from the Protestant Churches under the influence of modern thought—are leaving the sinking ship and finding refuge in the Church of Rome. On the other hand, the younger generation, now growing up, has, for the most part, no use for the Churches of any denomination, and, in any case, no time to waste on them. The Catholic perhaps loses less to Freethought, because of the rigid censorship exercised through the influence of the priests over the books allowed to be read. One fact is quite certain, the gains of Catholicism are not made at the expense of Atheism.

And what, after all, is the final authority for Protestantism, as opposed to Catholicism? We know that Luther made the Bible the final authority, but this view is now only held by the Fundamentalists. The final authority has now been transferred from the Bible to the person of Jesus Christ. Dr. Bartlet, in the "Foreword" to the present volume, says: "A broad Evangelicism, which rests all directly on Christ as *self-authenticating in His historic personality*, is the most genuine form of Christianity, and the only one ultimately tenable by Christians who really think in terms of modern knowledge and methods—scientific, historical, and philosophic." (p. xii.) The italics are Dr. Bartlet's own.

But the only knowledge we have of Christ is that contained in the now discredited Bible. According to modern criticism, the Gospels were not written by the writers whose names they bear. They are anonymous documents written many years after the events they are recording. They are historically unreliable. The figure of Jesus, of his divine birth, his sufferings and death, as a vicarious offering for the sins of mankind, his resurrection on the third day and ascension into heaven; all these events formed part of the story of ancient pagan gods long before the era of Christianity; and it is useless for Protestants to shut their eyes to the facts and think that they will melt away by being ignored. The coming generation will not ignore them. In fact, the process is only too evident now, as the following confession, from the editorial, leading article, in the *Methodist Times* for January 24, will show:—

The Methodist Churches have largely ceased to function as soul-saving institutions. The cry of the penitent is seldom heard within their walls. Conversions do not take place. The spiritual miracle has ceased to happen. What is worse, there is no expectation that it ever will happen. I am afraid one must say also, in some cases there is no desire it should happen. Sermons are not made to convince men of sin, or if so made, fail in their purpose. The plain truth is that Methodism has settled down into a Church organization, and is no longer a great evangelistic movement compelling world-wide attention. The glow is gone . . . It is useless to try to hide earthquake cracks with postage stamps.

In conclusion, although the argument for the authority of Christ is quite as vain as that for the authority of the Church, yet for those who wish to have a detailed exposition of the points at issue between the Protestant and the Catholic to-day, the book is a valuable compendium. There is a wealth of quotations from the latest theological works on both sides of the question, indicating the great industry of the author, and should make the work of great value to everyone interested in the subject. Mine is a library copy, but I certainly shall not rest until I see a copy on my own shelves.

W. MANN.

¹ Cadoux: *Catholicism and Christianity*. p. 44.

The Crucifixion of Cupid.

In 1669, there appeared at Amsterdam a fine edition of Petronius, supplemented by the effusions of some other authors who dealt with his favourite topics. One of that goodly company is Decimus Magnus Ausonius, a native of Bordeaux, who flourished in the fourth century, and about whom something of interest might be related if anybody evinced a curiosity to hear it. Three of his poems adorn the above collection. The second of these contains over one hundred lines, and is entitled, *Cupido Cruci-Affixus*, literally, "Cupid Affixed to the Cross," or freely, "The Crucifixion of Cupid." Both in sound and in sense this is an exquisite performance, full of learned but elegant allusions to Grecian mythology, and displaying, along with imagination and feeling, a light and graceful fancy. There you learn how it came to pass once upon a time, that far away "in the aerial fields" the Heroides, or half-goddesses, were spending their orgies on the spot "where a myrtle grove shades raving lovers." You are greatly mistaken if you think they were happy. Each one bore the marks of her more or less tragic decease; and suffered the pangs of a remorseless memory. Forsaking the grove, "they wandered under a murky moon hither and thither in the great wood among reedy foliage and teeming poppies, and silent lakes and un murmuring streams"; and on the banks of those dismal waters they espied the languishing forms of Narcissus, and Hyacinthus, and Crocus, and several others, all of whom, for loving not wisely but too well, had been turned by the Fates, or some other authorities, into familiar flowers. Such sights increased the gloom of the Heroides by reminding them of the disasters which Cupid had brought upon many famous persons in olden times, and upon themselves at later periods. These melancholy recollections favoured the poet by giving him an excellent opportunity to display his learning and taste; and they even afforded the poor Heroides a real though mournful pleasure, for we are told that "they revived their torments with sweet and sad complaints." Suddenly the flutter of noisy wings dispersed a cloud which had gathered over their heads. It was Cupid. Through sheer indiscretion the young rascal had made the mistake of his life. Everyone of the Heroides recognized him immediately, and all saw in him their common foe. Damp clouds had dulled his characteristic ornaments, and darkened his ruddy lamp, but, as the poet says, "still they knew him!" A thrill passed through the group. The enemy found no quarter. Before he could take his hook under cover of the returning cloud, they collared him fast. In that triste grove there stood a very notorious myrtle, singularly invidious for the punishment of gods. Adonis, one of his mother's dearest friends, had perished on that accursed tree. There they strung up their rosy little victim with his fat little hands tied behind his plump little back . . . If you think that I am going to make the dear flappers cry by relating all the cruel things that those implacable creatures did to the wretched Cupid, when they had him in their power, you are more ill-advised than they were. But you may guess that he on his part did the sort of crying that requires no pocket handkerchief either of lace, or any other material. Venus, his devoted mother, must have heard him, for she flew to the spot. You might have thought that such a great lady as she was would have swept through that mob of Megaeras like an Atlantic wave across the hurricane deck, with the result that those who did not fall backwards, fell, either forwards, or side ways, or else into the fourth dimension. Alas for the infirmity of human previsions! Nothing whatever of that kind transpired.

Venus entered calmly into the tumult, but instead of increasing it by supporting her son, she began to incite the Heroides by connecting her own lapses with his faults. Then, finding words insufficient, she took a wreath of roses and smote it upon the woe begone boy who was dreading a worse injury. But alas, he soon felt the truth of the good old tag *nulla rosa sine spina*, for the thorns in that floral scourge "extracted a purple dew from his wounded body"; and "tinted" already by the first blow, they soon "drew forth a dye of more than fiery hue." "Fierce threats" now followed; and "a vengeance greater than the offence seemed about to make Venus herself guilty." This touched the Heroides, and they sought mercy for Cupid, every one of them preferring to father "her tragic end" on "a cruel fate." Venus gave thanks, and Cupid was forgiven . . . You think that is all. No. There are still four lines, and these let out the secret that the whole story is nothing more than a bad dream that once disturbed Cupid's repose. On awaking he flew up to the gods. What he had been after down here, I cannot tell, but rest assured that it was mischief of some kind, and that he well deserved the scare which came to him through the ivory gate.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

Labourers in God's Vineyard.

"A Christian is God Almighty's Gentleman."

J. C. and A. W. Hare (*Guesses at Truth.*)

"Persons of mean understandings, not so inquisitive nor so well instructed, are made good Christians, and by reverence and obedience, implicitly believe and abide by their belief."

Montaigne (*"Of Vain Subtleties."*)

"Christians of the best edition, all picked and culled."

Rabelais' *Works. Book IV. Ch.50.*

As a professional journalist I find it necessary to keep in touch with modern thought and to read many newspapers.

The results are sometimes ludicrous, and often it happens that having studied the pronouncements of authorities on scientific matters, my blood boils to find an old, old ancient myth appearing in a newspaper, and influencing thousands.

Usually I pass such untruths by, but once I could not content myself when a famous daily asserted that science could not refute the Genesis story of creation.

I wrote a letter to the editor pointing out that the two creation accounts in Genesis differed and were separated by four hundred years. I stated that the Jews obtained the legend from more ancient nations, and added one or two facts well known to Freethinkers.

To my surprise, the editor printed my letter, and my name and address. Then the fun started.

Letters from angry Christians (how apt the Christians are to become angry!) rolled in. One began promisingly: "Your letter must surely be of a Rip Van Winkle type, after all the years that has (sic) practically by comparison and research settled the fact that the Bible is the true account of the beginning, continuance, and destiny of all creation." I felt like giving it up, but I waded on through the mire of words. "Had you have read carefully you need not to have travelled to Babylon to interview those writers of 900 and 500 years B.C. You would have seen that it was all done in one day."

After all, I suppose that if a man believes a thing he might as well go the whole hog.

Lower down the page: "Jews proverbially obtain anything and everything from everybody and anywhere. They so are capable folk."

Having written this masterpiece, my correspondent lost his power and sank into the usual drivel about "the Bible is the Greatest Power in the World," and so on. At the end came the expected, "I beg enclose pamphlet, helpful I hope." The pamphlet introduced "The New Church People," so new that they believe

that "Jehovah, the eternal God, our Creator is absolutely one, and that he became our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The next letter was the best of the lot, and deserves giving in full, for doubtless the writer was a pillar of his local church, and was inspired by the same intolerance which characterized the Son of God.

"From a casual reading of your letter it is clear that you know as much about Science as you do about the Creation. Your letter is the pompous effusion of an obviously conceited ass. A greater than you declared that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and in answer to his critics informed them that 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Perhaps you have not read the scientific works of the great Lord Kelvin and other eminent men!!!! With others I thought your letter very stupid. May I suggest that you don't rush into print again until you can write sense?"

As I was writing for my living, I thought this rather hard, but I did go so far as to envy my correspondent his power of invective, and then with a sigh ejaculating, "Lord How these Christians love," I passed on.

There were numerous pamphlets, some bearing on my letter and some not. The titles are all that I need inflict on my readers. "Why I am not an Evolutionist"; "Who Originated Sunday"; "Is Man Mortal or Immortal?" "Spiritualism Unfolded," and that familiar empty phrase applied to so many one-and-only brands, "Real Religion."

The British Israelites did not forget to send me proof that the British race (which we are elsewhere told is made up of Celts, Teutons, Saxons, Angles, Picts, Jutes, Frisians and all the rest of them) is of the stock of Israel, that the present tenants of Buckingham Palace are descended from King David, that the son of Jacob visited Ireland, that man was created in the year 4,000 B.C., and that the Pope's income is eighty-five millions a year.

One other letter calls for notice. It was from a parson who made the astounding statement, but typical of muddleheadedness: "To receive it (The Bible story) by faith is the most scientific means of arriving at a right understanding." This letter was sprinkled with quotations from Professors in 1886 and later. Possibly the pearl of the letter was the statement in reference to the various compilers of the Pentateuch known to students as J, E, D, and P.

"It verges upon a downright lie to say what certain men *did* when you have no evidence that they ever really existed." Yet this parson accepts as truth the tallest stories in the Bible about men concerning whose existence there is no real internal evidence even in the Bible itself.

Now for the climax. This reverend gentleman handsomely offered "to charitably discuss the matter or to read any evidence that you care to bring forward"—but he would not accept anything which disagreed with the Bible, because the "whole question assaults my Saviour, My King, My Joy, My Wisdom, My Life, My Spiritual Powers—THE HOLY GHOST."

He finished his letter with the words, "Every good wish and Christian desire"; and having experienced from these letters something of the mental outlook of Christians, I made the very pious exclamation: "God forbid that anything should come to me labelled Christian, even though it be good wishes."

NECHELLS.

Chicago Celebrates Christmas.

PITY in the press goes pretty far in England. It seems to be worse, if possible, in America. One of the Chicago newspapers (*The Post*) on Christmas Eve saved the cost of an editorial by reprinting (as a leading article) a *pot pourri* of the Story of the Birth of Jesus. To students of the Bible (few Christians are included in this category) much amusement is derivable from all attempts at "editing" Holy Writ. It always happens that the editor betrays his own sense of decency and probability. The editor always omits the things he doesn't like. The "Editorial" in the *Chicago Post* says nothing about Joseph's suspicions, nothing about his "being minded to

put Mary away privily," nothing about the Holy Ghost's mysterious visits to the B.V. Mary, and there is only one single verse from St. John's mystical nonsense.

As most of the editorial is copied from the "First" Gospel, it is interesting to note that none of the "Egyptian" business is included. Perhaps the editor doesn't believe in dreams! Perhaps he felt that silence is golden when the Christian reader has to note a great contrast in what is nowadays called the "reaction" which Joseph felt towards two different dreams.

When God appeared to Joseph in a dream, and told him not to worry about the mysterious parentage of Mary's son, he promptly obeyed. After all, Mary was probably a very attractive young lady, and he intended to marry her anyway. But when Joseph, with his wife and child, had escaped to Egypt (that most extraordinary incident in all the unusual story) once more Joseph gets the straight tip from heaven by means of a dream (Matt. ii. 19), but this time he is positively "disobedient unto the heavenly vision," for all the world like a modern anti-Freudist!

Naturally the editor wallows in the wonderful "Star" which performed prodigies which could not have been conceived in post-Copernican times, but which make good illustrations on Christmas cards, like the seasonable snow-scenes.

Chicago churches are gaily decorated. Even the evangelists are now imitating the Catholics. The enormous Moody Institute, the most fundamental of all fundamentalist institutions, a sort of anti-Y.M.C.A. (and still more anti Y.W.C.A.), displays a garish and horribly lighted enormous Christmas tree as an exterior decoration. The interior of the Moody Institute is said to be the last word in gloominess—a fact I can appreciate, having been born and bred in an evangelical environment.

A Congregational Church here has surely "licked creation." It actually advertised that it would present, on Christmas Eve, in dramatic form, "The Full Story of the Nativity." It seems incredible that the "FULL" story could be told "in dramatic form," even in a church. Surely the rumour (or the advt.) has exaggerated the story.

The newspapers in general boasted of the five hundred million dollars which would be spent in Chicago this Christmas. The *Tribune* devoted several of its finest cartoons to a contrast between the nominal worship of poor Jesus, and the totally different reality of the tribute to another mythical person, Santa Claus. One of its Christmas Day cartoons shows two altars: the altar of Jesus attracting a handful of humble souls who pray to a shadow disappearing in the distance; the other altar has thereon a fat ugly prosperous wealthy Santa Claus, before whom millions of dollars are being wasted in foolish trumpery momentary, but very expensive, oblations. There is a good deal of very sensible truth in the picture, although we must not allow Christians to shift the responsibility of these stupidities on to pagan shoulders.

Some American hotels celebrated Christmas, 1928 by opening churches or "sacred apartments" in the hotel building, where "meditation and prayer" may be indulged in without extra payment (directly). The church in the hotel is to be open to "worshippers of every faith" (the view of the proprietors is clearly that the only "faiths" worth mentioning are Protestant, and Catholic Christianity and Judaism). There is an altar where "Easter lilies" will always be found, and an inscription over the altar will always say "Come unto Me and I will give you rest" (always an appropriate text for hotel proprietors).

Perhaps the Churches will revolt! Already, in America, funeral services are commonly held in the undertaker's shop, and weddings in the front parlour of the brides's home, even if they are only "Companionate" marriages. The Radio gives everybody an excuse for non-attendance at church (which is probably why the B.B.C. imagined that Radio Religion would be popular). No wonder the Churches make an effort to attract a congregation on Christmas Day. The Chicago Churches were large consumers of electric light this Christmas. There were immense crosses blazing out their once tragic, but now warning message of what the

cross means to civilization. The wayfarer and the sight-seer notes these expensive additions to the other electrical advertisements. "Uncead Biscuit," says one of the worst. "Whose Birthday Is It?" asks another. And between the two are advertised every form of Christmas "good cheer" except one . . . the Speak-easies, the bootleggers, and the blind-pigs are busier even than the Churches this Christmastide—but they are able to do a roaring trade (amongst Christians) without advertising. Sacramental wine need not even be bootlegged.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

"WHY I AM NOT AN ATHEIST."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, A. J. La Bern, has a strange conception of Atheism.

Atheists possess similar attributes to other members of the community, but, by their appeal to reason, they have a distinct advantage over those who prefer phantasies and gropings about to find the land where the rainbow ends, the land of half lights and mauve shadows, dreamy delusions, and unseen song. They believe that this life is the only one there is any certain knowledge of, and that it is the wisest course to make the most and the best of it. As Ingersoll said, "The time to be happy is now, the place to be happy is here, and the way to be happy is to make others happy." That surely does not sound like a cold and barren philosophy, nor can it, by any stretch of imagination, be described as pitiless.

Mr. La Bern is evidently not a Christian, as he says Christianity is not religion. As he also says he is possessed with a certain amount of mental alertness, it would be interesting to know what he means by "colourless void" and "unseen song," also what hope a delusion can inspire which can be of any possible lasting benefit to him or to anyone else.

As knowledge, which is based upon reason, grows, religion (which is superstition) weakens; the vast majority of people give very little thought to the superstitions which governed the lives of their ancestors, and it is more than probable that your correspondent does not believe in special creation by an omnipotent God, the miracles of the Old and New Testaments, or even the alleged performances at spiritualistic ceremonies.

If Mr. La Bern will come out into the open, do away with his half lights and mauve shadows, I can assure him that he will discover a new zest in life, with all the human emotions as strong as at present, and he will then have pity for the poor wireless listeners who sigh for good music on Sundays, when the parsons prate about things they do not understand. He will find life much happier when he ceases to strive after the vast incorporate idea and rays of hope from mirages.

H. R. CLIFTON.

SIR,—I hope you will not misunderstand me in saying the letter in your issue of January 27, by A. J. La Bern, expresses the Truth, although somewhat hidden and entangled.

The rejection of Atheism *per se* is quite easily understood. Its mere negative position; lack of constructive policy; its pure intellectualism; is somewhat exasperating and repugnant to an intellectual-emotional balanced individual. The gradual acceptance of it has hardly any pleasing emotional effect; on the contrary, it is the emotional side that is so difficult to overcome with most people, although they may be intellectually capable of grasping it. There are very good reasons for this, and not merely from the point of view of control. The demand, "What are you going to put in its place?" is not so silly as some Atheists think, and their general answer to which I am fully aware is inadequate.

His "objections to Atheism," as I understand it, are purely emotional, the expression of *feeling* rather than *seeing*; emotions do not appeal to reason. This feeling is Religious emotion, which is quite a natural phenomenon. The "hard, cold, unrelenting reason" of Atheism *per se*, only arouses the Religious emotion to fury, because it leaves nothing to satisfy it—mere moral platitudes won't do. Atheism appeals to reason, and

has very little, if any, emotional balance, and as such has a powerful enemy in religious emotion, where this is strong and its fiction in life not fully understood. Hence, the God idea is upheld, and to a degree satisfies Religion; it takes the place of its true social function, which is not preached because it is revolutionary.

Religion is the urge, the cry, the motive power, for the Brotherhood of Man; it is as old as Man, manifested throughout history and even to-day—unconsciously. Fundamentally it has nothing whatever to do with gods—but with humanity. It is instilled in the hearts of men—"is inescapable," "incradicable." Creeds may die; but Religion—never. By its aid the hope of the ages will eventuate; Atheism *per se* can never do this.

But I would point out to our friend that Religion can be very dangerous. It is emotion pure and simple, and to the individual who fully understands, the joy it can give is unequalled. It must be fully realized that emotions are blind and irrational, liable to overstep its function and do more harm than good. Under the stress of uncontrolled Religion men have sacrificed themselves, even their lives; history is full of them.

How are we to control it? In the same way that we control our actions—by intellect, knowledge. The study of Man in his struggle upwards involves his beliefs, but does not stop there, they are only a part of his social life. In negating his supernatural beliefs, his Religious emotion is satisfied and directed to the substance of social life in place of the shadow.

The direction is carried out by the knowledge man has accumulated for the social well-being—The Social Sense. To-day supernaturalism takes the place of this, and thereby side-tracks Religion into worthless channels; The awakening of Man to the correct Social Sense is just beginning, and the knowledge of its outcome arouses Religious emotion and urges Man on in its struggle.

Religion will bind the human race together, the Brotherhood of Man will be a fact through the interaction of Intellect and Religion.

A. S. E. PANTON.

[We have had to curtail Mr. Pantan's very long letter. Writers should bear in mind the distinction between a letter and an essay.—EDITOR.]

BUDDHA, THE ATHEIST.

SIR,—I have just one or two comments to make on the letter of Mr. Upasaka. From it, if words have any definite meaning at all, the title of "Buddha, the Atheist" is not justified. I don't mind the Buddha being considered one of the greatest intellectual figures in history—I have a Scots friend who puts Burns on the very top—we all have fads of some kind, but the Buddhist philosophy is one of pessimism; a thorough-going denial of full and abundant life, and as such, in a line with other reactionary forces. I would set down how many years have gone since I first read *The Soul of a People*, if I thought the telling of it would not set up in the mind of my friend, Joseph Bryce—who lent me the book—unsettling reflections on the passage of time. And if I may better the advice: the opening of some of the early volumes of the *Anthropological Review* might shed a light on Buddhism from a different and, possibly, more informing angle to that of Fielding Hall.

H. B. DODDS.

THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS.

SIR,—In answer to Mr. Kerr's last question, I do think it would be wrong to save a large number of human lives by the infliction of pain on a small number of rats, monkeys, or dogs.

I hope my answer is sufficiently definite.

A. J. BRAINE.

[We have been obliged to curtail considerably Mr. Braine's letter, but we have inserted all that was relevant to Mr. Kerr's question. Mr. Kerr stated explicitly that he was not discussing the value of vivisection, but stated the proposition, assuming experiments on the lower animals to be productive of good, would Mr. Braine tolerate their exercise? We have had to decline several other letters altogether, because instead of dealing with Mr. Kerr's very plain point, they devote themselves to either attacking or defending vivisection.—EDITOR.]

Obituary.

MRS. ELIZABETH STEWART ROSS.

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Elizabeth Stewart Ross, the widow of W. Stewart Ross, known to generations of Freethinkers as "Saladin" of the *Agnostic Journal*, and the brilliant author of a large number of Freethought works. Mrs. Ross, who was eighty-four years of age, died suddenly on January 31. Until the last few years of her life she was active, and two or three years ago vigorously refuted in the press the Christian assertion that her husband had recanted on his death bed. In earlier days she was her husband's collaborateur, and she frequently helped in the actual publishing of the *Agnostic Journal*, while her house was the rendezvous of many of the more advanced Freethinkers of the day. Apart from her work for Freethought, Mrs. Ross was the authoress of several school books, and was at one time school mistress at a well known college in Dumfries. She gave her life to what she believed to be the service of truth. All Freethinkers will extend their most sincere sympathy to her daughter and three sons, by whom she is survived. Mrs. Ross was buried at Brookwood Cemetery, Woking, on Tuesday, February 5, a Secular Service being conducted by Mr. F. Mann.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. E. C. SAPHIN'S excellent lecture on Phallic Worship, with an admirable selection of lantern slides, attracted a larger audience than usual last Sunday, at the St. Pancras Reform Club. The connexion of many phases of ancient sex worship with modern religion, and particularly with Christianity, was clearly shown, and many of Mr. Saphin's conclusions were the result of his own independent investigations. Later in the session, he will deal with the "Solar Element in Christianity," and "Christian Art and Ritual," both lectures with lantern illustrations. To-day (February 10), Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman will lecture on "The Need for Courts of Domestic Relations." This should also attract a large audience.

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17th, 1929 at 3 p.m.

LANTERN LECTURE BY

Professor Y Gordon Childe, M.A., B.Litt.

(Department of Prehistoric Archaeology, Edinburgh University).

Subject: "THE BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZED LIFE IN MESOPOTAMIA AND EGYPT."

Questions and Discussion

Silver Collection.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster): Lecture in English by Mr. Dimsdale Stocker—"Cosmic Kinship." All are invited.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Mr. F. J. Gould—"Prophets, their Values and their Weaknesses."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mrs. M. L. Seaton Tiedeman—"The Need for Courts of Domestic Relations."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Father Vincent McNabb, O.P.—"Has Man a Conscience?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m. Hon. Bertrand Russell—"What is Western Civilization?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Use of the Cinema."

THE NON-POLITICAL, METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree Hotel, Easton Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. Wattson—"What of Russia?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, Maurice Maubrey—"The Path to Heaven."

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Every Saturday at 8 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Bryant, Math'e and others.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart. 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden. Every Friday at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* is on sale outside the Park at all our meetings.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (Proposed) Branch N.S.S. (I.L.P. Hall, 48 York Street): 3.30, Mr. Ross—"Is There a Life Beyond?"

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Still's Restaurant, Bristol Street, opposite Council Schools): 7.0, General Discussion. (Mecca Café, Waterloo Street): Saturday, February 16, at 6.30 p.m.—A Whist Drive and Social. Tickets 1s. 6d.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Large Spinners' Hall, St. George's Road): 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"What is the Use of a Future Life?" Tickets 6d. and 1s. Meetings every Sunday, at 6.30 p.m., in Small Borough Hall, Corporation Street. Christianity and Biology studied.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—7.15, Mr. Jno. Welsh A Lecture. Chairman: F. Brown.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall): 11.30 and 6.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Subjects: "The Phallic Element in Christianity"; "The Solar Element in Christianity."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. H. W. Nevinson—"A Glimpse of the Near East." Lantern illustrations.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): 3.0 and 6.30, James A. Brewin (National Council of Labour Colleges). Subjects: "Leadership"; "The Nature and Evolution of Thought."

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