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

Views and Opinions.

(Concluded from page 18.)

Tracking a Ghost.

As an instance of the way in which the ghost of religion influences modern thought I dealt last week with Bishop Berkeley's famous analysis of Knowledge. Berkeley, who wished to establish a God, first of all showed that the metaphysical talk of a world of "matter" distinct from the matter of the ordinary man and woman, was moonshine. It meant nothing and did nothing. Then he proceeded to argue that if this metaphysical matter did not exist, there must be a world of spirit, a "divine mind" which kept all things in being. It did not take long for a mind so acute as David Hume's to prove that Berkeley had in his fear of Atheism only destroyed a fallacy on the one side of the road to re-instate on the other. For if the idea of "matter" distinct from the matter we knew was absurd, then the idea of "mind" existing as the substratum of mental phenomena was equally absurd. It meant nothing and did nothing. It was not a thing, it was a vacuum. Both assumptions were of the same order. So long as we profess a belief that the "real" world is not the world we know, whether we choose to call this world "Mind" or "Matter," it presents us with only a variation in fallacy. We are still living in a world dominated, more or less, by the ghost of religion.

Curiously enough, so careful a thinker as Charles Bradlaugh fell into this trap, when he followed Spinoza in professing belief in a single substance, of which we know nothing whatever but its "modes." But "substance" here must be either the substance of ordinary consciousness or it is not. If it is not, then as Berkeley would have said, and as Hume would have said, if we take away from the assumed substance every quality by which we know substance,

then we are not dealing with a thing, but with nothing. The mere alteration of terms from "matter" to "substance" makes no difference whatever. Meanings must remain meanings whether we are speaking of things we know, or of things we don't know. "Matter" divorced from the synthesis of qualities which to us constitute all we mean by matter, "Mind" divorced from the synthesis of mental phenomena, which to us constitute all we mean by mind, mean no more than mouthing the word "God" without any kind of definition. Definition is really more than a line or two taken from a dictionary. It is of the very essence of intellectual operations, even of conscious thought. It does not follow that because a man has given up all religious doctrines that he is still uninfluenced by the ghost of religion. Mental characteristics are not easily shaken off.

* * *

Science and Sanity.

So that the position to-day is this. We have (1) a number of self-styled scientific theologians who prate about science being able to deal with phenomena only, while the world of "Real" being must be left to religion; (2) religious-minded scientists who also indulge in talk about some "Great Reality" of which science is in search but which it never discovers, and which therefore prevents science knowing what things are in themselves; (3) those who are in conscious opposition to all forms of religion, but who continue to speak of a world of "matter" as something different from the matter present to us in consciousness, and (4) those who reject this substratum "matter" but substitute a substratum "mind." So far as my present purpose is concerned all of these four groups are haunted by the ghost of religion. Numbers 1, 2, and 3 are obviously animated by the desire to find God. Number 3, in the healthy desire to get rid altogether of "God," is unknowingly influenced by theology to the extent of affirming an unknown and unknowable "real" world as distinct from the world which we actually know.*

It is, however, one thing to point out a confusion; it is not so easy to make clear how it has arisen. The influence of the desire to find a God is quite plain as one of the causes—one ought, perhaps, add to this the influence of not desiring to be found by one's neighbours to be without a God. There is also the tremendous influence of social heredity. With the best of intentions it is difficult to cast one's thoughts into entirely new forms. It is just as hard to do this as it is to speak an unknown tongue. We must use

* For a detailed description of the scientific meaning of "matter" and of such terms as "objective" and "subjective," see chapter 4 of my *Materialism Re-stated*.

the language we have when we express ourselves, and this is fully charged with anthropomorphism. So also are the thought-forms of our social inheritance. Everything tends to bias the mind in the direction of religion. It would take a volume to deal adequately with this aspect of the subject. All I can do now is to give an outline of a very long story.

* * *

Ringling the Changes.

The one plain thing we can start with is the fact that we have here two questions, which have been, on the religious side, treated as one. There is the existence of God, which is the theological question, and there is the philosophical question of the existence of a world distinct from the world we know, which is decided to be the *real* world. The origin of the first to-day is well known. It began in an illusion, a "primitive psychological blunder," and should have died out when the nature of the illusion was exposed. The philosophical question came later. The question "What do I know about the world?" was naturally followed by that of "How do I know about the world?" and "How can I be sure that my knowledge is trustworthy?" It was next demonstrated that our knowledge of the world was ultimately dependent upon our sense organs, and that to discuss what the world is like apart from sense impression is very like discussing what the world looks like and sounds like in the absence of sight and hearing. This problem, as it was asked, has always shown itself to be insoluble, but very few have asked themselves whether they were not trying to answer a question that never ought to be asked, because the terms of the proposition are quite unthinkable. If a start had been made from another angle, and if instead of asking how does an external world make itself known, the question had been asked what do we mean by an external world, and what is it we know about it, the reply would have been more satisfactory, because more intelligible.

The important thing, however, to bear in mind is that it is along this line of enquiry that there grew up a theory of two worlds—a "real" world about which we could only get a transformed picture through our sense organs—and the world as our sense organs presented it. Absurdity reached its greatest height in the conclusion that the only world we know, the only world with which we have dealings, and which has any significance for us, is unreal, while the other world, of which we know absolutely nothing, and which would be of no use to us even if we did, is the "Great Reality."

Historically, what has taken place is this. As the idea of God began to fall into discredit, and as philosophical and scientific questions assumed greater prominence, theologians began to ape the language of philosophy, and to dress their primitive notions in an intellectually respectable garb. On the other hand philosophers tended to use theological terms, first, because they naturally used accepted terms to express their ideas, second, because of a hesitation to break too abruptly with established religion. In this way the idea of a God standing at the back of the world was gradually confused with the question of a "real" world underlying that presented to us through our sense organs. It was a very pretty trick, and few appeared to notice how the changes were being rung, at least, very few said anything about it. Something of the same thing was done when Professor Huxley took the philosophical question of the nature of existence, about which he might logically have professed Agnosticism, and used it to disguise his complete re-

jection of belief in a God by professing Agnosticism concerning the existence of God—an application that rendered the term wholly and irretrievably absurd.

* * *

Rock Bottom.

Now if the reader has followed me in this very brief sketch of a very large subject, he will realize the nature of a deal of the nonsense uttered by theologians on the one side, and religiously-minded scientists on the other. The two problems, the religious and the philosophical are quite distinct. The religious question is settled so soon as we realize the nature of the primitive delusion that gave the Gods birth. The philosophical one owes its existence to a misunderstanding of the real nature of the problem to be solved. This problem is not to find out what is it that lies outside the world we know and with which we have to deal, but to discover precisely what we know about this world, and how we are to deal with it. The real task, both scientific and philosophic, is to interpret the raw material of experience so that we may find our way about the world of experience. The laws that science draws up are codifications of experience, the categories framed by science, matter, mind, etc., are categories of experience. The world with which we have to deal is a real world precisely because it is a world of experience. A world which is not that is unreal in the only intelligible sense in which that word may be used.

I commenced these notes with a discussion as to Berkeley's meaning of "matter." His dismissal of the matter of the metaphysician, and his restriction of the term to the matter given us in our daily experience was brilliantly successful. But he was spoiled by his theology, and because he wanted a God he had to assume the existence of a metaphysical mind, quite as absurd and as unwarranted as the metaphysical matter he had just dismissed. It is the same desire that leads prominent scientists to dwell upon the limitations of science in dealing with the world. For example, we are told that in spite of all we know of electricity and gravitation we do not yet know what electricity and gravitation are in themselves. All this is sheer nonsense. There is not electricity *and* also electrical phenomena, there is not gravitation *and* gravitative phenomena. The phenomena we know as electrical *is* electricity, the phenomena we know as gravitative *is* gravitation. All that remains possible in both directions is an enlargement of knowledge on the lines that have already taught us so much.

It is a pity that in this real world of ours ghosts should still exert so great a power! It is easy comparatively to kill the belief in formal religion, the great difficulty is to destroy the influence of religion in language, customs, and modes of thought. And it is only when a man is free from this influence that he can truthfully claim to be completely free.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

MATERIALISM RE-STATED

A STATEMENT AND A DEFENCE
OF SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM

Price - - 2s. 6d. Cloth. Postage 3d.

The Marvel of Mohammed.

"The moving finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on."—*Omar Khayyam.*

"There is nothing on earth divine beside humanity."
Landor.

"All right use of life is to pave ways for the firmer
footing of those who succeed us."—*Meredith.*

ONLY a mere handful of Englishmen out of a population of forty millions know or care anything concerning Oriental faiths other than the Christian religion. The majority are acquainted with the Hebrew-Christian Bible for the simple reason that they are taught to read it at school. In after life most of these scholars, when they read at all, prefer the recondite novels of Edgar Wallace, or the sporting pages of the daily newspapers, to such light literature as the Koran, the Zendavesta, or other sacred books of the East.

Yet the plain fact remains that Mohammedanism is Christianity's greatest religious rival, and the Koran is actually one of the most widely read books in existence. Mohammedans number some two hundred and thirty millions of the human race, who use the Koran for public worship and in schools far more than Christians use their own sacred scriptures. The very numerous sects of Protestants of the world number only one hundred and fifty millions, whilst the Roman Catholics do not encourage undue familiarity with the Christian Bible among the laity. The ecclesiastics of the Greek Orthodox Church are in the very happy position of catering for an illiterate population who care more for life itself than for literature, and whose ethics are as weak as their faith is strong.

Mohammedans differ from Christians by reason of their sincerity. They are as fanatical as they are pious. To them prayer is a daily routine, not a thing to be done once a week, once a month, or twice a lifetime, as in this Christian country. They really regard their Koran as the actual work of their "god," revealed to their own prophet, Mohammed. So profound is their reverence for their sacred volume that they may not even touch it without ceremony.

The Mohammedan Scripture, revered by over two hundred and thirty millions, of whom eighty millions are British subjects, is a curious volume, and if the arguments by which the divine inspiration of the Christian Bible are worth a moment's consideration, this Koran must be inspired also. There is the same exaltation, and similar apparent incompatibility of the author with the writing, a plagiarised morality, the same beauty of language and wealth of Oriental imagery, the same claim to prophecy and the fulfilment of prophecy.

The outstanding divergence is that there is no claim on the part of the prophet to work miracles, although the Koran incorporates so many Hebrew legends. The same mythical characters, "Abraham," "Lot," "Noah," "Moses," "Solomon," and many others, appear and reappear in its pages. Another important divergence is that Mohammedanism is monotheistic. Its theology is simplicity itself compared with the amazing confusion of the Christian creeds and the tangle of the Trinity. In spite of these differences, however, there is the old, familiar, priestly ring in the phrasing of the sentences. Take the first Sura from the Koran:—

Glory to God, Master of the Universe, the Merciful,
the Compassionate, Lord of the Day of Judgment, we
adore Thee and implore Thy aid, guide us in the
right path.

Then, again, "There is no God, but God; God is
most great," was a bold message for an Arabian Shep-
herd to bring to a nation of fanatics that had deities

by the dozen, and sharp swords and strong arms to defend them.

The morality is impressive. Take the faith as laid down in the second Sura:—

Pity does not consist in turning your faces to the East or the West. He is pious who believes in God, and in the prophets; who, for the love of God, gives of his own to his neighbour; to the orphans, to the poor, to the traveller, and to those who ask; who ransom the captives, who observes prayer, who gives alms, fulfils the engagements he contracts, who is patient in adversity, in hard times, and times of violence. These are just and fear the Lord.

Right through the centuries the Christian Churches have always been jealous, and even envious, of Mohammedanism. The history of the eight Crusades shows some of the extent of that envy and that jealousy, and also demonstrates that Christian "love" is but the merest mouthing and lip-service. The Papacy pitted Christianity against Mohammedanism, and staked the authenticity of each on the result. Had not the defeat of Islam resulted, a predominant part of the world might have become Moslem, or, as Edward Gibbon declared in his picturesque way, Oxford University might to-day be expounding the Koran instead of whitewashing the Christian Bible.

Compared with Christianity, Islam possesses many advantages. The text of the Koran was finally settled within a few years of Mohammed's death, and, so far as his own life is concerned, friends and enemies alike are agreed as to the main facts of his extraordinary career. The prophet's life may be traced in the stately sentences of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in the picturesque phrases of Thomas Carlyle, and in many other volumes. An ardent propagandist, Mohammed made only thirteen converts in three years. Think of it! To-day, a large proportion of the human race mention his name with reverence. Such iconoclastic propaganda as Mohammed's meant the risk of death or most severe punishment. Forced to take the sword in hand, it took him ten years' hard fighting before he prevailed. As in Christianity, force was the determining factor in the religion's rise to temporal power.

Mohammedanism is still a powerful factor in human life. Hundreds of Eastern cities shimmer with the fair architecture of mosques. From thousands of filagreed pulpits the glory of Allah and of Mohammed the prophet are daily proclaimed. Throughout the wide expanse of the Orient men still turn their faces to the East, and repeat the formula of the faithful. Unquestionably, the peoples who revere the Koran still possess a solidarity that is lacking in the nation's of Christendom; and for a time they may prove that they have a staying power as unconquerable as the sword of their prophet. Yet it will not be for all time. As surely as Greece has discarded the numerous gods of Paganism, so one day the Oriental will turn with disdain from the star of Islam. For the newer generations will carry on the work of the world without the burden of priestcraft.

"Not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright."

MIMNERMUS.

No man of intelligence, no one whose brain has not been poisoned by superstition or paralysed by fear can read the Old Testament without being forced to the conclusion that our God was a wild beast. If we must have a God, let him be merciful. Let us remember that when the sword of justice becomes a staff to support the weak, it bursts into blossom, and the perfume of that flower is the only incense, the only sacrifice, that mercy will accept.—*R. G. Ingersoll.*

The Value of Death.

To admit that the idea of dying is unpleasant is not the same as to admit a belief in "life after death." Nor is it equivalent to an admission that one would like to go on living in some other state after this life has ended. The most that can logically be inferred from such an admission is that we find life, on the whole, to be relatively pleasant.

In the course of my adult existence I have spoken personally to thousands of persons, belonging to at least fifteen different nationalities, and in parts of the globe as remote as Java in the East and Vancouver in the West. Yet I never heard one of all these people express, when mentally and physically normal, any genuine desire to end this life sooner than need be. Indeed the reverse is the truth. Even among the elderly and aged of those who firmly maintain that the "hereafter" is happier than the "here," there is no sign of reluctance to call in medical aid in order to prolong a life which, by comparison with the anticipated heaven of joy, must be a hell of misery.

Now although this has been my experience, I do not therefore assert that suicide is always proof of insanity. Nor do I assert that I have never heard anyone in his senses exclaim: "I wish I were dead!" For in the first case it is well known that amongst the Japanese there are certain situations where honour can only be vindicated by suicide (*Hara Kari*). And in the second case it is well known that the exclamation is often used for effect rather than as the expression of a genuine desire. For, of all those who have given voice to this suicidal wish in my presence not one took the trouble to carry it into action—though it would have been perfectly simple to do so.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to infer that the love of life is as natural to all humanity as the liking for physical well-being. And just as the human mind dislikes the idea of ill-health, as being the unpleasant opposite to normal health, so it has a natural dislike of the idea of death as being the unpleasant opposite to the normal and relatively pleasant condition of life.

Let it be noted, in passing, that a liking or dislike of anything may be exaggerated to unhealthy proportions. This may be the result of faulty upbringing, of poor inheritance, of bad environment, or of other evil causes. But whatever the cause may be, the effects of exaggeration are always harmful both to the individual and to the community. Exaggerated contempt of life, for instance, may breed anything from the most useless foolhardiness to the filthiest forms of asceticism. Exaggerated love of life may breed anything from the most cowardly egotism to cold-blooded murder in the name of humanity.

So in our attempt to form an accurate idea of what constitutes a normal liking of life and dislike of death, we must beware of being misled by extremes either of behaviour or of statement. It is what the majority of people do that counts, not what individuals here and there say, or say they believe. And where there is an obvious discrepancy between behaviour and belief it is the behaviour on which our judgment should be based. For, supposing a friend were to be suffering from acute sea-sickness, and in the extremity of his agony he were to exclaim (as I have personally heard): "I wish I were dead," it would be perfectly logical to take him at his word and throw him overboard. Yet would his relations or the ship's officers thank you for your kindly deed? Or, if a preacher were to expatiate (as I have also personally heard) upon the marvellous bliss in store for us all in Heaven, it would be perfectly logical for some self-denying anarchist to blow the whole congregation sky-high. Yet would the good fellow be treated as a philanthropist?

The answer to both these questions is clearly in the negative. And it is so because, whatever individuals may say in the fairy-tales of their religions or in the agonies of exceptional suffering, humanity has agreed that it is better to be alive in this life than dead—or "alive" in some problematical "existence after death." It is this normalcy of the human species which has, amongst other things, kept it in existence for so long.

In spite of this we find strange mental aberrations occurring at different times and places. And some of these have had a longer or shorter vogue over larger or smaller areas of the inhabited earth. In his endeavours to enhance the pleasures of life man, with the aid of drugs and other media, has gone to amazing extremes of auto-intoxication. In his attempts to banish the distaste of death man has gone to similar extremes of auto-intoxication by means of his imagination. With regard to the former, there is very little disagreement as to the ill-effects produced; for these effects are immediate and palpable to the senses. But with regard to the latter, the evil consequences are not so direct, nor so easily traceable to their true origins. They are none the less disastrous on that account. Indeed they are usually more lasting and widespread by very reason of the general ignorance in regard to their causes.

There is, for example, little disagreement amongst thinking persons as to the evils which result from over-indulgence in alcoholic drinks, drugs, etc. There may be less agreement as to the harmful consequences of over-indulgence in fiction, play-going, gambling and so forth. But the practical argument remains clear that life would be impossible were everyone to avoid work and spend their whole energies in pleasure-seeking. Consequently it needs no great amount of logic or eloquence to convince people of the necessity for moderation in the use of all things with which man tries to enhance the pleasures of living. But when it comes to pointing out the ghastly results of attempting to minimise the unpleasantness of the idea of death, we are faced with a more difficult problem of explanation. For the trail which has to be followed, from the evil consequences back to their true causes, is a mental rather than a physical one. And although it may be as plain as a pikestaff to the analytical observer, it is not so easy for the ordinary person to see it. Who, for instance, would admit without objection that the continuance of poverty and war amongst so-called civilized races is almost entirely due to the belief in a "future life"?

Let us begin by examining the reasons for man's dislike of death. They are not really very abstruse or complicated. Without trying to be exhaustive, one can make a list of the most important reasons which apply to most civilized beings. Stated in the first person singular the list might be as follows:—

- (1) I have not had my fair share of happiness in this life.
- (2) Even if I have, it is clear that others have not. I dislike the thought of this unfairness.
- (3) I am fond of certain persons or animals. Their death before mine, or my death before theirs, deprives me of a source of happiness or pleasure which I do not willingly forgo.
- (4) The extinction of my personality, individuality, consciousness (call it what you will) at death is an intolerable thought.

It needs no subtle analysis to see that the desire for fair play for others is entirely bred of the desire to be fairly treated ourselves. And the desire to see more of one's relatives and friends is precisely the same as a complaint that we have not had enough of the happiness which their society gives us. Reasons (2) and (3), therefore, are merely special versions of reason

(1). With regard to reason (4) I can find no other cause than personal conceit for the "intolerableness" of the thought of extinction. For we are not in the habit of worrying about the absence of our personalities in the Cosmos before we were born. Nor do we keep awake o' nights for fear that Creation will go adrift while our consciousness is temporarily obliterated in sleep. Why, then, should extinction, with its absence of pain and sorrow and worry, or permanent sleep and rest, be such an intolerable thought to some of us? If the answer is not that we have a hopelessly exaggerated idea of our own importance, then reason (4) can only be a roundabout way of expressing one or more of the first three reasons. So it becomes clear that the chief cause of man's dislike of death is the sense of not having had fair treatment during life.

Now the most popular ruse which man's imagination has devised to smother this sense of injustice, and to protect his conceit, is the "life after death" ruse. This entirely illogical and humanly invented "existence" has, by reason of its non-existence and its remoteness from truth and reality, assumed a great variety of fantastic forms. From the weird complications of metempsychosis to the simple idealism of Nirvana, from the gruesome Hell of Christianity to the crude pleasures of the Islamic heaven; many and strange have been the fantasies whereby man has sought to escape the plain teaching of death and to avoid accepting it at its true value.

What has been the result? Just this—man has become the victim of his own vain imaginings. The foolish and wholly unsupported assumption that wrong balances will be adjusted rightly after we are dead has led to more abuses and injustices than life could ever have produced without it. Disease and suffering were tolerated as part of the "scheme" of some incompetent deity, who would repair the mess he had made in some "future existence"—until science discarded the theological outlook and treated gods as the fictions they are. The poor were taught to rest contented with their poverty and low estate—until reason and irreligion saw through the greed of priests and others in power. Heretics and unbelievers were tortured and condemned to various cruel deaths for the ostensible benefit of their imaginary "souls"—until heresy and unbelief, with their accompanying rationalism, humanism and tolerance became the rule of the majority. And were it not for the further spread of reason and indifference to the lies of religion, we would still be in danger of similar harshnesses from our fellow-men, as existing laws bear witness. And were it not for the tacit belief in some sort of "survival after death," what sane man to-day would find any excuse or justification for the method of settling disputes by slaying his neighbour? Yet we have the leaders of all "civilized" nations meeting in solemn conclave to discuss the limitation of armaments. Limitation, forsooth! What a pitiful farce!

God shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more pain, nor death, neither sorrow, nor crying—for you and me and yours and mine, in the sweet by-and-bye. But for him and her and theirs—they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone—in the sweet by-and-bye. Everything will be all right, saith the Lord, in the sweet by-and-bye. Yea, when we are all dead and it's too late for us to do anything. In the meanwhile—mañana, Kismet, just let things rip! God will see to it—this year, next year, sometime, NEVER.

Away with such rubbish! In the name of common-sense let us sweep such childish superstitions out of our minds, and face the facts. Let us hold up our heads and meet life and death as reasoning beings, not as credulous savages. Let us frankly recognize

that death means death; and do not let us quibble with words, or try to dope our intellects with some ridiculously self-contradictory verbal narcotic. Let us give death its true value and realize its worth. And let this value inspire us to be done with fatalism or procrastination. This life is the only life known to anyone, all the nonsensical theories of religion notwithstanding—and there is not one atom of evidence for any other. Let us, therefore, recognize and act up to the necessity for making the best of the here and now, in the full realization that, if we fail to do so while we live, we shall certainly be unable to do so when we are dead. And the best of life for you and me implies the best of life for all humanity.

C. S. FRASER.

"Sabbat and Seance."

"After God Himself hath spoken of magician and sorcerers, what infidel dare doubt that they exist."

Pierre de Lunere—"L'Incredulite et Mescreance du Sortilège (Paris 1622).

I HAVE just been reading the *History of Witchcraft and Demonology*, by Montague Summers (Kegan Paul, London, 1926). The author is a Catholic priest, who has spent half his life searching ancient records for evidence of Satanic manifestations.

While admitting that there is much fraud, superstition and hallucination in witchcraft and spiritualism alike, he considers that there is a solid substratum of fact in which the intervention of the Devil and his angels can be traced. It appears that the heretical sects of the Middle Ages were Satan-worshippers and closely connected with witchcraft, and our author speaks with enthusiasm of the manner in which the wretches were sent to the stake. At the same time he points out that the fiercest persecution of the witches took place in Protestant England and Scotland, under Queen Elizabeth and John Knox.

The Catholics have a sound instinct that if the truth of witchcraft and demonology be doubted, the foundations of faith are sapped. "It seems to me that—if unshaken evidence means anything at all, if the authority of the ablest and acutest intellects of all ages in all countries is not to count for merest vapourings and fairy phantasies, the possibility of these demonical connexions is not to be denied." (page 90.) "For the fact of demonical possession the authority of Christ Himself is plainly pledged. . . . There can be no doubt whatever that the reality of witchcraft is definitely mentioned by the New Testament writers; and any denial of this implicitly involves a rejection of the truth of the Christian revelation." The Freethinker will heartily agree with this sentiment.

One can but admire the care and diligence with which so much interesting material has been brought together. It appears that the Sabbat was an inverted Mass. The Lord's Prayer was recited backwards, black tapers were used, then cornered wafers were eaten, and the sign of the cross was made backwards. It is evident, as the author says, that the witches were firm believers in Transubstantiation, or there would have been no point in desecrating the sacrament, which was stolen from churches for the purpose. In fact, these senseless rituals are plainly due to the action of religious obsession on unbalanced minds, and are the inevitable results of religion. After the "horrible blasphemies" had been completed, the whole assembly used to plunge into a bestial orgy, in which incubi and succubi took a prominent part. In his priestly manner our author gloats over the minute details of the devotee's sexual intercourse with the Devil. He suggests that the unnatural coldness which Satan displayed on these occasions has now received scientific verification in the spiritualist phenomenon of "ectoplasm."

A chapter is devoted to "The Witch in Holy Writ," in which Balaam, the Witch of Endor, and Simon Magus are seriously discussed.

The weight of enthusiastic opinion, we are told, in-

clines to the view that Satan actually inspired Balaam and Simon, and that Samuel actually appeared to Saul and the witch. As Origen stated: "The Scriptures cannot lie; and the words of the Scripture are: "And the woman saw Samuel." (p. 180.)

An edifying story is related of Saint Margaret of Cortina, the Franciscan penitent (p. 202) who was followed up and down her cell by the Devil, who "sang the most filthy songs, and lewdly incited Christ's dear handmaid . . . to join him in trolling forth bawdy catches . . . but her prayers and tears finally routed the foul spirit and drove him far away."

The Roman Ritual still contains a "form of exorcising the possessed," and this is set forth in detail (p. 211 *et seq.*). With many prayers and signs of the cross the priest addresses the demon and says, *inter alia*: "I adjure thee, thou old serpent . . . by Him who hath power to put thee into Hell, depart in haste from this servant of God N—. . . But why, O fierce one, doest thou withstand? . . . The more slowly thou goest out, does the greater punishment increase against thee."

The ritual is repeated, "until the possessed person be entirely set free." In his sixth chapter, our author denounces "the abomination in our midst," modern Spiritualism. This, he says, is old witchcraft revived, and the "spirit" messages are received from evil incarnate spirits who personate departed relatives in order to deceive mankind.

There are several hints that the author and his colleagues have gained evidence in the secrecy of the confessional, these show the unabated activity of the Evil One. He envies the "happy sceptic," who doubts these things. "Would that it were so."

Christianity, in fostering these dark superstitions, has caused a sum of evil and misery that is too readily forgotten; for Demonology and Witchcraft are as truly the children of Christianity as the Crusades, the Salvation Army, and the Bishop of London. And if we reject the stories of witchcraft we have no logical grounds for retaining belief in any other part of the Christian revelation.

AGIS.

Ruddigore or the Witch's Curse.

SOME few weeks ago I wrote some notes on the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, "The Pirates of Penzance," and I am now moved to commend to Freethinkers H.M.V. records D.B. 4005 to 4013, upon which appears the opera "Ruddigore," with famous singers, full orchestra and chorus conducted by Dr. Malcolm Sargent, under the direction of Mr. Rupert D'Oyly Carte.

First of all let me say that in Birmingham at the time of writing, the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas are attracting crowds of people, many being unable to gain admittance.

Most Birmingham Churches are lucky if they get a congregation of twenty. In other words comic operas appeal more to Birmingham people than do comic clergymen.

The song of Hannah might well be memorized by every Freethinker, for it refers to a savage custom which was at one time encouraged by the Church. Hannah tells how:—

"Sir Rupert Murgatroyd
His leisure and his riches
He ruthlessly employed
In persecuting witches
With fear he'd make them quake;
He'd duck them in his lake,
He'd break their bones,
With sticks and stones,
And burn them at the stake."

The heroine Rose bases all her actions upon a book of etiquette, and is asked to look with favourable eyes upon young Robin, who combines "the manners of a Marquis with the morals of a Methodist."

Sir Despard Murgatroyd, the present holder of the title suffers from the witch's curse and has to perform one crime daily. His methods savour much of the methods of a certain type of philanthropist, for he would steal a child and then found an orphanage, rob a bank and then

endow a bishopric, and carry off Rose Maybud and atone with a cathedral.

The plot, like the plots of most comic operas does not matter at all, but Richard is a character well known in the religious world, whose conscience tells him to do some one a bad turn when it is to his own advantage.

Gilbert was a born satirist, and there is a delicious scene when the bad baronet is foiled because a Union Jack is waved over the head of Rose.

The nonsense of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas suffers when torn from its context, but the arguments used in Ruddigore are reminiscent of theological arguments.

The baronet of Ruddigore is obliged to commit one sin per day or else to die. He argues that to refuse to commit his daily sin is tantamount to suicide, and suicide is a crime, therefore the baronet need not die.

The records are marvellous renderings of the songs of the opera; the names of the singers will ensure that the gramophone version is as good as it possibly can be: Alice Moxon, Dorothy Gill, Muriel Dickson, Nellie Briercliffe, Derek Oldham, George Baker, Stuart Robertson, Sydney Granville and Darrell Fancourt.

NECHELLS.

Acid Drops.

The impudence of the clergy is unbounded. The latest exhibition takes the form of a circular issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury forbidding his clergy to marry a divorced person, or one who has not been baptized. Incidentally, this may have the good effect of sending more people to the Registry Office. But with that point we are not now concerned. Neither are we concerned with the fact that the civil marriage in England is the only legal form of marriage, whether performed in a Registry Office or elsewhere, for the parson is only able to perform a marriage because he receives a licence from the State enabling him to do so. In the eyes of the law it is the civil part of the performance that is essential, and which must not be omitted. The accompanying religious ceremony may take any form, from jumping over a broomstick to the pompous semi-indecency and silliness of the Established Church.

What we are concerned with is this. The Archbishop holds his office as a member of the Church established by law. Its doctrines and civil privileges are established by law. It cannot alter its teaching save with the consent of the law. The Archbishop is a State official. He and his clergy are licenced to perform marriages, and it is not merely an impertinence for them to decline to marry two persons when the State says they may marry, but it is a neglect to perform a duty for which they are being paid, and to perform which they are granted a licence.

Now we speak under correction, but it seems to us that there should be the same remedy here for citizens that exists elsewhere when an official declines to carry out his duties. If that is correct then application could be made to a Court asking for an order compelling the parson to do that which he is appointed to do. If the order were granted he would be guilty, in the case of refusal, of contempt of court. We should much like to see the matter tested. Or, again, the State could withdraw the licence to perform a marriage from all parsons who declined to administer the law. We say *could*, but in this priest-ridden country Governments move in such fear of Church and Chapel, and politicians are so accustomed to subserviency to them, that we are afraid it is too much to expect them to do so. Still, one day—

There is one other aspect to be considered. According

to Canon law the marriage of two persons not permitted by the Church is not a marriage at all. They are legally married according to Statute law, but the Church will have nothing to do with them. But the Church is an institution set up by law, and apart from this it is a mere ordinary association of men and women following their peculiar ideas. So that we have a body set up by the State sternly denying the legality of a law valid in the State, with its officials, who are licenced by the State, and a part of their incomes derived from the State, refusing to carry out their duties. Only in connexion with religion would such a state of affairs be tolerated. But in connexion with religion impertinence is unbounded on the one side, and on the other politicians and public men evince a cowardice and a lack of principle greater than in any other direction.

It is also worth noting that in this matter all the intolerance is on the side of the religious section. The Secular State makes for tolerance. For the State does not say that religious ceremonies may not accompany a marriage; it says you may have whatever ceremonies you please, provided certain forms accompany them. It is the Church that says we will have one form and that alone, before we will admit that a genuine marriage has been performed. And that is a summary of the history of intolerance from the most primitive ages. The impetus to intolerance comes from religion. The moralization of intolerance comes from religion. What should we have done without religion?

The *Christian World* notes that "since becoming Prime Minister in 1929, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has never missed morning worship while in Lossiemouth." That is quite the correct attitude. Having got a job that one likes there is nothing like so acting as to make its retention as certain as possible.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society wants an extra half-a-million shillings to balance its accounts, we are told. We suggest that people with half-a-million shillings they have no use for could put them to far better use than dumping them into the greedy maw of a missionary society. There are at least half-a-million wives of the unemployed who could make good use of a shilling by spending it on some necessity and thus help the trade of the country.

A clever experimenter claims to have discovered how to make cloth from glass. The achievement may be a notable one, but it has a long way to go before it can equal that of our priests and parsons, who claim to be able to construct Truth out of a collection of myths, folklore, superstitions and ancient speculations.

A Hornchurch reader of a daily paper complains about "maddening church bells." He calls them an anachronism and a curse. He ends on the following note, "And if a peal of bells is distressing, the constant clang of a single bell is maddening." Quite so; but he mustn't expect the clergy will do anything to mitigate this kind of public nuisance, except under compulsion. When engaged in the pastime of doing God's work, the Christian never denies himself the spiritual joy of being a great nuisance to other folk. One has to excuse him on the score that he knows no better.

Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson says that:—

If I were Dictator I would make it compulsory for the newspapers to insert the truth about all facts of political importance.

The ideal suggested here may be a laudable one, but if put into practice, it would prove, we think, very unpopular. For this is a nation which, by virtue of the religious training it receives, has been taught to weigh truth on a balance-scale weighted with prejudices and beliefs.

A reader of a daily paper thinks the clergy are too gloomy. "It is high time the clergy struck a brighter vein of thought." Well, we don't quite see where they are to find the brighter vein of thought. They can only ring the changes on the old theme that one will dodge a rough time in an alleged hereafter by professing a belief in Christ here. However the theme is manipulated, they cannot make it anything but gloomy. The reader complains that sermons are gloomy. He suggests that "The public like facts. Let our clergy give them facts, then we shall hear less of their parrot cry 'why are the churches empty?'" The trouble here is, of course, that the clergy have no facts to give. All they have is a useless collection of primitive speculations and fancies which were imagined by an ancient race of Palestine shepherds. Primarily, the clergy are dealers in if's and perhaps's, which have been neatly polished into a set of dogmas.

The Rt. Hon. George Lansbury declares that he has discussed and quarrelled with friends about political matters, but has never lost their friendship. On the other hand, he says, discussion about religion has generally ended by leaving him minus several friends. We can quite believe that. Curiously enough religion is claimed to be the one thing which is capable of bringing goodwill and concord, and love and brotherhood to the human race! The claim is one which centuries of experience have proved to be unfounded. That it is still believed in by millions of people to-day is no particular testimony to the intelligence of the believers. If millions of people thus refuse to profit by experience, one need not wonder that human progress is so very slow.

Of the Day of Intercession for the nation a religious journal says that it was observed by all the churches. But, it adds:—

Perhaps of even great import than the fact is the national welcome of the proposal. Congregations may not in general have greatly increased, but beyond the borders of the Churches there was a feeling of approval of the nation and gratification that the Churches were doing the right thing.

If there were but small increases in the congregations, we don't see how a "national welcome of the proposal" can be inferred. There were more millions of people who ignored the services than there were millions who attended it. And since those who did attend comprised but a comparatively small minority of the nation, how can it be truthfully asserted that there was a "national" welcome of the proposal? As for the remark about the "feeling of approval" attributed to those outside the churches, we suggest that the writer has a very active imagination. But of course that is one of the essential qualifications for those who write for religious papers.

On the authority of a weekly journal we learn that "one of the most famous financiers of the world" told the Bishop of London recently that:—

We financiers cannot save the world. We can only save it if you Christian people will help us. If you can replace suspicion and hatred by trust and love you can save the world.

What a hope! We cannot quite see why the Christian religion and churches should be suddenly regarded as capable of performing that kind of miracle. For we remember that although the Christian religion and churches controlled Europe for many centuries, yet suspicion, hatred, and war have existed all the time.

Throughout the same period, too, suspicion, hatred, and strife have been prominent features of the Christian churches themselves. It is really asking too much to expect us to believe that such expert sowers of suspicion, hatred and strife are capable of teaching the world how to trust and love. If such a miracle can be performed by the Churches now, we cannot help wondering why it wasn't accomplished centuries ago, when the Churches had all the power they wanted over the people of Europe.

Speaking about "The new world and the old gospel," the Rev. Dr. Townley Lord avers that the people of this age ought to go back to the old gospel. "There is still need," in this age, he believes, "for repentance, for forgiveness, and for salvation." He fails to realize that large numbers of people in this age disbelieve that man is a fallen animal or naturally sinful, or that there was ever any need for a divine sacrifice, or any necessity for "repentance" and "salvation." To them, all this parsonic stuff about repentance, forgiveness, and salvation has an archaic flavour and is meaningless to the truly modern mind. The modern man and woman merely laughs at the suggestion that they should allow themselves to be guided in their actions by superstitions and fancies begotten in ancient Palestine.

Dr. Lord also believes that Christians will get back "to a faith that is clear, simple, and direct." If such is the case, the faith they "get back" to will hardly be Christian. The Christian faith has never been clear, simple and direct; otherwise there would not be hundreds of sects each with a different interpretation of the Christian religion. The only thing simple in connexion with that religion were the people who professed to believe in it.

A member of the *Methodist Recorder* staff says:—

If a man in a prominent public position is a Christian, he is sure sooner or later to be up against more or less abusive criticism. That is why . . . Sir John Reith, of the B.B.C., is abused by careless creatures who hate any sort of wise restriction in the interests of purity. How thankful we are that some men are left who are big enough to consider the susceptibilities of "maiden aunts and children."

For our part, we should be very thankful if the Sir John Reith ceased to persuade the B.B.C. to cater exclusively for the mentality of "maiden aunts and children." He doesn't realize that two-thirds of radio-listeners are not Christians.

The most fatuous of all the clerical comments on the recent national day of prayer must surely be that of the Dean of York. He is reported as having said that "though it was no easy matter to frame into devotional language problems bewildering in their greatness, *God knew what they were already*. Therefore they must not make their prayer the occasion for furnishing the Almighty with a detailed statement of present-day economic and political complications." If God knows everything, why tell him anything?

Sir Norman Angell, whose *Great Illusion* predicted with uncanny precision the consequences of modern war before 1914 has now, in *The Unseen Assassins* (Hamilton) not only dotted the i's and crossed the t's of that book, but re-examined the case for international arbitration in the light of conditions that have arisen since 1918, and, in no small measure as a result of the "peace" then imposed. It is a tragedy that the cause which is here so ably expounded is not much more advanced towards general acceptance than it was in what are somewhat ironically called "pre-war" days. The Kellogg Pact, and

the League of Nations Covenant might be another "scrap of paper." The signatories to them have gone back on their signatures—or on the only implications of them they made them worth writing—and that rational and peaceful re-adjustment of international relations which Sir Norman Angell advocates seems almost as far off as ever. War, like God, is "an insufferable time a dying."

The Conference of Disarmament Committees have just issued a message signed by the Bishop of Chichester: "We believe that to hold war inevitable and disarmament impracticable is to deny our faith in Jesus Christ." This is most interesting, but how typical of true Christianity! We venture to assert that not a single member of these Committees, including the dear Bishop, ventured on such a message when the late war proved "inevitable." On the contrary, the ease with which Jesus Christ was made to drop the title "the Prince of Peace," and enrol in "shining armour" as the "great God of Battles" was beautiful in its simplicity. Oh, these dear clergy!

Even the *Church Times*, in an eulogistic article on the late C. P. Scott, that great minded journalist who raised the *Manchester Guardian* to the proud and independent position it now holds, is forced to admit he was "not an orthodox believer." At Oxford, we are told, Scott learned from Seeley "a religion of duty." Leaving out the word "religion," is not this just *Secularism*? When will Christians frankly admit that Christianity does not carry with it a guarantee of right mindedness, truth, justice, love or "duty"?

Real-believing, "listening-in" Roman Catholics had their religious feelings terribly shocked a week or so back. They expected a right up-to-date Roman Catholic Service from Lowe House with a real Roman Catholic Sermon from Fr. R. Riley, S.J. Alas, no matter how they switched, from Northern Regional to London Regional or *vice versa*, all they could get was Canterbury Cathedral and its Archbishop delivering his message for the New Year. The spectacle of sincere Catholic Christians forced to listen to a sincere Anglican Christian demands our sincerest commiseration. That the B.B.C. could do such a thing at all is appalling, and we suggest the whole B.B.C. staff should be sacked at once. But how Christians do love one another!

Fifty Years Ago.

THE *Freethinker* is causing a great commotion in religious circles, and it is frequently said that we should be prosecuted and suppressed. Nobody, however, seems inclined to begin. There is a huge pack of pious dogs barking at us, but not one has the courage to bite.

What is our offence? Blasphemy. And what is that? Treating religion with commonsense. Piety never recognized a greater crime. It is like the sin against the Holy Ghost, and can never be forgiven.

But, it is urged, we do not content ourselves with arguing against Christianity; we ridicule it. While Free-thought is learned, serious, and a trifle dull, Christians can tolerate it; but the moment it assumes an ironical air they are as alarmed as Macbeth was by Banquo's ghost, and cry "take any shape but that." We are not so foolish as to heed their advice. Our policy is to strike where the enemy shows that he is weak, for in all warfare that is the golden rule of success.

The "*Freethinker*," January 15, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—T. Griffiths, £1 is.

QUERIST.—*Christianity and Civilization* is a reprint of Chapter 21 of Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*.

J. MCKENZIE.—Your letter was quite correctly addressed, but it appears to have been delivered first of all to Farringdon Road, which prevented its publication last week. We are pleased to learn that the absence of the advertised speaker was so promptly and satisfactorily made good by speeches from Messrs. Harris, McCluskey and Dennis. May we suggest that local talent should be "exploited" in the future as much as possible.

R. B. YENDOLL.—There may be a great deal in what you say, but we are quite unable to organize from headquarters such a distribution of Freethought literature as you suggest. We can send you parcels, if you will see to their distribution. The same remark applies to other possible helpers.

A. TAYLOR.—There are many ways in which both the established Church and other Churches receive financial help from the State. But no very exact figures can be obtained. We have, however, in the press, and hope to publish shortly a book by a very competent writer dealing with the revenues of the Church. A work of the kind has long been needed.

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.

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Roscetti, giving as long notice as possible.

Sugar Plums.

On Sunday next (January 24) Mr. Cohen will deliver a special lecture in the Town Hall, Battersea. His subject will be "The Benefits of Unbelief." We should like all friends in that part of London to do what they can towards making the meeting known. The Town Hall is a large building and will take some filling. Slips announcing the meeting can be had and supplies of these may be had on application. Those interested might undertake a house to house distribution in the neighbourhood. The Town Hall is situated in Lavender Hill, Clapham Junction. Trams and buses stop outside the door.

In spite of the bad times we again venture to press on the attention of our friends the desirability of securing new subscribers for this journal. We are prepared to send parcels of specimen copies for free distribution to anyone who will let us have name and address with some idea of the quantity that can be handled. Those who do not care to help in this way, can send on the names and addresses of likely readers, accompanied by six half-penny stamps in each case, and the paper will be sent post free for six weeks. Many new readers are secured in this way.

The following is from a notice of Mr. Cohen's last volume *Selected Heresies*, from *Armchair Science* for January:—

Mr. Cohen has a facile pen and this collection of extracts from his various writings is of much interest. Whatever the subject he has something striking to say. One of the pieces headed "How to Stop War" is particularly worth reading. Mr. Cohen may be a heretic, but he is certainly a clever and interesting one.

There is again a spate of talk going on concerning the censorship of films. We need hardly say that we agree with those who point out the futility of censorship. It has never yet managed to make things better than they would have been without it, and have generally managed to make it worse. We may discuss the subject at length later, for the moment it is enough to point out

that the censorship in this country extends over a much larger area than that covered by the film and the stage. Above all the self-established censorship of the press manifests itself as much in the shape of doctoring news as in suppressing what it does not wish its readers to know. If one compares the news given in two sets of papers concerning Russia, India, or Manchuria, and the way it is given, what we mean will be seen clearly enough. With the film and the stage the censor says we want the people to think so-and-so about certain things. The newspapers say exactly the same, and they proceed to achieve their purpose by a process of deletion, exaggeration and distortion, which amounts to a form of lying as great as anything attempted by the Roman Catholic Church. The great stunt press—and there are few outside the ranks nowadays—does not aim at giving reliable news and thus enabling people to form an opinion for themselves; it aims at establishing strong prejudices which the unthinking will mistake for opinions. Historically, the censorship was established for the purpose of preventing people knowing things which the governing powers did not wish them to know. And in the main it has never ceased to live up to its origin.

Apropos of the remarks made in our "Acid Drops" column on the Archbishop and Church marriages. There is a very striking difference between the number of Church attendants and the number of marriages in Church. We are of opinion that one important factor here is the fact of marriage in a Church providing more of a "show" than is possible at present with marriage in a Registry Office. In a very large number of instances marriages in a Registry Office take place in a miserable little room, and with no attempt whatever to surround the ceremony with proper dignity. And in no case with which we are acquainted are the conditions what they ought to be.

Now the remedy for this is pretty clear. We have for many years been agitating for local authorities to make proper provision for the performance of marriages. The local Town Hall could be used in such a way as to make a civil marriage the impressive performance it ought to be. And here is a measure of reform that any member of a local Council, who is not in deadly terror of local Chapels and Churches might easily take a hand in promoting. If once this reform could be accomplished we might easily find that the numbers of marriages in Church would approximate to the number of attendances at Church.

The *Sunday Express* commenting editorially on the B.B.C. Sunday programmes says:—

The Sunday programmes are indigestible conglomerations of gloom and dullness. With this nearly everyone, except parsons will agree. But if the *Express* had followed our lead when first the B.B.C. began to spend Sunday in giving us religious preachments to the exclusion of everything else while this was going on, Sunday with the B.B.C. would not be the scandal it is. But when we protested the *Express* did not know whether it would be safe to oppose it or not. When it discovered that at least ninety per cent of licence holders would prefer less religion on Sunday, and a goodly proportion none at all, then it promptly began to lead—by following.

The Nelson Branch N.S.S. is rapidly being restored to health and activity. The Annual Report just to hand shows the Branch to be in quite a sound condition. The credit side seems largely due to the secretaryship of Mr. R. Hartley, who has many plans for the future and seeks the support of local saints, who may communicate with him at 241 Chapel House Road, Nelson, Lancs.

We are asked to announce that the Metropolitan Secular Society is holding a series of Sunday evening meetings at the City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, N., at 7.30. The meeting place is close to King's Cross. The discussions are upon all sorts of social and Freethinking topics, particulars of which will be found in the Lecture Notice Column. Freethought literature is on sale.

The Evolution of the Horse.

EVEN in the days of Darwin the remains of extinct animals recovered from the rocks afforded conclusive evidence of the truth of evolution. As this evidence increased with the advance of knowledge, the most prejudiced opponents of evolution were shaken. In his earlier years T. H. Huxley was unconvinced by the then fragmentary testimony of fossilized remains, but with the progress of palæontology he became completely converted. So much so, that in 1881, while Darwin was yet living, Huxley was constrained to declare that: "If the theory of evolution had not already been put forward, palæontologists would have had to invent it."

The ancestral histories of the horse, elephant and camel are now so fully known that the course of these mammals' development can be traced with remarkable accuracy. All these creatures are familiar to us, the horse above all, and a review of the latter's evolutionary history should prove of interest to the intelligent public.

While mammals as a class possess several toes, the horse and his near kindred are unique in having retained one toe only, of which the hoof is the nail or claw. The elephant also is singular in possessing that remarkable organ, its trunk, an organ that has become most delicately adapted to serve so many ends. Now many deposits of sand and clay long since solidified into rocks have preserved the remains of the ancestors of these animals and the deeper men delve into the deposits, and the further they penetrate into the past, the more primitive the fossils discovered.

The rich remains of fossil horses reposing in North American Tertiary and Quaternary rocks are truly amazing. Upwards of 200 distinct varieties of American horses are already known to science. Thirty other species or varieties have been discovered in European deposits, while those of South America, Africa and Asia have revealed nearly as many more. Prof. Loomis, the eminent geologist, assures us that "Some beds have yielded thousands of teeth and jaws, some have yielded other parts of the bony frame, and most of the types of horses are represented by complete skeletons."

It is estimated that approximately sixty million years have elapsed since the earliest ascertained ancestor of the modern horses lived and died. The contemporary horse genus is represented by various species. These include the common domestic horse, the half-asses (the onager and kiang), the untamed horses of Mongolia, the zebras and the true asses. The entire genus embraces several species of living mammals, while the more recent fossilized forms are all closely related to the existing horse group.

Northern America was an ancient habitat of the horse, as the remains recovered from deposits dating back to the Eocene or Dawn Time of the Tertiary Epoch abundantly demonstrate. In that remote period North America was connected with the Asiatic Continent by a land bridge, across which animal organisms migrated from one area to another, while during the same period, the wild horse roamed over France and England, our island home then forming part of the European Continent.

The Eohippus—the Dawn Horse—of Eocene Times was a little animal some twelve inches in height. This diminutive creature carried four toes on its forefeet and three on its hind feet, while each foot retained vestiges of an additional digit. The structure of its teeth was simple. Three varieties of Eocene horses have been discovered. They are known as the Eohippus, Orohippus and Epihippus, and all three appear to have lived during the same period, both in

Britain and America. Pastures, woods and undergrowth provided them with food and shelter.

With the close of the Eocene Epoch the European horses seem to have vanished for no remains have been found in the deposits of that period. But in America they continued to flourish, and there they increased both in multitude and magnitude throughout the succeeding Oligocene Epoch.

These ancient horses were not only larger than their ancestors, but the number of their toes had been reduced to that of three. The three-toed horse is termed Mesohippus, and it appears to have been restricted to the New World. Scientists consequently surmise that the earlier land connexion between America and Asia had been submerged by the sea. While still in Oligocene Times another horse, the Miohippus was evolved, an animal with smaller toes and larger and more efficient teeth than those of the preceding Mesohippus.

The Oligocene Epoch passed away and the Miocene Era was ushered in. Western North America became the home of many new species and varieties of horses. These quadrupeds were likewise three-toed while their teeth were low crowned. One of these creatures, the "forest horse," migrated to Asia and Europe, but died out in its American birth-place, and soon afterwards expired in Europe. Still, as a group the horse genus continued to prosper in America, and displayed many striking transformations. The environment appears to have proved the leading factor in these modifications. In the words of Prof. Loomis: "The teeth became larger and harder to adapt them (the horses) better to grazing; the feet, which in the earlier horses were first five-toed, then four-toed, and then three-toed, advanced towards a single-toed form, the side toes becoming useless. These changes indicate a growing adaptation to life on grassy plains. The grass on these plains is harsher than that in or near forests, containing more silica, and horses that feed on it must have hard teeth. A hard smooth hoof is also peculiar to plains horses, as well as long legs, for the horse must be able to escape from enemies, such as wolves and other carnivorous animals."

Different conditions of life at this time led to the division of the horses into three distinct groups. These groups were represented by the Pliohippus, Protohippus and Hipparion, each type of horse seemingly indicating a special adaptation to the mode of existence imposed by the desert plain, the grasslands, and brush regions respectively.

In the morning time of the succeeding Pliocene Period these three types of horses were numerous in America and so soon as the land bridge between the Old World and the New was restored some of these animals wandered from their native clime to Asia and thence to Europe. Here further differentiation took place as also in Southern America now re-connected with the Northern Continent.

All the horses of the Pliocene Period were three-toed, but the side-toes of many species had so dwindled that they failed to touch the ground. Curiously, the Pliohippus, which never appears to have left its original birth-place in America had the smallest side-toes of all. Hipparion, however, became common both in America and Europe, and was distinguished by his large side-toes and markedly patterned teeth.

During later Pleistocene Times the horse genus abounded both in the Eastern and Western Worlds. The Pleistocene embraces the Glacial Periods, and the horses then living were so similar to those of our time that science includes them in the same genus—Equus. The remains of Pleistocene horses are common in all parts of the United States. These animals reveal a wide range of variation, for the most diminutive are smaller than our tiniest modern ponies,

while one extinct form (*Equus giganteus*) was probably the largest horse that has ever existed.

The Pleistocene Period was the golden age of the horse. Then it attained its maximum in number, stature, and variety. Throughout the Great Ice Age, this highly intelligent and tractable quadruped, destined to become man's chief beast of burden, persisted in the warmer regions of Western America and spread as far as Argentina in the Southern Continent.

As we have seen, the most pronounced changes registered in the course of the horse's prolonged and progressive development reside in its increased stature, more efficient teeth, and hoof adaptation. Along these lines was evolved from a tiny five-toed ancestor the modern horse renowned for its strength, power of endurance, gracefulness, and swiftness in flight on the race-course and elsewhere.

Strange to say, although wild horses survive in the Old World they had long been utterly extinct in the New when Columbus rediscovered it. No tradition of their earlier abundance remained. And this as a sequel to a progressive advance embracing more than fifty million years! Perhaps the horse was destroyed by primitive hunters in the Age of Stone, or its extinction in its cradle-land may have resulted from a fatal epidemic which swept over the Western World. It is true that wild horses have been met with in America, but they are merely the feral descendants of escaped animals introduced during the period of the Spanish invasion. Again, all the domestic horses of modern America are the known offspring of animals of European origin.

Hunters and racehorses seem assured of a long lease of life. But the motor-car has enormously diminished the demand for draught horses. Still, thousands of these sagacious creatures remain in use even in mighty roaring London. Machinery tends more and more to displace manual labour in husbandry, yet the day is perhaps far distant when the patient and obedient horse will entirely disappear from the rural landscape making the countryside poorer for his loss.

T. F. PALMER.

The Vatican Gang in Mexico.

Concluded from page 28.)

OBVIOUSLY any sovereign State is justified in considering the Papacy as an enemy aiming at destroying the sovereignty of the State and reducing it to vassalage and destruction. This is in fact the conspiracy of the Roman Catholic Church in every land. All Roman Catholics being believers in, and subjects of, the Canon Law are members of the conspiracy, aiders and abettors of it.

The Mexican Government is distinguishing itself by showing that it realizes the villainous nature of the Roman Catholic priesthood and by subjecting it to strong handling. The regulations it is making and enforcing are perfectly reasonable, and such as no patriotic citizens could object to. But the priests not being patriotic choose to resent the regulations even to the extent of open rebellion. When the State then deals firmly with them they shriek about "persecution"—which comes very badly from the vilest persecuting organization known to history. The Roman Catholic Church has persecuted not simply from bad temper but by deliberate policy; and has never expressed contrition. As it claims to be infallible it could only excuse its past misdeeds (which include 20,000,000 murders) by admitting itself to be very fallible. That hypocrite, the present Pope, talks about shedding tears over

Mexican "atrocities." What he wants to do is to express contrition for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the atrocities of the Inquisition, the burnings of the English martyrs, the horrors of the conquest of Peru, etc. Having done this he wants to erase the dogma of non-toleration and to make a dogma of the Golden Rule (specially for priests.) Until the Roman Catholic Church does these things it must not squeal when it gets treated to some of its own sauce, for it deserves it all. If the Roman Catholic Church gets its deserts it would be wiped out. *Ecrasez l'infame!*

What the Mexican Government has done is really very mild except to actual rebels. First of all it has asserted that church property is State property. The State (any State) could not admit that a Church has any reason for its existence except as a purely religious organization meant for the good of the country. The State could not admit the right of a church to be an organization at the beck and call of a foreigner and a taxgatherer for that foreigner. The Mexican Government allows that there is a demand for a certain amount of religious service, and it allows the demand to be catered for. But it is not going to allow priests to be numerous beyond reasonable limits. President Calles has stated that they have found towns of 1,500 inhabitants with 300 priests. This is at least ten times too many. In other words such a town has 270 parasites battenning on it.

It is significant that the Church has raised most opposition to the mere registration of priests. Obviously where there was a question as to the excess or otherwise of priests, the first thing to do was to get exact figures. There is no persecution about taking a census. But the priests resisted tooth and nail. They *knew* that they were in unconscionable numbers. Rather than register they rebelled. It is their aim to subvert all Governments but the Papacy, and if this is not being an enemy I don't know what is. Their only legitimate sphere is religion, but as President Calles says they invade the spheres of politics and Government, provoke dissension, incite secretly or openly to rebellion. The Bishops say they are prohibited from preaching. They certainly are prohibited from preaching politics, but not from preaching religion, and they are not prohibited from performing the sacraments either in churches or homes. They have all legitimate scope in the sphere of religion—but that does not satisfy them.

Again, in President Calles words; "they wish to take advantage of the pulpit not only to preach religion but to incite the ignoring of the laws, to spread propoganda against the Government, and in general for purposes that are not of a religious but a political nature."

Mexican law prohibits foreigners from being ministers of any religion. The alien priest question had become rather serious and the law is a legitimate exercise of the State's powers.

Monastic orders are also prohibited; they were prohibited in the Mexican Constitution of 1857. They have been prohibited in many countries. It is paradoxical truth that Roman Catholic countries are precisely those which are nowadays the most drastic in regard to monks. Yet there is reason for it. Roman Catholic countries are those where they are the biggest nuisance. Monks are parasites pure and simple. They are organized cadgers. In any case, as the President says, monks are not an essential or indispensable condition for the exercise of religious worship. This is letting monks down gently.

We repeat that the laws and regulations of the Mexican Government are mild and certainly do not amount to persecution. If the priests had been decent

citizens there would have been no trouble. But of course they must beat the drum ecclesiastic and squeal about persecution and generally adopt undemocratic methods. To show their spirit even against Protestants who have nothing to do with the Government, some American tourists who were proposing to look at the fine church in Guadalupe (and remember the building is State property) were threatened by the priests that their lives would be forfeited if they persisted. The priests were sternly warned by the Government that if they and their followers attacked the tourists the mounted police would fire on them. The Mexican Bishops have issued a pastoral letter in which they say they cannot tolerate oppression against the principles of the Constitution of the Church. President Calles has scornfully asked them if they can be surprised if he and his friends are not disposed to tolerate oppressions against the principles of the Constitution of the Republic, the more so since oppressions and attacks and disobedience of the Constitution of the country are amongst the Catholics constant and indisputable, whereas the Government only imposes penalties and repressions when dealing with actual disobedience to the laws.

The question for Mexico resolves itself into this: Is Mexico going to be its own boss or are the priests (directed from Rome) going to run (and ruin) the country? There is only one possible answer for patriotic Mexicans. There is only one possible answer for any country to make to the priests' conspiracy. Voltaire put it concisely: *Ecrasez l'infame*. Not even the Mexican Government has gone to this length. But it has shown that it is going to be master in his own house.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

Criticism and the Bible.

THE TEXT.—II.

(Continued from page 27.)

ACCORDING to the Biblical criticism of recent times there are three original authorships upon which the Books of Moses are based, and which were worked up into the Mosaic-literature after the return from the Babylonian exile.

(1) *The Priestly Code*. According to all appearances this work was composed by one or more priests, and seems to have been written with the main object of recording and of explaining the origin of the contemporary religious rites, institutions and laws.

(2) *The Elohist Composition*. In addition to the above-mentioned work, the compilers of the Books of Moses have utilized a book of legendary history which was composed by a member of the tribe of Ephraim, and describes in particular the local legends which, at the time, were in circulation in the dwelling-places of the Ephraimites. Among those legends are many of an old Canaanitish origin. This work is usually designated as Elohist. The post-exilic editors of the Torah, however, did not find this Ephraimitic script in the original. A long time before the exile, apparently about the end of the seventh century B.C., it had already been worked up in conjunction with another collection of legends into one whole.

(3) *The Yahwist Composition*. This third original work is a book of religious history written by a man of Judah and a worshipper of Yahwe. He was apparently a priest. He narrates most of the legends of old Judah, and also some Canaanitish ancestor-legends in a more modern Judaic setting. He sets out to prove that the Yahwe-cult of Judah has been for all time, *i.e.*, from the day of the creation, the national religion of the people of Israel. The later

sex and ancestor-worship, according to him, was only a defection from Yahwe. Since he seems to have helped himself very liberally from an earlier and already-mentioned document, namely, the Book of the Wars of Yahwe, and since he appears in the rôle of an ardent votary of Yahwe, who traces back all the events in the history of Judah to the work of Yahwe, he has been styled by almost all the Bible-critics as a Yahwist.

When did those oldest original writings originate? What were the religious outlooks from which their authors set out to write? What were their intentions? How far have their original works been revised? Over these questions a bitter struggle has been waged between the theological critics of the Bible. If the answers to these questions had simply a purely scientific interest it would be unintelligible why such a struggle should rage. But the answers to such questions have a very important bearing on the settlement of a still more fundamental question, namely, *What was the religion of the old Hebrews?* Yahwist and therefore monotheist? Then all is well with "the Church's one foundation," a foundation which would thus have the appearance of being strengthened by scientific criticism. The more advanced among the critics can turn to their less free-minded and more backward brethren in the church and claim to have rendered, by their "science," a service to the Christian religion analogous to that rendered by the philosopher Kant to the theologians at a time when theology had begun to be very embarrassed by the achievements of science. "I had to abolish reason in order to make room for belief."¹ In more recent times, the results of ethnological science, of the investigation of religious beliefs and practices of peoples like the Australian Aborigines, Polynesians, Micronesians, North and South American Indians, etc., have thrown the Orthodox Christian theology into further perplexing embarrassments.

In the medley of Israelitish ideas of religion as presented in the Old Testament, striking likenesses began to exhibit themselves between the pre-Christian religious outlook and practices and those of other peoples on the same levels of evolution. Ethnology threatened the province of theology with extinction. The old naive belief that the Christian religion was exempted from the laws of historical development, that the Christian religion was *the* religion, and all others the mere make-shifts of human ignorance, idolatrous cults, apostasies from the one true revealed religion, no longer offered an effective resistance to the forces which were driving Christianity into its rightful place as a particular religion in the general evolution of religion, *i.e.*, into its historical place. Within the circle of the Christian theology the need asserted itself to a number of Protestant theologians, despite Kant, to give a rational refinement to the Christian religion, to bring reason to the defence of belief, without however being conscious of the fact that it was a historical reason which impelled them to adopt this new attitude.

Thus they took up the task, "not to destroy but to fulfil," not to reduce theology to ethnology but to exempt theology from the implications of ethnological investigations. They undertook this work, the work of analysing *only* the religious ideas of the Israelites, of dissecting the medley of Old Testament literature, not merely with the object of laying bare the individual parts of the religious, ideological structure, but with the object of supplying something positive for theology and thus satisfying the religious need which prompted them to their "criticism." They have thrown overboard much of the old ballast from

¹ Preface to the Second Edition of *Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant.

the "revealed and infallible Word of God." In doing so they incurred the condemnation and displeasure of their more "dyed-in-the-wool" theological brethren. Nevertheless, they looked upon what they discarded as *superfluous* ballast which had to go in the interests of the ship's salvation and of the safety of the crew. What they have thrown overboard is precisely that material—although there is still some left—which ethnology has exhibited in the religious practices and outlooks of other peoples who have been found living in historical times on similar stages of evolution. In other words, the "criticism" of the "Higher Critics" has consisted in seeking to restore the originally "pure" ideas of the Hebrews about God. What appears to these critics as extraneous and non-essential for their purpose, is set aside. Out of what remains, they develop the "pure" fundamental conceptions. No attempt is made to compare the beliefs and rites of the Israelites with those of other peoples living under approximately the same historical conditions, and through such comparisons to gain a correct estimation of these things. Most of the theological critics have had little appreciation for the comparative method. They cherish too lovingly the old fiction that the Christian religion is *sui generis*. Their profession clouds their judgment.

The "reconstructions" of the "Higher Critics," while they assume different forms, begin in theology and end in theology. Each of them starts out from a certain theological stock of naive assumptions, from so-called *a priori* truths of the last instance; there is, for example, the assumption that there is contained in the Old Testament a revelation of God to the world through the medium of history; another reconstruction proceeds from the hypothesis that the Israelites, since God revealed himself to them most of all, were from the very beginning monotheists, and that accordingly the worship of Yahwe represents the oldest form of religion among the people of Israel. Still another critic starts out from the "fundamental truth" that because God first of all manifests himself in his works, the worship of Yahwe first arose out of the worship of nature,² so-called Natural religion, and that therefore the oldest Hebrew conceptions of God must be deduced out of natural phenomena.³

In accordance with what the individual reconstructor excludes as extraneous, with what he looks upon as an original and basic conception, with how he interprets this and after trimming and dressing it finally inserts into the masonry of his scheme, the most peculiar and odd-looking reconstructions are brought to light. Especially is this the case when the Old Testament writings are conceived to be, for the most part, original works, and when the accounts contained in them are accepted off-hand as historical facts, either on the ground that they appear to be psychologically possible or that these stories have been recounted in similar fashion by more than one author. For such novel reconstructors, apparently the difference between a myth and a historical fact depends upon whether one author or three or four authors have told it!

What are now the representative opinions concerning the respective importance and order of the three original literary sources which we have already classified?

The well-known theologian, August Dillman, considered the Priestly Code to be the oldest original document which according to all probability was com-

posed about the end of the ninth century or the beginning of the eighth century B.C. Nevertheless only certain fragments of the modern text have come down to us from that time. More than in the case of the other original writings, this one, before it was incorporated in the later Torah, has undergone different revisions and additions. It can even be demonstrated that a very considerable part of this work only originated during the Babylonian exile, since it contains the codifications of the Judaic legal practice and religious ceremonial which were elaborated in exile. The second oldest writing Dillman regarded as the Ephraimite book of legends, which is probably fifty years younger than the oldest part of the Priestly Code. The Yahwist work he assigns to the time of the first prophets, about the beginning of the seventh century B.C.

But most of the leading "Higher Critics," e.g., Wellhausen, Graf, Budde, Stade, have more or less sharply opposed Dillman's opinion. Generally speaking, they take the view that the Yahwist narrative (which according to some of them belongs to the eighth, and according to others to the seventh century B.C.), is the oldest original source. They consider that the Elohist book of legends is of much more recent date, and that it is partly borrowed from the Yahwist narrative, while in their opinion the Priestly Code can only have originated in the Babylonian exile. It is further maintained that the Yahwistic must have been the older work on the grounds that in comparison with the other two compositions many archaic expressions are to be found in it, that the style of presentation of the Yahwist is more homely and popular, and that its conception of God is decidedly more simple, naive and original. Therefore, if one finds parallel passages in the Elohist collection of legends and in the Yahwist work, it must not be assumed that the Yahwist has helped himself out of the Elohist collection, but, conversely, that the Elohist has borrowed much from the Yahwist.

That much of this reasoning is correct, is undeniable. *But it does not prove what it is intended to prove.* Undoubtedly, there are many old lingual expressions in the descriptions of the Yahwist, even if, on the whole, scarcely any more than in those of the Elohist. There is, however, quite a simple explanation for this fact. As already mentioned, the Yahwist made use of several old religious sayings in the compilation of his narrative, and incorporated many of those old expressions in his text. On the other hand, the Priestly Code had been many times revised, purified and enlarged, in the course of which treatment obsolete expressions were replaced by new expressions.

W. CRAIK.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DAVID HUME.

SIR,—Reading Mr. Stevenson's article, the following curious incident may be worth noting.

On a building in Edinburgh a tablet says that "David Hume lived in this house from 1772 to 1776." The street in which it is situated is now called "St. David Street," and the story goes that it was so called to alleviate (counteract was too much to expect) any banal effect his residing there might have on that thoroughfare.

J. MACKINNON.

RE PROPAGANDA.

SIR,—It seems to me the mole work in propaganda is far too much neglected, and your pious wishes will surely bear not much fruit if you do not propose some

² See 1 Kings xix. 11-12. —Jahwe is no longer manifested in the wind, the fire, the earthquake but in the "still small voice." The human attributes of God have gained the supremacy over the natural attributes in the veneration of his worshippers for him.

³ There are also some rationalist critics who regard natural religion as the first form of religion.

more concrete action. When I was a young man I lived in Germany, at the period of the Anti-Socialist Law. Every Sunday morning we young people went forth for an intensive house to house propaganda; selling and distributing (verboten) Socialist literature. Caught in the action, it meant six months free lodging in one of Bismarck's Staate Hotel, and if caught in one of the cities like Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig and Frankfurt it meant banishment for life from the towns. That was an exciting time, and we were full of enthusiasm for a great ideal, we were not conscious then that the ballot-box was as great a superstition as a church. The young men and maidens of the N.S.S. Branches should take the matter in hand, it is the mole work of an organization which counts; selling the *Freethinker* from house to house, and distributing back numbers with an invitation (over print) to subscribe and join.

C.H.

FROM DARKEST QUEBEC.

SIR,—Do any of your readers ever wonder at the violently anti-clerical measures taken in Mexico, Spain, etc? If so, I invite them to cast a glance at Catholic Quebec. Last week I asked my newsagent why he did not stock the *New Leader*. I explained carefully to him that it was not a Communist publication. His reply was illuminating. "If I did, my store would be raided by the police, and I might be fined \$500." A few months ago a neighbouring bookstall was thus raided, and every book by Joseph McCabe was seized and confiscated. That eminent and learned ex-priest could lecture in Quebec only at the risk of his life. Last Sunday a meeting of trade-union delegates to agitate for the repeal of a certain Section of the Canadian Criminal Code was raided and forcibly dispersed. Those present were told that "no meetings could be held on Sundays while Mass was being celebrated." I asked a lawyer what law authorized this outrageous interference. He said he had never heard of one, but he added, "the authorities do whatever they like here."

In Montreal it is a crime to give away a leaflet or handbill on, in, or near a street. It is a crime to distribute a handbill from door to door without a police licence. It is a crime to hold any open air meeting anywhere in the city without a police permit; and this is always refused to a Labour meeting. An annual parade of the Catholic Trade Unions is however permitted. It is a crime, punishable with years of imprisonment, to utter words with the intention to "raise discontent." No hall may be let for a public meeting unless it is licensed by the Chief of Police.

The Customs ruthlessly exclude books by numerous world-known writers, because they do not square with the tenets of the Roman Branch of Christianity. Either directly or indirectly, every possible hindrance is put in the way of the spread of fresh knowledge. It is a matter of wonder that the Romish Church is widely regarded as the implacable foe of human freedom and progress. Is it wholly irrational to hold that in Mexico, etc., they are getting simply what they have, for a number of years, been asking for?

J.F.W.

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WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; at 3.30 and 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Hyatt, Tuson and Wood. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Lord Snell—"Is the British Empire Breaking Up?"

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, January 18, at 8.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren will open a discussion on "Freethought and Sociology."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mr. Sanders—"Can we Solve the World's Economic Problems?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Mrs. Israel Zangwill—"World Disarmament."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, Hall No. 5, near Clapham North Station, Underground): 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead—"Overpopulation; as a Chief Cause of Poverty and Unemployment."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, January 19, at 7.0, Michael Farbrman—"The Agrarian Aspects of the Russian Revolution."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mrs. E. Grout—"The Right to Kill." Mr. P. J. Taylor in the chair.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

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CARDIFF BRANCH N.S.S.—A Meeting will be held at the Carlton Hotel, Queen Street, on Wednesday, January 20, at 7.0 p.m. Address by J. Davidson, "Organizing Atheists." All members and friends as well as general public are invited.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, J. T. Eastwood, of Nelson—"Astronomy." Questions and discussion, all welcome.

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