

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Vol. LI.—No. II.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1931

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Simple Bible Teaching.

LOOKING over some papers the other day I came across an article dealing with the education question in which the writer, with child-like simplicity, pleaded for a return to the principle of "simple Bible teaching." The phrase appears to have with a great many quite a narcotic effect. Give the children in the schools, they say, the simple teaching of the Bible and all will be well. It is quite true that all Christians believe in the Bible, as they believe in Jesus and God—just as they believe in Jesus and God. The cases are identical. For while all Christians believe in God and Jesus and the Bible, what the devil they believe about any one of the three is the cause of all the trouble between the two or three hundred different sects. Put on one side all they would disagree in and there would be left—the Bible. Just the name and nothing more.

Now Christians nowadays are not quite such fools as to have all this bother over a mere word. The word is there as a cover for something else. If any one of the churches could, it would get its interpretation of the Bible established and exclude all the others. But as none can hope for this, the next best thing is to get the fetish book there in a position of authority. It is something to get the Bible under any pretence—as a manual of English literature, or as a book of ethical counsels—although there are scores of books that would serve these purposes much better. The important thing is to have the Bible there, selected from all other books, placed on a pedestal by itself. This does at least get the children used to the superstition concerning the Bible, and so makes them more amenable to the manipulations of the parsonry in their post-school life.

What the Bible Teaches.

If genuinely simple Bible teaching were what Christians desire in the public schools, I feel fairly certain that Freethinking teachers would give such lessons with the utmost cheerfulness. As it is, the only place in which such lessons may be gained is in a paper like the *Freethinker*. In the schools they get the Bible according to the Roman Church, or according to the Jew, or the Baptist, or the Methodist, or to someone else, but they never get the Bible as it really is. Anyone who was found using the time devoted to the religious teaching to giving the children real simple Bible teaching would soon find himself forced to resign.

It is, for example, simple Bible teaching that witchcraft is an actual fact. It is recognized by God and punished according to the command "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The reality of witchcraft was accepted by all Christians for many centuries, and honest but narrow-minded John Wesley said that if you gave this up you might give up the Bible itself. But having pointed out what the Bible said on the subject, the teacher, in order to protect the children would have to point out that witches never existed, do not exist, that the professional witch-finders of England and Scotland were exactly on the level of the African witch-smellers to-day, that Jesus was mistaken, that all the saints were mistaken, that God Almighty himself was mistaken, and that in the immense number of things he had created he had probably imagined more than he had done, just as he appears to have forgotten a great many that he had made. Simple Bible teaching would open the way for some interesting lessons if they were properly given.

* * *

Slavery and the Bible.

Another interesting piece of simple Bible teaching, with valuable sociological deductions would be that concerning the slave trade. It could be pointed out how careful the Bible arranged all the details of the traffic in human beings. The Jewish slave was subject to certain favourable considerations, but in the case of outsiders they and their children were to remain slaves forever. And with a proper sense of "values" the Bible actually gives slave dealers a scale of prices of human beings which would be found to be quite useful. Thus, in their modern equivalents, the prices are, from one month to five years of age 12s. 6d., to twenty years of age £3 15s., from twenty to sixty £6 5s. The value of females was lower. And in the New Testament he would be able to point out how the frame of mind suitable to slavery was part and parcel of its teachings. And as a kind of commentary upon the influence of the Bible he might point out that this was the impregnable rock upon which slave-holders all over the Christian world based their right to buy and sell human beings.

Slave owners never placed an obstacle in the way of the slaves having the Bible. On the contrary, the more they had of it the better pleased were the masters. They made special arrangements for the teachings of the Bible; they appointed lectureships for the teachings of the Bible; they shot Abolitionists in the name of the Bible whose teachings these wicked humanitarians, their minds puffed up with worldly knowledge, had outraged. The religious fervour of the American negro is ample evidence of the extent to which the mind of the slave was saturated with "a simple Bible teaching."

* * *

Deity and Disease.

On the important question of health and disease simple Bible teaching is equally explicit. We have it here on the authority of Holy Writ that leprosy, plague, epilepsy, sunstroke, scrofula and insanity are all brought about by either God or the Devil, or by God and the Devil. And as a logical corollary, disease being supernaturally caused is to be supernaturally cured. Once again this exposition would pave the way to an interesting historical commentary, pointing out how for many centuries the Christian Church tried to check the growth of medical, surgical, and sanitary science. It might also be pointed out how, even to-day, we have such crazy movements as Christian science, or Faith-healing crusades, or Peculiar People being sent to gaol for trusting to the prayer of faith to save the sick. It is certain that children would grow up with a better appreciation of these things if they knew how they logically developed from simple Bible believing.

There are many other useful lessons that might be learned from genuinely simple Bible teaching in the schools. Youngsters would grow up with a better appreciation of the way in which the freedom of thought enjoyed in both the ancient Greek and Roman worlds was replaced by the intolerance of the Christian ages. They would understand why when wicked Freethinkers arose and demanded that women should enjoy the same educational, legal, and political privileges as men, they were met with the fact that in the Bible this is not tolerated; that man "is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church"; that woman must keep silent, and if they would know anything they must enquire of their husbands at home, and must not usurp authority over them. Blasphemy laws, sex laws, the torture of criminals, burning of witches, charming away disease, these and a thousand and one other things would be better understood if simple Bible teaching actually existed in the public schools.

* * *

How to Read the Bible.

This kind of simple Bible teaching might be given by capable teachers to the advantage of everyone—except the parsons. It could be used to illustrate the gradual growth of man from savagery to civilization; the struggle of science with primitive ideas, the development of ethics from magic to morals. Bible teaching might be used as part of the general process of educational enlightenment; at present it is used to prepare children for the operations of one or other of the Churches till they reach the age at which they may profitably be plucked. It is not the Freethinker who objects to a sane and scientific study of the Bible, he would like everyone to be thoroughly acquainted with its contents, but it should be actual, not its imagined contents.

If I could I would place in the hands of every believing Christian a copy of Foote and Ball's *Bible Handbook*. At the price of half a crown he would,

probably for the first time be able to see exactly what the Bible contains, and just what simple Bible teaching would mean. For the real way to know the Bible is to first of all see what it actually contains, and then compare its fundamental teachings with those of savages in every part of the world. He would then be able to detect the identity between the two, and to discover that the real commentator on the "Blessed Book" is not a parson, but a savage. He is the only one who can teach us to know the inner meaning of God's word. The Bible records it. The savage acts it.

* * *

Religious Humbug.

"Simple Bible teaching" is actually as great a sham as is "unsectarian teaching." Both phrases were coined to hide the real aim in forcing religion on the child. The advocates of both "slogans" know quite well, that to leave a child till it is outgrown its childhood to introduce religion is to ensure its rejection. Art may wait, science may wait, literature may wait, everything else may wait upon understanding. Religion in modern environment must precede and exclude understanding as a condition of its being believed. The only people who actually believe in pure Bible teaching are those who do not believe. The professed believer in the Bible is really aiming at a selection from the Bible which shall be presented as the whole, and by a forced interpretation of even that prepare children for sectarian exploitation.

Simple Bible Teaching! It was the Bible that for ages obstructed the thinker and the reformer. It closed the schools of antiquity and placed a "Thus saith the Lord" that barred every road by which man sought to advance. It sent Roger Bacon and Galileo to prison, and Bruno and Vanini to the stake. It opposed the astronomy of Copernicus and Laplace, the physics of Newton, the geology of Lyell, and the biology of Darwin. It kept the flames of persecution alive for centuries, and does what it can to fan them into activity to-day. And it is in the name of the same thing that to-day children are in State schools fed upon lies, and religious interests protected by an officially contrived scheme of deception. Let us by all means have real Bible teaching, but that will never be given so long as it is controlled by bodies of men who by every interest are committed to the perpetuation of a set of beliefs that every educated man or woman should be ashamed to profess.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

METAPHYSICS.

The History of Philosophy presents a spectacle of thousands of intellects—some the greatest that have made our race illustrious—steadily concentrated on problems believed to be of vital importance, yet producing no other result than the extreme facility of error, and the remoteness of any probability that truth can be reached. The only conquest has been critical—that is to say psychological. Vainly do some argue that philosophy has made no progress hitherto, because its problems are complex and require more effort than the simpler problems of science; vainly are we warned not to conclude from the past to the future, averring that no progress will be made because no progress has been made. Perilous as it may ever be to set absolute limits to the future of human capacity, there can be no peril in averring that metaphysics never will achieve its aims because those aims are beyond all scope.

The difficulty is impossibility. No progress can be made because no basis of certainty is possible. To aspire to the knowledge of more than phenomena—their resemblances, co-existences, and successions—is to aspire to transcend the inexorable limits of human faculty. To know more we must be more.—George Henry Lewes, *History of Philosophy, (Prolegomena)*.

The Wonder of Whitman.

The distance, and as it were the space around man, grows with the strength of his intellectual vision and insight: his world becomes profounder; new stars, new enigmas, and notions are ever coming into view.

Nietzsche.

OVER half a century ago an obscure American author was dismissed summarily from a modest Government position because he had written a very outspoken book of verse, entitled *Leaves of Grass*. What would Walt Whitman have said could he have foreseen that his little book, which brought him so much trouble, would be treasured by posterity; that even amid the awful distractions of a world-war the centenary of his birth would be celebrated; and that he would be hailed as the most notable among the men who laboured to lay the foundations of a purely national literature for America, and as the poet of Democracy?

Emerson alone among the critics had the sagacity to see the outstanding value of Whitman's work. His tribute to the worth of *Leaves of Grass* is an historic utterance. "I find it," said the great Bostonian, "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed, I greet you at the beginning of a great career." The tribute was a prophecy. Three generations later all the auspices seem in favour of Whitman's permanence in literature. It is the old, old story of the fate of pioneers. First the neglect by his own countrymen, tempered by abuse; then the recognition by a few of the keener minds and brighter intelligences; and finally the slow emergence into appreciation as the singer of Democracy.

For not only were Walt Whitman's ideas unconventional, but his work is unlike anything else in poetry. It was not the freak of a writer trying to be eccentric at all costs, but a new and extended criticism of life. If Whitman had merely rearranged the old poetic materials, such a departure would be in no sense remarkable. He set himself the Herculean task of dealing with American life in the nineteenth century without any regard to convention. His cultured contemporaries amused themselves with carving flowers on cherry-stones; but this self-educated man elected to hew his dreams in granite.

Whitman's amazing inequalities, which are not merely inconsistencies of style, but are inherent in his barbaric originality, set traps for the infatuated reader at every turn, and yet the reader must be infatuated or Walt Whitman has nothing to say to him. Consider his lines on a dead soldier:—

"My enemy is dead; a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies whitefaced and still in his coffin, I
draw near,
Bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face
in the coffin."

There is no false rhetoric or brazen bravado in the touching tribute to his comrades of the Civil War:—

"The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love."

That is really the one omnipresent subject of Walt Whitman's poetry, the comradeship of men. His interest is centred in men, and men chiefly. His references to women, young and old, are perfunctory. He is occupied with matrons, but almost only as the mothers of future American heroes. The Wordsworthian serenity of soul which inspires the descriptive and emotional vignettes was derived from his memories of a serene and dreamy childhood in Long Island, where he loafed on the silver sand within sight of the limitless ocean.

The making of such a vital writer is of importance. From his twenty-second to his thirtieth year Whitman

was immersed in the busy journalism of New York, and for two years he was editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. There can be no doubt that it was Whitman's journalistic training which sharpened his interest in humanity. He had naturally the keenest sympathy with life, and all human activity interested him, but it is no less true that in his capacity of a working journalist he was brought into contact with so many phases of life which would otherwise have been a closed book to him. This world-wide interest is the key to those poems of his in which he seems merely to catalogue human occupations, merely naming the singing of the stevedores, the raftsmen sounding their bugles, the Oriental sailors turning to the East. Moreover, by his genius, Whitman roused in other men this tireless sympathy. Their universal and broad-minded charity, which was his natural gift, was re-inforced with emotion, sometimes very startling, as in his significant words addressed to a prostitute: "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you."

Nor is this all, for in the numerous poems on slavery and war, Whitman invariably rises to the great occasion, and the claims of humanity are ever present in his songs. "You celebrate by-gones," Whitman says defiantly, "I project the history of the future." And it will be long ere the Great American Republic will be able to realize the gorgeous dreams of an emancipated race portrayed with such vividness in so many unforgettable poems by this "tan-faced poet of the West."

"Our glorious century gone,
Beheld no head that shone
More clear across the storm, above the foam,
More steadfast in the fight
Of warring night and light,
True to the truth whose star leads heroes home."

MIMNERMUS.

The Three Trials of George William Foote.

(Continued from page 155.)

THE first summons for publishing a "blasphemous libel" in the *Freethinker* was served on its editor the first week in July, 1882. There was, of course, plenty of warning that some such action would be taken. Twice questions were asked in the House of Commons, and it is amusing to read one of the replies of the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, about his attention having been called to a paper "bearing the title of the *Freethinker*, published in Northampton." As Foote later pointed out, "his reference to the *Freethinker* as published at Northampton clearly proves that he had never seen it"; so, of course, he was thoroughly qualified to describe it as "pernicious to the minds of right-thinking people."

The real instigator of any questions being asked in Parliament about the *Freethinker* was a dreadful evangelist called Henry Varley, whose speciality was addressing meetings for "men only," and who was constantly publishing hysterical effusions about Christianity written in the very worst kind of ten-penny tract style.

His pamphlets, like those of so many of his Christian Evidence contemporaries, are now even deader than the proverbial door nail, and his very name would have been completely forgotten but for the fact of his attacks on Bradlaugh and Foote. It must be pretty galling to these gallant defenders of the faith to find so few, if any, of them figure in the Dictionary of National Biography, while considerable space and honourable mention are given to Robert

Taylor, Bradlaugh, Holyoake and many other genuine "blasphemers."

Sir William Harcourt, all the same, was not anxious to prosecute, and Foote bluntly told him in an open letter that he "could not suppress the *Freethinker* if he tried." In the meantime, the Secretary of the Tunbridge Wells Branch of the N.S.S. was summoned for blasphemy, through writing a "profane" sentence on a notice board with regard to its meetings. He pleaded guilty and was bound over. 'His pleading guilty, Foote thought "a grievous error," and, as far as he was concerned, his attitude "was one of defiance." "I denounced the bigots," he tells us in his *Prisoner for Blasphemy*, "for pouncing on a comparatively obscure member of the Freethought Party, and I challenged them to attack its leaders before they assailed the rank and file," and the sequel showed that his challenge was accepted. Foote and his partner, W. J. Ramsey, and the printer, E. W. Whittle, were all summoned to appear at the Mansion House before the Lord Mayor of London. Bradlaugh gave every assistance, but Foote decided to conduct his own defence.

The "prosecutor," or "informer," or whatever he was called, was Sir Henry Tyler, who provided all the money to pay for the summons and the legal costs generally. He seems to have been a superior sort of Henry Varley. Foote, is scathing in his denunciation of this "amateur champion of omnipotence," this obscure Member of Parliament, who was only noticed there because every now and then he would ask some particularly silly question. He was referred to later by Lord Coleridge in some extremely contemptuous remarks, and very little has since been heard of Sir Henry Tyler.

A gentleman with the Catholic name of Maloney appeared for the prosecution, and it can easily be imagined that he made the most of his opportunities. His own feelings must have been very much hurt, for he attempted without success, to introduce more numbers of the *Freethinker* than were mentioned in the summons. He also imagined that repeating a "blasphemy" in a voice of frozen horror was sufficient proof of its utter vileness, though Foote had no difficulty in pointing out that far stronger expressions could be taken from Mill, Clifford, Amberley, Arnold, Milman, Newman, Conway, Swinburne, and many other "respectable" Freethinkers.

This is one of the sentences—not written by Foote, it may be mentioned in passing—given in the indictment: "As for the *Freethinker*, he will scorn to degrade himself by going through the farce of reconciling his soul to a God whom he justly regards as the embodiment of crime and ferocity." There is genuine "blasphemy," if you like, in all its naked horror. How terribly lacerated must the feelings have been of such champions of orthodoxy as Sir William Harcourt, Sir Henry Tyler, Mr. Maloney, Mr. Justice North, and Mr. Henry Varley, when they read this shocking example of "blasphemy"! But what can one say of this England of ours, this land of the free (and, of course, of the noble) when a man runs the risk of rigorous imprisonment for publishing such a sentence?

The treatment meted out to Charles Bradlaugh when, duly elected over and over again by the citizens of Northampton, he endeavoured to take his seat in Parliament, was so beastly that even its most orthodox members were ashamed, and had the account expunged from the parliamentary records. We ought never to relax our own efforts in making orthodoxy equally ashamed of the treatment meted out to George William Foote for publishing such a sentence as I have given and others like it in defiance of such stupid, ignorant and intolerable laws as those relating to "blasphemy."

The first appearance of the defendants resulted in a remand, so that Mr. Maloney could obtain fresh summonses for the other numbers of the *Freethinker*, and also one against Bradlaugh.

The result of roping in such a legal luminary as Charles Bradlaugh can be imagined. He got both the Lord Mayor and Mr. Maloney tied up in a legal tangle, not very palatable to either of these gentlemen. Bradlaugh knew, of course, that the attempt to include him in the *Freethinker* "blasphemies" was merely another attempt to ruin him and prevent, if possible, his sitting in the House of Commons. It resulted in the utter failure and discomforture of the bigots, for Bradlaugh was not only a Freethought fighter to the finger tips, but his knowledge of law—and legal quibbles—was so profound that he made any case against him very difficult to continue, and on actual points of law he almost always won.

Foote, Ramsey and Bradlaugh were eventually committed for trial at the Old Bailey, the case against Whittle being dropped, as he had ceased to be the printer. Bradlaugh, however, decided, if possible, to have the case removed from the Old Bailey to the Court of Queen's Bench and put in the Crown List, and though every possible obstacle had to be fought, he succeeded, and it was not tried there till after Foote had been in prison for two months on another indictment. This point should be remembered, as the famous speech which he made before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge was at the *third* trial, but in reply to the *first* indictment. Securities to the extent of £600 were required and had to be found, and says Foote, "As I walked home I pondered the great truth that England is a free country, and that there is one law for the rich and the poor; and yet I reflected that only the rich can afford it, the poor might as well have no law at all."

Fortunately the Freethought Party supported Foote, and on his subsequent lecturing tour he was heartily greeted. Most of the Press were against him, but the *Weekly Dispatch* never wavered in faithfulness to its Liberal traditions, and stood firm in its "censure of our prosecution from first to last."

The real blow fell when Foote decided to publish a second Christmas number. It was to be the "warmest" publication ever issued, full of "blasphemy" from cover to cover. Its editor was a fighter, and decided to face the enemy boldly instead of running away; and though it resulted in twelve months imprisonment, he never regretted the course he took.

The Christmas Number had a very large sale—though both Foote and Ramsay actually lost in pocket on it. But it proved to be an outstanding challenge to the bigots, and even frightened not a little many of the old-fashioned Freethinkers.

"It is evident," said Foote in an article on "Superstitious Freethinkers" "that some of them who have lost belief in God are afraid to speak too loud lest he should overhear them . . . I am as much entitled to ridicule the gods of Christianity as any other Freethinker is entitled to ridicule the miracles at Lourdes; and when 'taste' is dragged into the question, I simply reply that there is as much ill-taste in the one case as in the other . . . These squeamish Freethinkers don't object to ridicule in politics, literature or social life . . . Why then do they object to ridicule in religion? Simply because they still *feel* there is something sacred about it." Foote thus knew what he was doing full well, and he was prepared to take the consequences, but he had very little patience with those other Freethinkers who refused to laugh at "devout delusion," and who were hurt at fun being poked at beliefs which they themselves had given up, but which they thought, because they once

believed in them, should still be held sacred by other people.

At all events, he was not altogether surprised when on January 29, 1883, he once again got a summons, together with Ramsey and Kemp, to appear before the Lord Mayor of London, to answer another charge for "blasphemous libel." They were all committed for trial—again at the Old Bailey. Foote tried hard to get the case removed to the Court of Queen's Bench but without success, and on Thursday, March 1, 1883, the three "blasphemers" surrendered to their bail, and took their stand in the dock at the Central Criminal Court of the Old Bailey.

Perhaps a brief description of the celebrated Christmas Number which was the cause of this trial might prove interesting at this day. Foote intended giving the bigots a run for their money and they got it.

H. CUTNER.

(To be continued.)

"God and the Universe."

FOR some time now Freethinkers must have been aware of a flirtation that has been going on between Religion and Science, or, to be more precise, between Religion and certain scientists. One could not properly describe it as a case of love at first sight; the romance has not been quite so spontaneous as that. On the contrary, we get the impression that we are watching the preliminary stages of that much more prosaic affair the marriage of convenience. The particular convenience involved is that form of popular expediency which is much less concerned with the truth than with a compromise in the interests of conventional organizations and established prejudices; and those who feel that Science, if it is to preserve its usefulness to the utmost, must remain single, will extend open arms of welcome to Mr. Cohen's new book, *God and the Universe*. All who are acquainted with the author's other works will know that these are distinguished chiefly by three features: A fearlessness in attack, a tremendous philosophic grasp and a clarity of exposition that one could not imagine excelled. We are led therefore to expect much from Mr. Cohen, and it is a pleasure to be able to say that in *God and the Universe* we are not disappointed. It is doubtful whether anyone but the author could have performed the task of sweeping up fallacy and confusion with the ease, the clearness, and at the same time the thoroughness displayed in this book. There must be Freethinkers, and not a few of them, who, after reading Professors Julian Huxley, Eddington and Jeans, are at a loss to know the precise effect of the professorial pronouncements and arguments upon the Freethought case. Whoever can read *God and the Universe* without defining the position exactly might as well abandon all hope of appreciating religious controversy.

Part of the work consists of matter re-printed from the *Freethinker*, but we assuredly lose nothing by going over it again. Presented in the perfect continuity which only the book form can bestow, the full import of what is written can be grasped with even greater clearness than before; and to complete the picture Mr. Cohen amplifies where he desires to leave the reader in no doubt as to his message. A section of particular interest gives us the entire controversy between the author and Professor Eddington, including the Professor's reply.

In the course of the book Prof. Julian Huxley is dealt with at considerable length, Professor Jeans not

quite so exhaustively, while there is a chapter on "Einstein and God," the whole work being prefaced by an introductory discourse on "Religion and Science." Mr. Cohen shows himself throughout to be an all-round controversialist, exposing time and again the inherent weakness of the specialist. And it is this very versatility that makes Mr. Cohen at once such a formidable opponent and so capable a champion of Freethought. Take him where you will in religious controversy, whether it be into regions historical, scientific or philosophic, and you cannot lose him. He keeps his bearings with unflinching accuracy, and apparently without the least effort, and sticks to the point with the acumen of a natural logician and the tenacity of a born fighter. As he has himself remarked, it takes considerably more time to expose a fallacy than to propound one, yet in *God and the Universe* he tackles some of the subtlest verbal confusions with a light heart and a confident pen, disposing of them in a comparatively short space and combining always, according to his habit as a lecturer, the process of tuition with that of argumentation.

The result is that his new work has something to offer all classes of reader. The man who is but poorly acquainted with the problems discussed will learn a great deal about them in the course of controversy. He will make the pleasant discovery that it is not necessary to have a preliminary grounding in the subjects dealt with in order to appreciate the text. The author seems always to build his case from a foundation of common sense and common experience, and one is constantly reminded of a profound statement occurring in his *Determinism and Free Will*, that "a sane philosophy must base itself on the common things of life and deal with the common experiences of all men." On the other hand, though he proceeds from elements appreciable to all, it is no superficial edifice that he constructs. The task of building is performed with thoroughness and at the finish his work will stand the closest examination and the severest criticism. Thus, even for those who are familiar with all sides of the religio-scientific conflict, there are new lines of approach to be seen and old ideas to be crystallized in new forms; and through all there runs the thread of connexion that ever guides the reader nearer to the goal of complete comprehension which has obviously been reached by the author. It is no small achievement to have made the reader feel that, so far as the relationship between religion and science is concerned, he has a thorough grasp of essentials.

A solitary criticism I would offer on the work. It is that the section dealing with Professor Jeans could do with a little amplification. In the words of George Robey, "what is there is good," but we could do with more. Mr. Cohen may have felt that it was sufficient to expose the fallacy, nay at times the absurdity, of the substance of the Professor's plea for a mathematical God, but one cannot help feeling that this chapter would have been enhanced by further discussion on the scope of Determinism, its precise credentials in philosophy and its alleged dependence upon the verdicts of Physics. Perhaps more strength also would have been imparted to the chapter by an examination of the Professor's contention, not at all new in philosophy, that certain forms of mathematical thought "draw nothing from experience." It is along this line that he proceeds to a transcendentalism. It may be that, in a subsequent edition of the new work, Mr. Cohen will embellish this chapter. It is to be hoped so, for no one else is equally fitted for the task involved. But after all it is perhaps ungracious to grumble, though it is only the grumble of Oliver Twist for more. Yet who will blame us that has tasted what is already there?

Still another feature of the work deserves mention. It is that Mr. Cohen is not satisfied only to meet the arguments of his opponents. He goes further and shows us all the time why those arguments are used. He is not content to refute a belief; he explains it away. Thus we are treated not only to the ebb and flow of controversy, but to a historical survey of the stages by which an argument arrives at its present form, and further to the psychological reason why a man selects it. It is this very comprehensiveness that makes the book so valuable a contribution to Freethought, for again the author has bent his shoulders to the task, no stone is left unturned, no avenue of escape unguarded.

God and the Universe is not merely a book to be read; it is one to be kept by us always for reference. And in the case of those who would keep themselves constantly refreshed in the manner and substance of religious controversy in all its fluctuations, this book will be well thumbed in the course of the ensuing years.

MEDICUS.

Oh, for a Wind!

OUR boots are dirty with the London mud,
Our souls are dirty with the London press,
Which chews again and yet again the cud
Of all our follies, failures, and mess.
Oh, for a wind to dry our muddy streets,
And blow away these lying London sheets!

For they do lie in that they do suggest
That London's multitudes are rogues and fools;
Whereas the truth is (though it be suppressed)
Intelligence and kindness mostly rules.
'Tis time that it was said, and said out loud,
There is much goodness in a Cockney crowd.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Acid Drops.

As was to be expected the Government did not dare to stand up against sectarian pressure and sweep away all Sabbatarian legislation, and make it illegal for a man to be employed more than six days out of the week. The new Bill which Mr. Clynes is to introduce is to establish the principle of local option where Sunday entertainments are concerned. Which means that if a minority wishes to spend its day of rest in a healthy and harmless manner, a majority of religious bigots, in the name of religion is to forbid their doing so. By this measure the Government definitely makes itself the champion of religious intolerance. We do not wonder that the Attorney General lied, and the Home Secretary wobbled over the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

We wish to emphasize the fact that local option in the matter of Sunday Entertainments is the enthronement of religious bigotry, for there is no other ground on which these entertainments are forbidden, save that of religious prejudice. The Government has no other ground. It is not seriously denied that this is the case. The Government merely says, "In every district where Sabbatarian bigotry is strong enough, and where, if affronted it may vote against it, we hereby decree that it shall do as it pleases with the liberty of those who are opposed to them." One might as reasonably leave the opening of a Church or Chapel to local option as Sunday entertainments. It is essentially a case in which there should be a law governing the whole of the country, and not a mere section.

We desire to call the serious attention of the Home Secretary, "Jix," Gipsy Smith, and the leader of the

Salvation Army, that on Sunday, February 8, the Prince of Wales attended a race meeting and a boxing match in S. America. Something really ought to be done about it. King Charles was beheaded, King James had to skip the country, but their offences were trifling at the side of that of the Prince of Wales. He is undermining an institution upon which the greatness and the stability of the country rests. The Home Secretary is about to sponsor a Bill which, if carried, will prevent people attending a harmless cinema or listening to a concert. Will he have nothing to say to a Crown Prince who actually attends race meetings on Sunday?

The Transvaal also has its troubles with Sunday Observance Acts. Under a law passed in 1899, two men were summoned for opening a miniature golf course on Sundays. The judge found the men guilty of this terrible offence, but in passing judgment said that miniature golf was a healthy, pleasant pastime, while those not taking part in it were in no way disturbed. Of course, the reply to this is that Sunday laws are not passed with any regard for health, but solely in the interests of stupid and degrading superstition. South Africa needs a good strong Freethinking propaganda.

A contemporary commends as "sensible" the life-long philosophy of an old lady aged one hundred and ten. This is it:—

She never has allowed things to worry her, and has always believed that anything good comes from God, and anything bad has been sent for her good.

This is essentially Christian. It is the philosophy of the vegetable. Intelligent people will consider that the favour of living to a great age is too dearly bought at the price of adopting a vegetable philosophy. This Christian philosophy, however, has been commonly held during the Christian era. And what an appalling amount of evil it has hindered from being prevented or removed! The resignation and apathy it engendered has blinded the human mind to the need for investigation concerning the causes and cures of disease and social defects of every kind, and has also hindered the adoption of remedies proposed by investigators and reformers. "It is sent by God for some wise purpose," "God wills it." "It is all for the best"—this has been the Christian philosophy for nearly 2,000 years. Let the religion responsible for it also take the credit for the vast amount of preventible misery that resulted from the philosophy.

Religion, we learn, is the feeling of absolute dependence upon God. Quite so. And what religion does is to keep alive in adults the helpless and dependent feeling which they had in their nursery days. That is why the Christian religion is no creed for real men and women. It saps their self-reliance.

The Rev. T. J. Pinnell, a district organizer of a Bible Reading Association, declares that the Church is in the stagnant state it is to-day because church-goers have lost touch with God. This is very deplorable. But perhaps there is no need to blame the clients of the churches. Maybe God is "fed up" with always having to inhabit the gloomy buildings erected for his benefit, and has gone away for a holiday. This is quite feasible. Presuming God to be as intelligent as man, he couldn't help but get tired of always being forced to hang about Christian praying-sheds, in case someone wants to tell him how wonderful he is.

Man is ranked as the highest of the animals because he possesses an apparatus for reasoning. It would be high treason to challenge the statement merely because some people manipulate that apparatus in a very queer manner. For instance, the British Field Sports Society gravely declares that, if hunting were stopped, intense suffering would fall upon the deer of the country. Then, again, there is Mrs. E. Wimbush, of Bagborough, who loves deer

so very much, that she has accepted the mastership of the Quantock Staghounds, although she herself does not hunt. "If the deer were not hunted," she says, "they would be shot by poachers—which would be very cruel." By taking over the mastership of the staghounds she will, presumably, ensure that when the deer are chased to exhaustion and torn to pieces, or are driven into the sea and then captured for another happy day's sport, they will be treated with the utmost kindness. Hence, one can easily understand that a Field Sports Society and a hunt primarily exist for the prevention of cruelty to animals. What is to be regretted is that, as stags are animals without a reasoning apparatus, they are unable to appreciate the kind thoughtfulness of the hunters.

According to the Rev. Kennedy Williamson:—

It is very facile to make sport of Mrs. Grundy and her forbidding demeanour. But when all is said and done Mrs. Grundy does represent the accumulated wisdom of mankind regarding prohibitions which have made life safe from moral disaster. It is reasonable to suppose that a few more men trod this planet before it was graced by our arrival, and their experience is embodied in the greatly maligned and frumpy old dowager whom we all deride so mirthfully.

It is as well to point out that the late Mrs. Grundy did not represent the accumulated wisdom of mankind. Some of the wisest of mankind have derided her prohibitions. What she represented was merely the accumulated ignorance, stupidity and prejudice of the most narrow-minded religionists. Nor is it "reasonable to suppose" that such persons had a monopoly of wisdom. What is pleasing to remember about Mrs. Grundy and her unwholesome taboos was that her and their death was caused by the sanitation of public opinion.

"Clubman" wrote an article in a recent issue of the *Liverpool Weekly Post* on an alleged revival of religion, but announced that he would not reply to any criticism offered by those who disagreed with him. When a man writes a lot of nonsense that is, perhaps, a wise policy when one states an absurdity. But judging from letters which have appeared in the *Post* from Mr. Ready and our old friend Mr. McKelvie, we fancy that even "Clubman" may be thinking that in this instance a little bolder course might have paid him better. Cowardice cannot gain respect whether in connexion with religion of anything else.

"We perish if we cease from prayer," is an announcement in bold type by a Nonconformist journal. Our friend is trying to frighten its readers. There are thousands of fine, good men and women in the country who have not "perished," mentally or morally, although they have ceased to pray. What our contemporary really means is that "we"—the parsons and religious journalists—will perish if "you"—our clients—cease from prayer and believing in a God to pray to.

Sunday school teachers must feel "called" for their job, says one of them. He adds:—

If we have this sense of vocation, we shall be prepared to expend time, brain, and heart sweat in preparation for the greatest of all exploits—that of getting our boys and girls and youths to see in Jesus the Hero of Heroes, and to accept him as the Lord and Master of their lives.

We gather that the "religious instinct" in young children is very, very feeble. Else why the necessity for Sunday-school teachers to sweat so profusely at the job of convincing the young that Jesus is a great hero? But perhaps the truth of the matter is that it takes several years of incessant pounding away at the child intelligence, before religious ideas can be made to stick in the mind.

At a Conference of Sunday school workers at Eastbourne, a speaker urged that the pious should use their influence to ensure that persons who were anxious about

adequate religious instruction being given in day schools should be elected to local bodies controlling the schools. This is a pretty move on the religious side. If the suggestion is put into practice, the ratepayers will find men being returned as councillors, not on the score of their having intelligence and administrative ability, but on the grounds of their being pious. Ratepayers will be advised to select their councillors on better grounds than piety, if they desire their town or local districts to be properly governed.

Apropos of the possibility of local option in connexion with Sunday opening of cinemas and theatres, a pious journal says:—

No matter how many people may object in a particular area, there will always be a few theatre and cinema proprietors who will spend money in working up an agitation whenever they see an opportunity of Sunday opening with its accompanying profits.

This craving for profits, of course, is very wicked. Still, it is no worse than pious organizations spending much money in working up an agitation against Sunday amusement facilities, in order to prevent the churches and parsons from losing any profits. And on what grounds—ethical, or any other—is it contended that only parsons should be permitted to make profits on Sunday?

An international committee has discovered that there are 125 languages spoken in Europe. This reminds us that millions of Christians still ignorantly believe that the variety of languages originated in their God's displeasure at the building of the Tower of Babel. Now, the difficulty of understanding one another's language, prevents the people of the various nations from understanding one another's thoughts and actions, and this is a fruitful cause of misunderstanding, friction, and war. Ignorant Christians are therefore invited to meditate on the fatherly love of a God who, by inflicting the "curse of Babel," has caused misunderstanding, hatred, and strife among nations—his beloved children—for thousands of years.

The tremendous problem of the evangelization of the huge populations of the new areas around London is perplexing all the Churches and straining their resources to the utmost. So a Methodist journal says, rather pathetically. The amusing part of the whole affair is that the "unsaved" are not caring a "tinker's cuss" about these altruistic efforts of the parsons. And what is worse, they seem to find life tolerably good, despite the fact that they haven't received salvation.

In a letter to the *Times*, a correspondent records a warning note about the "stunt" press. He points out the law is in France and Germany when a public man is attacked in a newspaper; in both countries ample space is given to the aggrieved party to reply. The correspondent: "... there has grown up of late a process of systematic denigration of public men and falsification of the proceedings of public meetings that must, sooner or later, call for a sharp remedy." We are very pleased to give this matter further publicity as it correctly interprets the idea of fair play, and, at the same time underlines the criticism made from time to time in the pages of the *Freethinker*. Public life is not made up entirely of the "Jix" type, or for that matter, the Bradlaugh type, but an element of fairness to all would make for the discussion of ideas instead of as at present, the press simply being another edition of the "coward's castle"—the pulpit.

We have Mr. Winston Churchill's word for it that our Press is "unquestionably superior in every standard of strength, quality, probity, and decency to the Press in any other country in the world." Is this beautiful bouquet presented on a valuation in the political world only? That could be understood. Again, can the foreign press be as bad as the inference to be made from Mr. Churchill's testimonial? The degree of depravity cannot be

imagined. With few and praiseworthy exceptions the Press has not the moral courage to publish one word in favour of Freethought, and whilst it will consistently bellow its opposition to any news that will disturb its pious followers, it proclaims its Christian principles by giving any murder pride of place in its columns. It is to the credit of Freethought that the movement never asked for or accepted a favour from the Press, and the occasion will be marked by the appearance of a blue moon. We have no doubt that Mr. Churchill's Greek gifts will be accepted by those newspapers who will soon have to give prizes to readers for "spotting the news."

Since the war, 1,500,000 men, women and children have been killed or maimed in street accidents. It is rather difficult to fit these facts with the pretty Christian theory of Providence watching over the welfare of human beings. They also shake one's faith in the hypothesis that the human animal is intelligent. For the slaughtering and maiming of 1,500,000 persons is hardly an advertisement for human intelligence.

A pious organization in America has established a "chair of missions," the main objective of which is "the restatement to the younger generation of the motive and aim of the world mission of Christianity." We rather fancy the main objective of the professorship is to supply a well-paid job for some pal of God's.

In an announcement of Dr. Boyd Barrett's autobiography *Ex-Jesuit*, we are told that the author left the Order to devote his life to science. This sounds very refreshing—it is romantic—from the shackles of Jesuitry to science! But reading on a little further, we are told, that although Dr. Barrett is no longer a Jesuit, he is still a devout Catholic. One is free to be left wondering whether the Doctor will take up science after or before the year 1820—the period when the Roman Church officially admitted that the earth revolved round the sun.

By the death of his brother, Earl Russell, Professor the Hon. Bertrand Russell, succeeds him in the Earldom. The *Daily Express* refers to the new Earl as being "world-famous as a philosopher and Atheist." We venture to remind the *Express* that this sort of thing is not done. They will be getting into trouble with some of their clerical and other Christian supporters. The proper way to refer to the new Earl Russell would be as a man of liberal religious views, or as one who is not convinced of the truth of Christianity, or at most as an Agnostic who looks "wistfully" at the childlike faith of his Christian neighbours. But to refer to him as an Atheist! Particularly as in this country if it gets blazoned abroad that a real live Earl is actually an Atheist there may be quite a number of independent spirits who will conclude that Atheism cannot be so bad after all. To be atheistical in the company of a mere Professor is one thing, to be atheistical in the company of an Earl is quite another, and a far more respectable thing. It is due to Bertrand Russell to say that so far as we know he has never sacrificed the expression of his opinions to his fear of public opinion. We wish other public men were equally frank.

The *Daily Herald* is much more cautious and more orthodox in referring to the religious opinions of the new earl and his late brother, in remarking:—

Like his brother he was under his father's will, to be brought up as an Agnostic.

In its haste not to be forced to say that the new Socialist peer is an Atheist, the *Herald* says that which is not true. The children were to be brought up without any religious instruction whatsoever, which is not quite what the *Herald* says. This was ignored by the courts, but it would have been very interesting if the will had said they were to be brought up as Agnostics, to have seen the Court deciding what was an Agnostic. They might well have decided, when they examined some specimens that it was some sort of a Methodist.

The *Daily Telegraph* says that the late Earl was noted for "unorthodox views on religion and social conduct." That might mean, of course, that he had doubts about

the Virgin Birth, and believed that girls might go about with bare legs. The *News-Chronicle* saves itself from telling or suggesting a lie by saying nothing at all. If every nation gets the press it deserves we must indeed be a scurvy lot.

It should be said that Mr. Bertrand Russell has never hesitated to express his opinions either on religion or on any other subject, and we see no reason for believing that his entrance into the House of Lords will alter him in this respect. But it may alter others for we have no doubt that many timid souls will find more courage in expressing their own heresy when they find similar opinions to their own held by a real live Earl. And who knows, even some members of the Labour Party may pluck up courage enough to say what they believe about religion once Freethought gets openly patronized in aristocratic quarters.

"There is ample evidence," says the *Church Times*, "that the only religious teaching that has any lasting influence is definitely dogmatic teaching." We do not know whether the *Church Times* will value our endorsement of this, but, any rate, it has it. It is no use arguing in the matter of religious instruction. The only method that is of any avail where religion is concerned is to say what must be believed and see that it is accepted. Set anyone arguing about religion, try to explain to them what are the grounds of religious belief, and inevitably doubt is engendered. That is why the only way to make people religious is to see that they get it when they are young, and that no taking back is permitted. Make them familiar with "I believe." There is then room for telling them what it is they believe. But the first step is the most important.

It is amusing to learn how much trust in the Lord the pious have in the matter of that most important item of religion—Money. The alms box in the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church at Buffalo, New York State, was broken open, but, in the attempt to take off the cover, an alarm was given, the pastor released the bottom of the box and the contents fell into a receptacle in the cellar. It is not recorded that the pastor touched his forehead and said to his superior "Okay Chief."

One of those Christian conundrums to which even the Bishop of London cannot give a satisfactory answer is to be found in the New Zealand Earthquake. The Lord allows such catastrophes to happen and his children have to put up with the consequences, and in a very human way patch up celestial carelessness.

The modern world as against the ancient world of Catholicism has a good example in Malta at present of the social effects of superstition, backed by the organization of the Vatican. The so-called spiritual and temporal powers are at variance, and this aspect of mediævialism should be carefully watched by those who are in no doubt about the Catholic lamb being an out size in tigers.

Do not let us forget, says a religious weekly, that "if war does come it must be a ghastly and horrible affair as well as an un-Christian affair" So war is "un-Christian," is it? Yet for nineteen hundred years there have been wars among Christians. The Churches have blessed battle-ships and war-banners, and have also urged on the combatants and promised God's support. War is now discovered to be "un-Christian." This is a rather belated discovery. May we presume that there will be others forthcoming in due course—at the speed of nineteen hundred years for each?

At last we have a definition of "true religion." A parson declares that, "primarily, religion means the recognition of the existence and reality of God. Unless there is a personal God, there can be no religion." This seems rather inadequate. There is no mention of the importance of the recognition of the existence and necessity for parsons. As every parson knows, religion cannot possibly be "true" unless the necessity of parsons is admitted. Did not Jesus die on the Cross in order that parsons could live on it?

SPECIAL.

The *Freethinker* office was the scene of a burglary on either Saturday or Sunday last. The front door was forced, the letter-box broken and the whole of Saturday's mail, after the morning delivery, stolen. We are, of course, unable to say what was stolen, but we shall be obliged if all who sent us letters of importance, likely to arrive by any post on Saturday will write at once. Where cheques or postal orders were sent, the cheques should be at once stopped, and the numbers of the postal orders forwarded. Those who ordered books or pamphlets will please repeat their orders, which will receive attention.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Miss N. Murray, 58.
- L. WAINWRIGHT.—Naturally we should like to see a copy of *God and the Universe* in the hands of everyone who has swallowed the "metaphysical theism" of Sir James Jeans. But how are we to get this done? Some pious booksellers refuse to show the book, and newspaper reviewers treat it with silence. That is much easier than attempting to reply to its arguments. Anyway, the book is selling well, judged by our usual sales.
- K. B. N.—Crowded out of this week's issue. Shall appear next week.
- B. JENKINS (Johannesburg).—Thanks for cheque for £2 2s., for the funds of the N.S.S., which has been handed to the General Secretary. We appreciate your compliments on what you call our "wonderful fight over so many years." But that fight would have been impossible without loyal help from Freethinkers all over the world. That has helped to make an impossible task a pleasure.
- C. DYSTON.—Thanks for cutting, but we do not see anything in Mr. Joad's *Daily Herald* article that calls for comment. It is mere journalism, and of that kind of thing one can only say what Mark Twain said of professional lecturing—its only excuse is that one has no other way of getting a living. And Mr. Joad's statement of "Life as an independent principle" is too silly and too confused to merit detailed criticism.
- C. S. THOMPSON.—We note your high appreciation of Mr. Cohen's *God and the Universe*, and also that while you think the work "timely" and "clever," you fancy that he has been hard, and "even contemptuous" of Sir James Jeans. All we can say is that in our judgment the castigation was deserved. It is long since we read so muddled an effort on the part of a man who when he sticks to his own department is capable of useful work in the way of scientific teaching. However, if Sir James cares to use these columns to disprove anything that has been said when dealing with his work, the space is there for him.
- M. COORLECH.—Thanks. As soon as possible.
- T. CANDLISH.—Quite understand, but it takes all sorts to make a world, and we may indulge our feelings too much for complete health. One must always distinguish between what we would ourselves do, and the right of others to do things we would not do. The denial of the latter right leads to intolerance.
- B. A. MACDONALD.—To hand, and shall appear as soon as possible. But we are terribly overloaded with copy at present.
- W. L. ROWE (Transvaal).—Pleased to hear from you. Your letter was full of interest, but you overvalue, perhaps, the self-sacrifice displayed. After all, it is a great thing to be able to what one wishes to do, and in the way one desires to do it. Don't forget to let us know when you are coming to England. We must have a meal together.
- B. J. JONES.—Many thanks for list. We are keeping it by us for future use.
- The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The Secular Society, Limited office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all com-

munications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 15) Mr. Cohen will speak twice in the Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street, Plymouth. In the afternoon the subject will be "How Man Found God." In the evening, "How Man Found Himself." Freethinkers should do what they can to bring their Christian friends to these meetings.

The Manchester Branch brought its season of special lectures to a very successful close on Sunday last. Mr. Cohen was the speaker. In the afternoon the Chorlton Town Hall was comfortably filled, and in the evening crowded, with many standing. Mr. Blaney occupied the chair in the afternoon, and Mr. F. E. Monks in the evening. There were four speakers in opposition at the evening meeting, but one would have liked the opposition to be stronger. There was also a very good sale of literature, with a brisk demand for Mr. Cohen's new book, *God and the Universe*.

The *Sunday Referee* in a leading article dealing with Mr. Cohen's new book, says:—

Mr. Chapman Cohen is not only one of the stoutest defenders of nineteenth-century Materialism, but a philosophic critic of brilliant intellectual gifts. His book *God and the Universe* is the best, and perhaps the only serious attempt to winnow the scientific work of Eddington, Jeans, Huxley and Einstein from its pseudo-philosophic accretions, and to emphasize the highly-important fact that the philosophical and religious speculations of men of science are not necessarily more significant than those of Billingsgate porters. Such criticism, coming as it does from the foremost Freethinker in the country, is particularly refreshing; it indicates that men of science can no longer be relied upon to subscribe to orthodox Atheism.

We are not sure what is the distinction between orthodox and unorthodox Atheism. But Mr. Cohen's position happens to be that science, as such, is necessarily Atheistic although scientists may often use religious language when they allow their religious prepossessions to overcome their scientific knowledge and to adulterate a genuinely scientific method.

Tickets for the N.S.S. Social at Caxton Hall, on Saturday, April 18, are now on sale, 2s. 6d. each, including refreshments, and may be obtained from the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, or the offices of the N.S.S., 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. All London Freethinkers will of course reserve the date, and no doubt, as before, there will be visitors from the provinces. The programme will be varied, and, as is usual, good.

We should be greatly obliged if our friends would forward us local papers containing articles advocating a free Sunday, particularly those opposed to the stupid and iniquitous policy of local option in Sunday entertainments, which Mr. Clynes purposes making law. If opinion on this head can only be organized Mr. Clynes may reconsider his position.

The *Jersey Critic* reprints the whole of a recent "Views and Opinions" dealing with the B.B.C. and its methods of conducting discussions, which it says, "throws a searching light" on the policy of the Corporation. We believe we were the first to set going a public protest against the methods of the B.B.C., and if the policy of protest we advised is persisted in, even in that direction further improvement may be effected.

The energetic Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, Mr. S. A. Ready, has been busy in several of the local papers dealing with matters of interest to the movement, some of which run to considerable length. Other letters criticising the teaching of religion in the schools, and the claims of the Roman Catholic Church have also appeared. The press campaign conducted by the Branch is an example of what might be done in other parts of the country by persistence and ability. If the Liverpool Branch continues as it is going, it bids fair to be one of the strongest Branches in the country.

Arrangements for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. are proceeding, and Branch Secretaries are reminded that invitations to entertain the Conference must reach Headquarters by Saturday the 21st inst. Motions for the Agenda can also be forwarded.

The West London Branch of the N.S.S. is making a presentation to its Secretary and Organizer, Mr. B. A. Le Maine, in recognition of his services in connexion with the Freethought Movement. Those who are not in close touch with the Branch, but who would like to be associated with the presentation should write to Mr. Councillor Savory, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.

Will members of the Plymouth Branch N.S.S. please note, a members meeting will be held at 4 Swilly Road, Devonport, on Tuesday evening, March 17.

At the invitation of the Eastbourne I.L.P., Mr. A. D. McLaren will speak at the Red House, Eastbourne, to-day (Sunday) on "The Life and Death of My Religion." The lecture will begin at 7 p.m. We have no doubt local saints will take full advantage of Mr. McLaren's visit. Admission is free.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti opens the course of three lectures to be given at the Labour Hall, Eastwood Street, Mitcham Lane, Streatham, to-day (Sunday) at 7.0 p.m., on "Do We Need Religion?" Those arranging the course naturally expect the co-operation of local Freethinkers towards making it a success.

The Story of an Ex-Jesuit.

(Continued from page 150.)

BARRETT spent six years at Clongowes School, leaving it in 1901, at the age of nineteen, declaring that it was the best school in the world; and indeed, this Catholic school seems to have been run on the same lines as similar public schools in England, and the boys—with their love of games, and code of honour—seem uncommonly like Protestant school boys.

Upon arriving home, he found that much of the family wealth had disappeared, as it is very apt to do when widows place it in the hands of others to manage for them. His eldest brother had married and gone to England. The other brother was studying for medicine, so Barrett had to set about earning something to support the home. He obtained a post in the offices of the great Dublin firm of Guinness, the famous brewers. This was not considered inconsistent with his religious profession, as "In Ireland consistency is unknown." Besides, he adds, with amusing ingenuousness: "It was not infrequent for penitents, about to face the ordeal of confession, to have recourse to stout for the courage that it awakened." When opportunity offered he introduced religion and even started a sort of brotherhood.

He now resolved to train himself to become a Jesuit, so that he could enter the Society of Jesus when he came of age.

Meanwhile he kept up his connexion with his old school, where his labours for the faith had become known, and he was made much of by the Jesuit teachers who were never tired of painting glorious pictures of the religious life as lived by the Jesuits. It must be borne in mind too, that the evil and sinister reputation that Protestants connect with the Society of Jesus, does not exist in the mind of the average Catholic. To them, the Jesuits represent the storm-troops in the battalions of the army of Christ. All that is best and most heroic that man is capable of. To cite the testimony of a Protestant historian:—

With what vehemence, with what policy, with what exact discipline, with what dauntless courage, with what self-denial, with what forgetfulness of the dearest private ties, with what intense and stubborn devotion to a single end, with what unscrupulous laxity and versatility in the choice of means, the Jesuits fought the battle of their church, is written in every page of the annals of Europe during several generations. . . . In spite of oceans and deserts, of hunger and pestilence, of spies and penal laws, of dungeons and racks, of gibbets and quartering-blocks, Jesuits were to be found under every disguise, and in every country.¹

There was one voice, however, which warned him against precipitate action, it was that of Father Brennan, a priest of much experience, but of whom Barrett stood rather in fear, because of his stormy and passionate nature; after commending him for his good work in Dublin: "he continued, looking at me closely 'Don't be in a hurry to quit the work you are doing in order to enter our society. You should know that things in the Society are not what they seem to outsiders.' He begged me to reconsider the whole matter and not allow myself to be guided by pious dreams. I listened respectfully, of course, but with a kind of horror. . . . Was not the Society of Jesus the chosen regiment of Christ? And how could one do wrong in enlisting in such a regiment? My mind was already made up, and my heart was wedded to the scheme of becoming a Jesuit."² In after years he was to bitterly regret that he had not taken Father Brennan's advice. In the meanwhile he kept his resolve secret from his mother and brother. The Jesuit priests had warned him to do so. "It is something between yourself and God," they told him, "and liable to wither in the chilling air of the world's criticism." So he kept it "secret from the two people in all the world who were most desirous of my real good and happiness."

The three ensuing years were years of supreme happiness, ending in July, 1904, when he tendered his resignation to Guinness's, in order to enter upon his novitiate in the Society of Jesus. He tells us:—

The approaching parting with my mother and Joe [his brother] troubled me more and more as the last days drew rapidly by. The little home that I had come to care for so much and that I had helped to keep afloat was going to be broken up. The lives of the two souls dearest to me in the whole world were going to be upset. But what could I do? Was not Christ calling me? And was I not pledged to obey His call?

How many millions of lives have been wrecked on this plea of a call from Christ. If there ever was a Christ who was crucified, then he has amply avenged his death by the long trail of misery, and

¹ Macaulay: *Critical and Historical Essays* (1883). pp. 550-551.

² E. Boyd Barrett: *Ex-Jesuit*. p. 57.

agony, it has caused through the ages, and is making even to-day, after the lapse of 1900 years. We would humbly suggest to Him and his Father, that enough blood and tears have been shed to avenge the death even of a God.

He resolved to break the news to his brother first. He opened his mouth to speak the words but they would not come, his brother looked up startled, and then he managed to tell him. His brother gave him a glance he will never forget, reached for his hat, "uttered a kind of sigh or sob, and went out, as I learned after, for a long and lonely walk by the desolate sea front that stretches from Sandymount to Salthill. He did not want to mar my happiness, which he recognized to be involved in my entering religion, but he realized in a flash that there lay before him, the long, distressing path of comforting mother for the empty chair by the fireside." (p. 6.) Then came the parting at the railway station, not like other partings, this was: "to be for ever like the parting of mother and son on Calvary." That night, he says, "I knelt in a cold monastic cell on the borders of the dreary moor which surrounds the Jesuit novitiate at Tullabeg. My mind went back to the home I had left and to the fireside where my imagination told me my mother and brother would be." His mother trying to knit, his brother pretending to read, "did he realize how we should suffer?"

The life of a novice in a Jesuit monastery is not passed in a bed of roses. Of the three vows, poverty, chastity, and obedience, most stress is laid on obedience. As a horse has to be broken in to bear a rider, or draw a vehicle, so the novice has to be broken in, until he becomes nothing but a spiritual Robot who has surrendered his will into the keeping of his superiors. Ignatius Loyola, the founder (in 1540) of this devilish system, laid down that:—

The new principle of life and motive to action was obedience: obedience absolute and unconditional, without a thought or question as to its objective consequences. Every member of the society had to resign himself, in total and blind submission to the will of his superiors, to be led "like a thing without life, as the staff, for example, that the superior holds in his hand to be turned to any purpose seemingly good to him." The love of kindred was denounced as a carnal inclination; all property had to be given up unreservedly for the benefit of the poor, and the members were not permitted to aspire to any higher rank, or to accept ecclesiastical dignities, for these "might have involved the fulfilment of duties, or the forming of relations, over which the society could no longer exercise control."

The novitiate lasts two years, during which time the novice is deprived of all amusements, however innocent. No thrilling novels to read, no exciting games to play or to watch, no concerts, no friends to converse with, no cigarettes or lying in bed in the morning. It has been described by Father Bernard Vaughan, himself a Jesuit, as "a spiritual treadmill." And in many respects, says Mr. Barrett, the description is true, during the two years no quarter of an hour is unaccounted for: there is always a definite duty awaiting the novice: "he is subjected to severe 'tests' by his superior. He is sent to shovel away manure heaps or to clean out latrines: in the burning sun he is put to work in a hay-field, or on a raw winter's day he is commissioned to carry armsful of fallen leaves. He is taught to regard everything which obedience imposes upon him as the most important work in all the world."

One day the superior sent for him and gave him a message to deliver to some visitors in the parlour, it

was really a trick to get rid of them. As he was very untidy, wearing a soiled cassock, and his hands were dirty with work, he asked if he should wash and put on a clean cassock. "Go as you are!" was the reply. After the visitors had gone, the superior sent for him again and asked him whether he had gone to the parlour in that state? "Yes Father," I answered "you told me to go as I was." Upon which the superior told him to confess his fault to the brothers at dinner that day, and seeing his astonishment, he added, "While telling your fault hold out your hands and show the community how soiled they are." Barrett did as he was ordered, whereupon the superior said: "Brother, go to your place at once and do not again make such silly gestures with your hands in the presence of the community." That was one of the 'tests' to which he was subjected.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

A Life of Jesus.

[Assuming the actual existence of the Gospel Jesus, and the substantial accuracy of the New Testament records, the following sketch outlines a point of view that is hardly likely to receive hospitality elsewhere than in the "Freethinker."]

I.

LIVES of Jesus Christ are innumerable, both biographical and fictional. This is not to be wondered at, because the material is scanty, leaving the writer free to put his own interpretation upon the fragments, as preachers do.

Doubtless owing to this paucity of facts it is said that every novelist has an ambition to write a life of Jesus, and many have done so. The scope for the imaginative author is wide.

Most of the lives of Christ have been religious or devotional, many interpretive or explanatory, few critical.

No one has written a sexual life of Jesus. This would shock good Christians, but the possibilities have to be faced.

II.

The favourite child of his mother, born in peculiar circumstances, always different in character and behaviour from others, it would be easy to discover in Jesus an Oedipus complex. This culminates in his first public appearance at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee.

To his mother's simple statement "They have no wine," Jesus returns such a curt answer, "Woman, what have I to do with thee," that it can be explained only as an attempt to break the excessive love that he feels for her; a passion that is on the border-line of hate.

Mary is not rebuffed. She cannot understand the young man desiring to cut off the bond that has held him and her so long. In her fondness she tells the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

All through Jesus Christ's public career we see this struggle. At no time will his mother be repulsed, though he fights fiercely to kill the clutching power that gripped his youth.

An example of this is when Jesus is told "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee."

He replies with the abrupt question, "Who is my mother, and are my brethren?"

Indicating his disciples he adds emphatically, "Behold my mother and my brethren," hoping to submerge the particular yearning in a general love for mankind.

It does not succeed. All through we see the personal longing, almost lust, for individual women threatening to overwhelm the all-embracing humanism by which Jesus tries to sublimate his ardent desires.

Even when dying on the cross his impulse toward his mother survives. In one last despairing effort to kill it he cries to her, "Woman, behold thy son!"

¹ *Globe Encyclopedia* (Article Jesuits).

And to his favourite disciple, "Behold thy mother!" so that his final moments may be free from the spectacle of the lonely over-loving woman. John may take to him the emotional strain.

Jesus wished to take upon himself the burden of the world, but his own secret load is too great to be borne.

It is one of the most poignant items in the accounts of Jesus. It is his final effort to rid himself of the oppression that he had carried from infancy: the gnawing secreted love for his mother beyond the normal limits of filial affection.

III.

All through the Gospel records runs the insistence on Jesus Christ's enormous fascination for women. Peter's mother-in-law is healed of fever by his presence, as is the woman of an issue of blood after she touched his garments. Jairus' daughter rises from a trance when Jesus takes her hand. Similarly the bent woman in the synagogue could straighten herself after his words and touch. The Syro-Phenician woman desires but the smallest favour as long as she receives something, if only to be as the little dogs which eat the crumbs falling from the feast. Mary and Martha idolize Jesus, and numerous other examples of women's admiration could be named.

The incident of the woman taken in adultery by the scribes and Pharisees, her accusers reminding Jesus of the Mosaic law that she should be stoned, and his confutation of them, is unique. It was no sad-eyed or dreamy weakling who so successfully dealt with the case. There is the wisdom of Solomon in the statement, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

It is witty. The whole affair is bathed in humour. The commentary, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last" is cynical, but the conclusion is profoundly tender.

Yet the handling of the problem is that a man of the world, one who knew human frailties at first hand, a strong masculine experience begot by suffering, a deep sympathy purified by the fires of sorrow, but pre-eminently understanding, authoritative.

On his last journey to Jerusalem we are told that many women followed him, who had ministered to him of their substance.

They are reported to have watched the crucifixion, though it was no fit sight for women to see. Their love must have been enormous, transcending all conceivable devotion.

Women were first at the grave, to anoint the body with spices.

Of Jesus Christ's reactions to those devoted women we are told nothing. Did the reporters think them of insufficient importance, or were they ignorant of what Jesus thought of women, or said or did to them? We are given no details of his relations with women.

Yet that is what we of to-day would most like to know. A novelist writing the life of Christ in story form, or a plain biography, would have to deal with this.

Hardly could he avoid giving offence to the puritanically minded. If he represented Christ as a rigid ascete and celibate, there is still the persistence of the women to be accounted for: that they never deserted him.

Certainly the four Gospels do not give such a portrait of Jesus. His first public appearance was at a wedding feast, where he encouraged the drinking. Many more times he appears at feasts, and in his utterances he always speaks of festivities with approval. One of his final acts is a feast; sad and ceremonial admittedly, but nevertheless a feast.

When he walks with the disciples to Emmaus he stays to eat with them. At his last visit to the seashore he has ready for his followers fire with fish laid thereon, and he causes a miraculous plentitude of fish in the nets.

The scribes and Pharisees accuse him of being a glutton and a winebibber. Not directly denying the charge, he agrees he is in contrast to John the Baptist, who is notoriously abstinent and rigorous.

On many occasions Jesus mentions with approbation dancing and music and singing, celebrations, merry-making, and the enjoyment of life generally.

Many of his parables are based upon a generous and happy, well nigh convivial view of life. Several attributed miracles are concerned with multiplying food, and nearly all are intended to give pleasure.

These things being so, it is difficult to conceive of Jesus as a cold-blooded ascetic, dull-eyed or listless in the presence of women.

Although tired and hungry and thirsty on arrival those things vanish as Jesus talks with the woman at the well in Samaria. As always he brightened and expanded in the presence of women. They refreshed and enlivened him. He recuperates at Bethany with Martha and Mary.

His practice of withdrawing to the wilderness or mountains for fasting and self-denial seem to suggest that Jesus lived a sanguine, virile, masculine life, needing on occasions to rest and refresh his body. Perhaps he found it necessary to get the surging desires and rebellious wishes disciplined and under control.

An honestly written life of Jesus or a well-balanced novel based thereon would have to face all these aspects of the man and deal with them.

IV.

Most important are the dealings with Mary Magdalene and Judas Iscariot. Those two supply the real interest, because they explain the motives of the drama.

Judas Iscariot was passionately in love with Mary Magdalene. For no other reason did he remain a close follower of Jesus, enduring the discomforts and contumely which that position entailed. He had eyes or ears or thoughts for none else but Mary Magdalene. We must suppose her to have been all of face and figure and charm that her profession needed.

Unable to be reasonable or restrained, totally unbalanced by his infatuation, Judas Iscariot becomes jealous of his leader. On that last journey up from Galilee to Jerusalem, though many women accompany Jesus, Mary Magdalene seems always nearest, doing most for him, apparently getting his fullest favour.

What chance, thinks Judas, has he against the outstanding person of the Master? Only a minor disciple, doing the humblest duties of paying out small monies to shopkeepers and beggars, Mary Magdalene will not look at him. With scorn she repulses his approaches.

Comes the great moment when Mary Magdalene sells her finery and jewels to buy a beautiful vessel of delicate scent, and throws herself on her knees before Jesus, to anoint his feet, wash them in her tears, and wipe them with the long hair which was once her pride, always a magnet to men.

Breathless, stabbed to the heart, Judas watches the scene. He misunderstands and hates both the principals. He thinks it but mundane love between the two, whereas on Mary's part it is purely spiritual, wholly selfless. For the first time in her life she experiences sexless love, and it transforms her. She rises to her feet regenerate, a noble woman.

To Jesus this occasion justifies his life's ministry. All the past may be failure; the future painful and tragic, but at the moment he feels divine. One soul is attuned to his, flawlessly, wanting nothing but forgiveness and peace. Both are purified by the mutual understanding. It is a great scene, only to be dealt with in the grandest manner.

Blind with thwarted desire, insanely jealous, Judas goes and makes the arrangements with the priests to betray his Master. At the moment revenge seems more satisfying than love. And Mary Magdalene—he will kill her with his own hands after the crucifixion!

To accomplish this latter purpose he mingles again with the disciples. What he hears then, all speaking most candidly of their leader, especially Mary Magdalene's changed character, added to Jesus' words and simple dignity during his trial, convict Judas of wrongness. Stricken to heart with remorse he goes out and hangs himself.

No other chain of circumstances will explain Judas Iscariot. To attribute his actions to love of money is absurd; a lowering of the high tragic note that prevails all through the final events of Jesus Christ's life.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

Revenge.

We are largely indebted to the Christian Churches (as are all countries where they possess some authority) for the survival of the passion of revenge in so strong a form as it undoubtedly manifests.

Revenge, which may be defined as the desire to repay a real or apparent injury inflicted, belongs to a primitive environment, and among all primitive peoples it exercises a powerful influence.

This is only natural, for here whatever court of justice may obtain is concerned chiefly with matters affecting the tribe in general, thus the individual harbouring a grievance is constrained to take the law into his own hands in order to gain redress. That is expected of him, and should he fail to do his duty in the matter he is despised, scorned, labelled a coward, and is very harshly treated by the rest of the community. So the savage returns blow for blow and wound for wound—usually with interest: if a relative of his is killed, then he must kill in return, and sometimes he will go to the extent of exterminating the whole of the murderer's family and kin also, providing he can trace them of course, for they, as soon as they are aware who the murderer is flee into hiding. And even where the perpetrator of the crime cannot be discovered it is necessary for the savage, always desperate to avoid the taunts and insults of his fellows, and incidentally appease the spirit of the departed, to kill some person though he may have perhaps only the faintest suspicion of him.

So that the instinct of revenge which man has in common with lower animals finds its highest level in primitive society, where to all intents and purposes vengeance is a law. And necessarily so, for as Tylor says (*Anthropology*, p. 415): "Among all savages and barbarians the avenger of blood, little as he thinks it himself in his wild fury, is doing his part toward saving his people from perishing by deeds of blood." Vengeance, particularly blood-vengeance restrains men from acts of violence in a society where there are no police, and justice does not interfere to punish a person simply because he has committed a murder.

Considering, then, the important part played by revenge in his life, it is scarcely surprising to find the savage worshipping gods whom he depicts as being most revengeful beings when they do not receive unceasing attention. And when the many gods are condensed into the one omnipotent God, it is no cause for wonder to learn that "the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries." (*Nahum*, ch. i v. 2).

The Bible which deals with the exploits of the God I have in mind reeks with the revolting stories of the terrible vengeance He and men "after his own heart" inflict on others at the slightest—and quite often without—provocation; to say nothing of the dire threats of the awful revenge which will overtake those who disobey Him even on trivial matters.

On the narrative running through the Bible from Adam and Eve to the death of Jesus Christ is based the theory of Christianity: in this story of a monstrous revenge which has lasted from about four thousand years before Christ till the present time, and which will remain until the human race has vanished from the earth (at least that seems to be the idea) are built the Christian religions. Hell is also a prominent feature in the Bible, and it was eagerly seized upon and preached by the Christian Churches. Anything of a more appalling and vengeful nature than this place where sinners are everlastingly burning would be exceedingly difficult to conceive.

But besides teaching that revenge is a divine attribute and a manly passion, any Christian sect which gains power is never dilatory at demonstrating just to what extent the passion can be carried. The best example of this is shown in the history of the Holy Inquisition.

I do not wish to dwell on the ghastliness, the shocking brutality, and the unspeakable horror of this reign of Christianity, but I would like in passing to draw your attention to the similarity between the inquisitors searching for a heretic and his family and the savage, whose

father, or some other relation, has been slain, hunting the murderer, his family and relatives.

Although now the power of Christian Churches is slowly on the wane the Bible is still retained in the schools, and it is mainly through this that the instinct of revenge is still able on occasions to conquer rational judgment. Moreover it is due to the representation of the instinct as being righteous that many people are deceived into believing that war is necessary at times, and that unless their country maintained a strong army and navy jealous enemies would invade it and extirpate the inhabitants. While on the subject of war, it is interesting to note what Brigadier-General Crozier has to say in relation to the subject with which I am dealing. "The Christian Churches are the finest blood-lust creators which we have, and of them we made free use," we read in his book *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*.

Now, how is this blood-lust created? Admittedly you can induce men to enlist by mouthing such words as honour, liberty, justice, truth, freedom, courage, etc., but it is certain they will require something more tangible to induce them to fight, and inspire them with the burning desire to kill mercilessly. So in order to create the right spirit as it were, the Churches make their appeal to the lowest strata in man—his passions. Need I add that the one to which they devote most of their efforts is his passion for revenge?

Yes, the soldier is made to picture himself as being a perfectly justified avenger, and this will always be the case where the intellect has not been fully developed. By that I mean that until we have established Secular education, and made it illegal for the Christian Churches (I am speaking of this country only) to enforce their doctrines on the minds of children under twelve years of age, we cannot reasonably hope to subdue the savage monster Revenge lurking beneath, and ever swift to rend, the filmy veneer of civilization.

TOM BLAKE.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

TITHES—ABOLITION OR REMISSION?

SIR,—After the war many farmers bought their farms, and to-day, owing to the fall in prices they are finding it exceedingly difficult to make "both ends meet."

One heavy burden on some land is the tithe. Owing to the Tithe Act of 1925, one again the Church true to its colours, drove a shrewd bargain fixing the amount at 105 plus 4½ per 100 for eighty years. The 4½ is to create a sinking fund in order that they may be compensated with £70,000,000 at the end of that period.

There is a "Tithe Remission Bill" before Parliament. But the Farmers of East Anglia are dissatisfied with the Farmers Union in not pressing matters, and have held meetings at Ipswich and Colchester, and passed resolutions condemning their own Union for its slackness.

This matter is of great importance to all Taxpayers.

How can the impoverished farmers fight the Church? The Church draws £3,000,000 from their industry annually, £400,000 from the mining industry, and has in addition over £100,000,000 of investments and property. Also a representative in every village in the land.

The Church will fight, but not if it can see the tithe taken off the land and placed on the Taxpayer. They would welcome such a change, knowing that it would make abolition more difficult.

It should be "Abolition as an Act of Social Justice"; not "Remission" which may mean only shifting a wrong from a particular section on to the whole nation.

R. J. BARR.

DR. PANKHURST AND AGNOSTICISM.

SIR,—Whilst appreciating the kind notice of my book, *The Suffragette Movement* (Longmans) in your columns, I must regretfully observe that I am afraid your Reviewer did not find time to read the whole of it. So far from being "diffident in proclaiming to the world the extent of" my "father's departure from orthodox re-

ligion," as your Reviewer alleges, I have been at pains to give his precise views in his own words, which I have quoted on page 18, 19, and 76, in a form which admits of no ambiguity.

I am surprised that your Reviewer should not know that the term *Agnostic* had already been used by Huxley when my father brought his actions for libel against Colonel Hamilton, the *Manchester Courier*, and Chesters Thompson, out of which actions arose my father's Press controversy with the then Mr. Balfour on the question of Agnosticism.

If your Reviewer knew anything of me, he would have looked up his facts before controverting my definite statement on page 78, that my father in the witness box called himself an Agnostic.

If he will now refer to the *Freethinker* of May 23, 1886, he will find an article over the signature of G. W. Foote, in which the following passage occurs:—

Dr. Pankhurst . . . calls himself an Agnostic, thinks God unknowable, doubts whether there is a future life, believes Jesus Christ to have been a man, and pleads guilty of having once said that the Holy Ghost was the "foggy member of the Trinity." Nor could he deny having said that he would have liked to have that personage in the witness box. Our readers will enjoy these things, and conclude Dr. Pankhurst has a gift of humour. But orthodoxy will make a wry mouth at such profanity, and when it cannot imprison the heretic, it still knows how to punish him with political and social ostracism.

Foote was right; Society many times proved that it well knew how to punish my father for his views.

I may add, that if anyone connected with the Secular Society has any records or reminiscences of my father's activities I should be grateful to receive them to add to my material concerning his life and work.

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST

[We regret that our memory played us false with regard to the date of the vogue of the terms "Agnostic." Miss Pankhurst's letter is conclusive on that head. With regard to Dr. Pankhurst's connexion with the Manchester Secular Society, there may be some of the older Manchester members who are able to give details. When we first became acquainted with the Manchester Branch, about 1892, we heard many accounts of that connexion, and we believe it terminated as a consequence of a difference of opinion with Bradlaugh over a contested legacy to the Manchester Society.—E.D. *Freethinker*.]

Society News.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

THERE was a good attendance at Conway Hall last Sunday, when Mr. H. Cutner gave an interesting address on "The Other Side of Spiritualism." He urged all interested in this subject to make a systematic study of conjuring. In making this statement he did not for a moment assert that the phenomena manifested at seances were all the result of fraudulent manipulation; but a knowledge of the performances of the world's great illusionists provided very valuable data to the student of psychology of deception. Mr. Cutner briefly sketched the careers of Marjery, Eusapia Palladino, and other well-known mediums, exposed the fraudulent methods of spirit mediums, and referred to trance addresses in strange tongues. The discussion which followed showed that this subject is creating wide-spread interest, and that Mr. Cutner's treatment of it was fully appreciated.

A.D.M.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S.

It was an attentive audience that listened to Mr. R. H. Rosetti's lecture, "Nature, Man and God," last Sunday evening, the opposition appeared in one person, who made a most extravagant claim for what he called Christian philosophy. His environment previous to his attendance at our meeting, no doubt accounted for his views. This Sunday, Mr. H. Slater will speak on "Religion in Russia."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Friday at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorliffe Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Saturday, 7.30, Messrs. A. Frank, G. Haskell and F. Day.

INDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (London Co-operative Society's Hall, 249 Dawes Road, Fulham): 7.30, Mr. H. Slater—"Religion in Russia."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. J. Katz, B.A.—"What do Men Seek in Religion?"

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): Wednesday, March 18, at 7.45, Mr. George Whitehead—"Population and Poverty."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Arthur Linecar—"Words, Idle Works." Continuation of January Lecture by request.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Winter Garden, 37 High Street, Clapham, near Clapham North Underground Station): 7.15, Mr. R. Arch—"Wagner, Artist and Freethinker."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Social Equality."

STREATHAM (Labour Hall, Eastwood Street, Mitcham Lane): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, on "Do We Need Religion?"

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Town, N.W.2, facing The Brecknock): 7.30, Mr. E. Baker—"That Organized Christianity is a Menace to World Peace."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Saturday, March 14, Social at Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, E. Dances, Games, etc., from 7 till 11.0. Admission free. All Freethinkers and their friends cordially invited.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.30, Dr. P. R. Paranjpye, Member India Council, late Minister of Education—"Education in India. Religious or Secular?"

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.30, Mr. Lew Davis—"Problems of Morality."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"A Glimpse of Some Modern Religions." Questions and discussion. All welcome.

EASTBOURNE I.L.P. (The Red House, Beamsley Road): 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren (London)—"The Life and Death of My Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. L. L'Estrange Malone—A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 47 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. J. A. Brewin (Manchester)—"The Nature and Evolution of Thought." Current *Freethinkers* will be on sale.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street entrance): Mr. Chapman Cohen (London) will lecture at 3.0, subject, "How Man Found God," and at 7.0, on "How Man Found Himself." Reserved seat sixpence and one shilling each.

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Bakers Hall, 5 Forbes Place): 7.0, Mr. R. T. White—"The Secular Solution."

PERTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Secular Room, 122 Canal Street): 2.0, Full meeting of committee and members requested. Important business to discuss.

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