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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Our Point of View.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	65
<i>The Plight of Education.—Mimmermus</i> - - - - -	67
<i>The Decline in Religion.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	68
<i>Goethe the Freethinker.—A. D. McLaren</i> - - - - -	69
<i>Memorials of Man's Lowly Origin.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - - -	74
<i>Masterpieces of Freethought.—H. Cutner</i> - - - - -	75
<i>In Praise of George Moore.—Alan Handsacre</i> - - - - -	76
<i>Freethought in South Africa.—A South African</i> - - - - -	77

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

Views and Opinions.

Our Point of View.

I RECEIVED recently from a South Country Vicar a lengthy letter following a reading of my *God and the Universe*. The letter is written by one who is evidently in earnest, and who says he writes more in the hope of getting better acquainted with my point of view, than with any desire to engage in controversy. He says:—

I, of course, started off as a "sucking curate," that is one who lapped up the arguments fed to us at a theological college. I don't think, however, that I am a sucking vicar. I am a modernist parson, often tempted to throw up my Church of England orders, but prevailed upon not to do so because I honestly and sincerely believe that, without conceit, I hope, I am helping in my little niche to promote truth as it comes to humanity, and securing its acceptance by the Church of England both against the so-called orthodox and against the Julian Huxleys, and sometimes, of course, against, I won't say Determinists, for there are Determinists who are believers in Christianity, but against such as yourself. Yet may I say that I appreciate the work which "Freethought" has done for so many years to kill superstition.

This last opinion is expressed more than once by the Vicar, and it suggests one comment. My critic's appreciation of the part played by Freethought in relation to religion is based upon the belief that it has helped to kill "superstition" and to promote a reception of the better understanding of what was the real message of Christ. I do not want to challenge or criticize this, for the moment. It is the kind of comment often made by men who are dissatisfied—to use a mild word—with the forms of religion that have existed or do exist, and who are too honest not to admit that for at least a great deal of the improvement that has taken place with religious teachings, it

is the Freethinkers who must be thanked. And that gives rise to this question, which, for the moment, at least, I will state without doing more than suggest an answer. Freethought must be determined—in form—by contemporary culture. The Freethought of to-day, with its immense critical armoury of scientific information could not have existed, say, two hundred years ago. The principle remains the same, the form in which that principle finds expression is always changing. But in each age it has been the critical rejection of some religious teachings that has made for advancement. Left alone there is no reason whatever for assuming that the Christianity of, say, the tenth century would not be the Christianity of the twentieth. Religion by itself has no progressive and no purificatory power. History shows that it is the Freethinker who was always right, the religious believer who was always wrong. The desire for advance, for purification, the indication of development came from the Freethought side, whether that Freethought took the form of rejection of demonism, witchcraft, miracles, biblical inspiration, special creation, punishments for heresy or compulsory uniformity of religious belief. But if time has so generally vindicated the position of the Freethinker against the opposition of the religious, why may we not conclude that the future will here repeat the past; and that the future will see the acceptance of the Freethought teachings of to-day, as the present witnesses the acceptance of the Freethought teachings of yesterday? If history tells us anything at all, it tells us that.

* * *

The Ideal Christ.

I do not reprint the Vicar's letter in full, first, because it is a lengthy one, secondly, because I only wish to get at his meaning and deal with that, thirdly because I do not wish to conduct a controversy so much as to make plain, in answer to his enquiry, what my position is. And here he will pardon my saying that he suffers from the usual infirmity of parsons when dealing with Freethought, that of not properly understanding what the position of a modern scientific Freethinker really is. In that we Freethinkers have the advantage. We know the position of the Christian from A to Z. He knows us mostly from hearsay, or from a mere casual reading. To know the strength of the opposition gives one a great advantage in the fight.

And first, I think it is the fundamental position of my critic that while expressing agreement with many of the criticisms passed on Christianity, he finds no reflection on Christianity itself, for the teachings of Christ have never been rightly or fully interpreted or developed. His claim is that "Christ's principles fully and completely allowed for development far beyond such knowledge as man has yet

discovered." Now all I can make of this is that if we take the teachings of Jesus as given in the New Testament, and "rightly interpret" them, there is not only nothing there in opposition to modern knowledge, but they provide room for all the development we can reasonably hold man to be capable of. Of course, everything is determined by what is meant by "correctly interpreted," and as I cannot be expected to accept Jesus Christ as God-incarnate, the statement seems, to use an Americanism, a rare mouthful.

Now I form an estimate of Jesus, or of the teachings attributed to Jesus, exactly as I should form an estimate of the teachings attributed to any other person. I take what his words imply, and I read them in relation to the time in which he lived and his evident relation to the ideas of his day. When, for example, I read Shakespeare saying through one of his characters that he can place a girdle round the earth, I do not assume that he knew about electric waves, or that he was acquainted with wireless sets. I know that as knowledge was in his day he simply could not know anything about either. It is not what a man's statements can be made to mean, not whether we can read into them *our* meaning, but what he did mean, and what he could mean in the light of his knowledge and of the knowledge of those around him, that is important and decisive.

* * *

The Real Jesus.

Looked at from that point of view we find the Jesus of the New Testament not in advance of the knowledge around him, but far, far behind the best knowledge of his time. There were sane views of disease held by some, but Jesus never advanced beyond pure demonism. A teaching of the rotundity of the globe was to be found but Jesus held to a flat earth. The conception of natural law was to be had, but Jesus had an unswerving faith in the universality of miracles. There was not a single point in which he showed himself even abreast of the best knowledge of his time. There was not a superstition around him which he rejected in kind. How, then, can we reasonably say that Christ's principles allowed for development? There was only one thing to do with them, and that was to reject them.

But if there are definite grounds for saying that in actual knowledge Jesus was on a level with the most superstitious around him, have we any better grounds for saying that he was a teacher of morals or of sociology of such transcendent excellence as to serve as a pattern and an inspiration for all time? Here, again, we have fairly sound reasons for a conclusion. It was nothing unusual in his day to find wandering religious teachers proclaiming a message from God. There was nothing new in men teaching lessons of brotherhood—which sound well so long as we are careful not to enquire what they meant by brotherhood. And there was nothing in the least unfamiliar to his contemporaries in the moral maxims placed in the mouth of Jesus. Nor is there any evidence that his moral teaching attracted attention either on the part of his disciples or of others. Their interest in him was that he proclaimed himself the son of God or a messenger from God. Moreover, to assume that this character had a striking, an unexampled moral influence on his followers, either during his life or afterwards, is a statement for which there is not a tittle of evidence, and is, *a priori*, unreasonable.

I agree with my critic that a deal depends upon the method of approach we employ. And I am trying to explain my own. I approach the study of

Jesus exactly as I should approach the study of any other character in either history or fiction. Personally, I do not believe the New Testament Jesus ever existed, and it is quite plain to me that it was not the moralizing or socializing Jesus that led people to follow him, even in name, but Christ the incarnate God, the miracle-worker, the resurrected Saviour who would profit men in another life. But for the purpose of argument I am willing to take his existence for granted, and then to enquire whether a man who on every purely intellectual subject was so obviously below the level of the best thought available, was capable of laying down principles that carried within themselves all, and more, than advancing knowledge has suggested to us to-day. I find that hypothesis ridiculously incredible once we approach the study of Jesus free from the determination to find at all costs a perfect character.

* * *

How Not to Do it.

Of course, I quite admit that it is possible to read almost anything into the teachings of Jesus if one will do so, and if one reads without regard to the times, the character, or the plain meaning of what is said. You can make "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel" a message of universal teaching, if you take "Israel" to mean the whole world; the casting out of devils a physician's method of soothing a troubled mind by working along the lines of its prepossessions, his miracles (so long as one does not examine them in detail) as exhibitions of a forecast of a scientific control of nature; "Love one another" a command of universal benevolence, so long as one does not read it as the command to a religious brotherhood applied to its members; "the labourer is worthy of his hire," a sound economic rule, so long as one does not consider that it is precisely what is the worth of a labourer's hire, and how we are to determine it that is the very crux of the problem the world has to solve. All this can be done, and Jesus Christ emerges as the world's greatest teacher—only the same thing could be done in the case of almost anyone that was selected, from Plato to Lenin, or anything from the New Testament to the *Daily Express*.

It is when one comes down to ordinary rules of interpretation that we realize that in the estimates of Jesus that are given us to-day by his so-called followers we are following a pure myth, and that whether the Jesus of the New Testament was a myth or not, it is certain that the Jesus of the "advanced" Christian is that and nothing more. It is easy to say that "Christ's principles allowed for development, far beyond such knowledge as man has yet discovered." This has become the cant of the professional politician and the pence-hunting journalist. But is it true? When demonism was displaced by neural disorder, was there anything in the teachings of Jesus to allow for that? When special creation gave place to evolution, or trust in God to reliance upon human effort, or miracle to law, or credulity to critical investigation how can any of these things be said to be even allowed for in the teachings of Jesus? My friendly Vicar laments that the teachings of Jesus have been persistently misunderstood, have never been interpreted aright (fully interpreted) and have even been misinterpreted and distorted. Well, it is a fact that Christians have always accused one another of distorting and misinterpreting Jesus. From my point of view this is inevitable when one starts from the position that the truth must be found within a certain teaching, and this assumption leads to an interpretation in terms of contemporary knowledge. In this respect our Vicar

is in line with Christian practice and tradition. The conclusion that Jesus Christ gave man the best and wisest of teaching is not something that is derived from facts, but follows from an inherited and unquestioned assumption. To read into the teachings of Jesus twentieth century knowledge and aspiration is only another variant of a practice indulged in by other generations. To-day Jesus the man is being praised because Christ the God is too flagrantly out of touch with the times. And it is Christ the God that is being perpetuated under the camouflage of the ethical and socially reforming Jesus. Otherwise there would not be the great anxiety shown to preach his supremacy. He is a figurehead essential to the persistence of an established religion. That is the real key to the situation.

Next week I will deal with the other questions put to me.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Plight of Education.

"Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own soul."—Emerson.

"Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life."

Meredith.

"Conscience is born of love."—Shakespeare.

NATIONAL education in this country is largely a failure. For three generations attendance at elementary schools has been enforced by Parliament, and money has been spent freely in the attempt to infuse some culture into the population. Nevertheless, the results so far have been lamentable. During the last war military and naval censors were astonished to find how large a proportion of soldiers' and sailors' letters were written by half-educated men. Since the war no real attempt has been made to amend the educational machine in the national interest. To-day, in the name of economy, retrogression is perceptible everywhere. Educationalists frankly admit the terrible impeachment. Mr. J. J. Mallon, the Warden of Toynbee Hall, says: "Young people of to-day have not had education enough." Mr. J. C. Stobart, Education Director of the British Broadcasting Company, admits that "the majority of children leaving school are uncultivated." Dr. Norwood, headmaster of Harrow, has spoken often of "the low ethical tone of the younger generation." All these men have ample means of arriving at a sound judgment, and their verdict is against the present system, which, remember, has been on trial for over sixty years.

What is wrong? It is not the fault of the hard-working teachers, who have to control classes which are far too large. The blame lies on the shoulders of the educational executive, who waste money, and what is far more valuable than money. Millions of pounds are squandered on costly buildings and expensive fittings. The educational programme is too ambitious for children leaving school at fourteen years of age. The result is that millions of pupils have a smattering of many subjects and a real knowledge of none. The younger generation leaves the national schools half educated, a ready prey to every charlatan who cares to exploit them.

The fact is that in this country national education has been "cribbed, cabined and confined" by the desire of the clergy, of whom there are 40,000, to ally their own peculiar teaching with the ordinary school programme. This desire has been further complicated by the dissensions among the priests themselves. State Church clergy hate Nonconformists like poison, and Romanists consider that Anglicans and Free

Churchmen are perfectly monstrous. Churchmen and Nonconformists sometimes agree, and when the question is one of self-preservation, their unanimity is truly wonderful. For the purpose of safeguarding their own sorry trade, they have agreed that their fetish-book be read in the schools, but that no theological doctrines be taught. This is what is called "the compromise," and, although it satisfies most of the clergy, it still impedes education and fetters progress. For the clergy are astute enough to realize that so long as their fetish-book is forced upon the millions of children of this country their own anomalous position as a clerical caste will remain unquestioned, and their ill-gotten stipends be paid with regularity.

There are grave reasons, however, why this Christian Bible should no longer have a place in the school programmes. Its educational teaching is already out of date, and comes to us moderns "like the horns of Elfland faintly blowing." It is not an English book at all, but merely an antiquated version of an Oriental work, and it is Eastern and not Western in its outlook on life. Large parts of it are really unfit for the tender minds of children. In its pages may be found plain, unvarnished accounts of rape, sodomy, unnatural vice, and all manner of ancient Eastern frightfulness. This is not all. It reeks of the bad days of old. What do our Kindergarten teachers, for instance, make of such Biblical advice as "a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding." "Thou shalt beat him with a rod"; "Chasten thy son, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Such Biblical injunctions may receive the blessings and approbations of Nonconformist ministers and their supporters, but they still remain the quintessence of cruelty and barbarism, and their practical application in the year 1932 merits the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, or of the Police Forces of this country.

Nor is this all! Bible chronology is simply nonsense. Only very innocent persons can believe that the universe was created six thousand years ago; that "Adam," "Noah," and "Methusaleh" lived near a thousand years apiece, and that "Melchisadech" had neither beginning nor ending of days, and may be loafing about somewhere at the present moment. Philology gets no countenance from the romantic legend of the building of the Tower of Babel, nor from the tall story of the tongues of flame at Pentecost. The mistakes of Moses are as "thick as leaves in Vallambrosa." In sober truth, the whole atmosphere of the so-called sacred volume is that of the "Arabian Nights," and its many marvellous stories, if found in another book, would only excite an amused laughter.

In short, the Christian Bible, from the page describing "Adam" and "Eve" starting life at full age until the Second Person of the Undivided Trinity ascends into the ether like an aeroplane, is a salmagundi of unrestrained, exuberant Oriental imagination. The book is inconsistent with modern ideals, ascertained knowledge, and even common sense, and sooner or later it will have to be so regarded in spite of the 40,000 priests in this country. For Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing national education from the control of Priestcraft and its devious ways. In so doing they will free children from absorbing the absurdities, immoralities, and barbarities of uncivilized times perpetrated by this fetish-book. Freethinkers stand for Humanity, which existed before all religions and superstitions, and will survive them all. Priestcraft, on the other hand, always on the side of vested interests, helps to degrade life for the working and unprivileged classes of the community. And that fact tells its own sorry tale.

MIMNERMUS.

The Decline in Religion.

(Concluded from page 52.)

"Civilization reached its culmination with pagan Imperial Rome; with Christian Rome it went into a thousand years' sleep. No other event in human history worked such havoc with man's handiwork, such momentous change in his outlook. All that man had built through thousands of years of toil and effort, even the world itself and the joy of living, all—wife, home, friends, health, and happiness—were to be renounced in the name of a Saviour sent to bring, not peace, but a sword, into the world. And the sword began to do the Lord's work with a ruthlessness that would have made Assyria's war lords green with envy." (G. A. Dorsey: *Civilization*. (1931) pp. 455-456.)

THE Scopes trial, in America, gave an immense lift to Freethought in that country—more than years of Propaganda could have done. These Fundamentalists would have stopped their ears to the most eloquent propagandist, even if they did not stone him, and would certainly have made a bonfire of his literature; but they could not ignore the shout of laughter that went up from the world's press, led by their own newspapers in the great industrial cities. No one, least of all religious people, likes being held up to ridicule.

The case arose in a part of the country known as the "Bible belt," where the people, untouched by modern thought, were still at the primitive stage of thought of the Pilgrims of the *Mayflower*.

One of the most influential promoters of the campaign against evolution was a wealthy old farmer, and when one of the crowd of reporters which descended upon Dayton, asked him if he had read any of Darwin's and Huxley's works? he replied, No, but he intended to when things were settled down. The fact is that the first movers in the affair were quite ignorant of what they were up against, and unable to foresee the consequences of their action.

Since then, there has been an immense output of Freethought works in America which quite puts this country in the shade. Works like Mencken's *Treatise on the Gods*, and *Is it the Word of God*, a *Drastic Criticism of the Bible*, by an American Judge, Joseph Wheless, which book, published at five dollars, has gone into a second edition. Also, *The Forgery in Christianity*, by the same author.

Dr. George Dorsey's, *Civilization*, an edition of which has just been published here (Hamish Hamilton, 15s.) is a veritable Leviathan; it is a bulky volume of 976 pages and Mr. Kellett, the *News-Chronicle* book reviewer, declares (December 31, 1931) that "hatred" of Christianity "permeates his whole book." We should think it more correct to say that the author was inspired by hatred of Religion in general because of the crimes it has inspired, and of Christianity as one of its manifestations; for instance, the book is divided into three parts, and the first part deals with civilization before Christianity appears upon the scene.

However, Mr. Kellett knows for whom he is writing; it is the old guard of Nonconformity, who were brought up on the despairs and horrors of *East Lynne* and *Wuthering Heights*; and bow the knee before "that great clumsy Idol," Dostoyevsky the biographer of criminals, lunatics, and the dregs of society. A task for which he was eminently capable, for he, in some degree, shared in their characteristics; as all admit who have read his latest biography, and the book of letters to his wife. If he had been an open Atheist he would have been hooted for a rogue and a black-guard; but as he finished at the foot of the cross, he has been whitewashed and endowed with a halo. To

these, for light reading, might be added the innocuous novels of Jane Austin and Dickens, especially those where he wallows in a morass of sentimentality. These names would cause the youths of Bloomsbury to stop their ears, and run up Gower Street until they dropped. We wonder whether there will ever be a great daily paper edited for the younger generation, for the grandsons, instead of their grandfathers?

But to return to Dr. Dorsey, who declares that, "Religion is a disease. It is born of fear" (p. 619). He also gives an answer to an old argument for Christianity, as follows:—

"We have practised the Christian religion," said a French cynic a hundred years ago, "for nearly two thousand years; suppose we now try the religion of Christ." Well, suppose we do? Suppose you or I tried literally to follow the teachings of Christ as set forth in the Gospels? Such an effort might land us in heaven; it certainly would not land us in any church or office or college that I know of; it would land us in the poorhouse, if not in jail or in an asylum. (George Dorsey: *Civilization*. p. 618.)

Mr. Chesterton's revised version of this old taradiddle, is to the effect that "Christianity has not failed; it has been tried and found difficult." If he had said it has been tried and found to be unworkable, and in its effects ruinous and deadly, he would have been nearer the truth.

The higher class American magazines are also much more open to Freethought than ours. For instance, in *Harpers Magazine* for last December—an article concluded in the current January number—by Clarence Day, entitled "God and my Father," would stand no chance whatever of being published in any magazine in this country. It also illustrates, what we have noticed before, that total lack of reverence, even in professors of religion, in America, which enables them to tolerate and enjoy things on the Stage and the Cinema, which would shock and scandalize the religions over here.

Mr. Day, who tells us that his father rented a pew in the Established Church, says that with God, his father "had somehow contrived to achieve a serene and harmonious relation the clergy themselves might have envied." "Father and God," says Mr. Day "usually saw eye to eye . . . they had perfect confidence in each other—at least at most moments. The only exceptions were when God seemed to be neglecting his job—Father's confidence in Him was then withdrawn, instantly." It was not easy for Father to see that he had any faults; and if he did, it didn't occur to him to ask God to forgive them. "He forgave them himself. In his moments of prayer, when he and God tried to commune with each other, it wasn't his own shortcomings that were brought on the carpet, but God's." He expected a good deal of God, and when things went wrong they roused his wrath, and: "he would call God's attention to such things. They should not have been there. He didn't actually accuse God of gross inefficiency, but when he prayed his tone was loud and angry, like that of a dissatisfied guest in a carelessly managed hotel."

Mr. Day says that his room was just over his Father's, and he could hear his Father communing with God, when things had gone wrong:—

The sound of damns would float up at first deep and tragic and low, then loud and exasperated. Fragments of thoughts and strong feelings came next, or meditations on current bothers. At the peak of these, God would be summoned. I would hear him call "Oh God?" over and over, with a rising inflection, as though he were demanding that God should present himself instantly, and sit in the fat green chair in the corner, and be duly admonished. Then when Father seemed to feel that God was listening, he would begin to expostulate. He would moan in a discouraged but strong voice, "Oh, God,

it's too damned much. Amen . . . I say it's too damned much . . . No, no, I can't stand it. Amen." After a pause, if he didn't feel better, he would seem to suspect that God might be trying to sneak back to heaven without doing anything, and I would hear him shout warningly, "Oh, God! I won't stand it! Amen. Oh damnation! A-a-men." Sometimes he would ferociously bark a few extra Amens, and then, soothed and satisfied, peacefully go back to sleep . . . And one night in the country, when the caretaker of our house in town telephoned to Father that the rain was pouring in through a hole in the roof, I heard such a noise that I got out of bed and looked over the banisters, and saw Father standing alone in the hall, shaking his fist at the ceiling, and shouting in hot indignation to Heaven, "What next?"

It must be admitted that as regards Freethought, America is far ahead of us to-day.

W. MANN.

Goethe the Freethinker.

I.

THROUGHOUT the civilized world there are few places where the centenary of the death of Germany's greatest genius, the Atlas, who held up ideals that animated not only his own age but will go on animating the ages to come, will not be commemorated next March. In sheer bulk Goethe's work is a harvest that can never be completely reaped by one individual, and it will be praised and criticized and commented on from many points of view, literary, scientific, political and moral; but it has for the Freethinker a special interest which we owe it to ourselves to emphasize, for Goethe's attitude to religion represents a side of his essential personality which is often suppressed in England.

This suppression began many decades ago, it has continued for a long period, and sometimes approaches very near to downright mendacity. Goethe himself, always deeply interested in English literature, wrote to his friend Foerster in 1829: "Nowhere else can be found so many hypocrites and holy Willies as in England." Let us glance at a few of the English testimonials to Goethe's character, and see if this opinion is confirmed.

Though Carlyle, a born hero-worshipper, is rightly regarded as the originator of the Goethe-cult in England, it should not be forgotten that Scott, Byron, Shelley and others here and throughout Europe had already acclaimed the German poet as one of the immortals. We find Carlyle, however, writing in 1824 that he was "tired to death with his (Schiller's) and Goethe's *palabra* about the nature of the fine arts," and this is precisely the opinion that one would expect from the least Hellenic spirit in the literature of the world. Despite real greatness in some directions and a profound admiration of certain aspects of German thought the sage of Chelsea remained throughout life a dour, foreboding prophet, and never advanced to the core of Goethe's complex personality, a personality always half-pagan and half-modern. But this is hardly an excuse for persistently attributing to the poet Christian sympathies which would never suggest themselves to an open-minded interpreter. "In his third or final period," said Carlyle in an essay written in 1832, the year of Goethe's death, "reverence becomes triumphant; a deep, all-pervading faith, with a mild voice, grave or gay, speaks forth in Wilhelm Meister's Travels and in the West-eastern Divan." Now not only are these two productions not fully representative of Goethe's mind and art, but even in these, his own selected sources, Carlyle finds a

religious significance which was never there. The lyrics collected under the title *West-eastern Divan* reproduce the spirit and thought of translations from the Persian poet Hafiz, and in strange contrast to the discovery in them of triumphant faith Goethe himself said, when nearing the seventh decade of his long life: "This Mohammedan religion, mythology, and manners allow to poetry a scope which suits my years." The love of the East was no new thing with Goethe, for whom the Orient had long been a realm of light "where doubts were few and truth was broad." In his religion, as in his politics and his literary tastes, he was more than unsectarian, he was universal.

The last thing that the master's work, viewed as a whole, would suggest to an honest commentator is devoutness in the Christian sense, and it is inconceivable that any believer who held even loosely and conventionally to Christianity could have written some of the passages in *Faust* and the poet's intimate letters, or expressed the views on this subject recorded in Eckermann's *Conversations*. But Carlyle was not the only or the worst offender among those who sought to interpret Goethe on "correct" English lines. Eckermann was a kind of German Boswell, and has presented to us many interesting notes on the poet and his Weimar circle of friends during the last period of his life. An entry dated January 4, 1824, reports a remark by Goethe that is quite unmistakable in its meaning. He said that he believed in God and Nature, but that this was not enough for pious souls: "I must also believe that Three is One and One Three, which, however, was opposed to the feeling of my soul for truth." Oxenford's English translation, published here in 1850, dilutes this into, "I was also pressed to believe other points." Even Lewes, quite capable of criticizing the religious beliefs of his time, is unsatisfactory, both when he is dealing with Goethe's attitude to Christianity and when he is "explaining" the poet's moral standards, so much so that Professor Boyesen characterizes his *Life of Goethe* as "an elaborate apology for him, addressed to the English Philistine."

Goethe himself, having declared that all his writings were one continued confession, might be left to tell his own tale, particularly as he was brought up in a Christian atmosphere, and religion occupied a prominent place in his thoughts from an early age. His own description of the acts of devotion of his childhood days may be read at length in his autobiographical sketches, *Poetry and Truth*. But this religion soon developed, or degenerated, into something of a quite nondescript character. Before he was seventeen years of age he went to Leipzig to study law, and there he separated himself from the influences of the Church, but he cannot be said to have become merely indifferent to them. Many aspects of orthodox Christianity, dogmas that affect the very roots of the historic faith, he found more and more repugnant, and his undisguised attitude to them caused a marked estrangement between him and his friends, Lavater and Jacobi. In 1788 he returned from his prolonged stay in Italy, the influences of which affected the whole of his subsequent life and writings. Now, he frankly told his friends, he was a Pagan, and the ideals and world-view of Lucretius accorded largely with his own. But this ideal did not appear suddenly as a result of his Italian visit, it was rather the outcome of his natural kinship with the spirit of classical antiquity which came with his youth, gained strength with his experience of the world, of its art and literature, and never completely left him. In his later years he avowed to Eckermann that the name which he would prefer to all others was *Befreier* (liberator), and this avowal expressed his deepest conviction of his purpose in life,

He has been called, perhaps rightly, "the last of the Hellenes."

At one time Goethe expressed a "truly Julian hatred of Christianity and so-called Christians," and though this hostility became less intense with advancing years, yet throughout life he not only rejected the cardinal doctrines of Christianity on intellectual grounds, but regarded some of them as serious hindrances to the growth of personality, of that humanism which, under the name of "culture," was later declared to be "a shibboleth of his disciples." To this culture as an end in itself, he hoped that men and women would more and more aspire. Christianity's attitude to Nature, the doctrine of total depravity, the unique place assigned to the founder of the Christian religion, and in particular the exaltation of Christ at the cost of other great teachers, the cult of sorrow and its extremely unfavourable influence on art, and the orthodox scheme of salvation generally—all these elements of the faith strongly repelled Goethe. Many passages in his correspondence and in Eckermann could be quoted as convincing evidence of this assertion. In a letter to his friend Lavater, he tells him that it is fortunate that the extant record of Christ's life leaves scope for such idealization as one wishes. "But," continues Goethe, "I cannot call it anything else than an injustice and spoliation that you pluck out all the precious feathers from the whole winged creation under heaven, as if they had been usurped, for the purpose of adorning your bird of paradise exclusively." In the same letter he declares that an audible voice from heaven would not convince him "that a woman can conceive without a man, and that a dead man comes to life." Goethe knew his Bible well and regarded it as one of the treasures bequeathed to us by antiquity, but only as one of many. The following quotation is from Eckermann, and when one remembers the stir caused in England by Colenso's *Pentateuch* in 1862, one almost thinks that Goethe might have acquired a first-class reputation as a theologian if he had aspired to it:—

They are now shaking up the five books of Moses, and if criticism is injurious anywhere, it is in matters of religion; for here everything rests upon faith, to which no man can return if once he has lost it.

From the same source I may quote here a trenchant answer to the assertion, still constantly heard, that "all true art is religious":—

Religion stands in the same relation to art as any other higher interest of life. It is only to be regarded as material and has exactly the same rights as any other material.

It is true that he says, "man is productive only so far as he is religious," but this last word has a wide range of meaning in Goethe. In any case, it is safe to say that a large proportion of his severe comments on Christianity are the protests of the artist rather than of the intellectual critic. Reverting to his attitude to the Bible, I think the following reference to the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy expresses very significantly his views on ecclesiastical authority and its influence:—

The doctrines of the Church contain a great deal that is nonsensical, but she means to hold sway, and hence a stunted mass of men and women is necessary to her, of men and women who cower down, who are ready to allow themselves to be kept under control. There is nothing that the well-conditioned higher clerics dread more than the enlightenment of the lower strata of the population, from whom they have kept the Bible away so long as it was at all possible.

For his drama *Prometheus* Goethe wrote two short acts in 1773; but no complete work as originally planned was ever published. The extant fragment

reveals clearly his antipathy to the Christian idea of dependence, of the impotence of the natural man, and the same antipathy is expressed in a letter to Knebel, the translator of Lucretius. It is worth nothing that again and again in his correspondence and elsewhere he mentions the Roman poet.

Goethe's almost innate Hellenism, to which I have referred, appears so often in both his early and his maturest work that I will briefly touch upon it again. It seems most marked, as one would perhaps expect, in the essay on Winckelmann (1805). He tells us there the reason of the influence of classical antiquity upon him. The ancients, in this respect so different from the moderns, did not yearn for the unattainable, the transcendental as it was called in the jargon of the time. The poet knew Hegel personally, but was not attracted by the latter's Absolute Idea: he preferred to look for his philosophy in Nature, in her endless types and processes. The guiding principle of the Greeks was "nothing in excess," they recognized a distinct limit even to their highest thoughts and interests, they were glad of life, of the world, and made their gods as comely as they could. Why all this morbid clamour for something more?

A. D. McLAREN.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

The death of Dr. Gore removes one of those strange conglomerate personalities that are peculiar to Anglicanism. A contributor to *Lux Mundi*, which when published in 1890 kicked up only a little less dust than *Essays and Reviews* years before, Dr. Gore was a scholar, the founder of the Mirfield Monks, and, in theology, as conservative as he was liberal in his secular outlook. *Lux Mundi*—so far as Gore's contribution to it was concerned—need not have given the orthodox a shock. That a leaning to the Higher Criticism is no sign of scepticism may be judged by the following passage from his *Lux Mundi* essay in which, having gone a long way with the critics, he falls back upon the "inspiration" of the Church:—

The Church knows what the Bible means because the Holy Ghost teaches her its meaning; and directly anyone tries to put a meaning of his own upon any part of the Bible, or to get any doctrine out of it which is not Church doctrine, that person begins to go wrong. Remember this, and if ever it should happen when you are reading the Bible that a thought comes into your mind which seems to go against the Catholic faith, put that thought away at once. Don't stop to argue about it. Don't say: "It is in the Bible." The Bible is the Book of the Church. The Church is the keeper of the Bible, and the Holy Ghost is the teacher of the Church. The Church and the Bible never contradict one another. If they seem to anyone to do so, it is because he does not understand.

If this is heresy—where is orthodoxy to be found?

The preface to that fat and black book, Crockford's *Clerical Directory* is by way of having a reputation for a certain drollery. Reading it the other day we came across a gem not of clerical or editorial wit but of judicial satire. The Clergy now have to contribute to their Pensions. The Pensions Authority of the National Assembly actually sued in the Secular Court a parson who refused to pay this impost. His defence was that the Enabling Act—under which the Pensions Scheme was set up—was not in operation when he was admitted to Holy Orders, and he had, therefore, a conscientious objection to paying. Crockford reports that he lost his case. "The judge very properly pointing out that questions of conscience and abstract right could not be entertained." Certainly in this dictum the judge might have been a Bishop for "conscience" and "abstract right," so far from having been "entertained" by the Establishment, have been its boast and its embarrassment for centuries.

The following brief review is from a religious journal:—

The Rev. C. W. Hale Amos, D.D., believes that the inspiration of Satan is behind modern science, modern psychology, and modern thought of every kind, and in *The Church or the World* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 6s.) ably expounds his belief that the Church can only fulfil its destiny by rejecting all such teachings, and refusing to waste time on such things as social service, concentrating itself upon proclaiming the Gospel as that is understood by the Fundamentalists.

There can be no doubt that the Rev. Dr. Hale Amos is a Christian thinker whom the Gospel Jesus, if he were here to-day, would clasp fondly to his bosom as a true disciple.

Sir Michael Sadler declares that, "The last thirty years have done more to educate the English than any thirty years in history." It is, of course, during the last thirty years that millions of the English have discovered that they can dispense with the parson or priest—which is undoubtedly one of the greatest moves educationally in the history of the nation. In a hundred years time some historian will mention the fact, and award the credit for the achievement to the right quarter. In which case the Freethought Movement ought to figure prominently. We, of course, are assuming that in a hundred years time historians will be free to speak the truth unhindered by Christian prejudices.

In an editorial note, and in a paragraph elsewhere headed "New Spirit in Fleet Street," the *Newspaper World* blows the trumpet for Mr. Hugh Redwood of the *News-Chronicle*, who has been preaching at St. Bride's Fleet Street, known as the newspaper men's Parish Church. Says our contemporary, "those who organized the occasion knew the value of publicity!" Its contributor observes that "thirty years ago the idea of a newspaper man adopting the role of a preacher would have been treated with derision," but, with unconscious irony, he attributes the "new spirit" in journalism to the fact that "the higher salaries paid have attracted a better class of men." And "increased competition—not piety—produces these strenuous days in which there is no room for men of unsteady mien." We suggest that the next time Mr. Hugh Redwood appears in the pulpit of St. Brides he might take for his text: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." This is the least know of all the commandments in Fleet Street.

In this year 1932, it will be good news to know that there is a gentleman who has spent his life-time in the study of laying ghosts. One of the devices used is a ritual in Latin based on that of the Roman Catholic Church for casting out evil spirits. This is, to newspapers, good news value, and admirable as a sop to mob thinking; incidentally, it is a compliment to the medieval teaching that begins and ends with ghosts.

And if you should think that the world runs any risk of being wholly run on commonsense lines, just lay your eyes on this:—

A two-ton candle was offered yesterday to the Blessed Virgin Mary in a church at Genoa by a man who had just escaped being married.

The day before the marriage the girl who was sixteen, confessed that she was in love with another man.

It is for such information as this, that the reader is enabled to realize the full value of the press in social uplift, bigger and brighter ideas, and general advance upwards and all the way round or what not.

We are all descendants of savages, but the proofs in some instances are much clearer than in others.

This is a Protestant country, at least in the sense that it is not a Catholic country. And, in a Protestant country, we may believe that Catholics are man for man as good or as bad men and citizens as Protestants—they are both Christians anyway. The State Church conception of Christian citizenship in this country does, however, conflict with Christian duty as Catholicism sees it. Thus, the *Voce della Verita*, an Italian organ of piety and, we believe, of the Jesuits, says:—

It is necessary that all Catholics, to whatever class they may belong, should provide themselves with a heart resembling the sea, which does not distinguish one river from another. From whatever quarters the rivers flow into it the sea welcomes them all—be they Tiber, Tigris, Rhine, Rhone, Thames or Danube. The immediate result of the possession of such a heart will be that every individual must look with suspicion upon that affection which he may entertain for his own people. He must reflect that when the Lord ordained a true minister of the gospel, and a perfect Christian, the first thing he required of him was immediately to destroy every special affection that he might possess for his relations, his country and his race.

We cannot read the last sentence without being impressed with the amazing shortage of Christianity—in this be its virtues—in the France of to-day. Yet it was only last Sunday in the *Referee*, that Mr. Wyndham Lewis—who writes *Mustard and Cress* in a style which must make G. R. Sims turn in his grave—giving, as is his wont, a little puff to Catholicism, remarked that when he was recently in Paris the pleasure resorts were deserted by Englishmen and the Churches—packed with Frenchmen! This is apologetics in *extremis*.

The Rev. C. Ensor Walters wishes that Christian people would realize the peril of "practical paganism" in the great new housing areas of London, and would ponder on "the conditions which make it impossible for thousands of children to attend Sunday-school, on the doorstep of London, the greatest Christian city of the world." For our part, we congratulate the children on a great opportunity of escaping the peril of having their intelligence distorted by Christian ideas. What more depressing sight is there than to see young children being shepherded into Sunday schools, and being moulded into obedient church or chapel-goers and parsons' lackeys?

Apropos of the Wolverhampton police-court case in which a witness affirmed his belief in witches, "Candidus" of the *Daily Sketch* remarks:—

I suppose that nearly all these superstitions go back to the primitive days when we had neither science nor decent religion and mixed up ju-ju and mumbo-jumbo as in the heathenism of West Africa. Christianity when it came swallowed these superstitions and digested them as well as it could; just as it annexed the old pagan festivals for its own uses. The seventeenth was a religious century, but it was also the century when the belief in witchcraft was most prevalent. The abominable English law against witchcraft, which stayed on the Statute Book for well over a century, was passed in the reign of James the First. Soon after came the persecution of the Lancashire witches. But the Commonwealth period was even worse; it was then that the infamous Hopkins travelled round the Eastern counties, charging twenty shillings expenses in every town he visited and doing hundreds of harmless old women to death. Our civilization even now is but a thin crust over smouldering rubbish-heaps of age-long ignorance and superstition.

Primitive superstitions were not "swallowed" and "digested" by the Christian religion. What it did was to confirm and keep alive the belief in such superstitions. One has only to read the Holy Bible to realize that. It wasn't the arrival of a "decent religion"—i.e., Christianity—which has undermined such primitive beliefs, but the growth of knowledge and its dissemination among the people. The law against witchcraft was a Christian law, for which reasons were discovered in the Christian Bible. We agree that "our civilization even now is but a thin crust over smouldering rubbish and heaps of age-long ignorance and superstition." But the reason why the crust is so thin and the rubbish-heaps are still smouldering is that the Christian Bible has dominated men's minds for the past nineteen hundred years.

Discussing the findings of the Licensing Commission, Mr. H. Kingsley Long, in the *Daily Herald*, proffers the following opinion, which to our readers is not exactly unfamiliar:—

... this fact stands out: We have become a sober nation not because of restrictions, but because we are

better educated and far more alive to our social and civic obligations. There is this lesson, too: You cannot mould free men and women to your own ideas of righteousness by legislation.

This principle is capable of application to more than beer or the provision of drinking facilities. We cannot by legislation prevent men and women from openly expressing what the righteous call "blasphemy"—that is, free criticism of religion. Neither can legislation compel them to observe the Christian Sunday in accordance with pious notions. Blasphemy laws and Sabbath laws, whose object is to prohibit wholesome recreation and amusement on Sunday, are merely stupid anachronisms of the ignorant past. Seeing that the late Labour Government refused to repeal the Blasphemy laws, and did nothing towards rescinding the Sabbath laws, we are forced to conclude that Labourites, in the main, believe that one *can* and *ought* to mould free men and women to one's own ideas of righteousness by legislation. If such is the case, we hope Mr. Long's statement will assist in disturbing that stupid belief.

A Portsmouth reader of the *Daily Mirror* asks: "would it not be a good thing if people spent as much time practising religion as they do quarrelling about it?" The implication is, of course, that there is much more quarrelling than loving among Christians. Well, a survey of the Christian era would suggest that such has always been the case. Our friend should ask himself why a religion which boasts of introducing brotherly love into the world should have been, and is, so notable for provoking quarrels. When he finds the true answer to this question, he may appreciate why many intelligent people of to-day merely laugh when Church leaders affirm that the Christian religion can bring Peace among the nations. And as to the question of practising religion, we note that it is when some sects *are* practising their religion, that other sects start quarrelling with them about it. While the Christian religion affords such scope for multifarious interpretations as to what should be believed and practised, quarrelling will always remain a prominent feature of it. The defect is obviously fundamental. Yet that religion is assumed to have been invented by an omniscient God!

Preaching at the Wesleyan Central Hall, Birmingham, Bishop Barnes, in reviewing the present situation of religion, remarked that some recent sermons seemed for the most part to be gloomy—the future dark, the churches empty, trade bad, God ignored, morals lax, Bolshevism flourishing, and so forth. Personally, said he, "I cannot encourage such a gloomy view. To me the present era is exhilarating, stimulating. It has a certain tonic quality, a little bitter, perhaps, but most invigorating." We are glad the good Bishop is pleased with the tonic quality of the era. We are glad to assure him that this paper is doing its best to improve that tonic quality, and to make it still more stimulating to all bishops and parsons who are struggling to catch up with the vanguard of modern thought.

The Roman Catholic "Cardinal Archbishop" (which one is not stated) has been preaching on "happy families" and cites "Nazareth" as the model for all happy families. Why these bachelor gentlemen should imagine they are authorities of families at all is beyond our comprehension, but to cite "Nazareth" is surely a joke. There is no evidence whatever that Nazareth, the supposedly happy home of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, was in existence at the date given to "Our Divine Lord"; and in any case, from the gospel records themselves, one could show that Jesus was consistently rude to "Our Lady." The Cardinal Archbishop did *not* give a full list of the "back answers" Jesus gave to his mother, nor mention that Jesus completely ignored the existence of "Saint" Joseph.

It is good news to learn that New Zealand is not to be bullied into paying for the upkeep of "Catholic" schools. Catholics object to paying the usual education rate because they want their own schools, but want the State

to pay for their special upkeep and don't want to pay for any other schools. The only equitable solution for all religious instruction difficulties is to *abolish religion entirely from State Schools*. Then if Catholics or Plymouth Brethren or Theosophists or other weird examples of mental aberrationists want their children taught a special belief let them pay for it out of their own private pockets. What a relief it would be for sane folk!

The difficulties surrounding the Fourth Gospel are never ending—except to those dear old ladies who shut their eyes and swallow what they are told is good for them. In the January number of *Theology*, Dom Gregory Dix (says a recent notice) gives "an exceptionally devastating criticism of Canon Streeter's reconstruction from Papias, as to the author of the Fourth Gospel," and no doubt some other pious believer or half believer will annihilate Dom Gregory Dix. And so the game goes on and has gone on for 1,800 years, and nobody knows who "St. John" was. Which is a crushing proof of the Divine Infallibility of God's Own Book.

The President of the Primitive Methodist Conference affirms that he who sits at the feet of Jesus receives something he never forgets and something that never loses its grip. For our part, we are not prepared to deny it. But we must say that that kind of man has our sincerest sympathy. It is very sad to see a man in so hopeless a state.

In a religious weekly, has appeared some discussion on Vegetarianism, one disciple of which gave reference to Scriptures in support of his beliefs. A reverend gentleman hastes to correct this illusion:—

Your correspondent . . . might consider the fact that Jesus broke fish for the masses, cooked a fish breakfast for his disciples on Galilee's shores, certainly partook of the Passover Lamb, and told the story of the father who killed the fatted calf for the prodigal's "welcome home." This should be sufficient evidence of the will of God for man from One who said "I do always the things that are pleasing to my Father."

After this, one may assume that Christian Vegetarians will be thrown back on ordinary human reasoning in support of their convictions.

Fifty Years Ago.

THE PARABLES OF JABERS, KING OF BUNKUM.

[Translated by Unreverend Josiah.]

AND Jabers opened his mouth and spake a parable.

A shooter went out to shoot birds, and, lo, two birds arose, a pigeon and a crow. And the shooter said in his heart. "Verily, I will shoot the pigeon." And, lo, he aimed well, but the crow fell; and the pigeon spread his pinions and fled.

Now, when Jabers' disciples heard these words they marvelled much, and said: "Explain, O Lord!" And he answered and said: "Do not prickles grow on gooseberry bushes? Verily I say unto you, that it is better to be born a live pigeon than a dead crow." And when his disciples heard these words they went away and wept sweetly.

Now, it came to pass in those days that the multitude murmured at the exceeding high price of bread; and they said unto Jabers: "Oh, Lord, this is too bad." And Jabers spake a parable:—"Jack and Jill went up a hill; and lo, Jack said: 'We go for water'; and Jill agreed that it was so. Now, it was exceeding frosty; and Jack said unto Jill: 'Let us make to ourselves slides.' And they did so; but they fell and became cripples. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that had the matron and doctor agreed, these two would have become pulp." So when the multitude heard these words they said: "What has this to do with our bread?" And Jabers said: "Go thy ways. Many fall, but few are hurt." And they saw it, and with one voice said, "Encore!"

The "Freethinker," January 29, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JUDGE SPENCER DE GROLDIER writes from Washington, U.S.A. in sending us New Year's greetings, says, "The *Freethinker* arrives each week and becomes more and more absorbing. It brings me thought and news from another field, or rather, from a different corner of the great field of activities; for, indeed, it becomes more apparent as time passes that the world is our field." We welcome these good wishes and quite agree that however diverse the form, the Freethought fight is everywhere essentially the same.

A SOMEONE who signs himself "Roman Catholic," without feeling at all ashamed, but without other name or address writes objecting to something that was said in these columns, and asks us a number of questions. He says he will read the reply in the Free Library because he would not waste threepence on this journal. Well, he is now able to get our reply, and he may spend his threepence on holy candles.

MR. P. G. PEABODY writes us in high appreciation of Mr. C. S. Fraser's article on "The Value of Death," in our issue of January 17. We quite endorse all he says as to the excellence of the article. Mr. Fraser's pen is always welcome in these columns.

N. MORRIS.—We believe Mr. Cutner may compile a summary of Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*, one day, but it is too bulky a volume for reprint. A summary of part of the criticism of Jesus Christ would be useful.

R. HALE.—Thanks for New Year's greetings, which we heartily reciprocate. Hope to meet you soon in Glasgow.

H. BILLOT.—The B.B.C.'s Sunday Programme is an outrage on the public. We venture to say that not ten per cent of licence holders who can reach the Continent on Sundays ever bother with it. But as the B.B.C. is at present constituted reform seems hopeless. But that is no reason for ceasing to agitate for something better. Keep at it.

T. GRIFFITHS.—Sorry the slips did not reach you in time to be of use, but, as you note, that was the fault of the post. Thanks all the same.

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. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

On Thursday, February 4, Mr. Cohen will deliver the first of a course of four lectures in the Fulham Town Hall, Fulham Road. The subject will be "The World's Need of Freethought," and the chair will be taken at 8 o'clock, doors open at 7.30. We again ask the help of West London Freethinkers in making these meetings as widely known as possible; particularly we should like to see a goodly number of Christians present, as the address will be a topical one. Slips advertising the meeting may be had on application, and a deal of good may be done by their distribution.

There was a very good attendance at Battersea Town Hall on Sunday evening for Mr. Chapman Cohen's lecture on "The Benefits of Unbelief." It is true that the large Hall would have accommodated more, but, as was mentioned, the meeting was better attended—some hundreds being present—than many of the local churches. An appeal for questions proved Christians as shy and irrelevant as usual. Mr. F. P. Corrigan was in the chair. The friends of the South London Branch deserve thanks for their good work in advertising the meeting.

Mr. E. Hale sends us the following *apropos* of a recent article on David Hume:—

The following, from Huxley's Hume pages 38-39, may be of interest to Mr. McKinnon and other readers as well.

"In 1770, Hume built himself a house in the new town of Edinburgh, which was then springing up. It was the first house in the street, and a frolicsome young lady chalked upon the wall 'St. David's Street.' Hume's servant complained to her master, who replied, 'Never mind, lassie, many a better man has been made a saint of before,' and the street retains its title to this day.

The following is taken from the *Manchester City News*:—

We have on more than one occasion drawn attention to the argumentative powers and reasoning force of Mr. Chapman Cohen, and these selections from his writings will further prove, whether we agree with his conclusions or not, that he has an acute intellect, an incisive style, and an ironic humour. Mr. Cohen is a Rationalist, a Freethinker, and he approaches all orthodox beliefs as a hostile critic. He is ready to deliver a smashing blow, or to inflict a subtle cut. He detects the weak joints in the armour of his opponents and does not spare a shrewd thrust. It is not for us to declare in these columns whether he proves his case or whether he fails; but common honesty leads us to state that he deals with his themes in an adroit and masterly fashion, and leaves us wishing that the orthodox side would produce as keen a champion. Mr. Cohen is a well-read man, a scientist, and a philosopher. He takes as his standpoint sober common sense as against all forms of superstition or credulity. When he was dealing with the war—and a number of these selections relate to the period 1914-1918—he uttered warnings and truths to which sooner or later all reflective persons subscribed, although they were unpopular at the time. If a volume like this does nothing else it sets us thinking. It is nothing if not provocative. It sets orthodoxy the task of demonstrating its truth and its merit. There can never be stagnation in the religious realm while a Chapman Cohen is busy with his questions, and even those who differ from him would admit that in this respect he serves a good purpose. Many and varied are the subjects dealt with, and we would call special attention to the chapters on Byron, the Press, France in 1789, the problems of Pain, and Intolerance.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had an enthusiastic meeting in the Transport Hall, Liverpool, on Sunday evening, and although the lecture was somewhat longer than usual it met with a very gratifying reception. The work put in by the local Branch officials is hard and thorough, and if collections were in proportion to the size of the audiences it would ease the responsibilities of the Branch.

The Sunderland Branch N.S.S. appears to be making headway. The present accommodation is getting too small for the Sunday evening meetings. Last Sunday the Hallgarth Square Mission Hall was packed, many being unable to obtain admission, to listen to a debate between the Rev. Bell and Mr. J. T. Brighton. The minister relied upon the Design argument, with the usual result. To-day (Sunday) Mr. Keast speaks in the Co-Operative Rooms, Green Street, at 7.0 p.m.

The Ashington Branch is also getting to work, and has arranged a debate for to-day (Sunday) between Mr. J. T. Brighton and Mr. H. Hirst of Ashington. We have not received details as to the hall, and time of debate, although they may arrive in time to appear in the Lecture Notice Column.

We are glad to learn from the President of the Rationalist Association of New South Wales are holding largely attended meetings every Sunday evening, and is making very satisfactory progress. The chief lecturers are Mr. J. S. Langley, Mr. J. Bowden, and Miss A. Lennon, a recent convert from Catholicism. The Association has, we learn—not much to our surprise—to be on its guard against the intrusion of sectional interests, particularly from enthusiastic Communists, an issue with which the Association has no concern. The Committee think that if the best work is to be done the basis of the Association must be of the broadest character, and sectional interests excluded. In that we quite agree with the Committee, and wish it every success in its endeavours to promote Freethought in New South Wales.

From Plymouth we receive a good report of an address on Sunday last, on "Does Death End All?" by Mr. E. Lynden. The lecture was followed by an interesting discussion. Plymouth is not an easy place for Freethought propaganda, and we call the attention of local friends to the meeting held to-day (January 31) in Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus. The speaker is Mr. W. H. Harris. The lecture will commence at 7.0.

Memorials of Man's Lowly Origin

It has been concisely stated that the body of the newly-born infant is a veritable museum of relics. These vestigial structures the child has inherited from a long line of pre-human forerunners. The larger number of these shrunken structures tend to disappear as the child advances towards its adult stage. Most vestiges are seemingly useless, and in some instances are known to be decidedly detrimental to their possessors.

True it is that organs such as the thyroid gland, an organ which was long thought to be functionless, may play an indispensable part in the lives of men. On the other hand several structures persist which may be removed from the body, not merely without injury, but with positive advantage. Nor are these rudimentary structures confined to the human race. In the lower animal and vegetable domains alike they are encountered, thus preserving conclusive illustrations of the truth of organic evolution.

Insects commonly possess well developed wings—which function as flying organs. Some, however, bear wings that are entirely useless. Moreover, various animals that inhabit dark caves have become blind. Their sightless eyeballs are reduced in volume, and are completely covered with an overgrowth of skin apparently impervious to light. These sightless subterranean creatures include fishes; amphibians such as salamanders; and crustacea such as crayfish. Perhaps through age-long disuse these organisms have become visionless.

The snakes have arisen from four limbed ancestors, and traces of their lost legs have been retained in the python. These remnants may be noted in the reptile's vestigial claws which are so attached to the python's skeletal framework that they are obviously vestiges of earlier functional limbs.

In common with flightless insects, the wing of certain birds has ceased to function as a flying organ.

This is very pronounced in the ostrich and cassowary. The wings of these running birds are quite useless in flight for, in consequence of prolonged disuse the organs have dwindled to mere relics. In the flightless avifauna of New Zealand again, atrophy of once useful wings may be traced in various running birds, while in the case of the kiwi or apteryx the wing is so shrunken that it is entirely hidden by the body feathers of the bird. As a matter of fact the kiwi was long regarded as wingless.

The reptilian descent of the birds is proclaimed in their reproductive system. With most of the higher animals the ovaries and oviducts are fully developed on each side of the body, but with birds these organs function only on one side—the left. The ovaries and oviducts lying on the right side of a bird's body are purely vestigial.

Another example may be furnished from the lower animal world before we deal with man and justify the title of this article. That huge aquatic mammal, the whale, supplies a striking instance of vestiges retained from its former terrestrial life. Descended from land-dwelling creatures, the whale is a warm-blooded animal which has become adapted to variations in temperature by evolving a coating of blubber which replaces the hairy covering of land mammals. A true mammal respiring through the lungs, the whale is compelled to rise to the ocean's surface to breathe, while its circulatory system has become so modified that the animal is able to store a large supply of oxygenated or purified blood which serves it during submergence. As the eminent zoologist, Prof. G. H. Parker states: "The whale's movements are accomplished chiefly by the enormous tail flukes which spread out horizontally instead of vertically as do the tails of fishes. The flippers of the whale, which correspond to the forelegs of other animals, are chiefly used to guide these creatures through the water. Of hind limbs, there is no external trace whatsoever, but when the interior of the whale-bone whale is examined in the region where hind limbs would be expected, a group of isolated bones is found which correspond in part to the pelvis and in part to the legs of other mammals. These bones are completely embedded in the substance of the whale, and are apparently quite functionless."

Darwin once declared that man carries in his bodily framework the indelible marks of his lowly origin. The human eye, so constantly cited as a conclusive evidence of supernatural design retains a relic of our animal past. In the inner corner of man's eye there survives a trace of the nictitating membrane or third eyelid. This structure is well developed in most mammals, as also in reptiles and birds, and it serves to protect and clean the front of the eye. The membrane functions efficiently with birds and mammals, but is a completely vestigial relic in man, as also in the apes and monkeys, our nearest kindred.

A further survival from remote ages may be seen in the human intestine. In man, the small intestine does not unite with the large intestine end to end, but joins it at the side. The original termination of the large intestine persists in the form of a pouch or pocket—the well-known caecum. This pouch-like caecum, carries on its surface a worm shaped structure—the dark and sinister vermiform appendix—the cavity of which opens immediately into the caecum. Whatever other function it may or may not possess it is the unmistakable cause of appendicitis, and the surgical remedy for this disease is the speedy removal of the offending relic. This operation has been successfully performed in many thousand cases, and the excision of the vestigial appendix has never proved detrimental in any shape or form, while all apprehension of appendicitis is set at rest. Yet, while the vermi-

form vestige is dangerous to man it remains a well developed and normally functioning organ in the lower mammalia. Among the apes and monkeys, however, as well as with mankind, the appendix has dwindled very markedly in size.

The muscles essential to the movement of the external ear are eminently serviceable in the horse, dog and many other mammals. These ear muscles in man have shrunk to mere relics. Nine of these rudimentary structures have been detected by anatomists in connexion with the human ear. Usually these vestiges are quite functionless although they are occasionally capable of functioning. Obviously, the only rational interpretation of their presence is that man has ascended from lowlier modes of life.

What are commonly called wisdom teeth, whose appearance was popularly supposed to proclaim the attainment of years of discretion are justly regarded as vestigial structures. These teeth serve no useful purpose, but are frequently the cause of unspeakable agony. The last teeth to appear, although in some cases they fail to cut the gums, they are usually the first to decay. Again, in some instances, these superfluous teeth are never really formed. It is also significant that reduction in the number of teeth appears as a tendency, not simply in man, but also in the apes and Old World monkeys.

The hairy covering of the babe in the womb, in its embryonic stage, rarely survives delivery. Sometimes, however, it persists, as may be seen in the hairy men and women who are, or were exhibited at country fairs and monstrosity shows. This hirsute covering is always to be observed in the human foetus, and is obviously reminiscent of humanity's hairy ancestors.

In his fascinating essay, "The Evolution of the Brain," the distinguished anatomist, Prof. G. Elliot Smith notes the persistence in attenuated form of a muscle inherited by man from his tree-dwelling ancestors. Various arboreal animals bear a muscle in the fore limb which enables them to swing from tree to tree with facility. As a rule, this muscle has vanished entirely in man, but it occasionally survives as a dwarfed and functionless vestige reduced to a band of fibrous muscle.

When reviewing the embryonic development of the human infant, Prof. Elliot Smith conclusively urges the following additional testimony of man's kinship with the lower mammalian world. He states that: "At a certain stage in the normal development of the human child a real tail, complete, with all the muscles for wagging, is formed; but after two or three weeks it begins to dwindle, and it finally disappears. Some of its muscles also atrophy; others are put to new purposes. No longer having any use as tail-movers, once the tail has vanished, they become converted into muscles that help to support and control certain organs of the body . . . These statements about the tail are not theories or hypotheses, they are simple statements of fact, which any one can confirm by looking at a human embryo that has reached the third week of its development or at photographs of the embryo at that stage . . . The human embryo is at this stage so nearly identical with that of the monkey, dog and pig at corresponding stages, that only those who have expert knowledge can distinguish one from another. In fact, in many medical schools students examine the embryo of pigs to acquire a practical knowledge of the development of man."

Many other evidences of man's kindred with "the brutes that perish" might be given, but those submitted should suffice, at least to suggest, that the theory of special creation has been completely eclipsed and discredited by the discoveries of recent biological science.

T. F. PALMER.

Masterpieces of Freethought.

XI.

THE DIEGESIS BY ROBERT TAYLOR.

I.

OVER a hundred years ago three extraordinary books were published with the strange titles of *The Syntagma*, *The Diegesis* and *The Devil's Pulpit*. They were certainly widely read. They had an enormous influence on a large number of Freethinkers and those people whose wavering faith inclined them to Freethought. They were constantly alluded to in the controversies between Freethinkers and Christians and their author was reviled as a degraded turncoat. And they are now read so little that one might as well admit they are as dead as the proverbial dodo.

For my own part, I am not willing they should be dead. I should like to see them in every Freethinker's library and read not only because they did work necessary to be done at their time (and it could not have been better done by any other Freethought writer then) but because of the courage, the knowledge, the scholarship and the thoroughness manifested in almost every page.

Their author was Robert Taylor—a fully ordained priest of the Church of England and a fully qualified surgeon; a strange combination of learning, it is true, but sufficient to prove he was no fool. Perhaps a brief sketch of his life will prove of interest to those who perhaps know nothing of him but his name.

Born in 1784, at Edmonton, Robert Taylor's father died while his son was still a boy. He was sent to his uncle in Shropshire, and eventually articled to Samuel Partridge, the house surgeon of a hospital in Birmingham. In 1805 he walked Guy's Hospital under Sir A. P. Cooper and received his surgeon's degree in 1807. He came then under the influence of the Rev. T. Cotterill and decided to study for the Church. At Cambridge he soon established a reputation as a wonderful sermon-maker and was complimented on his brilliant university career by Dr. W. Craven. The only man who equalled him in the exams. (Taylor was never beaten) was the student who eventually became famous as Sir John Herschel.

Robert Taylor was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Chichester in 1814 and formally ordained priest later. But doubts soon began to assail him, for by 1817 he began to be attacked for "ministerial inefficiency," and he resigned his curacy in 1818. He published an advertisement in Latin in the *Times*, asking for employment, giving an account of his views—but "recanted" (out of consideration for his mother) and burnt his deistical books. He then was taken up by the Rector of Stoke Newington, was done out of his money in trying to found a school, became a curate at Yardley, and was dismissed by the Bishop of Worcester. His family were at their wit's end what to do with such an "infidel," and eventually he received an allowance from his brothers, sailed to the Isle of Man, wrote for the local newspapers, went to Dublin and attacked the Church there, returned to London and founded in 1824 "The Christian Evidence Society." Strange irony of fate! Taylor's Society was out to prove there was no evidence for Christianity, while the Society existing now, which bears the same name, has been struggling on for many decades trying to find the evidence it believes is there, but so far has utterly failed to find it. How Taylor would have laughed at these people were he living now!

In 1827, Taylor opened the Salter's Hall Chapel, Canon Street, as his "Areopagus," and was arrested later for uttering a blasphemous discourse. He was

tried "in full canonicals" before Sir John Bayley, sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Oakham Gaol and to find £1,000 for his future good behaviour for five years. He had become friendly with that courageous champion of freedom, Richard Carlile, and while in gaol wrote the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis*.

Taylor was released in 1829, went on a five months' lecturing tour with Carlile, and opened the Rotunda in Blackfriars Road (it still exists) for the lectures later published as the *Devil's Pulpit*.

He was again indicted for blasphemy, and in 1831 sentenced to two years imprisonment, and fined £200. He was released in 1833, married a woman with means, retired to Tours in France, where he practised as a surgeon and died in 1844. J. M. Wheeler says he was badly treated in gaol, so it is not altogether surprising Taylor retired from active Free-thought. He evidently felt he had done his duty to the movement.

From this brief account it will be seen Robert Taylor had a pretty rough time as a Freethinker. He tasted its joys and glories, but he paid pretty dearly for the experience.

Humanitarianism was an almost unknown quantity a hundred years ago, but there were few persons as vile as an "infidel." Victorian Evangelism was just being ushered in. Wesley and Whitefield had done their work, and all over the country were Nonconformists whose piety was a horrible mixture of insufferable cant, humbug and stupidity. Puritanism was again rearing its horrid head and there was no treatment too foul which was not urged against Freethinkers. They were a pest to be blotted out by any means, and though the great stand made by Carlile, Watson, Hetherington, the Holyokes and Charles Bradlaugh eventually made Freethought something to be reckoned with, Taylor was almost alone in his great fight. I cannot find that he was ever supported by the "intellectuals" of his day. And I make so bold as to say that the slanders against him then urged by Christian have still an echo even in the notices made by some later Freethinkers.

Supposing a young supporter of this journal wanted to find out something about the work of Robert Taylor, whose three books he had heard of but never read. That he was some "considerable man" could be proven from the fact of the space given to him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Far less space is given to many a better known man. The writer of the notice is the Rev. Alexander Gordon, and it is difficult to understand why a clergyman should have been asked to write about such an out and out infidel as Robert Taylor. I have no means of judging whether the account of his life is fairly written. I think it is. But what can one say of the paltry attempt at criticism? Either the Rev. A. Gordon did or did not read the three books which constitute Taylor's work. If he did, he must have known that what he said about them is utterly worthless and untrue. If he had not read them, he had no business to say anything whatever about them. I shall have occasion to deal with Mr. Gordon later.

Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, in his famous *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, merely mentions the titles of Taylor's works. He might at least have pointed out that the *Syntagma* was a reply to Dr. John Pye Smith, and that the *Devil's Pulpit* was Taylor's marvellous attempt at showing how much Christianity was indebted to the sun and star myths.

Mr. Joseph McCabe says in his *Dictionary of Rationalism*, that Taylor's "system was pure Deism." I may have overlooked the passages in Taylor which are Deistical, but I cannot remember noticing any at all. If he was a Deist, I certainly should not have imagined it from what I have read in the three books.

Perhaps I may be corrected on this point. In any case, Mr. McCabe says Taylor "took up the solar myth theory of Christianity and elaborated it with considerable (but not very reliable) learning in his *Syntagma* and *The Diegesis*." Taylor does not mention—as far as I have read—the solar myth in the *Syntagma*, and just barely alludes to it in the *Diegesis*. It is worked out wonderfully well in the *Devil's Pulpit* and in that alone of the three. It is astonishing that Mr. McCabe did not mention this book by name.

Mr. John M. Robertson, in his *Short History of Freethought*, notices Taylor in a line and gives the names only of the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit*. In the monumental *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* he has more space to deal with the ex-clergyman, but again only mentions at first the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit*. It is only later when he comes to deal with the myth theory in regard to Jesus Christ that he makes a special reference to the *Syntagma* even quoting the title page in full and giving his own opinion of the work—instead of, as in the case of the *Diegesis*, quoting some one else's; though the latter criticism is a very welcome one and deserved to be unearthed. I shall deal with it later.

Thus our young explorer in the realm of Freethought biography and criticism would get very little help as to the value of Robert Taylor's work, and quite possibly be put off entirely from reading it. I think the time has come to protest against the belittling of those Freethinkers in the past, the brave old fighters who battled and suffered in the cause of truth and freedom. Just as Thomas Paine bore the brunt of Christian foulness almost alone, so did Robert Taylor thirty years later. Let us examine his picturesque work—it will be time well spent.

H. CUTNER.

(To be continued.)

In Praise of George Moore.

I HAVE been browsing in some old novels, among them George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin*. Of the period of *A Mummer's Wife*, and *A Modern Lover*, the early 'eighties, it is a book in which his inimitable clarity, delicacy, and firmness of touch are seen, as they have been seen continually deepening and developing, so as to be a sure prevision of what was to come after, and has come since.

Irish "society"—in Dublin and in the country—in the days of the Land League; the "glories" of a Castle Drawing Room, and the poverty of the Dublin slums; where "every stain of misery was revealed to the silken exquisites who, a little frightened, strove to hide themselves within the scented shadows of their broughams," and when "the bloom on every aristocratic cheek, the glitter of every diamond, the richness of every plume were visible in the avid eye of those who stood without in the wet and cold"—here are pictures limned in by a master hand, and, alas, as true of London to-day as of the Dublin of 1880.

Even the details of most of George Moore's work are not ephemeral, but have, like this picture, a quality of permanence. We have in *A Drama in Muslin* a study of Lady Cecilia Cullen and her friendship for Alice Barton, in which, long before the name of Freud was on the lips of thousands who never read a line of his writing, and nearly fifty years before the recent suppression of a novel on a similar theme, Moore, in what only takes a page or two for his illuminating pen, has given a matchless and immaculate portrayal of abberation.

It is, however, the references to religion that will be most interesting here, where Catholicism as the exploiter of the poor, and Protestantism as the badge of respectability, are seen making the worst of all that is best in their respective professors.

Alice Barton, educated at a Convent, yet has no "faith." Cecilia suspects she is an unbeliever. "But surely," says Alice, "it is not a merit to believe; it is hardly a thing we can call into existence." "You should pray for faith."

"I don't see how I can pray if I have not faith."

"Oh! you argue too well for me. You are too clever; but I would ask you, Alice, . . . did you never believe in God, I mean when you were a little child?"

"I suppose I must have, but, as well as I can remember, it was only in a very half-hearted way: very much as I believe in hobgoblins. Belief never touched me. I could never quite bring myself to credit that there was a Being far away, sitting behind a cloud, who kept his eye on all the different worlds, and looked after them just as a stationmaster looks after the arrival and departure of trains from some huge terminus."

"Alice! how can you talk so. Are you not afraid that something awful might happen to you for talking of the Creator of all things in that way?"

"Why should I be afraid, why should that Being, if he exists, be angry with me for my sincerity? If he is all-powerful, it rests with Himself to make me believe."

* * *

Here is a sketch of Mass at a village chapel attended by high and lowly, and of the impressions of Alice thereat. (Space compels some compression).

"The peasantry filled the body of the church. They prayed coarsely, ignorantly, with the same brutality as they lived. Just behind Alice a man groaned. He cleared his throat with loud guffaws: she listened to hear the saliva fall: it splashed on the earthen floor . . . Alice was troubled as if by the obscure sensations of a nightmare. Surely, if their belief—gentry and peasants, she put them together—was not a mockery, a mere familiar usage, they could not be so indifferent as they were. If they did realize that the white wafer was God—God the Creator! before whom all things are nothing—something more full of meaning, more worthy than this little Sunday mummery would be the result . . . Alice felt more calmly than she had ever done before, that what she was now witnessing was but the dust of an old world faith, the sweeping away of which had only been delayed because man is idle, and 'loves to lie abed in the unclean straw of his intellectual habits.'"

* * *

Alice meets an American visitor, Mr. Harding, a journalist, and although born a Catholic, a sceptic. They discuss her doubts and his somewhat optimistic unbelief. He says: "I can't say I am much given to doubting, nor do I think the subject is any longer one worthy of thought. The world's mind after much anxiety arrives at a conclusion, and what sages cannot determine in one age, a child is certain about in the next. Thomas Aquinas was harrassed with doubts about the possibility of old women flying through the air on broom-sticks; nowadays were a man thus afflicted he would be surely a fit subject for Hanwell. The world has lived through Christianity, as it has through a score of other things; and Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Dove have already been bequeathed to the vaudevillists of the future."

Present with her at Dublin Castle for the Vice-regal procession, Harding says: "Does not real life sometimes appear to you, Miss Barton, more distorted and unreal than the wildest midnight dream? The spectacle we have just witnessed was a part of the ages that believed in the godhead of Christ, and in the divine right of Kings; but it seems to me utterly bewildering that such barbarities should be permitted to loiter about the portals of this age of reason."

We will leave Harding with a final quotation, namely his opinion—more optimistic, as we believe, than George Moore's—that "republicanism and commonsense will not put up with all their nonsense (*i.e.*, the priests) for very long and it is my firm belief that in fifty—say a hundred—years priests and parsons, in common with other fortune tellers, will be prosecuted under the Vagrancy Acts." There is yet time for this to be accomplished within the longer period mentioned.

Such is the art of George Moore that Alice Barton,

whose friendship with Harding arouses a maniacal jealousy in Lady Cecilia, does not marry that gentleman, but an Irish doctor. She was married by a priest and at church withal—a surrender to convention. But on the wedding morning, as they stood before the altar, "Alice and the Doctor looked at each other and smiled; but their thoughts were too firmly fixed on the actual problem of their united lives to wander far in the most hidden ways of the old world's psychical extravagances. What did it matter to them what absurd usages the place they were in was put to?—they at least, were only making use of it as they might any other public office; the police station, where inquiries were made about parcels left in cabs; the Commissioner before whom an affidavit is made. And it served its purpose as well as any of the others did theirs." And Lady Cecilia retires, as so many of her abnormal type do, to the Convent.

* * *

To moralize on George Moore's work were an impertinence. If apology be needed for passing on these gleanings from his pages it is that nearly half a century has gone by since these pictures were drawn and these predictions made of the absurdity and early doom of Christian belief. If its doom is a little more assured, its cupidity is unabated, and he will understand the need for this journal, and the gratitude of one who realizes the dimensions of our task to writers like George Moore who, with the most powerful of all literary weapons, wage war against the ignorance and superstitions of men.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Freethought in South Africa.

THE overwhelming mass of the population of the Union consists of black or brown "natives." Without these people the industrial and agricultural life of the country would be paralysed. Legislation, in this Christian land, prevents them from competing with the whites in certain occupations, regardless of their ability to do so. The Colour Bar Act exists to save "white civilization" from the attack of a race with a lower standard of living. Nevertheless, this standard is confirmed by the very laws which are designed to protect the whites. Such is the logic of the human mind when it acts under the spur of fear!

These natives have been the hunting ground of European missionaries for generations, but their robust commonsense has rejected with indifference the nonsense of Christian doctrine. Some missionaries have risen above their creed, but the majority have "done themselves well," living comfortably and healthfully in the open air. Most of the natives who "belong" to Christian sects have been converted because it is their only means of getting elementary knowledge of the outside world, and acquiring some of the amenities of social intercourse.

The other day the writer conversed with an ordained native Wesleyan parson about the Faith. He was *not* shocked by my blasphemies. On the contrary, it was a treat to see his fat kindly face convulsed with appreciative laughter! Natives are not allowed in our public libraries, so that they could not read the *Freethinker*, even if it was miraculously there. They cannot afford to buy books or papers, because of their extremely low earnings. The writer knows an intellectual young native whose favourite literary fare consists of the Freethought classics, yet this young man is obliged to seek the rudimentary instruments of culture in rigidly controlled "institutions" serving the needs of C₃ intellects! And then we are virtuously indignant when some natives become political extremists and fanatics.

Next in importance to the natives are the Boers or Afrikaners. They are a very pious Christian people—it is reported that the great President Kruger once officially opened a Jewish Synagogue in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Many Afrikaners are descendants of Huguenot fugitives from Catholic persecution during the "happy" (according to Chesterton and Belloc) days of that Church's supremacy. The writer is an Afrikaner,

but in very few of his countrymen can he detect any of that toleration of opinion which one would expect from those who have suffered from intolerance in their own history. As a Christian nation, it would be difficult to match them in pride of ignorance, religious arrogance, and the withering denial of all that makes for beautiful living anywhere on earth—except, perhaps in the fundamentalist States of U.S.A. In many country districts public games, the only relaxation available, are sternly forbidden on Sundays. Mixed bathing is frowned upon as of the devil; and old Republican laws enforcing conformity in religious observances go unrepealed, no politician, however eminent, daring to attack these slumbering serpents lest he lose his influence. A successful politician, much more so here than in England, is obliged to play the hypocrite. General Smuts returns from the Presidential Chair of the British Association to a country in which ministers of the Dutch Church, the Church of his fathers, are denouncing as a "heretic" a theological professor, du Plessis, whose "heresies" are so mild that they would hardly shock your Bishop of London. These ministers have pronounced the infallibility of the Bible from cover to cover, and General Smuts, world philosopher and scientist, has nothing to say publicly about this humiliating display of ignorance by the shepherds of his people. It is impossible for sincerity in religious opinion to manifest itself in the public lives of men dependent upon the votes of illiterate electors.

Ominous references appear from time to time in the press concerning activities which, if they are not stoutly resisted, may transform our Universities into sectarian institutions unworthy of the quest of knowledge. The spiritual heirs of John Calvin are many in South Africa, and they are as great a menace to human joy and courage as were the Pilgrim Fathers in their grim American Settlements. *And there is no strong Freethought body here to fight these evils.*

The Afrikaners are the virtual rulers of this land through their numbers, and it is hoped that this article will catch the eye of some of them who cherish freedom of thought, and that they will bestir themselves to teach their people the A.B.C. of Freethought. Much can be done by translating and distributing articles such as Ingersoll's and Foote's. There is a great and necessary work to be done.

South Africa needs a Bradlaugh, and what a fight he will have.

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LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): 7.30, Messrs. F. Day and C. Tuson.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting will be held at White Stone Pond, Hampstead, near the Tube Station every Sunday morning at 11.30 a.m. Speaker to-day Mr. L. Ebury.

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.

FULHAM TOWN HALL, Fulham Road, S.W.6, close to Waltham Green (Underground Station). Mr. Chapman Cohen, President of the N.S.S., will lecture in the Concert Hall on Thursday evening, February 4, at 8.0. Subject—"The World's Need of Freethought."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. John Katz, B.A.—"The Unity of Mankind."

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, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Art of Living."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Prof. J. C. Flugel, D.Sc.—"Psychology and Ethics."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, February 1, at 8.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren will open a discussion on "New Standards of Value."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mr. George Whitehead—"Why I Dropped Socialism." Mr. T. F. Palmer in the chair.

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, February 2, at 7.0, Anthony M. Ludovici—"The Influence of Christianity on the Graphic Arts."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ASHINGTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Princess Ballroom Cafe): 7.15, a Public Debate—"Is There a God?" *Affir.*: W. Hogg; *Neg.*: J. T. Brighton. Collection.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance Lorn Street): 7.0, W. E. Kennaugh (Liverpool)—"Some Groundwork."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION, Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley. Ernest Thurtle (M.P. for Shoreditch 1923-31), 2.45 p.m.—"Clericalism Still the Enemy." 7.45 p.m.—"The Dangers of Compromise." Admission free. Reserved seats for Associates must be claimed by 2.30 and 7.0 p.m.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 6.30, Mr. J. Grant—"Idealism or Materialism." Questions and Discussion, silver collection.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Sam Cohen (Manchester)—"Christian Materialism and Atheistic Idealism." Current *Freethinkers* and other literature on sale.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, Editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the N.S.S.—"The Benefits of Unbelief." Admission free. Questions and discussion. Collection.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members' Annual Meeting.

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