EXPLAINING RELIGION.

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Views and Opinions.

Explaining Religion.

LAST week I tried to make clear what was meant by my saying that scientific thought applied to religion explained it out of existence. This, I must again point out, was in answer to some questions put to me by a Vicar, whose name, for obvious reasons, I refrain from publishing. My point was that religious ideas spring from a view of the world that is now universally rejected among men and women with the least pretension to education or even civilization. This is true, not merely of the non-religious, but also of the religious. But while the views of the savage concerning the structure of the world, and the nature of the forces in operation around him and within him no longer obtain, we continue to profess beliefs (it is impossible to *hold* them) based wholly upon these rejected ideas. We might as reasonably profess to hold that Jesus Christ was right in attributing epilepsy to demonic possession, and also accept the current medical explanation of its nature. In the matter of God, the soul, etc., you may be either religious or scientific, you cannot be both religious *and* scientific.

After the two questions already dealt with there remain one or two points that are left unanswered. My critic says that I have "most successfully smashed the anthropomorphic God . . . but . . . there must be something superior to human personality, a most inadequate thing at its very best as known here, but you crab that also." This is one of those statements made by present-day believers as though it expressed an unquestionable truth, but which is so confused that it would take much more space than I care to take thoroughly to disentangle it.

First, the only real God that anyone can have, and certainly the only God that can be put to any religious use, must be an anthropomorphic one. "God" must always be someone to whom we can talk, or pray, who can listen, who can help or injure, and if what you call God cannot do these things, then he is not a God at all. Of course you may call whatever you happen to believe in a God, and there is no Act of Parliament against my giving a petrol pump the same complimentary, or derogatory, title. But there is no sense, and certainly no use, in adoring or talking to a mere force, however powerful. There is some degree of sense in my getting on good personal terms with a man who is driving the motor-car in which I am riding. He may, as a consequence, drive with greater speed or safety. But it would be a symptom of sheer idiocy for me to compliment, or pray to the engine because it was, so far as the car was concerned, all powerful. The only kind of a God that is of use to anyone is exactly the God of whom all educated religionists are ashamed.

The really funny thing about this kind of argumentation is that after having disowned an anthropomorphic (that is a personal) God, the argument proceeds to state that there must be something "higher" than personality in the universe. Now by "higher," is here meant different, and, therefore, if the "Power" that religionists profess to worship is higher than the personality we know, then it is different from the personality we know, and if it is not personality as we know it, then it is not personality at all. Things really cannot be identical and different at the same time. The world is just beginning to appreciate the absurdity of that crusted absurdity, "My country right or wrong." Perhaps one day it will be generally seen that the cry for a God at any costs is even more ridiculous.

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The Question of Values.

A friend of mine once showed me a lengthy essay he had written on what he called "The Problem of Genius." He argued very learnedly, with examples gathered from all over the world in order to discover how genius came into the world. It was an interesting essay, but I am afraid that I prevented its publication by convincing him that the problem of how did human genius come into the world was no different in kind from that of how did human stupidity come into the world. Of course that simple fact had been overlooked because it was more impressive, and looked more learned, to write on the causation of a Shakespeare, a Cervantes, a Wagner, or a Raphael, than it was to write about the causation of the village idiot and the Bishop of London. And yet the problem is identical in both sets of cases. When science is able adequately to describe every one of the causative conditions that eventuate in the idiot or the writer of those weekly religious articles that appear in many of our newspapers, it will be able to describe the causative conditions that eventuated in the greatest genius the world has ever seen. The problem is the same in both cases.

Something of the same verbal fog which leads so many to consider genius by itself, as though it were

more than a particular instance of a general problem, is responsible for another very fashionable religious argument, and which is repeated by my questioner. He asks, if I do not believe in a God, "where the dickens did the good, the true, and the beautiful come from?" So long as we talk in this way about "the good, the true, and the beautiful," as though the good, the true, and the beautiful are such in themselves, existing by themselves, and for themselves, we are perpetuating the confusion noted when one separates the enquiry into the origin of genius from that of a general enquiry into the origin of human faculty. If my critic will put the problem in another way and ask, "If you do not believe in a God, where the dickens does the bad, the untruthful, and the ugly come from," the fog will probably begin to dissipate. For badness and goodness and ugliness and untruthfulness surely require as much explanation as their opposites. Yet no one argues that there must be a God to account for them. Moreover, badness and goodness, ugliness and beauty, truth and untruth, have a curious knack of changing sides in the course of human evolution. Perhaps some help to an understanding of the question may be derived from the consideration that even in the animal world there is some sense of coloration, just as there is some gleamings of the good in the relations that exist between an animal and its young and between the members of some groups. When one starts from this point of view it is not very difficult to realize that the development of man's ethical and æsthetic appreciation is quite on all fours with man's development of general conceptions in other directions.

Or, if this be considered too abstruse, let me come back to the method of Socrates when dealing with one of his questioners. He too was faced with this question of the existence of "The Good, the True, and the Beautiful," each of them apotheosised as though they were actual existences in themselves. Socrates replied by driving his questioner into the admission that a thing must be good for something or good for nothing, and that if the goodness of a thing did not consist in its relation to other things, then it was not good for anything. That was a cruel way to prick so glittering a bubble, but it was effective. But if we admit that things are good, or true, or beautiful because they do something or gratify some feeling, or serve some useful purpose, then our enquiry becomes one of a purely utilitarian character, and we are left enquiring what are the things for which a thing is either good or true or beautiful, and all the current "mystical" flapdoodle loses its attractiveness. Biological and sociological considerations provide all the explanations required. It is also quite in line with ordinary evolutionary development that in the course of time feelings and actions that are really means to an end come to have an apparently independent value of their own. To take but one illustration of this, but a very fundamental one. Right through the animal and human world we have operative the fact of sex. But it takes little to discover how very soon this primal urge becomes overlaid with crude æsthetic and other emotional qualities, until in the higher reaches of life it is lost sight of altogether. But it is overlaid, not extinguished, and it is the task of the scientific enquirer to detect and expose the prime fact under the secondary and later ones.

* * *

Methods of Approach.

Now I hope I have made plain, to one whom I think is a serious-minded enquirer, what actually is the main attitude of a genuinely scientific Freethought towards religion. Quite rightly, my enquirer says that we have different methods of approch. We have, and the difference between myself and the religious apologist is just this. He approaches religion with a conviction—none the less imperative because it is so often unexpressed—that he must have some justification for the religion he finds around him. The result is that he—to use a technical term—rationalises his desire to retain religion by creating unnecessary problems which he claims only religion can answer, by reading into a fictitous character teachings that simply add to the mass of fiction that has grown up around the name of Jesus, and interpreting in terms of religion facts that are to be adequately explained in terms of the more mature knowledge of to-day.

I approach religion from a directly opposite point of view. I do not judge religion in the light of the past; I judge it in the light of the present. I take the facts upon which all religion has been built, and the religious interpretation given to these facts, and I find this interpretation as unnecessary now as is the geocentric theory in astronomy or the theory of demons in mental disorder. When I do this I am forced to an Atheistic conclusion because I see that the belief in God is on a level with the belief in all kinds of supernatural manifestations, that God finds his "spiritual" home with those legions of good and evil spirits which human culture has so largely outgrown. I do not make myself ridiculous by first of all disowning belief in a God, and accepting all that is known of the origin of the idea of God, and then rationalizing my timidity or intellectual confusion by calling myself an Agnostic and professing to suspend judgment on the subject. I say definitely that unless all modern scientific knowledge bearing on this subject is false, the existence of God is an impossibility in a universe where impossibilities do not exist.

My critic either in sarcasm or by way of compliment says I am "a mighty hard nut for a parson to crack." I do not think so—that is, if the parson will get my point of view. I flatter myself that I am very simple and very direct. I speak in the simplest language I have, and I deal with the plainest aspects of simple facts. I take religion as I find it and I ask where it came from. I then find that no generation of civilized people ever create their own Gods. They do not discover them as men discover some of their other possessions. They inherit them from preceding generations. And when I push the enquiry far enough I actually come across the manufactory of religion. I can then see the gods and ghosts and spirits of all orders coming into being. I see them as clearly the product of misunderstood facts as the monstrous animals of a dipsomaniac are the creation of his drink-sodden brain. I then find that these primitive misinterpretations are organized, vested in a priesthood, and are handed on generation after generation. They are forced upon each generation before that generation is old enough to protest, laws are made which prevent them being either understood or their nature made public. Above all, I find, as a mere matter of fact, that every attempt to explain religion is strongly resisted in the name of religion or morals, and it is only after the newer views about religion have become too strong to be further resisted that attempts are made to incorporate some of them in the existing religious structure.

Now when I see these things I say so plainly and without equivocation. I do not tell the lie that I regret giving up religion, for fear of offending any religious friends I may have, or any religious enemies I may fear. I say as plainly as I can that all religion is a perpetuation of primitive savagery, however much

it may be mixed with more civilized teaching. I am no harder to disprove than it would be to disprove the statement that twice two make four, and I am no more abstruse than is anyone who is able to throw off inherited formulæ—whether of the religious or other kinds—and look at simple facts with an open mind. That may be to some abstruse, to me it looks suspiciously like simplicity. But as in politics the surest way to deceive is to tell the truth, so in philosophy the way to make sure of being called "abstruse" is to be quite simple and quite direct. Meanwhile, the man who repeats formulæ to which the people are accustomed, even though it be the rigmarolish nonsense of the Athanasian Creed, or a completely ambiguous political war-cry, is not abstruse, he is not, they say, "difficult to understand." I assume that what is meant is that acquiescence in such cases does not require any thinking whatever. But in both philosophy and religion it is my aim and my business to call attention to the simple facts. And I am quite content to let the facts decide the issue between Christian and Freethinker.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Nonconformist Nonsense.

"Stuffing the ears of men with false reports."
Shakespeare.

"The best political economy is care and culture of men."—*Emerson.*

"Humanity thinks slowly."—*C. R. W. Nevinson.*

BOOKS are often produced in a hurry, and writers have of late years developed a reprehensible habit of reprinting newspaper articles in volumes with catchy titles, and without sufficient revision. One remarkable example is Mr. A. G. Gardiner's *Pillars of Society* (Dent & Sons, Ltd.), a collection of personal sketches of men and women who happen to be in the public view. In their original newspaper form these articles were tolerable, but placed together in a volume, they lack distinction, and remind the reader of a Cook's Excursion through contemporary society. These so-called "Pillars" include an archdeacon, a foreign actress, an eminent tradesman, a titled actor, several deceased nobodies, and a miscellaneous collection of notorieties who were better away. The writer, be it noted, was once the editor of the *Daily News*, and wields a facile pen; yet he is willing to challenge the verdict of the more serious reading public in this way. The articles themselves are not matured judgments of men and things, but journalistic vapourings which, however pleasant in the columns of the press, are somewhat startling in a volume advertised as real literature.

Mr. Gardiner has frequently expressed his severe disapproval of frivolity and sensationalism in the press, yet he is himself not unconscious of a desire to "tickle the ears of the groundlings." In a personal sketch of the king he lets himself go as follows:—

> He is the first English King to belong to the working classes by the bond of a common experience. He moves among them not as a stranger from some starry social sphere, but as one to the manner born. He had reefed the sail and swabbed the deck and fed the fire. He has stood at the helm through the tempest and the night. He knows what it is to be grimy and perspiring, to have blistered hands and tired feet. In short, he knows what it is to be a working man.

One rubs one's eyes at the printed words. It is a habit with Mr. Gardiner, for in a companion volume, entitled, *Prophets, Priests, and Kings*, he has some remarks on the Kaiser which read like the deadliest irony in the light of after events:—

> No man in history ever had a more god-like vision of himself than he has. His cloud of dignity is held from falling by the visible hand of the Almighty. He keeps his powder dry and his armour bright. But he stands for peace, peace armed to the teeth, it is true, peace with the mailed fist, but peace nevertheless.

If Mr. Gardiner wrote that particular royal character sketch with his tongue in his cheek, then your hat flies off to him as an astute man of business. But it is far more probable that he regards himself seriously, and is capable of admiring such writing had it been inscribed by another hand. His atmosphere is heavy with sentimentalism and emotionalism Witness his account of Dr. John Clifford's theological views:—

> His own faith is still as clear and as primitive as when, sixty years ago, he sat as a boy in Beeston Chapel, in much mental anguish, and, in his own words, experienced conversion in the midst of the singing of the verse:—
>
> "The soul that longs to see my face
> Is sure My love to gain;
> And those that early seek My grace
> Shall never seek in vain."

A third volume, *War Lords*, is more happily named, but, critically speaking, there is the same gush of fulsome nonsense. It reminds us of the story of a counsel who, in addressing a jury, characterized the defendant as a "naufragious ruffian." His junior asked him afterwards "what the expression meant." The counsel retorted: "I haven't the least idea, but it sounded well, didn't it?" Mr. Gardiner wields a fluent pen, but his ideas, however rosily expressed, have little connexion with reality.

It is difficult sometimes, to believe that he has ever studied life outside a small Nonconformist chapel, for where else could he stumble upon the conversion of Dr. John Clifford. But is it not playing it a little low down on the British Free Churchman thus to take advantage of his innocence of life and his lack of experience? When the Education Act has run another century, the readers of newspapers, perhaps, will cease to hunger for a diet of sawdust, and will prefer the bread of knowledge.

And yet, if Mr. Gardiner would but forget his Free Church audience, his books and his articles would be so very much better worth reading. Writing of the war-time legend of the landing of the Russian Army in England, he has some pertinent remarks:—

> The true interest of the legend is psychological rather than historical. It offers the most striking instance in our time of the growth of a myth, and it throws a curious light on the origin of the myths that have developed in the past out of the terrors, anxieties, and hopes of peoples fumbling darkly for an explanation of an inexplicable world. It could only have survived in circumstances in which the press had become artificially silent and had ceased to bring rumour to the challenge of definite proof. For the true twilight of the gods came with the printing press. Mythology and the newspapers cannot co-exist.

In sober truth, and not in the easy cant of journalism, let us wish for the recovery of Mr. Gardiner. There are so many editors for whom the inscription, "Died of the Christian Fallacy" is good, and quite good enough. But the man who once occupied the seat used by Charles Dickens, and controlled the great newspaper which numbered Harriet Martineau among its contributors should not be of these. So desperate is the dilemma that almost is one persuaded that British Nonconformity has declined upon a future of hypocrisy, vulgarity, and

make-believe. "The pity of it!" For the early Nonconformists were so utterly different. They had something of that superb moral courage and high devotion to principle which has made intellectual pioneers the wonder and despair of the human race. Such a decline on the part of British Nonconformity is nothing less than an insult to the present, and a direct menace to the future of this country.

Mimnermus.

The Evolutionary Advance of Life.

Every ascertained truth in the sciences of comparative anatomy, embryology and palæontology points imperatively to the fact of evolution. Long prior to the promulgation of the doctrine of natural development, geologists noted, and wondered at the orderly succession of life revealed in the sedimentary rocks. These petrified remains, fragmentary as they were, stimulated interest and aroused astonishment in the minds of the earlier naturalists. Even at a time when the theory of special creation was commonly accepted in scientific circles, the fossil record plainly contradicted the reigning belief. So startling were these discoveries that it was suggested that a series of supernatural creations and catastrophes had marked the course of the earth's history. This compromise with truth was necessarily abandoned as the growing evidences constrained scientists to recognize the orderly succession of life displayed in the ascending strata which compose the earth's crust.

The first systematic study of fossil remains was conducted in Western Europe. This research proved rich in result. The region examined consists of countries that in earlier ages have repeatedly risen above the sea's surface only to sink again beneath the waves. This prolonged alternation of land and water proved extremely favourable to the burial and preservation of plants and animals. These fossil-bearing beds were deposited in successive shallow seas and estuaries, and happily their edges are so tilted that their petrified remains may be easily studied and deciphered. That celebrated land surveyor, William Smith, who lived more than a century since, discovered that the succession of the strata with their contained fossils indicates orderly deposition. As a leading authority, Sir Arthur Smith Woodward assures us: "Nearly all the chief phases in the succession of life are represented in the old sea beds that now form rocks in the British Isles and the adjacent parts of the European continent. Approximately the same succession has been observed in other parts of the world and several of the greatest gaps in the geological history of Western Europe have been filled by the discovery of rocks of intervening ages elsewhere."

The primeval modes of living matter were composed of soft and perishable substances, and have in consequence left few, if any direct evidences in petrified form. Moreover, most of them lived in oceans or shallow waters, and this greatly decreased their chance of preservation. As a rule, the skeletal structure of an animal is that which leaves its impress on the rocks, and only in those instances where organisms have been swept into a stream, and buried in its sand or silt, subsequently hardened into rock, have their skeletal parts been preserved. When we consider the multifarious circumstances that preclude the petrification of animal organisms, the marvel is that the palæontological record is so well preserved.

The most ancient fossils thus far discovered are relatively highly organized, and therefore presuppose a lengthy antecedent chain of evolutionary development. In the Cambrian rocks of Canada, organic structures, presumably composed of soft materials only, have left their marks behind. All who are qualified to judge are agreed that invertebrate creatures, including giant cuttlefishes and huge lobster-shapen animals, were the sovereign lords of the seas until the fishes arose to challenge their authority. With the advent of the *pisces* the former rulers of aquatic life steadily declined to a second place, and in many instances died out altogether. The supremacy of the fishes was signalized by their stupendous increase in number and in size. Alike in Europe and America, the old Red Sandstone reveals multitudinous remains of ancient fishes. Some of these became adapted to marsh or pond life; were at times stranded when the water evaporated, and were driven to evolve lungs in place of gills to enable them to breathe in air, while their fins became transformed into primitive limbs which they utilized as organs for locomotion on land.

These modified fish were the ancestors of the early amphibians whose surviving descendants are represented by our newts, salamanders, frogs and toads. These creatures spent part of their lives on land, and part in the stream or sea. They flourished exceedingly, attained enormous dimensions, and only after a long ascendancy, were slowly but surely superseded by their reptilian descendants who assumed the leadership of life. In its opening centuries, the Permian Epoch was cold and dry, yet it proved favourable to reptile development, and lizards, crocodiles, and other animals adapted to a strictly terrestrial life were abundant. The reptiles rose to supremacy everywhere. They ruled the land; as winged lizards—the pterodactyls—invaded the air; some went down to the sea and successfully adapted themselves to life on the watery main. In the period when the great chalk cliffs were deposited—the Cretaceous—many of these saurians became huge mountains of flesh. These giant reptiles—the Dinosaurs—were without question the largest land creatures that have ever existed on our globe.

As the ages passed, transforming agencies were in ceaseless operation. The huge Dinosaurs were now trembling on the verge of extinction, and a few of the smaller, more active and intelligent reptiles were developing along mammalian lines. Their movements were less sluggish, as their organs of progression had become more efficient. Their brains were appreciably larger and, above all, the originally cold blooded reptile had been replaced by a reptilian mammal possessing warm blood. However humble in its inception, the evolution of the mammals advanced rapidly, and they soon occupied the place vacated by the mammoth reptiles which had now vanished from the scene. Along another evolutionary pathway the brilliant career of the birds began, and these also were the transformed descendants of reptilian ancestors. Even now, with all their splendour of song and loveliness of plumage, and after untold millennia of departed time, all anatomists and morphologists assent to the great Huxley's famous definition of the birds as "glorified reptiles."

Throughout succeeding Tertiary Times, on land the mammals held sovereign sway and masterdom. In mental capacity a marked advance was made. Just as in earlier Permian and Cretaceous Eras a truceless conflict had raged between the flesh-devouring and vegetarian reptilian forms so, in Tertiary Ages, fierce competition persisted between the carnivorous and herbivorous species of mammalian life. As the flesh-eating mammals developed in strength, sagacity and cunning, their natural prey, the vege-

table feeding mammals developed improved teeth, with better powers of mastication, and larger and more efficient limbs and weapons of defence. Also, with the more onerous demands of life, the brain and its functions were extended.

Various were the changes and chances of the time. An inconspicuous group of mammalian creatures lived on a mixed diet of insects and eggs, wild berries, fruits and nuts. These animals dwelt in security among the boughs of the forest trees. Nimble and alert, they watched the warring world below, and these primitive apes and monkeys, for such they were, doubtless little dreamed of the important part their distant descendants were destined to perform in their endeavour to master and control blind Nature's giant forces.

The early monkeys were observant and keen-witted, but it was with the apes that the organ of mind became most complicated. In an auspicuous hour some of the more inquisitive apes descended from the trees, and in wandering abroad their wits were sharpened and their brain increased steadily in size and complexity. The remote forerunners of mankind were now in being, while man himself, contemporaneously with the modern horse, came forth to view the earth.

The fossilized fragments of extinct apes are discovered from time to time. These fossils differ widely from the bony structures of living apes. But they doubtless represent the remains of animals in the ancestral line of living apes and men. Various are the known links between *Homo sapiens* and the anthropoids, and as time goes on many others will emerge. The considered judgment of Prof. Woodward is that: "The teeth and jaws of fossil apes suggest that they belonged to animals that may have been ancestral to man as well as to modern apes, and the oldest known fossil human skulls and jaws exhibit more ape characters than any human skull or jaw at the present day."

The most primitive apes so far discovered were found in Egypt. In some respects the remains seem to foreshadow both the human skull and the jaws of extant apes. Fossils unearthed in Middle Tertiary strata of a later time are those of apes as large as the chimpanzee, while the extinct ape Dryopithecus displays closer kindred with the living apes than with man.

While no region of the Old World may be ruled out as the birthplace and cradle of humanity, and the recent discoveries in Mongolia are apparently only the opening stages of far reaching disclosures, yet, India may offer the fairest prospect for future research. The Siwalik Hills in India are richly stored with petrified relics of man's simian relatives. Prof. R. S. Lull, however, regards "the comparatively unknown Asiatic plateau" as the area most likely to reveal the secret of the complete pedigree of man.

The array of evidence amassed by science powerfully supports the opinion that the sum total of organic transformation is decidedly progressive in its nature. Arrest, and indeed, positive degeneration has occasionally supervened, but broadly viewed, hope for the future seems well warranted by the chiefly progressive changes that distinguish life's evolutionary record. We may agree with the contention of Prof. J. A. Thomson when he urges that: "It is indeed a sublime picture that the evolutionist discloses—a picture of an advancement of life by purely natural stages without haste, yet without rest. No doubt there have been blind alleys . . . but on the whole there has been something of what men call progress."

T. F. Palmer.

The Walls of Jericho.

(*Concluded from page 92.*)

> "The first flood of the Mohammedan invaders, the fiery Mahdists of two generations ago, the stern fanatical Wahabis of to-day, all stained their trails with blood in the name of their religion. But there is no record of a determination comparable with this, the solemn sacrifice of an entire town . . . Nor was the slaying of its population a mere case of blood-lust . . . Jericho, as the first fruits of the Promised Land was to be devoted in its entirety to Jehovah. There were to be no spoils and no captives. Only the woman who had helped the Israelites' cause was to be saved, with her family; all others were doomed to be sacrificed within the city in one awful holocaust. (J. Garstang: *Joshua Judges.* p. 143.)

The way these reconcilers of the Bible with history begin their investigations is thoroughly unscientific, it would not be tolerated upon any other subject but the Bible. They begin by taking the account as a true record, in spite of the obvious fairy tales and impossible miracles with which it abounds. Then, when it is found not to agree, or to flatly contradict, the archæological record, as it does, then they try to twist it into agreement, instead of honestly admitting that the book is unhistorical. The same tactics were employed during the conflict of science with the Bible, which ended in the decisive defeat of the reconcilers, as it will again in the conflict with history.

To start with, Prof. Garstang, with the help of the Higher Criticism of the Bible, finds: "two independent streams of tradition which were set down in writing during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., and in part welded together during the seventh century B.C., and finally, "amplified and explained from a national and religious standpoint in the sixth century by the Deuteronomic School." (p. 3.)

As Prof. Garstang claims that the Israelites entered Palestine in the fifteenth century B.C., there is a gap of, at the least, six hundred years, and at the most, nine hundred years, between the alleged events and their record in writing by the Hebrew writers!

As for the fallen walls found at the alleged site of Jericho, and upon which the daily papers expended so much large type, Prof. Garstang remarks: "The collapse of the walls of Jericho is not attributed by the Bible narrative to a physical agency. But we should not overlook in this connexion the possible effect of earthquake." (p. 143.) This is a delicate way of side-stepping the fact that the Bible plainly states that the walls fell at the sound of trumpets, and says nothing about earthquakes. After devoting a page to showing that earthquakes are of common occurrence in that neighbourhood, he concludes lamely: "But an examination of the remains of the walls themselves hardly substantiates the suggestion." (p. 144.) Then why waste time in discussing it?

Since the publication of his book, Prof. Garstang, who is still at work on the site, has sent the following communication to the *News-Chronicle*. (January 13, 1932). After referring to "A common theory [which] attributes the fall of the walls to the effect of rhythmic vibrations set up by sustained trumpet notes, or by the trampling of armed men in step." He observes:—

> But walls of unbaked mud brick cannot be made to vibrate in that way; nor can rams' horns be converted into trumpets capable of setting up vibrations; nor can anyone familiar with the Near East imagine a host of desert people marching in measured martial step on the dusty slopes of what, after all, is a large mud-heap.

So that disposes of the inspired fairy tale that the walls were shattered by the sound of trumpets. As we have seen, and as Prof. Garstang himself points out; at the very time that the Israelites are said to have escaped from Egypt and conquered Palestine, the Egyptians held the whole country in thrall. They held all the strong places and their armies were constantly traversing the country, yet there is not a word of this in the Bible story. As Prof. Garstang truly remarks:—

> No direct allusion is made throughout these Books to the supreme temporal power in the land, that of the Pharaoh, which had held Canaan in vassalage almost continuously for four hundred years. That side of the picture is veiled from view, and only at rare intervals does a chance reflection betray what is there concealed. (p. 259.)

The reason for this being, he explains, that the Israelites "could not tolerate the notion that any other power than that of the God of Israel, might influence their destinies." Very well then, what is the use of trying to establish the truth of the Bible as an historical record? The plain fact emerges from the latest researches in Palestine is, that the story of the flight from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, as narrated in the Bible, did not and could not have happened.

As another archæologist has observed, the romantic stories of the kings of Israel "are apt to dazzle our eyes, and blind us to the fact that the Hebrew kingdom was in reality a pigmy compared with the great and long-enduring empires which bordered it on either hand."[1] It is only during the last few years of intensive research and excavation in Palestine that the truth has at last come to light. As the same writer further observes:—

> The facts as they are now coming to light, bear in upon us, with the force of a strange disappointment, the tiny scale of the stage on which these early dramas of religion were played, and the humble character of the players . . . if you could re-arrange the old city [Jerusalem] a little so as to make it compact, it would all go comfortably into Trafalgar Square, and leave about a matter of 75,000 square feet available for a "lung" to the little place, which it would badly need, unless it was unlike all other towns of this land and time. We are apt to think of the meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham as that of two stately potentates of the great days of old, as we see them, mitred priest and mailed soldier, on the porch of Rheims; the reality is the priest-headman of a little hill stronghold blessing the nomad sheik, who had turned away a pressing danger from his little bird's nest on the rock, and the sheik doing homage to the priest of "El-Elyon," the God of the hills, who had given him victory among the hills over his enemies. Melchizedek's material importance you may judge by the size of his town—A King of Brentford would have been a mighty monarch compared with him. (J. Baikie: *The Glamour of Near East Excavations*. (pp. 310-311.)

These little kinglets swarmed in Palestine, they were as numerous as the Kings of ancient Ireland, of whom tradition reports that two hundred were slain in one battle! Prof Garstang in a later report to the *News-Chronicle* (January 20) states that he has found the royal tombs at Jericho, "In the fifteenth century B.C. the Kings of Jericho, having Syrian names, were evidently the vassals of Egypt and wore the signet of the contemporary Pharaohs."

The question may be asked, "Why do all these, or nearly all these archæologists endeavour to establish the historical veracity of the Bible?" The answer is simple, it is because they depend, in large measure, for the funds to carry on the work in Palestine upon the subscriptions of people who, believing in the Bible, hope that researches in the Holy Land will confirm the scriptures. Prof. Garstang's work is an instance of it, for it is dedicated to: "Sir Charles Marston, whose desire for knowledge of the truth about the Bible has made possible much of the research embodied in these pages." And who, it may be asked, is Sir Charles Marston? Well, he has written essays on the Old Testament and also upon "The Christian Faith and Industry." He is also a "Member of the House of Laity of the Church Assembly."

Prof. Garstang makes a strong point, in favour of the Bible story, that the walls of the town had fallen down and that the place had been destroyed by fire. But what did he expect? Palestine was the Belgium of the ancient world, unfortunately situated between the great empires, it has been, as Mr. Baikie points out, "from time immemorial the land has been the cockpit in which the great empires of the world have fought out their battles." (p. 297.) It would have been a miracle if the town had escaped destruction.

Another Bible fiction exploded by Mr. Baikie is the wonderful fertility and richness of Canaan. He observes:—

> Scripture speaks of it, indeed, as a land "flowing with milk and honey"; but we must remember that the words were spoken to people coming from the arid desert, to whom the slightest approach to fertility would seem wonderful. Judged by normal standards, the country must always have been, on the whole, a grim and forbidding land, though it has its beauty-spots here and there. (p. 290.)

Prof. Garstang provides proof of this description for his book contains 108 plates from photographs he has taken of all parts of the country, and a more treeless stoney habitation, it would be difficult to imagine. That is why the great empires held it by turns, in thrall, but never incorporated it into their empires. It was quite worthless.

W. MANN.

[1] J. Baikie: *The Glamour of Near East Excavation*. (p. 296.)

Acid Drops.

To be a good Catholic and a good Irishman at the same time seems always to have been a knotty problem for some of the inhabitants of our "sister" Isle, but just now, in the face of the coming election in Ireland, what *is* a good Catholic to do? Mr. Sean T. O'Kelly a chief lieutenant of Mr. De Valera, declares: "We are the only people to stand for the Catholic gospel and Catholic doctrine in this country," while President Cosgrave insists that "there is good ground for the belief that the present is the *only* Government which will be able to keep in check those who attack openly the fundamental teachings of Christianity, and abuse and vilify the Catholic Church and its clergy." So there you are. You shuts your eyes and takes your choice. But *what* a choice!

The chief point to note, however, is that this proves beyond any doubt how these rivals are competing for—intolerance! Whatever may be the political views of objects of Mr. De Valera and Mr. Cosgrave, the fact remains that in any state founded on Catholicism, freedom, in the sense understood by ordinary people simply cannot exist. Religion has been the bane of Ireland, and it was this that gave the ground for many of the injustices on Ireland perpetrated by English rule.

Dr. Headlam, the Bishop of Gloucester, speaking on the relations of the Church of England with foreign churches, said:—

> A dignitary on the Continent had told him (the Bishop) that, in view of the anti-religious propaganda now rife, the dangers to Christianity were greater than at any time since the first rise of Mohammedanism,

and that the only thing that would enable them to stand up against this anti-religious propaganda would be a united Christian Church.

We can find at least one ground for satisfaction in this view, if it is well-founded, namely that, as, according to Dean Inge (in the same issue of the *Times*,), "mutual recognition has been accomplished with the Episcopal Lutheran Church of Sweden and the Old Catholics, and may be agreed to with the Eastern Orthodox Church," reunion only remains to be established at one and the same time with the Church of Rome and with the English Nonconformists—which is impossible. If "anti-religious propaganda" can only be defeated by a reunited Christendom its prospects are brighter than those of its opponents at any rate.

The centenary of George Crabbe, the parson-poet, has been the theme of many and varied tributes during the week. Goldsmith's country parson, "passing rich on forty pounds a year," was as much a rarity as Sweet Auburn itself. For that sentimental and idealized picture of rural life Crabbe provided the antidote of reality. Much had been said of his pedestrian level, but these comments hardly do justice to the faithfulness of his observation and description which is often reminiscent of Hardy's later and much better known work. Crabbe himself admitted that his studies might have "robbed my poor Muse of her plume and her wings." If anyone wishes to acquire an accurate acquaintance with the relations of squire and peasant, parson and people, farmer and labourer, and of the reactions of all classes of society to the deism and "enthusiasm" and to the first bracing stirrings of the French Revolution in the countryside of England in the eighteenth century, he should study Crabbe. He will find the study pleasant and informative. The cheapest selection, hardly suitable for the last-mentioned purpose but excellently representative, is in Benn's Sixpenny *Augustan Poets*.

"Observator" of the Sunday *Observer* points out that when China became a republic in 1913, the new Government asked the Christian Churches for their prayers for the success of the country in its new phase. He concludes with this rational comment: "Those prayers have not yet been answered." But he should really study his Bible more closely. For apparently he is unaware that "a thousand years is as one day" with the Lord, and that therefore a delay of a mere nineteen years is equivalent to less than half an hour. Quoth the Lord, "What's the rush?"

The Vicar of Ashington (Northumberland) and the Catholic priest of that parish have been on the warpath against a proposal to include a representation of Lady Godiva's ride in the July Carnival procession of that town. The Vicar hopes that "the people will remain in their houses and draw their blinds." The priest asks the faithful to "think what ribaldry this will lead itself to." This snuffling prurience compares badly with the view taken of more questionable displays by the Church itself in former times. Coventry, the original scene of Lady Godiva's ride, was also the scene of the most notable of all "mystery plays" in the fourteenth century. When they were shown before the public the parts of Adam and Eve were played in a state of nudity, and the copy in the British Museum shows that when Eve is tempted by the serpent, and induces Adam to partake of the fruit, he immediately perceives what until then he had been ignorant of, and says to her:—

"Se us toe nakyd be for and be hynd

. . . . . .

Woman, lay this leaff on thee
And with this leaff I shall hyde me."

Warton observes that "this spectacle was beheld by a numerous company of both sexes with great composure. The actors said they had the authority of the scripture for what they did and they only gave what was to be found in Genesis."

This account, for which we are indebted to William Hone's *Ancient Mysteries Described*, etc. (1823) is only one of many which go to show that prudery was not much abroad in this country before puritanism. As to the Ashington carnival we should have thought that the inevitably drab life of a small mining town in Northumberland was the last place in which to ban a procession which, if organized and conducted as such festivities generally are, would add somewhat of colour to the scene. And if any blinds are drawn in Ashington when Lady Godiva rides by we will wager that the parishioners of Mr. Davidson and Father Connolly will provide a record number of "peeping Toms." For only those who share the clerical mentality or fear its ban will take any notice of this absurd, but characteristic, protest.

In a sermon broadcast from Whitefields in the London Regional service of the B.B.C. on Sunday last by the Rev A. D. Belden, that gentleman went out of his way to circulate a very stale and misleading description of the Atheist position. "There were those," he said, "who believed in nothing, and the man who believed in nothing was himself negligible." Dealing with the cruel consequences of order in the natural world, with the losses involved in development, and with the evils inherent in society, Mr. Belden argued that in all these cases the gain was more than the loss; that law was better than chaos, development better than stagnation, and society superior to isolation, and thus, according to him "God, the friend of man," was seen working out his purpose. But so far from justifying belief in God all these arguments lead, not to "believing in nothing"—how can anyone believe in nothing?—but to the Atheist position of not believing in an incredible explanation of everything that is known and credible. "God," said Mr. Belden, "would give universal happiness and friendship to men if men would *let* him." Man that is to say, must help himself, and attribute the results to God—which is precisely what the Atheist does believe to be unbelievable.

The discussion on Tithes at the Church Assembly on January 3 provided a complete refutation of the contention that the State Church is not financially dependent on the State, that is to say on the taxpayers, and on agriculture and industry, for the main portion of its revenues. The Governors of Queen Anne's so-called Bounty money taken by that Lady from the State with the consent of the then Parliament and appropriated to and by the Church—are, said the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury, "the trustees for the clergy." They are also a Government Department, and they exist, according to the Bishop, "to insist on getting what is the property of the clergy—*the property by which they live*—so long as the taxpayer could pay it." Further, "if farming does not pay, and if the industry came to ruin, undoubtedly the clerical tithe owners would be involved in that ruin." If, however, the hard-pressed farmer was relieved of the tax which is in many cases a grave burden on his industry—a tax imposed upon him by the State for the maintenance of clergy whose services thousands of farmers never require, and for one denomination of the many to which they adhere—he might be at least a little better off, and would be relieved of one ground for his well known gift for grumbling which is absolutely justified.

Talking about war debts, Mr. A. Shaw, a director of the Bank of England, said recently:—

> Might I suggest to you that the healing message for which the world is waiting is this, which was first spoken so long ago, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In the sphere of Reparations and war-debts these words teach us, as I profoundly believe, the wise and indeed the only, practical and economic policy.

Commenting on this, a pious weekly remarks that "it has been left to a financier of the twentieth century to discern the way of national financial salvation in the idealism of the Gospel." We beg leave to differ. The "forgiveness" remedy of Mr. A. Shaw has obviously no connexion with idealism, and certainly no connexion with the spurious idealism of the Gospel, which offers its practitioners a reward in Heaven. Mr. Shaw's remedy is purely a materialistic or utilitarian one. He observes that reparations and war debts are crippling commerce and retarding the recovery of the nations, and he sees

plainly that there is a sound material advantage in cancelling the reparations and war-debts. Where does "idealism" come in here??

From Canada comes news that the only living Christ has refused to regard himself as Christ any longer. This sounds like a pretty bad knock for Christianity. In fact it is nothing of the sort. For the "Christ" is none other than the young Hindoo Krishnamurti, who was pushed as a child into his unsought and unenviable position by the leaders of that peculiar superstition known as Theosophy. "I am no actor," the poor fellow is reported to have said. "I refused to wear the robes of a Messiah." Christians will doubtless cheer at this blow to a rival superstition. Nevertheless we recommend the outspoken honesty of this "God's" action to the prompt attention and imitation of all those hierarchs who, in their efforts to hoodwink the credulous, assume robes of a more material and flamboyant sort. Let recent events in Spain serve as a timely warning!

We learn that the Pope is finding it very hard in these times of financial stringency to make ends meet. His income of four million pounds seems insufficient to meet the host of benefactions which he is reputed to patronize. This is truly tragic. Just think of the fearful situation when, owing to the demands of the Catholic House of Shirtless Savages, the Vatican Treasurer has to instruct the Vatican Cook that champagne and caviar can only be served on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays instead of Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays!

From the *Methodist Recorder*:—

> Christian people are apt to imagine that their convictions and their principles are opposed to commonsense, and even incapable of satisfying proof. If they have a wisdom, it is not of this world. They suffer from a kind of inferiority complex (unless they are Roman Catholics), ready to apologize rather than to use the word apology in its proper sense, and to defend and attack. Followers of the Knight of Bethlehem with little lambs for his men-at-arms, and sparrows for his trumpeters, they feel that their leader is ill at ease in such a world as this; and they are not themselves quite happy with a command that bids them love everyone around them. They cannot; and they are not sure whether they would even if they could.

If this is the present state of Christian people—and we are prepared to accept our contemporary's diagnosis—it is good evidence of the efficacy of the Freethought attack during the past fifty years. And what a "change of heart" it reveals from the former cocksureness!

A religious journal has the following brief review:—

> *Miraculous Healing*, by Henry W. Frost, D.D., is an admirably balanced discussion of the question of whether, and under what conditions, the Christian has the right to ask and expect the healing of his bodily infirmities.

We should have thought that a book on such a question was hardly needed. The "conditions" under which the Christian has the right to ask and expect the healing of his infirmities are obviously—when he has them. Assuming these conditions are satisfied, the next step is to tell God all about them, in case he had forgotten he had sent them. After that, there should be a humble request, incessantly repeated, for their removal. If this treatment fails, the final step is to visit a medical man. He may be able to do what God refuses to do.

The Chaplaincy department of a certain Nonconformist denomination is greatly pleased with the reports of the work which have come in concerning sailors, soldiers and airmen. The chaplains, we suggest, are well deserving of a special vote of thanks from the nation. Those manly sermons and heart to heart talks about gentle Jesus and his pretty habit of "turning the other cheek" to the smiter are exactly what is wanted for keeping up the fighting morale of the men. Really, one hardly knows how the combatant services could continue but for the good work of the chaplains in the way of spiritual uplift.

The Rev. J. Ford Reed affirms that "The New Testament exercises its hold over all types of men, because of the certainty of its glad tidings and its knowledge of God." The reverend gent. is not quite correct. The superstition of the New Testament as well as the popular superstition current everywhere, exercise their hold on mankind because of the certainty of human ignorance and credulity.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer has, in a contemporary, addressed an "open letter" to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in which, after scolding, criticizing and warning him, Mr. Swaffer implores His Grace to give the nation "a lead." For:—

> Britain is looking for inspiration in this its time of stress, yearning for leadership, seeking for someone who can point out a way. Statesmen have failed it. Yes, and the Church has failed it, too. For the Church is out of touch with modern thought.

Somehow, it seems beautifully natural that a "popular journalist" should expect the leader of a Church that is notoriously "out of touch with modern thought" should be capable of giving a "lead" to the nation! The Archbishop specializes in the antique. Whereas, the solution of the nation's difficulties must be found in new ideas and a fresh mode of thinking. Then obviously the Archbishop is the man to give a "lead" to the nation. Still, having noted how nicely Mr. Swaffer admonishes, scolds and warns the Archbishop, and how he tells the good man where he has gone wrong and what he ought to do, we feel impelled to the conclusion that if the Archbishop fails the nation, Mr. Swaffer will rise to the occasion. And may God help the nation!

General Sir Ian Hamilton has been explaining why he, although a soldier, detests war, why he has tried to "lower the prestige of military glory," and why he is anxious to help create an atmosphere unfavourable to war. He says, that too much insistence on the horrors of the battlefield is a method which has proved to be a failure in regard to scotching the war-spirit. He prefers, he declares, to direct attention to the miserable results of war—the human wreckage. He points to the widows, the orphans, the blind, the maimed, and the fathers and mothers who have lost their sons, and also to the deplorable plight of so many ex-service men. Another objection of his is that "War is getting more mechanical and less human." The foregoing, is, we think, a fair summary of his objections. One cannot help noting that there is no mention of the more important reasons against war. As a way of settling disputes, war is merely a large-scale imitation of the methods and code of the street-hooligan. Whether it be mechanized or unmechanized, war is stark barbarity. War does not and cannot settle the justice of a dispute; it merely registers which of the combatants has the strongest, and the best equipped, trained and led army. Only in the name of insanity can it be presumed that a quarrel can be equitably decided by the people of one nation murdering or maiming the people of another. If a "peace atmosphere" is to prevail in the world, such reasons as these must be made to penetrate into the half-civilized understandings of the peoples of the so-called civilized nations. And we would suggest that the first lesson in this new education might well be given to our rulers and statesmen and diplomats.

Fifty Years Ago.

I WISH some law could be enacted that men in clerical dress should not be admitted to public performances. St. James's Hall, on the night of the performance of the "Elijah" reeked with clergymen. Their weak or wicked faces are bad enough, but when these are intensified in their weakness or wickedness by the horrible garb that tells of the story of its wearer, and the harm that is inflicted on other men, and on women and children, the shock is very great. Butchers do not come to entertainments in their blue clothing. Soldiers, the more popular butchers, appear there clad in the garb of ordinary gentlemen. Why cannot the butchers of the minds of men appear in the respectable habiliments of men if they must inflict their presence on honest folk?

The "Freethinker," February 12, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. BURGESS.—Will use next week. We hope you will be successful in your endeavours. We should like all the Freethinking students in our universities to make a stand against the religious proselytising that goes on. If they were equally energetic in circulating the *Freethinker* it might teach these tract distributors to exercise more caution.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.—Next week.

E. WEBSTER.—Papers are being sent as requested.

MR. C. C. DOVE writes: "It is to be hoped that the scheme of selection whence the present volume of *Selected Heresies* was compiled has not been destroyed, for if the press will only let the public get at the book, a second volume, and goodness knows how many more, are likely to be required." The "scheme" is still there for use when required.

A. B. MOSS.—Thanks. We may republish.

J. F. HAMPSON.—Mr. Cohen wrote you over a week ago, but the letter was returned. What is your present address?

T. W. THOMAS.—Received with thanks, but regret we cannot use.

H.M.—MSS. received, but regret that owing to the number of articles in hand we are unable to use your contribution.

J. MCQUEALLY.—*You* appear to have been very badly treated, but we have no space at present for the articles you suggest.

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.

Sugar Plums.

On February 21 Mr. Cohen will visit Glasgow. This will be, in a way, a special visit, with a special lecture. The meeting will be held in McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, and there will be one meeting only, in the evening at 6.30. The subject will be "The Physiology of Faith." Admission will be free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seat tickets. We hope our Glasgow friends will do their best to make the meeting as widely known as possible.

There was a good attendance at the first of the Fulham Lectures, delivered by Mr. Chapman Cohen at the Town Hall, on Thursday, February 4. The subject, "The World's Need of Unbelief," treated with some references to present conditions in Europe, and in Italy and in Russia, produced some questions mainly on economic matters. Christians proved as shy or as discreet as usual. In reply to a question as to religious teaching in Council Schools, Mr. Cohen pointed out that it is within the power of Local Education Authorities to dispense with such teaching, and that in all elementary schools that are rate-aided, children can be withdrawn from such teaching. Mr. A. C. White was in the chair, and carried out his duties with dignity and discretion. This Thursday (February 11) the lecturer is Mr. A. D. McLaren, and next Thursday, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture on "The Evolution of Life from Microbe to Man."

The following notice of *Selected Heresies* appears in the *Times Literary Supplement*:—

> Mr. Cohen proclaims that, while he has written every line of this book—even its name has the genuine Cohen ring—he is not its author. That title belongs to the importunate friend who suddenly confronted Mr. Cohen with three large volumes of selections from his writings and would not rest until they had been pruned to a convenient size and published. The resulting book is a faithful reflection of Mr. Cohen's writing—vigorous, terse, witty, unconvincing. While some essays are on problems of citizenship, most deal with religion, for which all arguments, in Mr. Cohen's view, are bad arguments. He has "always believed in short essays and small books"—and presumably in short arguments, if we may judge, for example, from his elementary identification of prayer with petition. But no one can deny to Mr. Cohen, even in disagreement, a genuine hatred for "the man who tampers with truth"; only all religious people are not *ipso facto* of that type.

We would dearly like to see the *Times* reviewer settle himself down to the task of making quite clear exactly how much of prayer would be left if all petitions were eliminated. It would be as satisfying as dining off the menu card, and just about as popular.

And so as not to have it all one way, here is another notice from the *Sunday Referee*. After noting with qualified approval the reprint of J. M. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*, the reviewer, Mr. Patrick Kirwan says:—

> Mr. Cohen thumps a more vulgar tub to less purpose. *Selected Heresies* is an anthology of Atheistic journalism; and like most collected journalism makes stale reading. And his matter is no better than his manner.

Such things save one from getting a too swelled head. After all, Mr. Kirwan having been given the book to review had to say something.

John O'London's Weekly in noting Mr. Cohen's *Selected Heresies*, has the curious comment that the book is "a positive revolt against life." We should prefer to describe it as a positive affirmation of many of the things that will help to make life really worth living. But to do so we must revolt against many things at present established. But it is the curse of our public life that so many refrain from revolting against anything that is strongly established.

We receive from Plymouth a very enthusiastic report of Mr. A. D. McLaren's lectures there on Sunday last. We are not surprised at this. Mr. McLaren, when he lectures has something to say, and knows how to say it. The Secretary of the Branch also reports that the policy adopted this year has been successful in drawing a good many people "out of their shells." We are very pleased to hear it.

We have received from the Stratford Publishing Company, of Boston, U.S.A. *Joseph Lewis: Enemy of God*. This is a biography of the President of the New York Freethinkers Association, written by A. H. Howland, an ex-Methodist minister, with a Foreword by Professor H. Elmer Barnes. Mr. Lewis is still a young man, but he has by his shrewdness, and his persistency in his attacks on the different churches in their endeavours to make use of State machinery and State funds for the furtherance of their religion, attacks that have been several times carried into the courts, made himself well-known to the American public. His two principal works *The Tyranny of God*, and *The Bible Unmasked*, have both sold largely and have gained praise from many of the more liberal-minded of American public men, tributes that are here reprinted. Mr. Lewis is also at the head of the American Freethought Book Club, which is responsible for a large circulation of Advanced books. He is good humoured in his advocacy, unsparing in his criticism, and with a genius for obtaining public notice. These are extremely valuable qualities in a Freethought advocate. Given good health and length of years Mr. Lewis should make an enduring reputation in the annals of American Freethought. We wish him the success he richly deserves, and we feel that he will in time get a good share of the success he deserves. The book is published at two dollars, about eleven shillings of English money and has for a frontispiece a good portrait of Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis, it will be remembered, was recently in England, and we spent some enjoyable hours in his company. Just before he left England we referred to the pious lie told by Commander Evangeline Booth on Voltaire. She informed an Albert Hall audience that

Voltaire, in the course of an address on a Paris boulevard, used "all his eloquence and genius" to denounce his maker. Then he asked for a Bible, and an old man in the crowd gave him one, which Voltaire tore into halves and scattered the pages. He afterwards died with the words "Oh thou just and indulgent God." The faults in the story are that Voltaire did not go about delivering open air addresses against God, next, old men did not go about carrying their Bibles in the Paris of the eighteenth century, next, Voltaire never tore up a Bible in this way, finally, Voltaire did not die with those words on his lips. The story was a lie of the kind that only a Salvationist could devise and only a Salvation audience swallow.

On the journey home Mr. Lewis noted that Evangeline Booth was among the passengers on the boat. Characteristically, Mr. Lewis wrote out the facts of Voltaire's death and sent them to her. Back came this reply:—

Mr. Joseph Lewis,
S.S. Europa.

Dear Sir,—I am directed by Commander Booth to reply to your letter dated December 8, with reference to an alleged statement made recently by the Commander in the Royal Albert Hall, London, and published in the newspapers to the effect that Voltaire had "called upon the Almighty." While the Commander did speak of Voltaire, which she frequently does, being personally a great admirer of his exceptional intellectual gifts, the Commander did not make use of the statement the papers attribute to her.

But naturally for whatever Miss Booth said, the only authoritative source of her information is the same as your own, as she certainly quoted from some published work.

Yours sincerely,
Richard Criffel,
Colonel.

Our report was taken from the pious *Daily Herald*, but it appeared in other papers, and we do not believe that the papers invented the story. It is true the *Herald* appears to play to the religious crowd, but we do not believe it invented that story—it would not help its circulation. When "Colonel Criffel" says that Evangeline Booth certainly quoted from "some published work" he may be telling the truth, but we should not be surprised to find that the published work was one of the lady's own articles.

Masterpieces of Freethought.

XI.

The Diegesis by Robert Taylor.

(*Concluded from page* 85.)

III.

The word "Diegesis" is a Greek one meaning "narrative" or "relation," and Taylor points out it is used by Luke in the opening verse of his gospel and also used by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*. The chapter in which it occurs is translated afresh by Taylor himself. He wants the reader—if he can—to read it in the original so that it can be seen that he "has taken no liberty with the author." "I offer my own translation," says Taylor, "not on the score of it being mine, but on the score of it being as good as the best that could possibly be made and better than any that is not the best." Throughout both the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis* Taylor appends the original authority in Greek or Latin or French in the footnotes, wherever possible, and gives his own translation in most cases. He dedicates his work to the Master, Fellows and Tutors of St. John's College, Cambridge: "You will appreciate (far beyond any wish of mine that you should *seem* to appreciate) the merits of this work." Taylor was a scholar, and it was as a scholar he wished his book to be judged and his Dedication shows his pride in learning as becomes all scholars.

The point he wished to make was that Christianity was long anterior to Christ, and in quoting Eusebius and what he had to say about the "Ascetics," or the "Essenes," or the "Therapeutæ," Taylor wanted to use a damning admission of the great Church historian as he used many other admissions from orthodox writers. Taylor's training for the priesthood made him familiar with the writings of the great champions of Christianity. He knew Jones, Lardner, Marsh and many other defenders of the faith through and through. They were no mean defenders either. They were great scholars themselves and far above (considering when they wrote) most of our modern apologists in knowledge and thoroughness. They recognized that upon the credibility and authenticity of the Gospels, the whole case for Christianity rests. If every word of the four Gospels was not divine, what trust could be put upon anything else? Moreover, unlike our modern parsons, they claimed it was Jesus, the Son of God, who was "our Lord and Saviour"—not a Jesus of Nazareth, who went about preaching and "doing good." Taylor's consummate knowledge of their works made it possible for him to pick out the "probables" and the "possibles" with which their writings were scattered. He showed, and it cannot be too often repeated, that there was no more real evidence for the authenticity of the "genuine" gospels than for the apocryphal gospels. Taylor says:—

> In this *Diegesis*, we shall therefore more especially confine our investigation to the claims of the evangelical histories; and as our arguments must mainly be derived from the admissions which their best learned and ablest advocates have made with respect to them, we shall throughout speak of them and their contents, in the tone and language which courtesy and respect to the feelings of those for whose instruction we write may reasonably claim from us; and which being understood as adopted for the convenience of argument only, can involve no compromise of sincerity.

But he has no hesitation whatever in quoting the "bits" which have the "bite," not very palatable to the defender's of the faith. We remember how very angry Dr. Lightfoot got over *Supernatural Religion*. He lost his temper because its author quoted Greek and Latin with all the method of genuine orthodox scholars. "How can an 'infidel' know Greek or Latin as well as a true believer?" cried Lightfoot, in effect. One scents the same opposition to the scholarly attainments of Taylor. It was simply gall and wormwood to his opponents that he would quote the original Greek and Latin and mostly give his own translation.

"Notwithstanding Mr. Taylor's multifarious collection of passages from authors, ancient and modern," whimpers Dr. Pye Smith, "and all the malevolent artifice with which he perverts them, it is abundantly evident that of sound and accurate knowledge, he posseses but a scanty share." Yet just before this he says, "Mr. Taylor's translation of this clause and of the rest (from M. de Beausobre) is fairly made." Indeed, Pye Smith had to confess over and over again that Taylor's authorities were genuine, but Taylor's deductions from them were what he bitterly opposed. Of course. Mosheim, for example, admitted that the apocryphal gospels were "full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders." Even the most orthodox champions were obliged to admit that quite a number of them were quoted as genuine by Christian fathers. On what authority were *any* gospels made canonical? No one knows. To say it was the "Christian conscience," is surely no answer;

and Pye Smith and people like him were quick to see this. Call Taylor an infamous liar, shriek out he has "perverted" his authorities, denounce him as a renegade, jeer at his scholarship—in fact, never cease to pelt mud and some would be bound to stick. It has stuck to this day, and so we get that Taylor is "not altogether reliable"—as if, for that matter, any critic is. Let Professor Knowall write a book on Biblical criticism and is it not a fact that Professor Knowmore will "annihilate" it and Professor Somebody else will do the same with Professor Knowmore? Here I should like to say a word on C. C. Hennell's criticism of the *Diegesis* given in Mr. J. M. Robertson's fine *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*. Hennell himself was more or less an Unitarian, but his *Enquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity* is a very notable work not unlike Strauss' *Life of Jesus*. Hennell was particularly competent to judge the book because he had to put scholarship into his own, with the result that his drastic criticism left nearly as little of a real Jesus as Taylor himself:—

> I have nearly finished reading the *Diegesis* . . . it is . . . honest hating, reckless, witty, abusive, take hold of anything special pleading . . . yet there is an immense deal of learning in it, and some valuable hints . . . I must look a good deal into it and say something about it in the next edition. Like Dupuis, Taylor tries to make out that no such person (as Jesus) ever existed . . . This makes their books of quite a different character from mine . . . I am persuaded I am nearest the truth, but they suggest a great deal that I could not.

Hennell seems to have been surprised at the *Diegesis* and his criticism is in many ways just. But Taylor cannot be dismissed quite so easily as perhaps he thought. The fact remains that the "ill co-ordinated learning and methodless discoursiveness" of his books (as Mr. Robertson says) are part and parcel of the man himself, and must be accepted with all their limitations; in spite of them, Taylor will be found bold, original and provocative. But the long accounts and notices of the apostles, of Pagan Deities and mythological personages, of the Apostolic Fathers, and those of the second, third, and fourth centuries will be found highly readable and entertaining. They give in a small space a vast amount of information on the "origins" of Christianity and Church history; and more than that, they "give the show away." No one can read Taylor's account without seeing that the "evidence" for Christianity is based upon some of the most credulous fools who ever disgraced humanity. I think it would be hard to find a pack of bigger idiots than most of the so-called Christian fathers, who believed anything no matter how silly or stupid it was.

Finally, Taylor was not afraid to differ from such a man as Gibbon—and to give his reasons for so doing. Whether anyone before him insisted that the celebrated passage in Tacitus about the persecution of the early Christians was a forgery I do not know. Since he wrote, quite a number of books have appeared on the subject though, naturally, Christians would just as soon give up Jesus as Tacitus. Without Tacitus and Josephus, there is absolutely no outside reference to Christ, and that simply cannot be tolerated. Gibbon declared the passage in Tacitus genuine. Taylor categorically declared it to be a forgery:—

> I consider this celebrated passage to be a forgery or interpolation upon the text of Tacitus, from no disposition, I am sure, to give offence to those who may have as good reasons and probably better, for esteeming it to be unquestionable genuine, from no wish to deduct from Christianity one tittle or iota of its fair or probable evidence but from a consideration solely *of the facts of the case.*

Taylor gives twenty solid reasons for his claim and they are worth noting as prior to Hochart, W. J. Ross, W. B. Smith and Arthur Drews.

I hope I have said enough to interest the reader in the work of a great fighting Freethinker. He worked, fought and suffered for the Cause. He gave us the best that was in him and no one can do more than that.

H. CUTNER.

Criticism and the Bible.

(*Continued from page* 91.)

IN the hymns (Sanhitas) of the Old Aryan Indians, there appears in several places (but by no means everywhere) the conception of a lifeless sea out of which the land, later on, separates.

"CREATION."

1. "The non-existent was not, the existent was not then; air was not, nor the fundament that is beyond. What stirred? Where? Under whose shelter? Was the deep abyss water?
2. "Death was not, immortality was not then; no distinction was there of night and day. That one breathed, windless, self-dependent. Other than that there was naught beyond.
3. "Darkness there was, plunged in darkness in the beginning; indistinguished water was all this. That which was, was covered with the void; through the power of heat was produced the one." [3]

Now if the legend of the primeval ocean could not have arisen in the Nile Valley or between the Euphrates and Tigris, still less could it have originated in the interior of the old Orient. It is not a fabrication of Semitic Babylon but descends from the mythology of the Sumerians, who, according to all appearances, belonged to the Altai-speaking peoples. The Sumerians, before the time of the Semites, were settled in the South of Babylonia and were subjugated by the Semites some 3,000 years before our era. The proof for the descent of the legend in question from the mythology of the Sumerians, is furnished, not only by the fact, as the cuneiform inscriptions testify, that the Sumerian account of creation starts out from the conception of an original primeval ocean, but that also the Sumerian designations, in this connexion, recur in the later Semitic-Babylonian mythology. Thus, Anu, the god of heaven and father of the gods, is in the latter mythology identical with Anna, the Sumnerian spirit of heaven. Ea, the later god of the earth, is identical with Inkia (abbreviated Ia) the original spirit of the water-house, *i.e.*, the earth, since the earth, according to the idea of the Sumerians, was originally nothing other than a great water-house filled up by Bau, the miry, primeval waters.

Again with the Semitic-Babylonians, we also find this last word in the form of "Bohu," as a designation of the primeval condition of the earth, and out of this the expression has passed over into the Hebrew creation-legend. As is well known, the first chapter of the first Book of Moses begins with the assertion that the earth was "tohu wa bohu," a condition which is usually translated into the words "without form, and void." In strict keeping with the original sense of the Sumerian word, it should be translated by the words, "formless deep." In this way it is explained why immediately after the words, "and the earth was without form, and void," there follows abruptly, without any interposing word, a reference

[3] Rig-Veda, Book x, Hymn cxxix, first three verses.

to the primeval "deep" (Sumerian-Babylonian, tamu, Hebraic, tehom), over which the spirit of God (more correctly the breath of God, ruach elohim) moved; since it was precisely Bau (bohu) that composed this original deep.

It is not possible to say with certainty from whence the Sumerians themselves acquired this conception of the primeval ocean; whether they had, before their arrival in the Euphrates and Tigris Valley, lived on a sea-coast, for example, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, or whether they also had in turn borrowed the conception from another people. But one thing we can say with certainty. It follows from the descent of the primeval-ocean legend, that the idea that this legend must have arisen in the alluvial district of the Euphrates and Tigris, is nothing but an unfounded assumption.

II.—Traditional Factors.

There are still other contradictions in the Biblical account of creation, which prove that it is a mixture of different kinds of traditions. An examination of the attitude which is taken towards the woman, leads to the same conclusion.

According to the first Book of Moses, chapter 1, verse 27, Elohim created the man and the woman at the same time, in his own image. But according to the second chapter, the woman is produced out of one of the man's ribs. She is a *part*—and not only a partner of the man, and since she was created on his account, *i.e.*, for his society, she was not despised by him as insignificant. Admiringly he greets her after the operation, with the words: "this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." And in order to emphasize how valuable and indispensable she is to the man, it is written, chapter 2, verse 24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." The wife ranks for the man higher than his father and mother, and the object of their living together is that they shall become "one flesh," *i.e.*, copulation.

This passage appears to be a reminiscence of the time of the "mother right" (so-called matriarchy), when the wife did not as yet live in the gens of the man but, conversely, the man lived in the gens of his wife. For in the small peasant form of settlement, which followed the dissolution of the patriarchal family, the man does not leave his father and mother. He does not, it is true, live with them in the same household, but he remains in the same village and kinship group. In this age, it was the wife who left father and mother and settled in the village of the man.

The assumption that the passage under discussion is a recollection of the time of the "mother-right," is so much more possible, since, according to all appearances, descent was reckoned in the female line also among the Hebrews in the earlier times. Many of those female names, *e.g.*, Leah, Rachel, Sarah Hagar, Zilpah, Bilhah, were originally not personal names but names of gentes or totem names which, in part, were derived directly from animals.

But a much more important question than the foregoing is the one concerning the conception of the female character and of sexual intercourse which is presented in the Paradise story, and which is in marked opposition to the particular passage just discussed. In this legend (Ch. 3) the purpose of the woman is not, as in the myth contained in Ch. 2, begetting; rather is sexual intercourse a sin to which the lascivious woman cunningly tempts the man; a crime which leads to the expulsion of the first human couple out of the garden of Eden, and brings upon the human race toilsome labour and misery. With contempt the god Yahwe declares to the woman: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

The man shall rule and not the lustful woman, who is so depraved that although she bears in pain she again and again desires sexual intercourse with the man!

Here also in this myth, the creator appears as a quite different sort of being. In the first chapter of the Book of Moses, he is not only called Elohim (in the second and third chapters, on the other hand, Yahwe), but two different natures are represented. The Judaistic god Yahwe is a rather unskilled and ignorant sort of God. To while away the time for man, he creates the animals, but he is not equal to the task of finding a suitable companion for man. When at last he does create a woman, he does not simply allow her to come forth out of nothing in response to an authoritative order—"Let there be"—but finds it necessary to go to work in a round-about manner. His knowledge also is in a very bad way. For when the first human pair had eaten of the tree of knowledge, although Yahwe had surmised what had occurred, he must still first collect information from Adam in order to be quite sure about the affair.

W. Craik.

(To be continued.)

Freethought in Fiction.

I.—George Meredith.

It is seemly to begin this series with Meredith. Other novelists will be considered whose work only has a Freethinking tendency or tone. Meredith was an avowed Freethinker, a supporter of this paper and of its late brave Editor, and he died firm in his humanist philosophy, although (as G. W. Foote said), "a brace of blackbirds were brought to whistle their nonsense over his ashes."

Born at Portsmouth in 1829, Meredith died at Box Hill in 1909. Four years before his death the Order of Merit was conferred upon him, one of many recognitions that came to him so long delayed as to verify Sir Leslie Stephen's opinion that Meredith "belongs to the class of pioneers, men in the line of advance whose full greatness awaits recognition until the advance is completed." Unlike Dickens, a contemporary, he had no avid public waiting for his work. Also, unlike Dickens, he did not cater for that public. An appreciative critic (Elmer Bailey) says that "in no possible sense of the word did he ever become popular." There were, nevertheless, those who saw his destiny ahead and predicted it; among them G. W. Foote and James Thomson ("B.V."). In an article in the *Secularist* (1876) the latter aptly described Meredith as "an authentic historian of genuine nature," the "Robert Browning of our novelists," and proclaimed that "his day is bound to come."

Educated at a Moravian School in Germany, Meredith returned to England in his sixteenth year, and, before long, had commenced writing. He wrote for *Chambers Journal* and *Once a Week* and later for the *Fortnightly Review*, of which he was for a time Editor. As literary critic in that journal he won not only notice but repute as a sure judge of letters. For thirty years he was a reader for Chapman and Hall, and we may suspect that in the exercise of that function he often found reason for that scorn of pandering to the popular taste to which he himself never truckled, from first to last.

Meredith's first novel appeared in 1859, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. It was denounced from a hundred pulpits. One so-called "literary" periodical suggested that such a book (or such an author) might be compared "with the scavengers and dust collectors of ordinary life." Meredith himself said the book "fell dead." In those days the public took more notice of clergymen and critics than it does now. Even in these days those pro-

fessional gentlemen have not lost the itch for censure. *The Amazing Marriage*, his last novel, fourteen years before his death, together with some short stories and nine other novels between 1861 and 1894, comprise his whole output in fiction.

Mr. John M. Robertson has said that Meredith's later work, for example *One of Our Conquerors* (1891), was marked by an "ever-thickening crust of preciosity and verbal affectation." The book mentioned was (said Mr. Robertson) "the hardest novel to read I ever met with," except Zola's *La Terre*. A late Editor of *Punch* professed inability to read Meredith at all. If there was a deterioration in style (and to read in succession, say *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Lord Ormont and his Arminta*, may lead to an endorsement of that view) there is something to be said not in mitigation but in explanation. Meredith put himself into his books, and, if an author has to wait for half a century for recognition he may be pardoned if some of the iron that has entered into his being finds an outlet in what was perhaps rather a concentrated defiance than a "verbal affectation." Be that as it may Meredith never wilted. He was no member of that temperamental fraternity who mistake abnormality for art, and curiosity for culture. A walker, a boxer, a swimmer—"all wire and whipcord" as Hyndman called him—a novelist, a poet, and a *man*.

Modern Love, his first book, was in verse, and it is in his poetry more than in his novels that we can judge plainly his fundamental outlook and his supreme literary objective. Language has been described as the ritual of thought, but in poetry it may be more than a symbol. Meredith's poems show him to be not only an "historian" of nature, but one who, unlike Wordsworth, found in nature not mysticism but philosophy and truth. "We should," he said in a letter to Mr. Foote, "accept Reality in all its forms; for so we come to benevolence and to a cheerful resignation; there is no other road to wisdom." One passage from *Earth's Secret*, a characteristic one:—

"Not solitarily in fields we find
Earth's secret open, though one page is there;
Her plainest, such as children spell, and share
With bird and beast; raised letters for the blind.
Not where the troubled passions toss the mind,
In turbid cities, can the key be bare.
It hangs for those who hither thither fare,
Close interthreading nature with our kind.
They hearing History speak, of what men were,
And have become, all wise. The gain is great
In vision and solidity: it lives
Yet at a thought of life apart from her,
Solidity and vision lose their state,
For Earth, that gives the milk, the spirit gives."

Readers who have not yet read Meredith, and especially those of this generation, may find in his novels a faithful and fearless portrayal of much of the life of that century which has been thrown into the melting pot of precocious estimation so soon after its passing. It was the pit out of which "this England" of to-day was digged, and there was no more valiant digger than George Meredith.

Meredith's novels (and some of the Poems) are available for the most part in inexpensive editions. (Constable). The best known of the novels are *The Ordeal of Richard Feverell, Evan Harrington, Beauchamp's Career, The Egotist, Diana of the Crossways*, and *The Amazing Marriage*. Of these, in this writer's opinion, *The Ordeal, Beauchamp's Career* and *The Egotist* are, in that order, the best. In verse *Selected Poems* is admirably representative.

The author of a Primer of Meredith's novels (Moffat) says his book is designed "to help some readers of his over the fence." Well, it may be that the most beautiful garden is that around which there is a fence against the intruder; but the difficulty of reading in this case has, we think, been magnified unduly. There are few writers whose works, opened at random, will yield such a harvest of noble and unforgettable passages. Meredith was right when he predicted (in the days when "an audience impatient for blood and glory" scorned his stress "on incidents so minute and pictures so little imposing"), that an audience would come "to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work; who, as it were, will feel the winds of March when they do blow." We, who ought to be weary of "blood and glory," may still find inspiration in the fine materialism of Meredith. Here follows a sample of it from *Selected Poems*, and by way of conclusion:—

THE WORLD'S ADVANCE.

"Judge mildly the tasked world; and disincline
To brand it, for it bears a heavy pack.
You have perchance observed the inebriate's track
At night when he has quitted the inn-sign:
He plays diversions on the homeward line,
Still that way bent albeit his legs are slack:
A hedge may take him, but he turns not back.
Nor turns this burdened world, of curving spine.
'Spiral,' the memorable Lady terms
Our mind's ascent: our world's advance presents
That figure on a flat; the way of worms.
Cherish the promise of its good intents,
And warn it, not one instinct to efface
Ere Reason ripens for the vacant place."

Alan Handsacre.

The Book Shop.

When a novelist takes a holiday and indulges in essay writing, the reader is enabled to see the creative artist in another dimension. In a dream, no matter how many characters speak, the speaker is always the same—the dreamer. The exigencies of the novel, if it is not wooden, demand even more points of view than are the writer's personal opinions. It is difficult to see clearly the real man at the back of the novel. *Essays in Little*, by Eden Phillpotts, Hutchinson, 6s. net, is a compact little book containing twenty-one well-knit essays, provoking, suggestive, and in many places, challenging to that trend of thought which threatens to land us in a metaphysical bog. Mr. Phillpotts has a good word for Thoreau, and in the medium of the essay we can have the clear cut opinions of one who has written much, created characters that in many cases are memorable, and yet remained true to earth. In a gem, entitled, *To the Lamp-Bearers*, he shows independence of judgment in dealing with Milton, De Quincey, and Ruskin, and to those readers who demand the marriage of Hamlet with Ophelia, or the happy ending, he writes: "But why do you, who are a truthful soul in your life and in your relations with your kind, tell me to lie to you and weave the thing that is not, because in your hour of leisure you refuse to look upon the thing that is?" Nietzsche reminds the author of Thoreau and Lucretius—a new, yet true estimate of a lonely thinker whom we cannot touch and forget, and I found myself being carried away by the following praise of him: "He takes you by the neck, like a kitten, and slaps some mental decency into you. As the east wind scours the cranny and kills the grub hidden there, so he empties your stuffy mind of its selfish, illogical, anti-social medley, its acquired nonsense and newspaper opinions." In the concluding essay *Reverie*, Mr. Phillpotts, with no uncertain hand, takes fact and sentiment, and with the maturity of thought welds them together; the result is fine writing—a symphony dedicated to the highest and best in humanism.

The Nonsuch Press, with its usual good taste has produced the complete poetry and selected prose of John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's. Both print and binding are a delight, and the result is a book that will last for years and be a good and serviceable record. There are two definite camps of opinion about Donne—the usual for and against. In his prose and verse the quality that attracts me most is his deadly grip on the idea of mutability. Translated into popular idiom we get the saying that it will be all the same in a hundred years from now. The implication in this saying is true enough, although we know that it will not be all the same. Donne had the faculty of visualizing eternity, and the critic will ask, in vain somewhat, for any proof of the value of religious consolation in his works. There is a macabre touch in his serious work, there is also the broad jest, common in Donne's period, that seemed to fit comfortably with piety. His sermons are worth

reading for their value in giving one a view of religion during his time. The Jesuits are singled out for especial vituperation, and the Atheist receives Donne's commiseration. It would not do, at any time in the history of Christianity, to *admit* that there was any good in Atheism; one knows the runs and funk holes of Christianity, and one also knows that Christianity never gets within speaking distance of the real issues in Atheism. To live it demands iron in one's being; to make a scapegoat of Jesus for a real man's shortcomings shows the contemptible level in which the gospel of good-tidings is based. Donne's wit and genius flourished in an age when Catholic and Protestant imbecilities contended for the privilege of riding on the backs of the people.

It must have been in 1903 when I met Kropotkin. There had been a demonstration against some atrocity associated with the Czar's rule in Russia. I remember him, of medium height, bright eyes, and cheeks that spoke of the open air. He was a simple unaffected man, and, in a measure like Joseph Conrad, in touch with the verities of existence. His *Mutual Aid* is more interesting than many novels, and it rings true with the noble efforts of a man with something definitely constructive to offer. He makes short work of kings and priests, but never departs from his insistent line of thought—that of mutual aid among the human race. Now that exalted members of European nations are compelled to stoop to pick up the pieces of china in the shop after the bull's visit, it will not be amiss to give, from the conclusion of *Mutual Aid*, the following extract. In dealing with verities one can never be out of date in a world where newspaperdom is known for the fudge it is. For what it is worth therefore, as an amulet to touch, or a bone to gnaw by those dogs of war who live on a diet of iron bolts and fire, this extract might be studied to advantage:

> To attribute, therefore, the industrial progress of our century to the war of each against all which it has proclaimed, is to reason like the man who, knowing not the cause of rain, attributes it to the victim he has immolated before his clay idol. For industrial progress, as for each other conquest over nature, mutual aid and close intercourse certainly are, as they have been, much more advantageous than mutual struggle.

C-DE-B.

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the "Freethinker."

THE PRAGMATIC DOCTRINE AS APPLIED TO RELIGION.

Sir,—"How do you know, Dearie, that Jesus Christ died upon the Cross," demanded Epigrammus of his little friend Evangeline, a sweet Salvation Sister. Pointing to a waggon-load of men over whom waved a banner with strange device Converted Drunkards, she replied triumphantly, "Because all that lot have washed themselves clean in His blood; and everybody else who believes that he shed it, can do just what they have done." Her eyes which are bright even in repose, shone brighter still as she went on to exclaim, "I believe it because it does good; because it works." "Oh yes," said Epigrammus, pinching her arm, "that is where you are right. It does work; works like—er um, well—like a steam-engine." "How clever you are," cried she with ecstatic admiration, "Oh if you could only get to Calvary." "It is a long way off," quoth he, "and there is a far pleasanter spot under your bonnet."

Epigrammus got quits that time, for, on a previous occasion when he asked Evangeline, why "Mr. Ghandi's prayers had not been answered," she replied at once, "Because he sent to the wrong address."

C. Clayton Dove.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

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 Walham Green (Underground Station): Thursday evening, February 18, in the Large Assembly Hall, at 8.0, Mr. G. Whitehead—"The Evolution of Life from Microbe to Man." On Thursday evening, February 25, at 8.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Spiritualism v. Common Sense."

Hampstead Ethical Institute (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Dr. C. W. Saleeby—"England's Green and Pleasant Land."

South London Ethical Society (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Inspector Helen Taggart (Women's Auxiliary Force)—"Women Police Abroad."

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. E. C. Saphin—"Jesus Christ in London."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Frederic Kettle, B.A.—"Ethical Values in Pictorial and Plastic Art."

Study Circle (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, February 15, at 8.0, Mrs. H. Grant will open a discussion on "Religion and Woman."

The Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, February 16, at 7.0, Rev. A. D. Belden, B.D.—"Your Faith and Mine."

The Metropolitan Secular Society (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mr. Frederick Verinder—"London's Rates and London's Land Values."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

Birkenhead (Wirral) Branch N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance Lorn Street): 7.0, E. Biddle (Chester)—"Morality—Divine and Human."

East Lancashire Rationalist Association (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): Sunday, February 14, at 2.30, a Lecture, subject "Modern Physics and some Delusions of the Rev. F. T. Buckingham." S. D. F., St. James Hall, Burnley; at 11.0, J. T. Eastwood, of Nelson, and H. P. Turner, of Burnley—"Is Christianity Sun Worship?"

Glasgow Secular Society (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 6.30, Mr. A. Copland—"Dogmatism." Questions and discussion.—Silver collection.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. E. F. Wise, C.B.—"Russia's Progress in 1931."

Liverpool (Merseyside) Branch N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street): 7.0, J. V. Shortt—"God, the Question Mark." Current *Freethinkers* and other literature on sale.

Plymouth Branch N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 5): 7.0, Mr. G. F. McCluskey—"The Freethought Attack."

Perth Branch (Co-operative Hall): 6.30, Guy A. Aldred—'God and the State." Questions and discussion invited.

Sunderland Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street Co-operative Rooms): 7.0, Mr. T. Brown—"Man's Place in Nature."

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