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

Views and Opinions.

(Continued from page 67.)

Explaining Religion.

LAST week I dealt with the first of three questions put to me by a South Country Vicar after reading my book *God and the Universe*. He wrote me, not so much as one who wished to engage in controversy, as one who in the midst of his own religious difficulties was anxious to get my point of view more completely than he had ascertained from a reading of my book. The second question put me arises from a statement made in reply to Professor Eddington. He says:—

Where then we differ is, perhaps, best shown in the last two sentences of your reply to Eddington. It is so important to my mind that I quote you. It is seen that a very large part of this religious experience is explained out of existence. I agree, though we will not detail the very larger part. . . . Then "what remains unexplained is so only because our ignorance in some directions is still very great." Now, Sir, your book hits me hard . . . Am I to infer that because in the past religions have again and again been explained out of existence, therefore, all existing religious ideas will also be? And I have come to the conclusion that the answer is, No. You have come to the conclusion that the answer is, Yes . . . I claim that you have no more right to say, Yes, than I have to say, No, save this, that this curious thing Religion has persisted, and this explaining away or changing process applies to all human knowledge, in science most of all, and never so signally as at the end of the last century.

First, let me clear away what I think is a confusion with regard to the assumed likeness between the changes that take place in scientific theory and those which take place in religious belief. Every scientific theory is put forward as an attempted explanation of experience. It is built upon experience and has no

other validity or use save as an explanation of experience, to be modified or rejected as further experience demands. Finally, it is to be noted that the changes in scientific theory arise from science itself. Science is self-purificatory and applies its own methods of development.

Religious theory, on the other hand, is not put forward as a tentative explanation, but as a final one. It does not claim to rest upon experience, but to be superior to it. It does not offer itself as something which is to be checked at every step by experience, it resists every attempt at modification and denounces the rejection of its teaching as in itself a sin. Finally, the so-called "purification" of religion does not come from within, but from without. A religion never tells its followers that they must rightly test its teachings, and reject them the moment a wider and truer knowledge shows them to be inadequate and false. The demand for verification in itself suggests scepticism and is marked as wrong. The work of science is to find out what is truth, and it has no other possible interest than the discovery of truth. The work of religion is to preach what it calls "the truth," and it fights for its perpetuation. Scientific teaching is modernized from within; religion is modernized from without. Changes in scientific teaching make it more truly scientific; changes in religion make it less truly religious. Science persists by expansion; religion persists by contraction. Every extension of positive knowledge gives science a greater strength; it just as inevitably leads to a religious weakening. In actual practice one need only note the way in which the Christian Churches receive a man who asks for a modification of accepted teaching and the honour paid a scientist who demonstrates that something taught in the name of science is false. Religion builds upon human weakness; science upon human strength.

* * *

How It Is Done.

Now let me come to my statement that religion is to-day explained out of existence, a statement which my critic rightly regards as of first-rate importance. If I am right in this then the whole case for religion crumbles into dust. If I am right, then there is simply no case for the truth of religion, but only an enquiry as to how religious beliefs came into existence, and what are the causes that have led to their perpetuation. To put my position briefly and brutally, my claim is that modern science has wiped out altogether the question of whether the belief in God and a soul, in heaven and hell, in angels and devils is true; we know they are not true. In the light of modern knowledge all the religious apologies put forward on behalf of these things are so many fantastic irrelevances. They have no real relation to the facts of the situation.

Religion as a whole differs from science as a whole,

not because it deals with a different set of facts, but because of the different interpretation it places upon the same set of facts. The world in which we live is the same world, whether we are theistic or atheistic. The human nature that contemplates that world is the same whether it is theistic or atheistic. There is not a feeling, an impulse, a quality that is possessed by the theist that is not possessed by the Atheist. There is no difference in substance either in the world or in man, there is a difference only in the interpretation placed upon the same facts. It is this that stamps one interpretation religious and the other non-religious. The essence of the difference between Atheist and Theist is a difference of interpretation of facts that are common to both.

Look now at the facts upon which we know religion to base itself. These really cover the whole range of human nature and of nature at large. There are the facts of natural phenomena, every one of which were at one time interpreted in terms of religion. In the world of human nature we meet with the same thing. The religious value placed by all religions, primitive and modern, upon states of ecstasy, sometimes induced by fasting, or by practices that involve some disturbance of the normal functioning of the nervous system, the interpretation of disease as due to the possession by evil agencies, the religious interpretation of epilepsy and insanity have all gone to build up the sense of the truth of religion. If we pass from abnormal states to normal ones we have the same thing evidenced. Nearly forty years ago I pointed out the close relation between what is called conversion and the period of adolescence. Since then the line has been followed by many investigators both in this and in other countries, with the result of establishing the truth that conversion is mainly the interpretation in terms of religion of the developing sexual and social life of youth.

There is the same conclusion if we take the whole idea of the supernatural—of Gods big and little, local or universal, and of the survival of the "soul." Some seventy years of patient and trained observation all over the world of uncivilized peoples, and their comparison with surviving practices amongst civilized ones, has left no room for doubt that early religious ideas root themselves in man's inevitable ignorance of the nature of what is going on around him. Whatever may be the difference of opinion on points of detail, there is a very substantial agreement on the one point that early religious ideas rest on no other and no better foundation than a misinterpretation of well understood facts, both objective and subjective. And beyond this it is a mere matter of historical study to prove that existing religious beliefs as surely base themselves on the misinterpretations of primitive humanity as it is certain that the developed human form may be traced back to a primitive animal structure. With religion, however, it is not a case of putting an early structure to new uses, and so making the best of the situation, but a matter of persisting in conclusions that are drawn from admittedly false premises.

We have thus to face the plainest of plain facts. Either we must admit that the world-wide conclusions of anthropologists are wrong, deny that primitive religious beliefs did originate in the manner these men describe, and deny also that modern religious beliefs have not descended from primitive ones, or we must admit that the study of religion is fundamentally the study of a delusion. There is, in this last event no room for a discussion of the truth of existence of God or a soul or of any phase of the supernatural. There is no room for even Agnosticism, for there is nothing to be Agnostic about. That

illogical camouflage of Victorian timidity is dissipated by the recognition of the real nature of the problem before us. Once we realize that the belief in gods and ghosts began in a misunderstanding of facts that are now differently interpreted, all that is left is a discussion as to how the misunderstanding arose. Religion to-day is a question of psychology.

* * *

Clearing the Ground.

Now in all this I am applying to religion nothing but the most elementary rules of common sense, and putting into force a procedure which is everywhere else adopted. If a man visits a doctor and complains of hearing noises which he attributes to evil spirits, and on examination he is found to be suffering from some disease of the ear, the doctor pays not the least attention to the patient's claim that they are real voices. He admits the fact—the noises—but finds another and a better interpretation. When on the strength of certain observed facts the sun was believed to go round the earth, we had, again, a fact and an interpretation. But when it was shown that a better understanding of the fact led to the conclusion that the earth went round the sun, the old interpretation was discarded. In every case when we know the facts—neural disorder, or a misunderstanding of normal experience—upon which a delusion or wrong interpretation is based, and have another and a more correct interpretation to hand, we have done with the old one. In this way there has been explained away fairies and demons, witches and warlocks. They have been explained out of existence. Why may not the same rule be applied to religion? If we know the kind of experience that led men to believe in the supernatural, and if we now explain that experience in a way which leaves the supernatural out altogether, what reason have we to still accept an interpretation of things which we admit to have been quite wrong?

It is, I hope, now quite plain why I say that modern thought explains religion out of existence. It does this by taking all the facts upon which religious belief is based and showing, not merely that the religious explanation is wrong, but also that its wrongness is everywhere accepted in the world of science. And all my life I have been asking religious and semi-religious people to face this simple issue; and up to the present I have never met anyone who would face fairly the situation. Whether my present critic will I do not know, but I am quite certain that if he consults his brother clerics they will give him the advice that has been so often given in such circumstances, "Better leave him alone." It should also be plain why I insist that the apologies offered for the truth of religion, the arguments for the existence of a God or of a soul, are no more than a tissue of fantastic irrelevancies. They are so many excuses for continuing to profess a belief that has been completely exploded. The argument that changes in religion are on all-fours with changes in science does not fit the case, first for the reasons I have already given, second, because when a new interpretation of a given set of facts is adopted, the old one should be discarded. They cannot both be right. The facts upon which religion is based are there, the common property of believer and unbeliever. It is the interpretation of the facts that separates the primitive from the truly modern mind. If you do not accept modern science you may still hold to the world of the savage; but you cannot logically and honestly believe in both.

The final questions of my critic I will deal with next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Shillingsworth of Scholarship.

"Every reform was once a private opinion."

Emerson.

"Man is his own star."—Fletcher.

"Truth can never be confirmed enough

Though doubt did ever sleep."—Shakespeare.

THE inclusion of an abridged edition of Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* in the popular "Thinker Series" issued by Watts & Co., is an event of literary importance. For this fine work was originally issued at the price of a guinea, which limited the number of readers. At the cost of a shilling, however, the book should command a large sale and have an extended lease of life.

Theology has always been the meeting place of strange bed-fellows, and one is not surprised to find the versatile Grant Allen among the theologians. He was rightly proud of being one of the first to apply evolutionary theories to the belief in deity. In his preface to the first edition of *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, he said:—

It contains, I believe, the first extended effort that has yet been made to trace the genesis of the belief in God from its earliest origin in the mind of primitive man up to its fullest development in advanced and etheralized Christian theology.

It was an honest attempt to explain a big subject and Grant Allen had his reward. On its original publication the book made a deep impression among the people who care for other things than horse racing and football. Herbert Spencer wrote:—

I congratulate you on its achievement. I had no idea you had been devoting such an immensity of labour and research to the subject. The bringing together of the evidence in a coherent form, and showing its bearing on the current creeds can scarcely fail to have a great effect.

Spencer's tribute was richly deserved. In Grant Allen's masterpiece the whole theistic question is discussed in a nutshell. He shows quite clearly that the prevalent Christian idea of a deity is but a residuum. The attenuated deity is simply what is left when the other gods of the Pantheon are broken in pieces and ground to powder, simply the abstract form and general designation. A bubble is blown with real soapsuds, but it grows ever thinner and more transparent, and is most beautiful when it is at the point of breaking. The beauty does not save it, it breaks and disappears.

Allen met with great opposition on account of his anti-theistic book. Ordinary publishers, who are simply tradesmen, feared to offend their orthodox customers, and would not allow him to give full expression to his ideas. Science, pure and simple, did not pay; and novel-writing, to which he was compelled to turn, had to be carried on within absurd and galling restrictions. The publishers wanted smooth tales, generally of romantic love, written for young women.

Grant Allen did what he could as a novelist, but he chafed under the harness. In the days of threadbare plots, when all the old devices that were as embroidery to well-spun stories, were worn to skeletons of construction, it was a pleasure to find Rider Haggard and Stevenson rivalled in their romances by facts from the laboratory, and problems from the researches of scientists. Towards the end of his career Allen threw discretion to the winds, and wrote certain "Hill Top" novels, penned purely to ventilate some of his own ideas. *The Woman Who Did*, and *The British Barbarians* did not set the river Thames afire, but, owing to clerical influence, they caused a

drop in the sale of Allen's other novels. The Irish booksellers, as was customary in a priest-ridden country, refused to sell these books, and Allen found, as Hardy and Meredith before him, that propagating advanced opinions was not "roses all the way."

Grant Allen deserved well of his generation, for his finest and most suggestive work was that of a popularizer of science. He was an evolutionist, and he never tired of bringing that fascinating subject before popular readers. Strictly speaking, he was not himself a specialist, but he had a splendid and attractive gift of interpretation. His papers on biology, philology, the evolution of species, and kindred subjects, were bright and readable, even at times amusing. As a rule, when serious scientists try to be humorous, the result is "too deep for tears." This racy gift of Grant Allen's actually made him suspect in some scientific circles. Serious pedants professed to scorn his scientific journalism. They despised the star gossip of Richard Proctor on the same grounds, preferring, presumably, the unbearable obscurity of Dionysius Dryasdust, F.R.S., and other unreadable scholars. Whether the scientists felt that, having gained this knowledge by years of work, it was prodigality to give it away too easily, or whether the old clerical spirit had found a new lodgment in scientific circles, may be an open question. Nothing appeared to irritate some of the authors of ponderous monographs so much as having their life-work made intelligible to the wide reading public. But Grant Allen was a benefactor as well as a writer. He opened up a new universe to tens of thousands of appreciative readers who had previously known little of science beyond the mere name.

By means of delightful and informative books, Grant Allen awoke a new interest. In entrancing chapters he led a large reading public to understand the mysteries that, expressed in the esoteric terminology of a scientific vocabulary, else had remained unknown except to the superior persons scattered throughout the world. Now, thanks to an enterprising publisher, the ordinary reader may obtain Allen's masterpiece for a few pence, and, it may be, see more clearly the tendency of the anti-theistic movement than those who, with technical knowledge, dissect the old faiths whilst still worshipping the Goddess Grundy, the last and most elusive of the deities of the Pantheon.

MIMNERMUS.

He who thinks, and thinks for himself, will always have a claim to thanks; it is no matter whether it be right or wrong, so as it be explicit. If it is right, it will serve as a guide to direct; if wrong, as a beacon to warn.—Bentham.

The whole faculties of men must be exerted in order to nobler energies, and he who is not earnestly sincere lives but in half his being—self-mutilated, self-proscribed.—Coleridge.

Toleration must be a passing mood only, leading on to appreciation. Simply to put up with people is to insult them.—Goethe.

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

John Milton.

The religious life is based upon authority, the intellectual life is based upon personal investigation.

P. G. Hamerton.

The cook was a godly woman, the butcher a Christian man, and the table suffered.—R.I.S.

Masterpieces of Freethought.

XI.

THE DIEGESIS BY ROBERT TAYLOR.

(Continued from page 76.)

II.

THE *Manifesto* issued by the Christian Evidence Society, founded by Robert Taylor and written by him was just a leaflet, in which the following propositions were elaborated very briefly with cited authorities:—

1. That the Scriptures of the New Testament were not written by the persons whose names they bear.
2. That they did not appear in the times to which they refer.
3. That the persons of whom they treat never existed.
4. That the events which they relate never happened.

Such "propositions" issued now would cause hardly a tremor even in the ranks of the orthodox. The first two are tacitly admitted even by the most pious. Propositions 3 and 4 are not, of course, but get even a genuine modern Catholic or Calvinist on that remarkable event, Jesus being carried about by a Devil, and he will immediately begin to hedge. A hundred years of Biblical criticism has played havoc with orthodoxy. But Taylor in putting forward these four propositions in 1827 was not merely fighting the cause of Freethought. He was carrying the war right into the enemy's camp, and he was armed, not only with the technical equipment of a scholar, but with his own views and deductions therefrom. When the Rev. A. Gordon, in the *Dictionary of National Biography* tells us that Taylor's work (in the *Diegesis*) was "a curious medley of random judgments and second-hand learning," he was deliberately trying to hide the fact that Taylor was, in some ways, a bold investigator and original thinker in the vast realms of Biblical criticism. Mr. Gordon knew that very few readers of his notice would look up Taylor and judge for themselves whether his criticism was anything but Christian spite. "Second-hand" learning exactly describes the kind of knowledge which encompasses almost every priest who knows nothing but the babbling of a parrot. Taylor, at least, did attack the very heart of Christianity, and that in a manner which completely upset most of his Christian contemporaries. One of them was well known in his day, and just as completely forgotten now, Dr. John Pye Smith. He was one of those preposterous orthodox bullies, who imagined himself a match for any infidel, and he took off his gloves and produced a pamphlet, possibly rare and difficult to obtain now, but which, by a piece of luck, lies before me now. It is entitled *An Answer to a Printed Paper entitled "Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society,"* and it contains also a *Rejoinder to the Syntagma*, and a preface dealing with *The Diegesis*. It is an intolerant piece of raging anger, and to it Taylor produced one of the most effective replies I have ever read in the world of controversy. The *Syntagma* is a gem of the first water of this kind of literature. Smith could not, naturally, avoid personalities. In this he was unlike the urbane Dr. Watson, in whose reply to Thomas Paine will be found a desperate attempt to be courteous and tolerant to the wretched "infidel." Taylor produces as a start about seventy instances of this kind of thing from the dear Christian who, in this way, defended the Word of God:—

Audacious falsehood, dishonest man, wilful deceiver, unhappy writer, unblushing falsehoods,

gross untruth, disgraceful ignorance, dishonestly garbled, wicked in soul, contemptible writer, one of the most unprincipled and impudent liars that ever opened a mouth or set pen to paper—and so on.

The *Syntagma* dealt step by step with Pye Smith's *Answer* and made mincemeat of both the pamphlet and the writer. Taylor poked fun at the pomposity and bullying and learning of his opponent throughout, and at the same time contributed a magnificent volume to Biblical criticism. Mr. John M. Robertson says, "of the *Syntagma*, as of his work in general, the outstanding lesson appears to be that little effect on thought is to be won by pyrotechnics." But, if I may say so, the "pyrotechnics" is not to be found in "his work in general." The *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit* were not replies to an opponent, and the style of the *Syntagma* was just suited to deal with a Christian bully like Pye Smith. Moreover Mr. Robertson admits that Taylor "had a good many readers and influenced, among others, Judge Strange." In any case it was not the "pyrotechnics" which caused Taylor to be regarded askance by critics. It was because he pushed his unbelief as far as it could be pushed. For example, on the page after the title page is the following—which, of course, represents his own views:—

The Publisher to the Reader. Thou hast, in this Pamphlet all the sufficient evidence, that can be adduced for any piece of history a thousand years old, or to prove an error of a thousand years standing, that such a person as Jesus Christ never existed; but that the earliest Christians meant the words to be nothing more than a personification of the principle of reason, of goodness, or that principle, be it what it may, which may most benefit mankind in the passage through life.

Even now, a denial of the existence of such a person as Jesus Christ is enough to put off Christian readers—and for that matter quite a number of reverent Agnostics also; just as there are a large number of Freethinkers who insist on abolishing Christ, but not his *ethics*. In Taylor's time no sin could be worse than a denial of the existence of Jesus, and this with the addition of Taylor's defence of the sun-myth theory, put him out of court with quite a number of Freethinkers who considered he was far too rash. By the way, Mr. Robertson says of the *Syntagma*, "Here the arguments of his other works are vehemently colligated and developed." But the *Diegesis* appeared a year later (1829) and the *Devil's Pulpit* in 1831, and it is only in the last-named work that the sun-myth theory is developed. I have no doubt Taylor was already studying Dupuis, to whom he admits a big debt, but he was not writing on the subject till after the publication of the *Diegesis*.

There are some delicious pages of banter and satire in the *Syntagma* which I should love to reproduce. But space (as usual) forbids, and I want a word on the *Devil's Pulpit* before I pass on to the *Diegesis*.

It is really extraordinary how critics have not ventured on an examination of Taylor's claims. His thesis is that the Gospels embody a symbolic element, borrowed consciously or unconsciously from paganism, in which stories of the course of the sun and stars through the heavens are the distinguishing feature. Dupuis in his *Origin of All Worships* had already dealt with this in the most exhaustive manner, but Taylor, while relying a great deal on that great work, made the subject his own not only because of the inimitable manner of his discourse (the *Devil's Pulpit* consists of forty-eight of the lectures he delivered at the Rotunda in Blackfriar's Road and elsewhere), but because of the wonderfully clear explanation he gives of many of the Biblical narratives. How far he is right, it is difficult to say. How far is he right in his explanation of the myth of Mary?

Taylor was, (I think) one of the first to insist upon the non-existence of Mary, except as one of the many variations of Venus. He asks, "Why is it among all the boasted treatises on the evidences of Christianity, not one has ever attempted to prove the existence of the mother of Christ?" He points out that the name of Mary is literally the same as Miriam, or Myrrh, of the sea or Myrrha, the mother of Adonis. It comes from the Latin word *Mare* the sea, Maria, the seas or Marina, pertaining to the sea. Taylor says Mary signifies mistress of the sea, and is like the Marine Venus, born of the foam of the sea. Miss Charlotte M. Young, altogether too orthodox to have ever seen Taylor's work, points out in the *History of Christian Names*, that one derivation (the best) of Mary or Miriam is from *Marah* (bitterness) and in the Middle Ages the name was explained as Myrrh of the Sea or Lady of the Sea.

Mr. John M. Robertson in that masterpiece of analysis, *Christianity and Mythology*, has a fine section on the "Mythic Marias," in which the whole question is exhaustively treated with the apparatus of a great critical scholar; but from the occult side, it is interesting to note that Madame Blavatsky in the *Secret Doctrine* says, "Venus Aphrodite is the personified sea, and the Mother of the God of Love, the generatrix of all the Gods as much as the Christian Virgin Mary is *Mare*, the sea, the mother of the Western God of Love, Mercy and Charity." I have purposely dealt with the question of Mary because it is one of the hundred questions dealt with in a suggestive manner by Taylor which fill the *Devil's Pulpit*. Whether he was always right does not matter. It is so very easy to judge a pioneer when we have at the back of us a century of close Biblical criticism, the work of a large number of scholars and thinkers. And it is no victory to say Taylor was wrong here or mistaken there. *The Devil's Pulpit* is packed with all sorts of suggestions based on the solar legends and also on the meaning of words. The symbolism in the Hebrew language has been more carefully done by Inman in *Ancient Fails in Ancient Names*, but not until it is recognized that Hebrew never was a spoken language but is a made up language in the interests of the priests will there be a scientific investigation of its peculiarities. To claim it as a "holy" language spoken exactly as written is hopelessly unscientific. At all events, here again Taylor brought his own fine knowledge of languages into play, and the *Devil's Pulpit* is always worth the patient study of Freethinkers. To come to the *Diegesis* at last, it was no mean feat to write a book of 440 closely printed pages in prison, packed full of references and authorities. Here again it does not matter if Taylor was always right. He made a bold attempt to solve "the origin, evidences and early history of Christianity," and claimed that "never before or elsewhere" was it "so fully and faithfully set forth." I am of opinion he was right. It may have many faults, but it does contain a masterly epitome of his subject. I think if any modern young man or woman wants a good general idea of Biblical criticism and a good account of the earliest known references to Christianity with authorities for statements of facts and many inferences drawn from them by a master of analysis, let him (or her) read the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis*. A hundred years have not diminished their value or sturdy independence of thought.

H. CUTNER.

(To be concluded.)

EVERYTHING great is not always good; but all good things are great.—DEMOSTHENES.

Goethe the Freethinker.

(Concluded from page 70.)

II.

MANY assertions could be quoted from English writers intended to convey the impression that Goethe's attitude to Christianity underwent a profound change as he advanced in years; but the assertions are inexcusably misleading. He had always consistently maintained that the organized hierarchy, Catholic or Protestant, in no sense represented the primitive Christian community, and not one of his later references to Christ in any way reverses his general verdict on the Christian religion and its scheme of redemption. Only eleven days before his death, writing to Eckermann, he said that Biblical questions can be viewed from two standpoints, either as a study in religious origins or from the standpoint of the Church, which, feeble and transitory as it is, will continue as long as there are weak human beings in existence to need her good offices. This, it may be observed in passing, is quite a Goethean attitude to religion. In the *Maxims in Prose*, which belong to his later life, there is a striking reference to superstition and its influence: it is, says the poet, so essentially a part of human nature that, even when we imagine we have rooted it out, it seeks refuge in nooks and corners of the strangest description. In his letters to Zelter, the musician, one of the dearest of all his friends—Goethe's last letters, written after he had entered his 'eighties—are numerous passages showing his repugnance to Christianity's low estimate of human nature. One of these letters, dated June 9, 1831, expresses strongly his abhorrence of the cross as a symbol, and this feeling towards it had been excited at a very early period in the poet's life. Here he refers to it as "the wretched wood of torture, the most repulsive thing under the sun." The last letter that Goethe ever wrote, a long one dated March 11, 1832, does not contain a word directly bearing on religion, but near the end there is a remark so Goethean to the core that I must quote it:—

It is strange that the English, the French, and now the Germans, too, like to express themselves incomprehensibly, just as others like to listen to what is incomprehensible.

Again and again in reading the master we note this detestation of obscurantism, of that verbiage which expresses nothing real, and which he was never weary of arraigning as one of the baneful influences of his time.

Later on I hope to speak more in detail of Goethe's lyric poetry and of *Faust*; but it is of interest here to refer to a few passages in the latter which confirm what I have already said. In the drama *Faust* himself is to some extent a self-revelation; but, however interpreted, in Goethe's view Christianity's message to mankind, with its insistence on the innate evil of the human heart, with its other-worldliness and its idea that there is one and only one way of regeneration for each and all, is not only false to Nature but leads to irretrievable pessimism, and this view finds as articulate expression in *Faust* as in any other of his works. Confirmation of this may be found in page after page of the drama. In Part I, Scene IV, when Mephistopheles speaks of the life beyond, Faust replies:—

Of other worlds beyond the skies
I little reck: when this one lies
In ruin, then the other may have birth.
My pleasure's here, springs from the earth.

No minute research is required to find the same idea elsewhere in Goethe. Does our next quotation

smack at all of Christian orthodoxy? When Faust would fain have a vision of womanly beauty, of a female form which is "the bright epitome of all the heavens," Mephistopheles sees no reason why his longing should not be satisfied:—

Now, if a God first plagues himself six days,
Then self-contented, "Bravo!" says,
Why, something clever crowns his work.

Goethe as a thinker and investigator in the domain of natural science has been the subject of interesting dissertations by Helmholtz and Virchow; but it would carry me far afield to deal adequately here with this aspect of the master's work. One fact, however, deserves to be specially emphasized—the notion of evolution, in its broadest aspect, had taken complete possession of him. His great merit, said Helmholtz, is that he saw clearly that the differences in the anatomy of different animals are to be looked upon as variations from a common type, induced by differences of habit, locality, or food. This conception appears in a monograph on the intermaxillary bone, written as early as 1786 and is developed in the *Sketch of a General Introduction to Comparative Anatomy*, which appeared about ten years later. The second leading conception which Goethe contributed to science is found in his insistence on the analogy between the different parts of one and the same organic being, an analogy most striking in the vegetable kingdom but not confined to it. Helmholtz's lecture on Goethe's scientific researches, delivered in 1853, is itself a chapter in the history of evolution in the organic world.

To few men has Nature meant so much as to Goethe, for whom in her warring and her peaceful elements alike she is always one ultimate fact and man is her highest product. Evil exists but it is the outcome of our human sense of values: the evolutionist has no need to reconcile it with God. "Nature fills every space with her unlimited productivity. Consider our earth merely: everything that we call evil, misery, arises from this, that the earth cannot afford space to every production, and still less can she grant it duration." Not only is this idea of Nature's ceaseless interchange of combination and dissolution essentially Goethean, but there is the firm conviction that the principle of determinism applies in both the inorganic and the organic world, in religion, politics, and the whole history of our race. Bielschowsky says that Goethe was a Spinozist before he ever heard of Spinoza. Certainly no one else so much as the famous Dutch-Jewish Freethinker influenced the poet's philosophy, his world-view. He declared that he did not mind being accused as an Atheist if so he were coupled with the name of his revered master.

Here it would be interesting, if space permitted, to consider at some length the poet's views on Theism. Occasionally he speaks like a thorough-going Agnostic, sometimes like a Pantheist, and frequently when he refers to God he qualifies the word with a possessive pronoun—"my," "your," "his," or "their" God occurs fairly often. Now and then "God and Nature" or "God and necessity" are linked together almost as if they were one and the same. "If an ultimate phenomenon," he said to Eckermann, "has astonished us, we ought to rest content, nothing higher can be granted to us, and we ought not to seek anything behind it." On another occasion, speaking of the inexhaustible and productive energy of Nature, Goethe said to him: "That is my God."

I have already referred to the poet's interpretation of evil, and could quote whole pages to show his complete rejection of the theory of a moral government of the world. R. H. Hutton, in an able but

very unsympathetic essay on Goethe, after emphasizing this attitude adds: "God he regarded as inscrutable, and as best left to reveal himself." In *Prometheus* and elsewhere the poet strikes vigorously at the anthropomorphic idea of an external, personal deity that is concerned with man and his works: if such a God exist we are all engaged in an unequal conflict with him. Nature reveals no supreme personality interested in our welfare; her sun shines impartially on all, but her wind and water, thunder and hail, are equally impartial. Goethe has expressed this view in lines which Matthew Arnold, whose love of the German poet is often reflected in his own prose and verse, has imitated in a fine passage in *Empedocles*:—

Like us, the lightning fires
Love to have scope and play;
The stream, like us, desires
An unimpeded way;
Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.
Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

The fatuity of all attempts to prove that Goethe believed in immortality, in the Christian sense, seems to me quite manifest. Here is his opinion on this subject, as expressed when he was seventy-five years old:—

This occupation with ideas of immortality is for people of rank, and especially for ladies who have nothing to do. But a man of real worth who has something regular to do here, and must toil and struggle to produce day by day, leaves the future world to itself, and is active and useful in this.

This does not reflect the mood of the moment; it represents Goethe's typical attitude to the question of man's survival of physical death. When Mephistopheles says:—

Trust me, this perfect life is only for a God,
For man must day and night suffice,

he probably expresses Goethe's own philosophy of life, the view that there is no such thing as "supreme good" divorced from the healthy instincts of men and women. I think the dominant idea that permeates *Faust* is this: what matters above all other things for the productive life is aspiration. Human happiness can never be absolute here or anywhere else, and eternal bliss is not only a will o' the wisp, but those who preach it degrade personality and make our moral problems more acute. True, the poet says, in one of his *Maxims* (in verse) that a sufficient ground for believing in immortality is the fact that we cannot dispense with the belief; but he insists too often that there is no continued spiritual individuality for weak, dependent personalities to leave us in any doubt as to his real views on this subject. We may instructively quote the opinion of an English writer on this point. Sir Archibald Alison said that Goethe added to the ignominy of being heterodox in religion "the awful disgrace" of rejecting belief in the immortality of the soul. If that is not a characteristic compound of Christianity and English culture I do not know where the thing is to be found.

On March 22, 1832, Germany's greatest son, the poet and thinker whom Strauss declared to be "a world in himself," died an almost ideal death. His suffering was slight and he had no consciousness of the approaching end. Eckermann saw his body prepared for burial, and noted the peace and firmness of the features—"a perfect man lay in great beauty before me." "More light!"—this was the poet's last utterance, and it was symbolic of his life and his life's work.

A. D. McLAREN.

Acid Drops.

The Established Church militant here in England is evidently spoiling for its fight with the public which is inevitable unless its Commission on the relations between Church and State is a washout. Not content with breaking the law in the matter of the re-marriage of divorced persons and others lawfully qualified to marry, the York Convocation, consisting of clergymen, has passed a resolution calling upon "the Home Secretary and the Postmaster-General to restrict or prevent the distribution by post of advertisements dealing with contraceptives, and the display of such goods in shop windows." One of the speakers (Rev. E. T. Kirby) produced statements in favour of birth control by the Bishop of Birmingham, the Dean of London and Durham, and Dr. Norwood of the City Temple. It was also alleged that the front cover of a Telephone Directory, published by H.M. Stationary Office advertised "surgical appliances!" From one point of view the more of this intolerant rubbish we get the more we shall like it, for even the lackadaisical man in the street may at last discover the real character of these gentry, whose main concern is to get, and to keep on getting their millions out of the State and, at the same time as they pick its pockets, put handcuffs on its liberties.

It is very clever of the *Church Times* in these circumstances to pose, as the brewers used to, as the champion of the working man's beer. Re-butting a statement of the *Methodist Times*—religious journals like religious people spend much of their time quarrelling with each other—that "a Bill for Sunday closing would have the united support of all the Churches," makes it clear that they are not united, even about beer and Sunday opening. "The people who would prevent the working man from drinking a glass of beer on Sunday are the same people who would prevent his sons from playing cricket in the parks," and we may add, they are the same people, or at least of the same religion, as those who would prevent the working man, and his wife and sons and daughters from getting reliable information in order to safeguard themselves against that ignorance which causes more disease and unhappiness in families than all the beer consumed in this country. "Drunkenness," says the *Church Times* "has become rare in England"; yes, in proportion as religion has declined, and the influence of the clergy has waned. This is a case of the Anglican Pot calling the Methodist Kettle black.

A reverend writer waxes sarcastic about the "modern" practice of wearing or carrying a mascot when journeys are undertaken. In olden days, he says, men began their journeys with a sacrifice to the Gods. To-day, people rely not on faith in God, but on mechanical efficiency, plus a mascot. They are "too clever to need God's favour," and anyway, "against any chance evil" they carry a mascot. Well, we shouldn't call this way of thinking truly modern. The Christian Church taught people to believe in unseen powers—evil and good; and to beseech the good power—God—to safeguard them against the evil power. What has happened to-day is that people have lost their faith in God, but the religious notions accompanying that faith still persist. Unseen powers for good and evil are believed to surround one, and the mascot is carried because it is believed to be efficacious in averting the evil influences. It is a similar kind of thinking as that which induces millions of Christians to carry a small crucifix. Whether the mascot be a Christian one or the latest equivalent of the pagan charm, the reason for wearing it is not "modern" but primitive. After all, there is substantially little difference between the mentality of one who offers up a prayer to God to safeguard him on a journey, and the mentality of another who believes a mascot achieves a similar result.

A further striking proof of the power of religion to make men better, was seen on Sunday last, when the Church service was abandoned for fear of an outbreak

while the prisoners were at their prayers. One would have imagined that the solemnity of the service, the magic of the name of Jesus, the eloquence of the parson, and the "sacred" air of the place, backed by the warders with loaded revolvers and machine guns outside, ought to have been enough to have preserved peace on the sacred day. Really, the responsible parties appear to be acting as though religion has no influence at all.

The *Methodist Times* has an "exclusive" message from Mr. Lloyd George apropos of the Disarmament Conference. The bulk of its front page (of which the message takes a small part) contains a picture (across four columns) of the dove of peace?—No; of Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Douglas Haig, General Joffre and M. Albert Thomas at the 14th Corps Headquarters, Meaulte, September 12, 1916! We come now to the message thus infelicitously illustrated.

"The best of all books," according to Mr. Lloyd George, "tells us that to attain peace, armaments must be abolished or diverted to the ends of productive industry, and military training and conscription abandoned." Where, in the Bible, are we told any such thing? The well-worn quotation about swords and ploughshares and spears and pruning hooks which the rt. hon. gentleman quotes from Isaiah is unfortunately chosen, for the God for whom that prophet was supposed to be speaking is recorded, only a few verses before this, to have declared, "Ah! I will ease me of mine enemies and avenge me of my adversaries . . . and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." This does not sound like the declaration of a pacifist deity. God, like Christianity, must be judged by "works," not by words.

If, in 1914, the Christian communities in Europe had stood by the tenets which are now once more held out as the way to international harmony, there might have been no war. We say "might" because in 1914, and at every great crisis in human history for two thousand years, nobody responsible counted upon Christians practising what they preach, and nobody, however irresponsible, would have betted on their so doing. Mr. Lloyd George once said, "you cannot run a war as you run a Sunday school treat." And you cannot make the peace of the world secure until the false inspiration of religion is replaced by ideas that will not find their expression in such a simile as that "Europe drenched with the blood of its bravest and best," and the "hallowed causes" like that holocaust, "are the Stations of the Cross on the road to the emancipation of humanity." Next station—Shanghai! or is it Geneva?

It seems that "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," of whom they sing in Sunday schools, was not always true to that reputation. The Rev. Norman Goodall, in a Senior Course of Sunday School Lessons, asks, "Was Jesus angry?" According to him "the Prince of Peace could be a flame of fire upon occasion, and it is only a weak interpretation of goodness which assumes that the speaker of the Beatitudes could not also speak in language and in a passion that scorched his hearers. Jesus was not amiable. He was too great a lover." And, having gone thus far Mr. Goodall pulls up short, and observes, "we must guard against identifying many of our own loveless outbursts with the moral indignation of Jesus." The most "scorching" thing Jesus is reported to have said, is perhaps, his repudiation of his mother and father. "And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Then (and this is, we presume, a sample of moral indignation) Jesus said, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." And "they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." (Luke ii. 48-50.) Which is not surprising, although no doubt Mr. Goodall could have enlightened them.

Some time since the Lambeth Conference resolved that Nonconformists should, on certain occasions, and as a favour, be permitted to Communion in Anglican

Churches. Months later Convocation discussed this resolution and failed to agree about it. Some approved, others alleged it was a breach of one of the Canons, and that, anyway, Nonconformists are schismatics. In the end Convocation, on the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury, resolved, in effect, that this matter be dealt with "this day six months." The Bishop of Chelmsford wrote a temperate letter to the *Times*, supporting the proposal for inter-communion. The *Church Times*, in reply, asked his Lordship whether a ticket collector would allow a passenger to board a train knowing he had no ticket! The *Christian World*, not to be outdone in civility, observed that it "was not aware that any Nonconformist had requested the privilege of occasional conformity," and hoped no more would be heard of the proposal. Finally, the Psalmist says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

It is not often that the truth about events in which the Church is involved appears unvarnished in the newspapers. The new Spanish Republic has, on the whole, been fortunate in its press notices. Possibly the sheer mendacity of papistical journals has been too much even for Fleet Street. In last Sunday's *Observer* there is a most informative message from its correspondent in Spain on the suppression of the Jesuit Order. The writer says:—

Almost all the religious congregations which have taken refuge or established themselves in Spain have, sooner or later, taken advantage of their immunity from direct taxation to enter other spheres of activity apart from the primordial object of their establishments. Thus we have the Carthusians manufacturing the Chartreuse liqueur in Tarragona, the Benedictine monks conducting a similar business at Pasajes, whilst others manufacture chocolate at Bilbao. The Jesuits have ever shown themselves to be the most ambitious in that there is hardly a branch of human activity that they have not invaded. The exact number of their establishments in Spain is not at present known. In addition, they are owners, or part owners, of numbers of theatres and picture-palaces, possess large holdings in the Spanish Trans-Atlantic Company and Spanish railways as well as owning banks and credit establishments where large deposits are held.

This correspondent further states:—

The Government maintains that the decree is not directed against the Church of Rome, but is intended to prevent the interference of the Jesuits in the social and political life of the country. A further decree will shortly be issued defining the future activities of those religious bodies which, while recognizing the sovereignty of the Spanish State, have in the past devoted themselves to activities other than religious. Many of them will remain in the country without much modification in their status.

This does not sound like persecution.

"Belief in the Bible as literally inspired and equally true in every detail "has, according to the Rev. Dr. Foot Newton "petrified the Bible." Asking whether "it is to be wondered at that young people will have nothing to do with the Bible," or have been "confused by its contradictions," he declares that when they "enter the University and examine the Bible carefully for the first time they find their early teaching to have been wrong." Carried away by his wrath that anyone should think the Bible means what it says, the Doctor begs Christians to "rise above the letter to the spirit for the letter killeth, and it will kill the Bible just as surely as anything else." The last six words are ambiguous, for we cannot think of any other book to which they apply or in reading which we have to look for some other sense than that of the words we read.

The Rev T. R. Glover in an address at Bristol said: "People are reading trash and watching trash, and the only place where things that are fundamental can be put before them is the pulpit." In the next column but one

to this gem of clerical pomposity we read that "the world has set itself to jeer at any emptiness, from the emptiness, of superficial evangelistic emotionalism to the emptiness of bigoted ecclesiasticism." The reader of the *Christian World* must, we should think, be puzzled as to whether if the Bible is not reliable, and if neither Evangelical nor ecclesiastical religion are to be swallowed, there is very much left for their consumption. The Rev. Paul Barton, the author of the alliterative sentence above quoted says, "after all this may be wholesome"—i.e., that the world is jeering at the emptiness of religion. If the world has come to the conclusion that wholesome is as wholesome docs, we should have thought this was the reverse of appetising diet for the clergy.

Apropos of "Christian unity"—that quaint chimera bred from Christian disunity—at a recent conference of the Christian Unity League, held in America, a united Communion service was held at which a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church took part. According to an account in a pious journal, he entered the church with the procession of ministers and partook of the "elements" at the hands of a Lutheran and Methodist minister. In the clergy stalls were pastors of the Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist Churches. Wonderful! And it happens—as an unusual event—nineteen centuries after Christ introduced the religion which was to bring all believers in it together as brothers. The right explanation of this phenomenon is, of course, not the "moving of the Spirit" as the pious might say, but an acute appreciation of that profound saying—"If we don't hang together, we may hang separately."

Fifty Years Ago.

BRADLAUGH AND THE OATH.

No one can tell what will happen next Tuesday at St. Stephen's. One thing only is certain. Mr. Bradlaugh will present himself to be sworn. All the rest is speculative.

Will the Tories repeat their old tactics? We think so. Sir Stafford Northcote will probably move again his old resolution that Mr. Bradlaugh be not allowed to take the oath; and as there has been an urgent whip issued, the Tories will doubtless muster in strength and vote as one man.

How will the Speaker act? He has the power to terminate the struggle. If he would only treat Sir Stafford Northcote as he treated Sir Wilfred Lawson, and Mr. Bradlaugh as he did Mr. Tom Collins, there would be an end to the miserable affair. But as he grossly exceeded his powers once, he will probably do so again, and afford the young bloods of the Opposition another opportunity of "baiting Bradlaugh," which they think a much finer sport than shooting pheasants or pigeons.

How will the Government act? We are afraid that it will do nothing. A Coercion Bill was demanded for the enforcement of law in Ireland, but the Government will not coerce the law-breakers at Westminster. Some private member, probably Mr. Labouchere, will be allowed to move "the previous question," whatever that may mean when there is no other business before the House; and every Liberal member will be permitted to vote as he pleases. In that case, it is quite possible that some weak Liberals will abstain from voting, while others, like pious Samuel Morley, will desert to the enemy, and thus enable Sir Stafford Northcote's resolution to be carried.

How will Mr. Bradlaugh act? If he is again denied his legal right, we believe he will claim to make a speech at the bar, in which he may stigmatize his cowardly and slanderous opponents according to their deserts. He may be arrested for contempt of the House. That is the best thing that can happen. Or the House may shrink from the logical consequence of its policy, and allow him to escape free. In that case his words will be reported and will ring from one end of the country to the other.

The "Freethinker," February 5, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

(Mrs) J. P. THOMPSON.—We may publish an article on Biblical prophecy in the course of a few weeks, but we are dubious as to its value. People who believe in such an out of date absurdity have their proper home in the Church and are never likely to get anywhere else.

R. LICKFOLD.—Will bear your suggestion in mind.

W. P. SPANN.—We have passed your letter on to Mr. McLaren. If he can find time to do what you suggest, we shall be pleased to allot the necessary space.

J. C. WILSON (Montreal).—Thanks for cuttings. Religion always has stupidity for a bedfellow.

J. W. SILKSTONE (Toronto).—Glad to hear from you. The converted criminal is always a profitable example for evangelical Christianity. Pit Christianity could not stop the criminal being manufactured.

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.

All membership subscriptions to the National Secular Society are due on January 1. Mr. R. H. Rosetti, the General Secretary, informs us that the subscriptions are actually a little ahead of the subscriptions for last year, but there are still many members who have not yet remitted. This note is intended as a reminder of a duty yet to be done, and we also take advantage of the occasion to remind all and sundry that the subscription is purely nominal, and that it is left to those interested to enlarge their subscriptions as much as possible. Of course, not being a member does not prevent donations being sent along—particularly to the Benevolent Fund, which is maintained for the benefit of poor Freethinkers.

So far as the Fulham lectures are concerned they fall awkwardly between our publishing dates. The lecturer for February 11 will be Mr. A. D. McLaren. We hope all interested will see that the hall is filled. Mr. McLaren will well repay hearing. Full advertisement on back page.

The life of Edward Clodd does not present very promising material for a biographer. Life, on the whole, did not treat him very hardly. He had no great mental struggles to face, and for the very much larger part of his life he was placed in at least comfortable material circumstances. In addition he cannot be called a profound thinker, he took no extreme views, and so was not harshly treated by orthodoxy, on the principle that he might easily have been worse, nor did he ever stand as the abused champion of forlorn hopes or very unpopular causes. But he had a natural taste for folk-lore and mythology and this led to a break with the religion in which he had been trained, and also to the publication of

a number of works that played a useful part in their day. In the circumstances Mr. Joseph McCabe has turned out a very workmanlike sketch in *Edward Clodd; a Memoir* (John Lane, 6s.). There was evidently something very human and very likeable about the man, for he not merely gained the acquaintance of a great many eminent men of his time—which is tolerably easy if one is pushfully determined on doing so—but he also retained their friendship. He was President of the Rationalist Press Association for some years, but he jibbed at what he considered the too-aggressive tone of some of the Society's work. Mr. McCabe says that Clodd disliked Mr. McCabe's own work for that body. For those who were beginning to feel dissatisfied with Christianity, but shrank from directly attacking it, Clodd's work probably gave them what they desired.

We note that in the *Times Literary Supplement* H. P. Clodd writes, in order to guard any identification of his (or her) father with Atheism, and apropos of a reviewer's statement that Clodd "did not leap from orthodoxy to Atheism, but remained an Agnostic." The writer of the letter says that "the usually accepted meaning of Atheism is a complete denial of the existence of an Omnipotent Power, an attitude of mind with which my father was not in sympathy." We do not know what this means, neither do we think anyone else does, nor do we see why omnipotent power is set out in the awe-inspiring solemnity of capital letters—unless it is to assure the world that omnipotent power, if spelt with capital letters may do useful duty for a God, which the Agnostic is supposed to be without. An Atheist has no particular objection to an omnipotent power—without the personifying quality of capital letters. His objection is to a God. And without a God a man is an Atheist, whatever form of camouflage he may care to adopt. You may make a God out of an all-powerful person, but how you are going to make anything out of an all-powerful power is something that is quite beyond us.

The following appears in the *Schoolmaster* for January 28:—

Sir,—I see that an Association of Teachers in Religious Knowledge has been formed, and that the President, Sir Henry Hadow, described religious education as the "highest wisdom in the world." As he is aware, there are innumerable religions, and I would therefore put to him, or to the Association, the following questions:—

(1) Does education in any or every religion answer to the description "the highest wisdom in the world"? It is sufficient that the education shall be religious, without reference to the quality and content of the particular religion? Would any religion do—Mohammedanism, Communism, Christianity, etc.?

(2) If Christianity only is meant, would the teaching of any and every denomination represent the highest wisdom—Baptists, Anglo-Catholics, Salvation Army, etc.?

(3) Are the ranks of the A.T.R.K. open to teachers of all the above religions and denominations, and would teachers holding the religious views of, say, Bernard Shaw, be welcomed into membership?

ENQUIRER.

Sir Henry Hadow holds a high position in the world of governmental education. His ability to present the world with the sloppy silliness of the passage criticized by "Enquirer," may in some measure account for much that is unsatisfactory in the system of education in force. We should advise Sir Henry to save that kind of thing for a Salvation Army meeting. It is more in place there.

Two public debates held recently between Freethinkers and Christians have had at least the effect of benefiting public institutions. At Ashington a discussion between Mr. J. T. Brighton and the Rev. J. Hogg on Sunday last, the local hospital will benefit from the proceeds, and at Perth following a debate between Mr. Wingate, a member of the local N.S.S., and the Rev. Mr. Trotter, discussed whether the Church of Scotland had failed, the Perth Royal Infirmary profited to the extent of £60 13s. 6d. At the latter debate the very foolish procedure was followed of taking a vote among the audience. What on earth has a vote to do to settle the rights and wrongs of a discussion or an opinion?

Industry and Education (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.) by J. G. Crowther, provides all who are interested with a detailed account of what is being done in the direction of education and applied skill in Soviet Russia. In company with a friend, B. Monat Jones, Principal of Manchester College of Technology, Crowther was invited to Moscow to discuss with Russian specialists the subjects with which their book deals. The work restricts itself almost entirely to the subjects indicated in its title, and to those who knew what education was in Russia in the days of Czardom, the progress made is certainly remarkable. The great difficulty appears to be the human material, for there is an important difference between instructing people where there is an atmosphere of skilled industry and familiar with the processes of education and one where both are entirely absent. With this proviso, the advance made, as shown both in the descriptive letterpress and the elaborate tables given is certainly remarkable. The enthusiasm of the people for the machine, and the students for education is duly noted. Other aspects of Russian rule are not dealt with. But within its limits the book is an important contribution to an understanding of Russia.

A new Branch of the National Secular Society is being formed at Stockport, and the first meeting of the group will be held on Thursday, February 11 in the Central Hall, at 7.45. All interested are asked to attend or to communicate with Mr. G. Burgess, 98 Athens Street, Stockport.

Branches of the N.S.S. are getting far-flung. A new Branch has just been started in Sydney. The Branch holds both indoor and outdoor meetings, and we wish it every success in its work.

Criticism and the Bible.

I.—THE CREATION.

THE Biblical "creation story" is a good example of the intermixture of foreign and contradictory elements in the religion of the Israelites. It consists of a chequered medley of the most different sorts of myths. For this reason, and not merely because the Old Testament begins with the account of creation, we first of all concentrate our attention upon it.¹

It is now generally accepted in the circles of Biblical criticism, that there are at least two creation legends contained in the Genesis narrative, while the Paradise story has been compounded out of three legends which have arisen in different times and places.

One account of creation is given in the first chapter of the first Book of Moses or Genesis, and the second chapter to verse 4; and another account is contained in the second chapter, beginning with verse 5, and continuing in the third chapter, up to verse 23.

According to the second account God made heaven and earth, but then, without further ceremony, the earth is assumed as already in existence, except that it is still completely bare, since the god Yahwe had not yet sent down any rain. There was still no men to cultivate the soil when there burst forth quite spontaneously out of the earth—without any assistance from the god Yahwe—a torrent of water which moistened the surface of the earth. Only after the fruitfulness of the earth was thus accomplished, was the first human being created out of the earth and, in the first place, only the man. Life was breathed into him by the god Yahwe, and he was then placed in the garden lying in the East, called Eden, the garden of paradise. But as Adam felt lonely, and the god Yahwe, in order to provide society for him,

formed, also out of the earth, all the four-footed beasts and the birds. *This legend knows nothing of marine animals.* The animals were brought before the man, who named them according to his pleasure. Still, the first man was not yet contented with his animal company and so the god Yahwe caused him to sleep soundly and, while in that state, took out one of his ribs and made out of it a wife for him.

In what kind of region, or among what social type of people could a legend like this have originated? Only among agricultural people living in a dry, arid region, and who often vainly looked for rain. Disregarding for the moment the sentence which was later on placed at the beginning of this legend, we see that in the legend the original condition is conceived as a dry earth without water, a bare surface upon which nothing grew because there was yet no cultivator. That is a conception which could only arise among a people living in a waterless country, and who already practised agriculture. This legend knows nothing of a natural luxuriant vegetation, since it would otherwise be unintelligible that the tilling of the soil by men should be thought of as something necessary for the sprouting forth of plants. While the authors of this story later on speak of four rivers issuing out of the Garden of Eden—a passage which appears to have been inserted later by elaborators or revisers of the text—they have no conception of great masses of water, of oceans and seas, and the conception of a wide naturally-wooded surface was just as foreign to their outlook. Finally, there are, according to this legend no aquatic animals. The god Yahwe created only land animals and birds.

When we turn to the creation story which is given in the first chapter of Genesis, we find that it stands in most marked opposition to the account which we have just examined.

In this legend we find throughout, the conception of immense masses of water. First of all, there is the great primeval ocean enshrouded in darkness. The first act of God—who in this creation account is always called only Elohim—does not consist in creating man, but in setting up a habitable earth, in the course of which act the daylight arises; the water of the primeval sea is caused to collect at different places, so that within this sea dry land is created. Then God causes the plants to spring up. After that, he proceeds to create the animal world; *in the first place, the marine animals*, then the water fowls, and only thereafter the land animals, which are actually differentiated into wild animals, cattle, and creeping things.

Only after God created the animals, did he set man to rule over them. But he does not first form the male and then out of his rib, a female; he makes them both at the same time, after his own image.

From those two accounts of creation we receive radically different conceptions. The one to which we have just referred, starts out from a great primeval ocean encompassing the entire world, and considers the most important part of the animal world to be the aquatic animals. The other account visualizes the primeval earth as bare and waterless. The differences are obvious at once. But the *origin of those different creation legends* is not so obvious. False conclusions have in fact been drawn as to the origin of the legend contained in the first chapter.

It has been thought, for example, that this creation story of the first chapter could only have originated in the region of a great river which rises every year and overflows its banks. In the whole of the Orient there are only two such places: the Egyptian Nile-Valley, and Babylonia between the Tigris and Euphrates. Therefore, this six days history of

¹ The first chapters of Genesis are by no means the oldest parts of Old Testament literature.

creation, or its foundations, must first have been recounted in one of those two lands. As for the other creation legend, it is generally agreed that its native land might be Canaan.

It is possible and even probable, that this last view is correct. One of the two accounts of creation can have originated on the waterless tableland of Canaan. *But the other could not have arisen on the banks of the Euphrates or Nile.* For the annual overflowing of a river awakens neither the conception of an immense sea surrounding the whole earth not of the larger sea-animals. Such conceptions are to be found only among peoples living on the sea-coast and, particularly, among island groups. It would, indeed, be difficult to find similar conceptions prevailing among uncivilized or semi-civilized peoples living on the banks of rivers. On the other hand, such conceptions are widely spread among sea-coast dwellers and islanders. And, quite naturally! Every day they see, spread out before them, the wide unending sea, the animal world of which supplies them in most cases with the greater part of their subsistence. Thus arises out of their immediate circle of observations, the conception that first there existed the great wide ocean out of which, only later, firm earth emerged either through water being drawn away to other places through the throwing-up of certain parts of the sea bottom in consequence of the movement of great sea-monsters (volcanic upheavals), or through the downfall of huge masses of firmament. Thus it runs, for example, in the creation legend of the Hawaiians, that first there was the great primeval ocean, above which hovered in boundless space the god Tangaloa. He sent out his daughter Turi (the sea-lark) to discover firm land, but she found no foothold and returned worn-out through her labours. Then Tangaloa threw down masses of rock from the firmament into the sea. Hawai arose, and upon the sea-washed rock there germinated sea-plants, worms and aquatic animals; first of all the creeper, Fue, then the mites and mudworms, thereafter, the seaweed, lichen and other plants, then, further, the higher aquatic animals, until finally, in the eighth period of creation, man, the crown of creation, arose. And now only after this creation proper had been completed, the daylight arose. The heavens opened, the light shone forth in all its fullness, and the *Aeua* (later ancestor-gods) stepped down to earth and entered into sexual relations with mankind.²

We find several myths of creation, even if they deviate in certain details, among most of the peoples of Oceania; only in many cases it is not the gods who accomplish the first acts of creation but these acts rather emerge out of a mysterious primeval force from which also the gods arise. Thus, according to the New Zealand creation myths, originally only *Tecorro* (the spontaneous generative force) existed, out of which developed *Hinengaro* (consciousness) and out of the latter, *Manaco* (desire). Breaking through the lifeless night (darkness), they created the period of dawning day, and at the same time a firm atmosphere (the firmament) was formed above the ocean-covered earth. Then arose the moon and thereafter, out of the heat accumulated under the firmament, the sun. In the fourth period of creation, the islands emerge out of the primeval sea; in the fifth period, arose most of the gods; in the sixth period, man, etc., etc.

W. CRAIK.

(To be continued.)

The Walls of Jericho.

"And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat . . . And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, both young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword . . . And they burnt the city with fire." (*Joshua vi. 20-24.*)

PROFESSOR GARSTANG, the archæologist, has been at work excavating the ruins of Jericho, and has found that the walls of the city did fall down, and that the place was destroyed by fire, as described in the Bible. A year earlier, Mr. Woolley found geological evidence of Noah's Flood at Ur in Mesopotamia. Both of these discoveries have been broadcast by the press in large type. Yet the flight from the pews continues.

We believe that if an inscription was found recording the miracle of Balaam's talking ass—what a pity Balaam could not take a record of it—or the discovery of Jonah's Journal of his three days hotel accommodation in the whale's belly, or the fossil bones of the 185,000 Assyrians who were smitten by the angel of the Lord, so that, to cite the inspired book: "when they arose in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (2 Kings xix. 35.) We believe, we say, that these things, if they were discovered, would not have the least effect in getting the people back to the churches. It is, as regards religion, a stiffnecked generation; evidently they don't care a fig whether the Bible is true or false. It does not interest them at all.

The ordinary citizen who has neither the time, or inclination, for critical or archæological study of the Bible, but relies upon the newspapers for his information, will receive the impression that the Bible Story of the Deluge, and the fall of Jericho have been confirmed by recent discoveries. He will be mildly interested, and turn to something more important, politics, finance, the law courts, or sport. It is the religious sentiment that is dying out.

The latest from the Palestine front is Professor Garstang's account of his excavations on the sites of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor, and he claims that the result of his investigation of these cities, bear out, and confirm, the story of the invasion of Palestine by the Israelites, as related in the Books of Joshua and Judges. The book is entitled *The Foundations of Bible History: Joshua Judges.* (Constable, 20s.)

To begin with, our author tells us that it is unnecessary to re-argue old questions as to the date of the Exodus, as it has been fully treated in Prof. Peet's *Egypt and the Old Testament*, and Mr. Jack's work on *The Date of the Exodus*. It has, and no unprejudiced person can read Prof. Peet's book without coming to the conclusion that the whole story of the Exodus from Egypt, as related in the Bible, is a myth and a fable, and there is nothing in Mr. Jack's later work to alter that opinion. Now, if there was no Exodus from Egypt, there could have been no invasion by the Israelites of Palestine, at least not from the direction of Egypt, as described in the Bible; and since these books were published new discoveries in Palestine have made the story still more incredible. It is needless to say that in all the innumerable inscriptions that have been deciphered, not one contains any reference to the events narrated in the Bible.

The numbers of the Israelites who invaded Palestine, says Prof. Garstang, are not stated. But it is distinctly stated that when the Israelites came out of Egypt they numbered six hundred thousand fighting men. Of this figure, says our author, it is

² We find a similar parallel instanced in the sixth chapter of Genesis, in the second verse: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

necessary to disabuse one's mind, and observes:—

Half a million fighting men implies at least two million souls, a number which, without accounting for the animals would have involved on the journey from Egypt a continuous column of four abreast extending over the whole length of the desert wandering between Succoth and Jericho at its maximum estimate of 400 miles. The whole Jordan valley could not have contained their camp. The armed men alone if formed up ten abreast when encompassing the walls of Jericho would have formed a column forty miles in length, requiring two whole days for their defiling. (p. 120.)

These figures, we are told, are copyists errors, incorrectly handed down. This, simply, will not do, for all through the Books of Joshua and Judges the Israelites are represented as a great nation consisting of ten tribes and reckoned in hundreds of thousands. "The numbers of the Israelites," says Prof. Garstang, "when Joshua assumed command may be reasonably estimated at about six thousand souls, with a fighting strength of some 1,200 to 1,500 men." (p. 121.) What a falling off was there! From six hundred thousand fighting men to a paltry 1,500! And what has become of the ten tribes?

The excavations at the alleged cite of Jericho have not revealed the name of the city, but "the identity of the site is not in doubt," we are assured. The proof offered being that: "no other Canaanite city is to be found in the neighbourhood, nor indeed for miles around; and excavations in the mound itself has not only attested its early origins, but has disclosed the remains of a walled city, corresponding in general with the indications of the narrative." So that the only proof that the place is Jericho, is the story in the Book of Joshua. The same applies to the city of Ai, and we are told that "The identity of Beeroth like that of Gibeon, rests entirely upon circumstantial evidence." (p. 164.)

The recent researches in Palestine has revealed the fact that at the very time when, according to the Bible, the Israelites were invading and conquering Palestine, the country was held by the Egyptians. Prof. Garstang himself remarks:—

It is a fact not to be overlooked that, under any chronological system which can reasonably be advanced, the date of Israel's invasion and settlement falls within the period (1500-1100 B.C.) when the country was ruled by Egypt as an essential portion of its Syrian Empire. (p. 52.)

And further: "a number of the cities which the Israelites were unable to subdue, including Bethshean, Megiddo, Acco, Gezer, Jerusalem, and Gaza, are found to have been organized centres of Egyptian authority." (p. 53.) When the Israelites fled from Egypt to Palestine then, they were running straight into the arms of their enemy, and notwithstanding the destruction of the whole Egyptian army in the Red Sea, the Egyptians still continued to rule in Palestine as though nothing had happened! Is it likely? The more knowledge we gain of the ancient history of Palestine and Egypt, the more hopelessly incredible and impossible does the Bible story become.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Where slavery is, there liberty cannot be; and where liberty is, there slavery cannot be.—*Abraham Lincoln.*

The way of the superior man is three-fold, but I am not equal to it. Virtuous he is free from perplexities; bold, he is free from fear.—*Confucius.*

Every step of progress which the world has made has been from scaffold to scaffold and from stake to stake.
Wendell Phillips.

Any one can be rich in promises.—*Ovid.*

Censorship and Freedom.

"UNTIL the 'crime' of obscenity has gone the way of the 'crime' of witchcraft, it is idle to talk of civilization." That statement, accredited to Havelock Ellis, is one of the most penetrating analyses yet made of the censorship question. It drives straight to the heart of the subject, completely ignoring all the irrelevant issues usually raised in any discussion on the injustice of official interference in art. It is not always realized that, so long as the meddling propensities of the censorship are an active force in our society, authors, dramatists and film writers must be satisfied with portraying what they "see in a glass darkly," and refrain from "holding the mirror up to nature." Their creations, when dealing with those aspects of normal or abnormal life that cause a glow of pornographic glee in a censor's mind, must be lifeless, and the inevitable result is the production of books, plays, etc., that are more shocking to genuine morality than all the photographic trash supposed to emanate from Paris, or the sordid little volumes, whose references to matters of sex are terse and concise, that are popularly accredited to Buenos Aires.

Again, to quote Havelock Ellis: "Literature reflects life, and since the so-called 'obscene' is an essential part of normal wholesome life, that art is defective which is inadequately 'obscene.'" That statement can be applied to other forms of art as well as literature, and, if true, as I consider, then our loss in the true portrayal of life by artists who must of necessity work with one eye on a magistrate is not compensated by some problematic moral gain. Life is not made less "obscene" by the suppression of realism in art, but art itself suffers a crippling and distortion that render it not only valueless but ridiculous in a supposedly civilized community. One has only to remember the rows of asterisks, the idiotic and wearisome circumlocution and all the tantalizing euphemistic dodges, all of them doing more to rouse erotic feeling than any straightforward lucid phrases because of the opportunity they give for the play of imagination, to realize that we shall have made a big step forward as soon as we have abolished the censoring.

This question of censorship and obscenity is of paramount importance at the present moment, because many of the daily papers are devoting occasional articles and paragraphs to it, especially now that there is so much talk of "A" and "U" films, and while so much interest is being shown in protecting the child mind from degrading influences. Admittedly we should take great care of the mental development of the young, but mainly because their ignorance debars them from making sane, mature judgments, not because we want to keep their minds unsullied by knowledge, and that is the object of the present concern. There is little consistency being shown, otherwise these new protectors of youthful innocence (and ignorance) would be taking immediate steps to keep the Christian Bible from children. That book is a foul source of contamination of the young, because its contents are given as the revelations of an all-wise God, thus giving "smut" a divine sanction and a social importance that it would never otherwise get.

But the essential thing to remember here is that most newspapers dealing with the question of censorship and the child are asking for a thorough revision of the whole censorship regulations, and if that revision is undertaken, it may mean that the welfare of the child will be a secondary consideration, and that the result will be an increase in the stringency and viciousness of the present laws. There lies a grave danger, the child will be protected from the possibly bad influence of sex films, etc., by such productions being withheld from both children and adults, and our art will be more emasculated than ever.

To the best of my knowledge, only one paper attempted to deal with the matter in a logical manner: in a leaderette on January 1, the *Manchester Guardian* suggested that the proper thing to do is to produce plenty of films suitable for children, films dealing with travel and adventure for instance, because children do not want "love" pictures. That this is true can easily be verified by a visit to a children's matinee; the long drawn-out kiss, the passionate embrace, in fact any of the sentimental scenes seem to bore the youngsters, and their opinion is

expressed freely, forcibly and noisily by hisses and cat-calls.

Along that line in art generally there lies a sensible solution of this censorship problem as far as children are concerned, but unless we are vigilant we are going to get a tightening of the censorship regulations that will treat the adult as a child as well. It is a splendid opportunity for people like "Jix" and the Bishop of London, and we can rest assured that they will make the most of it. We may easily see in the next few years, possibly in the next few months, such a rigid official censorship that adults will be reduced to a choice of Edgar Wallace and Charles Garvice, Ethel M. Dell being considered too daring: the film could then return to the pre-war cowboy dramas, there being no official objection to plenty of six-gun murder on the screen.

We must understand, and make these people with an interference complex understand also, that genuine freedom puts one limit and one limit only on our conduct, our actions must stop short of that point where they would interfere with or harm another person. It is summed up tersely in the statement the fullest equal freedom of thought, speech and action.

But I have been more than surprised to find that even people who claim to be comparatively free, mentally afraid of what might happen if we abolished censorship and worried by some vague idea of an era of licence. Where shall we draw the line in this query? Well, if a line is to be drawn in this censorship of art, then its present position is as good as any. It is not sufficiently realized that it is not the position of the line that really matters so much as the existence of the line itself. I admit that all who want to see progress deplore the existence of those inartistic postcards and dirty books that circulate in secrecy in ports, but it should be obvious that the very difficulty experienced in obtaining them is one of the things that makes them eagerly sought after.

Abolish censorship and the whole question of pornography and obscenity will be lifted from the realm of illogical tabu to the plane of reasoned discussion, and can be treated sanely on educational lines. I do not say that obscene books etc., will fade away immediately, there will always, I think, be a demand for a certain amount of erotic flavour in art while the forces of our social structure tend to cramp normal sexual life, and I think there will probably always be that type of person who likes to gloat over questionable pictures and books, but their numbers will not be such as to harm the community, and even they may by education be eliminated.

The present conditions put a greatly increased value on "smut" productions, they are like stolen sweets, much of their attraction lies in the adventure of getting them. We shall get rid of their lure to a great extent when we get rid of the censor, but the obscenity censor will probably be harder to dislodge than other types, because few people will range themselves in opposition to him. There is a stigma attaching to any open defence of a person's right to read any books he likes or see the plays he finds attractive. When people fought the laws against blasphemy and sedition (and both can be legitimately included in the censor's sphere of activity) they laid themselves open to charges of leading immoral lives, particularly sexually immoral lives, but as such charges were obviously irrelevant, even if true, the accused could the more easily disregard them. But the man who opposes the obscenity laws stands very near the immorality charges, the freedom he demands does actually touch sex questions intimately, and often he shrinks from the consequences of his propaganda. That is, of course, merely another way of saying that he does not show the courage that was displayed by those who fought against ridiculous blasphemy and sedition charges.

The position is precisely similar to that in other progressive movements: as soon as those who demand freedom from these irksome regulations concerning obscenity in art (and they are undoubtedly numerous) make an open declaration of their opinions, then it will be merely a question of time before the restrictions are removed. It requires courage admittedly, but then no liberty was ever won by faint-hearted hopes, and freedom from censorship laws is surely worth fighting for.

But one thing we can be sure of, the restrictions in question are not going to remain in their present condition. Either they will, under the forces of reaction, be made much more stringent or, under the ruthless hammer-blows of determined opposition from Freethinkers they will be broken. Ours is the choice. If we are a spineless company of fireside agitators we shall see freedom lost and our fate will be well deserved.

L'AIGUILLON.

Obituary.

DEATH OF MRS. G. W. FOOTE.

WE deeply regret to record the death of Mrs. G. W. Foote, widow of the late editor of the *Freethinker*. For some years Mrs. Foote had been suffering from a very painful nervous affection, some relief from which was obtained by periodic injections. Ultimately, an operation—always, in a complaint of this nature, a delicate and dangerous step, became imperative. In this case the patient never recovered from the operation, and died on January 28. News reached us by cablegram on February 1. For some years Mrs. Foote had resided in Johannesburg, where her only son had been settled for a considerable time. In addition to this son, Mrs. Foote leaves three daughters, all of whom are married.

What is Truth?

"Man is the measure of all things."—*Protagoras*.

"The truth exists only in your head."—*Max Stirner*.

MANY answers to Pilates' celebrated question have been provided throughout the ages, but to my mind the most satisfying is that put forward by the Pragmatists. "Pragmatism" is the theory of knowledge which holds that the two essentials of "truth" are (1) it must work, and (2) it must be useful.

The proper test of truth is not reference to preconceived notions in form of words, but verification by reference to actual fact; if a theory "works" in practice, then it is true.

Moreover, in order to merit the adjective "true" in theory must have some relevance to man's needs and thoughts, and must help him to explain the facts of his experience.

The traditional formal logic, which made Truth depend solely on the form of words used and the supposed "necessities of thought," is now seen to be merely playing with words, the product of priestly word-spinning and scholastic atrophy of the intelligence. "Formal" logicians constructed their syllogisms without and reference to verifiable fact and material truth, so that their "science" degenerated into a sort of game, like chess, in which elaborate systems, totally divorced from reality, were erected on the basis of preconceived assumption according to an artificial set of rules (the "laws of logic"). The mistakes of traditional logic, are cleverly outlined by F. C. S. Schiller in his works: *Formal Logic and Logic for Use*.

Words continually change their meaning according to the context in which they are used, and the understanding of the speaker, so that the form of words used is no guarantee of truth. Moreover, the "necessities of thought," of which idealist philosophers have spoken so much are largely imaginary, and in any case prove nothing except that our thinking powers are still limited. "That we cannot help thinking a thing is not a proof of its truth; primarily it is only a psychic fact about the mind that feels necessitated or compelled." (Schiller: *Logic for Use*. p. 121.)

Truth is thus nothing absolute or sacred, but merely the best (for the moment) of several alternative hypothesis; it explains the facts better than the others, and is verified by experience, but it has no finality; it may at any time be discarded in favour of a better theory which has arisen in the light of fuller knowledge.

A good illustration of the confusion of thought arising from a misunderstanding of the meaning of "truth" is the old accusation of "dogmatism" made against the Atheist, on the grounds that he could not prove that God did not exist. The Atheist was apparently expected to scour every nook and cranny of the Universe and beyond it, before he could "prove" that God is not lurking somewhere. This, of course, is simply a misconception of the nature of truth. Atheism means that the hypothesis that there is a God fails to fit the facts as well as the contrary hypothesis that there is no God. It is a question of the relative worth and utility of two theories in the light of actual experience; there is a complete absence of "dogmatism," and there is no point in the Atheist seeking polite explanations such as "agnostic" or "pantheist."

In short, truth has ceased to be unchanging and sacred, and has become dynamic and experimental. Truth is part of man's struggle to understand and control his environment. Man is greater than truth, for he creates it for his purposes and uses it. Let us cease to revere it as something holy and learn that truth is for us—our creature.

AGIS.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
AN EXPLANATION.

SIR,—Perhaps as my name occurs in your very pleasant paragraph about Deuteronomy in your issue of January 24, I ought in fairness to you and myself to add that my appreciation of Chapter 28 does not prevent me holding that the Christian dogmas are the most significant, profound and effective philosophy yet experienced by man.

I apologize for this intrusion upon the charming helligerancy of a periodical which I have known with delight for thirty years.

CHARLES WILLIAMS.

Rationalist Press Association (Glasgow District)

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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): Thursday evening, February 11, in the Large Assembly Hall, at 8.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"A Freethinker Looks at the World."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Joseph Wicksteed, M.A.—"Idealism in Modern Education."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, R. D. Roper (of League of Nations' Union)—"Difficulties in Manchuria." Questions invited.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, Hall No. 5, near Clapham North Station, Underground): 7.30, Mr. A. Robertson (R. Arch)—"Eisler's Theory of Christian Origins."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, February 8, at 8.0, Mr. R. F. Turney will open a discussion on "Freethought and Politics."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mrs. Hornibrook (Ettie Rout)—"Birth Control."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, February 9, at 7.0, Mrs. Janet Chance—"Religious Belief: An Intellectual Crime."

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Zealley's Cafe, 100 High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Miss Nancy Price—"The Theatre: Past, Present and Future."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance Lorn Street): 7.0, J. Egerton Stafford (Bootle)—"Blasphemy, Sunday and Education."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Sunday, February 7, Mr. Saphin—"Is Christ Necessary?" Thursday, February 11, at Shakespeare Rooms, 174 Edmund Street (near Livery Street) at 7.30, Mr. F. Terry.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): Mr. Townend—"Sex."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, David Clarke, Esq., of Bury—"An Atheist View of the Old Testament." Questions and discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 6.30, Mr. R. Fyfe—"Progress of Secularism in U.S.S.R." Questions and discussion, silver collection. Special meeting of Members in Reception Room, Albion Street, on February 8, at 8 p.m.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, February 7, meeting at 36 Victoria Park Road, Bournemouth. Study Circle and Discussion.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead—"An Atheist's Views on Morality."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Ronald H. S. Standfast (Birkenhead)—"The Legacy of the Ancient World." Current *Freethinkers* and other literature on sale.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): 3.0, Miss F. W. Stella Browne (London)—"Lambeth and Rome—Recent Capitulations." 6.30, "Some Human Mental Types"

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 1): 3.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Woman and Religion"; 7.0, "Christianity in the Melting Pot." Admission free. Collection.

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, 5 Forbes Place): 7.30, Harry Watson—"The Limitations of Psychology."

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