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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Blasphemy on Trial.—The Editor</i> - - - - -	129
<i>The End of a Chapter.—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	131
<i>Priestley as Philosopher and Humanist.—T. F. Palmer</i>	132
<i>Man and God.—W. Mann</i> - - - - -	133
<i>Disease and Crime.—Ignotus</i> - - - - -	138
<i>Has Religion a Useful Function.—G. H. Taylor</i> - - -	138
<i>Forty Stripes Save One.—Alan Handsacre</i> - - -	139
<i>Paganism Triumphant.—Graeculus</i> - - - - -	140
<i>The Modernist Te Deum.—E. E. Kellett</i> - - - - -	141
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Blasphemy on Trial.
 THE Secular Society, Limited has just issued a booklet which I desire to recommend strongly to every reader of this journal. It is a verbatim report of the speech delivered by G. W. Foote, on the occasion of his trial for Blasphemy in the Court of Queen's Bench in 1883. I have read the report of nearly every important trial for blasphemy during the past hundred and forty years, with a great many earlier ones, as well as kindred trials in which heresy played a part; but I know of no defence that can equal Foote's speech for its striking survey of a very wide field, its literary grace, and its general forcefulness. There have been speeches with a greater display of legal learning, or with an equal display of pure eloquence, there has been none that in the course of a three hours speech has put the whole case against blasphemy prosecutions so completely and so convincingly. The report is well printed on superior paper, and is published at the price of sixpence. Every reader of this journal should buy at least two copies—one for himself, and one to lend to a friend who does not know what the battle for free speech has cost and the part played by Freethinkers in the partial triumph gained.

When over fifty years ago the *Freethinker* came into being it struck a distinctive note in Freethought journalism. It aimed at being both forthright in its advocacy and plain in its speech. It avowed its intention to use unsparingly the weapons of sarcasm, irony, reason, ridicule and learning in its attack on the established superstition of this country. It declared that it intended to give no mercy and it asked for none. From the first the *Freethinker* took up a position of its own. It encouraged the bold, but it frightened the timid and all those who, with an apologetic air that robbed their protest of the larger part of its value, voiced their disagreement with the established religion. And when to its other features the

Freethinker added a series of Biblical cartoons, the fury of the pious rose to fever heat. Eventually the editor, the printer, and the publisher were brought to trail at the Old Bailey on a charge of blasphemy. There had been no trial for such an offence for many years. The bigots thought they might have another try. They were to learn that, in its ultimate consequence, this was—for religion—the most disastrous victory ever won, and also that the spirit of fighting Freethought was unchanged.

* * *

Two Trials and their Sequel.

There were two *Freethinker* trials. The first summons was issued in July, 1882, a little over twelve months after the paper was first issued. The parts picked out for indictment would rouse small attention now, but things have moved since 1882. Owing to the efforts of Bradlaugh the trial was removed from the Old Bailey to the Court of Queen's Bench, where it came on for hearing in the following April. But another attempt to suppress the *Freethinker* was made in connexion with the publication of an illustrated Christmas number for 1882. Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp were again indicted for blasphemy while the first trial was pending. This trial came on before Judge North, a religious bigot and bully of the first water. His conduct at the trial was a disgrace to the traditions of the English Bench, and there was then no law of criminal appeal. In the end, Foote was sentenced to twelve months, Ramsey to nine months, and Kemp to three months imprisonment.

It was while serving this sentence that Foote and Ramsey were brought to the Court of Queen's Bench to answer the first indictment, and it is the speech made by Foote during this hearing that is now reprinted. That speech drew from the Judge, Lord Coleridge, very high praise, and his statement of the Common Law of Blasphemy did away for ever with the ruling that it was illegal to publish the most drastic attacks on Christianity. Some years later Foote saw in this judgment the possibility of doing away with the legal ruling that a bequest to an association established for the publication of criticisms against the Christian religion was illegal. This led to the formation of the Secular Society, Limited, and made it possible for other Freethinking Associations to follow. It is these, among other things, that make the Coleridge trial the most important in the history of Blasphemy prosecutions, and justifies my saying that the *Freethinker* prosecution was the most costly—to the Church—ever undertaken in this country.

* * *

The Vitality of Religious Lies.

Looking back over all these years it is not easy to realize the intensity of the feeling against the *Freethinker*. All sorts of stories were current concerning the paper. Those who had never read it, and never

intended to, whispered stories of its "indecent" and its "vulgarity." So far as Christians were concerned they were only following the lines of Christian tradition. The curious thing is that the same kind of thing should have been said by some non-Christians who, too timid to take part in the fight, probably felt that some apology was due to themselves for their attitude. In every advanced party there are usually some who while quiet enough in the face of slanders by orthodoxy against heresy, become obtrusively vocal when the heretic retorts by lacerating the feelings of the orthodox. Some of these lies have passed into a tradition, and even today one will find people who refer to the old "vulgar" days of the *Freethinker*, without ever having read a copy of it.

I had a recent illustration of one of these religious lies on which it is worth while spending a little space, as it appears to have been set afloat again. On one of the pages of the prosecuted Christmas Number there is an illustration to the Biblical text, "And it shall come to pass that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts." The picture shows the lower part of a man's body, habited in an old pair of check trousers, with a torn seat through which a piece of the shirt protrudes. As Moncure Conway said at the time, there was nothing in the least objectionable in the picture so long as one did not know that the portion of the body shown was intended to represent a part of the body of Jehovah.

To my great surprise—I had never heard this tale before—a reader of the *Freethinker*, who had never seen the prosecuted number, asked me whether it was true, as he had been informed, that it contained the picture of a man performing an act of nature. I laughed. The tale was a new one to me. He asked, "had I seen the picture?" I had seen scores of copies, and if he came to the office I would show him some. He enquired if I was sure that I had the original one. My answer was that there had never been but one print. My questioner felt rather ashamed that he had paid any attention to such an improbable story. But on looking up the files of the *Freethinker* I found that immediately after his release Foote had written about this particular lie as one of the many slanders circulated by Christians about him. So here again was a good hearty religious lie, which after nearly fifty years had been resurrected in all innocence and was being repeated by a reader of the *Freethinker*. There is nothing that so nearly achieves immortality as a religious lie.

* * *

A Stupid Slander.

It is then worth while exposing, once for all—if possible—this tale about the indecency of the prosecuted Christmas Number. It commenced with a good thumping lie told by the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt. Replying to a question, in the House of Commons, he said:—

Nobody who has not seen the publication (The Christmas Number) can judge of the matter. I have seen it and I have no hesitation in saying that it is in the most strict sense of the word an obscene libel.

Against this villianous lie protests came from all connected with the defence. Foote wrote from prison pointing out that there was not a word in his indictment about indecency or obscenity, but only blasphemy and wickedness. The letter was suppressed. The fat, religious liar had to be protected from exposure. Dr. Aveling, who edited the paper in the absence of Foote, protested in the *Freethinker*. Mrs Besant protested. Bradlaugh protested. Bradlaugh also pointed out that Lord Coleridge had had before

him for two whole days and had carefully examined the incriminated number. And Coleridge deliberately cautioned the Jury that while Foote might be blasphemous he did not pander to the low passions of mankind. Even North himself, the brutal bullying religious bigot who acted as both judge and prosecutor, and who did all he could to inflame the prejudices of the jury, warned the jury that they were not trying the men before them for indecency but for blasphemy. And when describing the Christmas Number page by page, he passed over with a mere casual word the picture of Jehovah showing his back parts and directed the jury's attention to other parts of the page on which the picture occurred. This certainly ought to be enough to kill this particular lie. But I do not know. Religious lies die very slowly, *Christian* lies slowest of all. But when a religious lie is credited by a non-Christian, as this particular one was until I was asked about it, well, then it may be said to be indestructible. Anyway these are, at least, the facts of the case.

* * *

Freethinkers and the Blasphemy Laws.

The present reprint brings back some of the atmosphere of those days. The speech of Foote in his defence deserves to be ranked as a classic. Omitting the speeches of lawyers briefed for the defence, which, other things equal, are certain to leave much to be desired, one need only compare the speeches made by Hetherington, Taylor, Carlile, or Holyoake and other Freethinkers to realize that Foote's speech stands almost alone. Nearly every legal point is touched on, although not with the display of legal erudition that would have distinguished a speech by Bradlaugh, but the literary graces are above Bradlaugh, and the profound irony of many of the passages bear the brand of a master. No wonder that Coleridge, with Foote before him, and the copies of the *Freethinker* under his eye, hardly troubled to disguise his disgust with the savage treatment meted out by North.

There is, however, more than a mere historic significance to this reprint. For many years before Foote's trial it had been said that the Blasphemy Laws were dead. The *Freethinker* trial proved the possibility of a resurrection. To-day the limits of freedom have been enlarged. But the same principle of the Common Law which permitted this enlargement of liberty, also provides for its contraction to its earlier limits, if and when opinion can be brought to sink to a certain level. The only safeguard against this retrogression is to see that public opinion is so educated as to make it impossible. It is of little use thinking that one is destroying present-day Christianity by whispering that it may be false, but suggesting at the same time that one has a profound respect for the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ, or "very respectfully" suggesting that one does not see any actual evidence for the existence of a God, although there may be one, and meanwhile continue paying "respectful" treatment to a demonstrated superstition. Only a couple of years ago a Labour Government showed itself in such fear of religious opposition that it deliberately wrecked a Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and to do so went to even the extent of deliberately lying to one of its own committees on a point of law. So long as the Blasphemy Laws are there they are a source of danger. They are kept there in order to be used when the opportunity occurs. The talk about "indecent" and "vulgarity" was as much in the mouths of the opponents of the Bill in 1929 as it was in 1883. We must,

if we wish to see those stupid and iniquitous laws repealed go on making Freethinkers—not merely non-Christians, but Freethinkers, men and women who know "true Christianity" for what it is and are determined to make an end of it. There is no such thing as coming to terms with Christianity. The only thing is to end it. A superstition is only innocuous when it is dead.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The End of a Chapter.

"In our fat England the gardener, Time, is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them?"

George Meredith.

"I love life which is earthy, life as it is. In this well of life I feel further from death."—Anatole France.

VOLTAIRE said that there is no man who has not something interesting in him; but there are few who will honestly tell us the matters of interest. Rousseau unbosomed himself in his *Confessions*, and the world has been grateful since. Old Montaigne was sincerity itself, and he showed himself with all his amiable weaknesses. Like Cromwell, who told the artist to paint his portrait "warts and all," he wished to have a truthful picture. English autobiographies, however, usually suffer from the disease of discretion, and are too respectable to be entertaining. Hence a book of memoirs, which has a spice of audacity, is a welcome relief. Such a volume is Shane Leslie's *The End of a Chapter* (Constable) which is entertaining from cover to cover, and is as full of human interest as an egg is full of meat.

"People who are old enough to write memoirs have usually lost their memory," says Mr. Leslie, who wrote his book in the very prime of life. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why there is not a dull page in the volume. Whilst invalided home from the last war, Mr. Leslie wrote his reminiscences, and turned his convalescence to such excellent account. He recalls his schooldays at Eton College, and has some very amusing passages concerning the religion taught at that ancient and aristocratic seat of Knowledge. He says:—

The Sunday sermon was a mild appeal to take holy orders or grow up like Lord Roberts. On Sunday boys were made to write answers to scriptural questions, a hateful tribute to the Sabbath god which made Sunday the chosen day for smoking, or catapulting the royal rabbits in Windsor.

The result of the teaching given at Eton College was that the boys were brought up to be good Pagans rather than indifferent Christians. Mr. H. S. Salt, who was for years a master at that institution, once said that the Etonian ideal was "brawn and not brains," and Mr. Leslie admits the impeachment. Incidentally, the younger writer points out that the Jesuits are the only people who have ever been able to impose religion on English boys, and adds, sarcastically:—

Their ideal is Saint Aloysius, a delicate youth with a lily. The popular Etonian inclines to be a tomboy with a cricket bat. Aloysius would have been better for games, and Etonians for the sacramental view of life. The ideal would be a combination of the two.

Religion, indeed, is attractive to Mr. Leslie, but the superstition of adolescents is not the only variety that interests him. In a cynical chapter on the religion of England, he has some caustic comments:—

The State bishops are objects of envy rather than of reverence. The depths of religious awe between

a foreign Catholic and an Anglican appear in the story of an honest Briton arguing with an astonished Frenchman, and ending, "To hell with the Pope." With a pallor befitting the terrible words of his reply, the Frenchman drew himself up and uttered, "To hell with the Archbishop of Canterbury." Whereat the Briton dissolved in laughter. "To hell with the Gold-Stick-in-Waiting" would sound as comic to him.

As may be seen, the author likes a profane story, and the following concerning a former Prime Minister visiting some French delegates is amusing:—

Mr. Asquith wore the uniform of an Elder of Trinity House, and this drew a query from a visitor. The incarnation of English Dissent explained in his very best French, "I am an elder brother of the Trinity." The Frenchman bowed politely, and said: "Ah! we have discarded all that in France.

With a twinkle in his eye, Mr. Leslie tells a story of the sensation caused by a Scottish prelate who went to France in the purple cassock of the Continental bishops, who, of course, are supposed to be celibates:—

As he brought his wife with him, the pious innkeeper refused to allow her in. "But I am on holiday," said the paragon of diocesan respectability. "There is no doubt that monseigneur is on holiday," replied the poor innkeeper, to whom the situation was with difficulty explained.

The evangelical and loquacious Lord Radstock is the subject of another funny story. He once went to preach to the "infidel" French, and was heard to entreat them, with tears in his voice, "Drink of the eau de vie, drink of the eau de vie, my brothers." He meant "the water of life" in the cant of religion, but the godless French thought that he was referring to brandy. There is an excellent story of rival ecclesiastics in Ireland. It concerns two Archbishops, one Protestant and the other Roman Catholic, and a Papal Legate:—

The interchange of humour and respect kept Archbishop Logue and Archbishop Alexander friends. When Cardinal Venutelli came to consecrate a new cathedral at Armagh, Alexander left a card on the Pope's legate. The two Cardinals paid the Protestant primate a visit. As the three old men were gossiping under a roof sacred to Protestant ascendancy a tumult was heard in the streets, and great was their amusement on learning afterwards that rival religious mobs had broken windows in their honour.

There are also many pleasant glimpses of people worth remembering. One good story concerns Oscar Browning, a former popular professor of King's College. One day, as Tennyson entered the great court at King's, a bulky professor was said to have run to him, explaining, "I am Browning." "No, you are not," replied Tennyson, and walked on.

So, Mr. Leslie gossips pleasantly to the end of a chapter of his life, with that genial, cultured manner of his. He comes of a good Irish stock, for his grandfather was a cousin of Wellington, and he had seen Talleyrand and met Walter Scott. Mr. Leslie himself fought in the last war, and buried his brother, Captain Norman Leslie, at Armentieres, between the guns of two great armies, and it is to the memory of this brother that he dedicates his very readable book. The flashes of humour are, perhaps, the best things in these bright reminiscences. One might fill columns with good things from its pages. "Can you emit sparks?" said the cat to the ugly duckling in the old fairy tale. Mr. Leslie can emit sparks of humour, and therein lies his superiority to so many sober writers who give themselves greater airs.

MIMNERMUS.

Priestley as Philosopher and Humanist.

DR. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY occupies a high position among the scientists and humanists of the eighteenth century. Radical as he was in politics, and genuinely enlightened in theology, Priestley nevertheless displayed pronounced conservative leanings when he failed to appreciate the important implications of his own discovery in chemical science. A man who acclaimed truth as his guiding star, he was ever anxious to proclaim the eternal verities regardless of consequences. This unbending characteristic was apt to make matters unpleasant for those to whom expediency and compromise constitute the working principle of life. As a consequence, Priestley estranged some of his friends, despite the fact that he was one of the most tolerant of men.

A native of Yorkshire, Priestley in full measure inherited the sturdy independence of his stock. Trained in Nonconformist surroundings amid the traditions of the many persecutions so long endured by the children of Dissent, Priestley viewed with suspicion the tyrannical activities of Church and State. In such solemn and straight-laced circles religion shaded the character and shaped the lives of its adherents to a degree now happily unknown. Sunday was strictly observed as a day of depression and gloom. The long dreary hours were dedicated to private prayer or public worship. An uttered oath, and the taking of God's name in vain were regarded with pious aversion. The only relaxation from serious study that Priestley experienced as a child appears to have been the perusal of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Priestley's mother died in childbirth while he was still a boy. Three years later, his father's sister, Mrs. Keighley, a lady in easy circumstances, adopted the boy as her own. A deeply religious woman, she determined to train him for the ministry, but the lad's sceptical attitude placed impediments in the way. For young Joseph early betrayed his inability to credit the tale of man's fallen nature as due entirely to Adam's transgression. This exhibition of heterodoxy precluded his admission to the communion of the Independent Conventicle where his aunt worshipped.

Priestley read widely, studied languages both ancient and modern, and succumbed to the attractions of the mathematical and physical sciences. Meanwhile, the attentively listening lad was led by the discussions between the various Dissenting preachers assembled in his aunt's house to renounce his narrow Calvinism in favour of the milder tenets of Arminius. The doctrine of the Trinity he still held, as also that of the divine atonement, although he afterwards abandoned both. Priestley now studied the essays of Anthony Collins, whose *Philosophical Inquiry* converted him to necessarianism or as we now say, determinism. As Allanson Picton states, "he exchanged his original Calvinism for a system of necessarianism, that is, he learnt to hold that the invariable annexion of cause and effect is as inviolable in the moral as in the material world."

Priestley was powerfully impressed by Hartlev's *Observations of Man*, a work that materially moulded many of his opinions. When ordained, Priestley occupied the Nonconformist pulpit, and he never disguised his independent outlook. In practical teaching he was a pioneer, for he founded a school at Nantwich, into which he introduced the study of science. This instruction was accompanied by experimental demonstration, and these experiments were conducted not only by himself, but by his pupils. In truth, Priestley must rank among the earliest innovators of scientific education.

In his *Essay on Government* (1768), Priestley showed the influences of John Locke's earlier treatise. Priestley here expresses the opinion, at that time anything but a truism that "the good and happiness of the members, that is the majority of the members of any State, is the great standard by which everything relating to that state must finally be determined." Jeremy Bentham read Priestley, and when that great thinker published his first work *Fragment of Government*, in 1776, he enunciated his celebrated principle "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," for which he later acknowledged his indebtedness to Priestley.

In his *Essay* Priestley earnestly protests against the benumbing influences of rigid dogma. That freedom of thought he claimed for himself must be extended to future generations. As he cogently urges: "Had even Locke, Clarke, Hoadley and others who had gained immortal reputation for their freedom of thinking, but half a century ago been appointed to draw up a creed, they would have inserted in it such articles of faith as myself and hundreds more would now think unscriptural and absurd . . . And can we think wisdom will die with us? No, our creeds, could we be so inconsistent as to draw up any, would, I make no doubt, be rejected with equal disdain by our posterity."

When the famous navigator, Captain Cook, was about to undertake his second voyage of discovery Priestley was invited to accompany him as naturalist. Priestley's notorious heterodoxy, however, prevented his appointment. Some narrow-minded clergymen on the Board of Longitude is said to have disapproved of Priestley's religious opinions. In these circumstances the offer of the post of librarian in Lord Shelburne's country mansion was accepted, and during Priestley's seven years' residence at Calne he conducted a great part of his physical research.

Priestley's first scientific publication, his *History of Electricity* gained him his Fellowship of the Royal Society. This history was regarded as highly technical by the average reader, so he wrote a more popular work, his *Familiar Introduction to the Study of Electricity*. Another important production deals with vision, light, and colours. This was published by subscription, but although many eminent names, including those of Franklin, Edmund Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Bentham appear in the list of subscribers the cost of publication were not met by the sales.

Priestley now turned his attention to chemistry, a science in which he won enduring fame. He commenced his inquiries into the constitution of the atmosphere at Leeds, where he was visited by Benjamin Franklin and Sir John Pringle. Upon these and subsequent researches his reputation mainly rests. Honest to the core, in his *Essays*, Priestley presents a detailed record not only of his successes, but of all the many errors he made in the course of his multitudinous experiments. As Miss Anne Holt states in her excellent biography of Priestley (Oxford, 1931): "His intention, faithfully carried out, was to place all his mistakes and false suppositions before his reader, and show how they had led to true discoveries. Had Priestley been more of a man of the world . . . his reputation as a chemist might have stood higher. Suppose he had only given those parts of his discoveries which had worked out successfully."

That Priestley never grasped the significance of his epoch-making discovery of oxygen is one of the ironies of science. Despite the demonstrations of Lavoisier and other chemists Priestley clung tenaciously to the theory of phlogiston—a theory his own discovery had exploded—until the day of his death.

As already intimated, Priestley was deeply inter-

ested in Hartley's philosophical theories. Like Darwin at a later day, Hartley was intended for the Church. Also, like the famous evolutionist, Hartley's conscience forbade him to subscribe to the Articles. He therefore became a physician, and after sixteen years study and meditation his *magnum opus* appeared. This work, Hartley's *Observations on Man* was published in 1749, and forms a landmark in the development of physiological psychology. Indeed, Hartley's exposition proved invaluable to James Mill when, in the succeeding century, he elaborated the Associationist Psychology. Hartley aspired to interpret mental processes in terms of physics. His leading thesis is summed up by Brett in the statement "that mind and body always co-operate, and there is a physical equivalent for the mental, and a mental equivalent for the physical operation in every case."

Hartley's work passed almost unread, but in 1775 Priestley deleted an important section of the book and republished the remainder. Hartley was constrained to make concessions to the powerful reactionaries of the time, but his conciliatory "intermediate elementary body between the mind and the gross body" was unceremoniously discarded by his later, and less intimidated successors.

Priestley was admittedly a materialist. He held that consciousness resides in the brain. Human sensation and thought he urges, "have never been found, but in conjunction with a certain *organized system of matter*." No man retains "the faculty of thinking when the brain is destroyed." Mind and body are inseparably associated. The lower animals differ from man in degree only. If the soul or mind of man is something independent from his body then animals also possess some immaterial property. The brain and body at death decompose. Science furnishes no evidence of human immortality. Yet, revelation teaches us that man survives death. But as the soul, apart from the body has no existence, immortal life is assured by the resurrection of the body. When, after the resurrection, we recognize each other we are "to all intents and purposes the same persons." And finally he argues that "whatever is decomposed may be recomposed by the Being who first composed it."

Priestley hailed the French Revolution as the righteous uprising of a downtrodden people against their persecutors and oppressors, and this in royalist and Church circles made him a marked man. The statue of Priestley now stands in Birmingham, in which famous city the insensate mob burnt down meeting-places and sacked Priestley's dwelling-house, together with his priceless collection of scientific instruments, in 1791. For a time the city was at the mercy of the turbulent multitude who knew not what they did. Priestley escaped with his life, and when order was at last restored determined to return to Birmingham and preach a sermon of forgiveness. His friends, however, dissuaded him from this rash enterprise. As the months rolled away and the forces of reaction multiplied, Priestley decided to emigrate to America, where he died in 1804.

Born in Calvinistic circles, trained in an Independent seminary, Priestley broadened into a Unitarian. Yet, with all the transformations his mind experienced he maintained, throughout his long and active career, the respect and fellowship of men whose speculative opinions ranged from those of the Freethinker, Peter Annet, to those of Toplady, the author of the famous hymn, *Rock of Ages*.

Wise are the words of Picton, the old time Radical member for Leicester, in relation to Dr. Joseph Priestley: "In general, as an exceptionally single-eyed and fearless searcher after truth he bore the brunt of

persecution by vulgar ignorance, and in his disappointments illustrated how little can be practically accomplished by isolated enlightenment apart from popular education."

T. F. PALMER.

Man and God.

"The God who plays a vital part in the daily affairs of men is by degrees banished to another world and then disappears altogether from the scene of action. To-day the scientific view of life is fast rendering the idea of God superfluous.

Science has consigned the supernatural to the realm of limbo."—(W. K. Wallace: *The Scientific World View*. pp. 4-30.)

"Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence is gone forth against thee, O God.

Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept for a span;

Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee lord over man."—Swinburne. "*Hymn of Man*."

The Scientific World View. By William Kay Wallace (Simpkin Marshall, 15s.). This is another of those numerous American works, in which religion is not only discarded, but openly and definitely repudiated, as an enemy of civilization and progress. "The belief in the intervention of the Deity in the every day affairs of men which has survived down to recent times is fast vanishing. God is no longer the familiar companion of most men's thoughts, as he was even as recently as half a century ago," declares Mr. Wallace, for: "Science has directed the attention of men to the affairs of this world here and now. It has broken the ramparts and stormed the City of God." (pp. 4-5.)

Mr. Wallace goes on to quote the following passage from *Harper's Magazine* (September, 1926): "And then there is the question of God, and it seems that He has a tendency to vanish also, with the disappearance of His celestial habitation so that I feel a touch of tenderness for departed grandeur in capitalizing the pronoun." Upon which Mr. Wallace remarks: "This passage illustrates in how far the scientific view has been popularly accepted. A decade ago such a statement could not have been printed in a popular magazine without calling forth a storm of protest. To-day it passes unnoticed, the current opinion of the market place."

To the Greeks of the Homeric period, the cult of the dead was unknown. The shadowy life of the disembodied soul, was not one that the Greek looked forward to, but was a matter for resignation: "Their approach to life was in the main scientific and not religious. . . . The Hellenic view of existence was principally concerned with death as the end of all things. To sink into nothingness became the final goal to a well-spent life."

Later, in the Græco-Roman world, the various Asiatic, and Egyptian cults, spread like an octopus over the empire and distracted the people with the mysterious terrors of the unknown. It is commonly asserted, by Christian apologists, that at the time Christianity appeared, the Roman world was sunk in sensuality, irreligion, and immorality. This is a grotesque travesty, and a wilful misrepresentation of the facts. Mr. Wallace quotes the eminent Greek scholar Erwin Rhode, to the fact that: "Hopes and a vague longing, a shrinking before the mysterious terrors of the unknown fill the soul. Never in the history of the ancient world is the belief in an immortal life of the soul after death a matter of such burning and exacerbated ardour as in the last days when the antique civilizations was preparing itself to

breathe its last." ¹ Upon which Mr. Wallace remarks:—

Such is the soil upon which the doctrine of immortality fell. The Pauline idea of a life after death and eternal bliss in a world to come advanced in the first instance to win a hearing for Christianity, became in time the irrefragible dogma, the *credo* that was to turn the thoughts of men from the affairs of this world and fix their eyes on the City of God. It served to inculcate a contempt for the events of this life and direct men's conduct with a view to winning a home for themselves in a universe beyond the stars.

The soul of man, cut loose from his body, from the world of sense, the world of beauty where Hellenic candour had so firmly rooted it, was to seek a new home in a supersensual, supernatural universe, not a land of mysterious shadows, but in a definitely situated and well-ordered Kingdom of Heaven. A passport, good for admission to this land of the blest, was so to speak, to be signed, sealed and delivered to every follower of Christ, together with his baptismal certificate, provided that he adhered strictly and faithfully to the laws and ordinances of the Church.

Is it to be wondered at that so many were induced to join the heavenly band? The invisible world had won the day. The peoples of the Roman Empire had, as we have noted, been fed on vague promises of immortality and a life after death. Now Christianity offered certitude in the place of surmise.

Even the upper classes among the Romans that had hitherto kept aloof from giving serious thought to questions of religion as being matters of superstitious fancy suited only to the fears of the common people, were ready to accept the Christian argument as plausible. This was due in a large measure to the fact that the scientific spirit that had characterized Hellenic civilization was dead. The philosophy of the age was marked by its interest in transcendental problems. The divine no longer descends to earth; man must mount to his God and seek an abode in His world. In order to do so he must be willing to turn his back on the affairs of this world rather than do his work in it. (W. K. Wallace: *The Scientific World View*. (pp. 55-56.)

The victory of Christianity led to the Dark Ages, the Ages of Faith, when civilization was extinguished for a thousand years, until the revival of Greek science, preserved by the Arabians, again illumined the world and set mankind on the path of progress again.

Religion is no longer our guide. "Secular views take precedence over religious doctrine." Mr. Wallace quotes the following passage from Hoffding's *Philosophy of Religion*: "Religion was in other days like a pillar of fire in the vanguard lighting the way of humanity in its long march through history. Now it has taken on the rôle of an ambulance, it follows in the rear, picking up the maimed and the wounded." Upon which he remarks: "Such is the rôle of religion in our times. It has taken refuge in good works, but even here it is being rapidly displaced by secular agencies which are showing themselves more efficient. In fact look where we will, there remains scarcely a form of social activity that has not emancipated itself from religious control. If we seek the causes of this change we will find that the mind of man wearies of spiritual dogmas, doctrines or creeds that no longer tally with the facts of his experience. Authority, even divine authority no matter how firmly entrenched, gives ground in the end before the irrefutable logic of facts. Reliance is placed in a new order of relationships which supplant the old gods." (p. 63.)

This is refreshingly outspoken. We wish that some of our own pundits would come out of their shells in matters of religion with equal courage and candour.

W. MANN.

Acid Drops.

The B.B.C. recently broadcast a play, entitled "Catastrophe." A scientist foretells the end of the world by collision with a minor planet. His prediction comes true, and the play ends in a fearful din from the midst of which a voice is heard to exclaim: "The spirit of man lives for ever!"—or words to that effect. When the catastrophe was complete and the din had subsided, we listened carefully for some evidence of the survival of this "spirit." Sure enough we were not disappointed. It was the voice of the B.B.C. announcer.

The Sunday broadcast programme, says a reader of a daily paper, is inferior because the old idea of the Sabbath still lingers in this country; those who remember Victorian times will understand why the programmes are dull. For our part, we think the B.B.C. should have no difficulty in defending itself against this sort of criticism. It has merely to point out that the Victorian notion of Sunday as a day of dismal meditation and of mental and physical stagnation is the highest conception achieved by man; that the Sabbath was made, not for man, but for the parsons, whose commercial welfare must come before everything else; and that the whims and prejudices of the religious minority are of greater importance than the happiness of the majority of listeners. Finally, as the Sunday programmes are designed in accordance with such lofty considerations as these, it is impossible for them to be either inferior or dull. We feel sure that a reply of this kind would convince most of the dissatisfied listeners that all was for the best in the B.B.C. world.

Mr. Francis J. Patmore, the younger son of Coventry Patmore, contributes to the current *English Review* some reminiscences of his father, who died in 1896. Patmore was, as was evident from his writing, a Roman Catholic. His son was at school at Beaumont when his father died, and was sent for to come to the funeral. This is his description of his experience. "My half-brother Milnes, Bishop of Portsmouth, and the rest were discussing rare pottery as the undertakers brought the heavy coffin down the stairs bumping it from stair to stair in a humble manner. . . My half-brother rang the bell for more drinks to be brought; there was no answer. . . Again he rang the bell angrily and at last the parlour-maid, Agnes, appeared crying at the door. Through the open door came the sound of the leaden coffin crashing down the last three steps. The friends unconcernedly carried on. The Bishop helped himself to a drink. A child crouching in the corner unnoticed sobbed in terrified grief." We make no comment on this story of the conduct of pious persons at the obsequies of one who doubtless died "fortified by the rites of Holy Church."

The *Catholic Gazette* (February) is in high dudgeon over a recent attempt by an Anglican parson to revive the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham (Norfolk) a pious flat trap that was, we gather, shut up by Henry VIII. That a minister of a Protestant denomination should seek to set it going again, and that "the successors of the enlightened generation that publicly burned her in effigy some centuries ago," should now profess devotion for Our Lady aforesaid, is too awful. The Bishop of Norwich (Dr. Pollock), promptly forbade Our Lady's shrine to be set up in the Parish Church, but there are more ways than one of giving canonical obedience to your Bishop, and the Vicar of Walsingham hit on the bright idea of having the shrine elsewhere. Then arose a storm in the *Church Times* which, sympathizing with the Vicar, is denounced by a clergyman from Chester, who protests against a fellow cleric "identifying the English Church with some of the worst features of

¹ Erwin Rhode: *Psyche*. p. 545. I have consulted Rhode's work, and added some words omitted from the above quotation.

Roman Catholic extravagance." The *Catholic Gazette* express a somewhat dubious hope that those Anglicans who agree with the Vicar will ultimately arrive at "their real home." All's grist that comes to Rome's mill; but we expect many departures thence will be delayed so long as it is possible to take the pay of a "Protestant" State, and a "reformed" Church, and manage such a good imitation of the old firm's *hocus pocus* as to be hardly distinguishable from it.

Dean Inge's series of addresses in St. Paul's followed by answering questions from the congregation have hardly been good Christian propaganda. The questioners did not get much change out of him. Thus one asked, "Why did our Lord and the Apostles say so little about social reform?" To which the Dean answered that "they believed in the immanent extinction of the world," which is no doubt true if they existed, and added "other-worldliness is the only thing that can transform this world," so the Church gives "a half-hearted approbation to social reform!" This candour must have been embarrassing to the questioner. Another frank assertion of the Dean's was his advice to his auditors to "leave impurity and the divorce court to the rich—for they specialize in these things." That the divorce court is still more or less only available to the rich is no doubt an agreeable condition to those who are opposed to divorce in any case. The one thing that has been made clear by these utterances of Dean Inge is that, for all his undoubted scholarship and literary skill, when it comes to Christian apologetics his polished arguments are exactly the same as those regularly supplied by Christian evidence tub-thumpers in Hyde Park and elsewhere. The most modern of its defenders can only tell "the old old story."

"A Report on Cinema Films," for which that poked-nosed body the Public Morality Council is responsible, expresses the hope that "friendly relation" will always prevail "between Religion and the Cinema," not, of course, in the interests of the Cinema, but in the interests of religion. With its increasingly precarious hold on a minority of the population, religion seeks to exploit the most popular form of entertainment. There could not be a more convincing proof of this than a statement of the Rev. Thomas Tiplady, who, at his mission in Lambeth, has a Sunday programme consisting of morning, evening and, after the latter cinema "services." This gentleman on a recent Sunday featured Tallulah Bankhead in "The Tarnished Lady," and according to the *Methodist Times*, has shown films with "amorous scenes," and "close-ups of lovers" having an "earnest conversation, the theme of which appears to be free love." Says Mr. Tiplady: "The cinema is the greatest invention since the printing press, and the Church must put aside all moral intellectual and artistic snobbery, and, either directly or indirectly bring this invention to the service of Christ." This is at least candid; but we cannot somehow picture Tallulah as an evangelist, if we may coin a new word for what is indeed a novel and somewhat startling idea.

Referring to the judgment of the Irish Free State Military Tribunal in the case of the *Irish Press*, the *Manchester Guardian*, in a timely leader points out that the use in that case of the "cumbersome weapon of seditious libel" is "not without application on this side of the channel." Here, as in Ireland, "the plea of public safety and State necessity easily becomes a specious cover for encroachment on the rights of the expression and publication of critical opinion." The prosecuting counsel against the *Irish Press* actually based the action on an eighteenth century dictum of Chief Justice Holt to the effect that "if persons should not be called to account for possessing the people with an ill opinion of the Government, no Government can subsist, for it is very necessary for all Governments that the people should have a good opinion of it (sic)." Even in this country any attempt to criticize the Government in certain important matters may involve the critic in prosecution or imprisonment or both, although criticism of the Government in general is the stable occupation of leader-writers not excluding those supposed to be

friendly. We are glad that at least one English newspaper has pointed out that "the ill-defined and unsatisfactory law of seditious libel is too often utilized for the penalizing of unpopular opinion."

The Holy Office (*alias* the Roman Catholic Bluff Department) has issued what it calls a "decree." This deals with those Roman Catholic wives who, having obtained from the Big Noise of Roman Catholicism the quite unnecessary permission to marry men who are not Roman Catholics, fail to compel their children (if any) to become Roman Catholics like themselves. It threatens them with the "risk" of having their marriages declared null and void by the same Big Noise. Now, we cannot vouch for the laws of other countries, but so far as this country is concerned, the simple expedient for such wives to adopt is to post a copy of their marriage certificate to the said Big Noise and to request him to go and suck eggs.

An interesting article in the February number of *Discovery* relates the foundation of an up-to-date College at Valparaiso, Chile. This college owes its inception to a wealthy Chilean, Don Federico Santa Maria y Carrera, who died in 1925. Despite the religious flavour of his "Christian" names, this benefactor laid it down that "instruction shall be essentially secular, and all religious instruction shall be prohibited." Don Federico's aim was that Chileans should become supreme among the world's engineers, mechanics and skilled artisans. It is now up to the Papists and other Christian sects to build a rival college in which engineers, mechanics, etc., will be trained to perform even greater feats of construction and destruction by means of the "faith that moveth mountains."

In a review of Prof. Julian Huxley's book *What Dare I Think?* the Very Rev. the Dean of Exeter concludes thus: "We are exhorted to a 'reverent agnosticism about ultimates.' Why 'reverent'? What is the point of being reverent with respect to something I know nothing about?" This seems to be mighty like what writers in the *Freethinker* have been saying for years past! But the Dean caps this eminently sane comment with the following final sentence: "Religion without worship of a God who is both the Supreme Reality and the Supreme Value will become either a superstition or a farce." We would love to have the Dean explain what exactly is the difference between a Supreme Value (or Reality) and an Ultimate. We would also love to have Prof. Huxley's explanation of the precise difference between "reverent agnosticism" and "a superstition or a farce." No doubt both explanations would be supremely valuable and ultimately decisive.

"The Sunday programme of many a modern family (says the Bishop of Ripon) reveals the family motor-car sitting in the place of God." The sad sight of the Almighty standing patiently in the background, waiting for the family "flivver" to rise and offer Him a seat, should stir the pity and compassion of many a weary paterfamilias.

Says a Sunday-school superintendent, "We start early to inoculate the children with the missionary influence." Quite so; if the young mind is not inoculated with religious notions before maturity is reached, there is a grave risk that the dope will not "take" when the child has learnt to think for himself. And the very fact that parsons so strongly insist on the necessity for doping the immature mind, implies that they are well aware of the difficulty in getting religion accepted by the mature intelligence. This is as good as confessing that religion has more affinity with the immature than with the mature mind.

God appears to have a sense of humour, although Christians never credit him with it nor include it in their catalogue of his virtues. Recently he seems to have been "pulling the legs" of the pious, as regards a "call" sent forth to a couple of Wesleyan ministers. It appears that Congregationalists sent a "call" to the

Rev. A. E. Whitham to succeed Dr. Orchard. And another "call" was forwarded by Hampstead Garden Congregational Church to the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead. Both gentlemen—no doubt assisted by prayer—declined the "call." Obviously the whole affair is a joke on the part of God. First he urges the Congregationalists to send forth a "call," after having convinced them (it would seem) that the nonsense of Mr. Whitham and Mr. Weatherhead would suit their nonsense. At the same time this jocular God advises these good men to ignore the "call" he has instigated. The true inference from this incident is not, as a Wesleyan journal suggests, that it indicates "the fellowship and essential unity of the Free Churches," but that God enjoys "pulling the legs" of the solemn asses who incessantly praise and flatter him.

A report of an address by the Rev. Dr. Ryder Smith mentions that the speaker "took his hearers close to Calvary that they might understand to the full the import of the 'joyful news of sins forgiven' which Jesus lived and died and rose again to give the world." Nevertheless, we doubt if the Doctor said much or anything about Hell or everlasting torment, the threat of which is responsible for making the "news of sins forgiven" seem joyful. What these modern preachers fail to realize is that they cannot excite true religious fervour unless a full and clear explanation is given as to what God's "hate" for the sinner may entail. While that explanation is missing the churches will have to make the best they can of luke-warm adherents who cannot be roused to revivalist efforts.

The Rev. Ford Reed (Methodist) has been explaining to his flock what is their supreme business to-day. "We are here supremely that we may witness for God; to show men and women what God is like, and what God wants to do through man." For our part, we suspect that if the intelligent outsider takes a good look at the men and women engaged in this "supreme business," he won't be at all anxious to contract the complaint they are suffering from, with its strong symptom of self-importance.

A reverend gent says that "One man asks for an infallible Bible, another man for an infallible creed, and yet another for an infallible Church. These we shall never get; and even if we did, we should still have got nothing." How true that is! It is also true to say that although Christians have a fallible Bible, a fallible creed, and a fallible Church, they have got nothing worth having. And it takes the parsons most of their time preventing their dupes from perceiving that fact.

A year on Mars is estimated to be four times as long as a year on the Earth. Christians ought to be thankful that they were not "created" on Mars. If they had to undergo a probationary period of toil and suffering four times as long in order to earn everlasting bliss, their patience would be sorely tried indeed.

In order to say something about the Christian faith and belief in relation to some of the wonders of the universe, the Rev. W. L. Waights has been answering the question, "What is Reality?" This reverend wiseacre explains that "What moved God to self-expression was the Eternal Manhood in the Godhead. The purpose of that self-expression was that men should grow into the likeness of Christ." We have to confess our inability to follow the meaning of this collection of words, but we have little doubt that it also explains why God made tigers and poisonous snakes and deadly disease germs to be the companions of mankind. Even the dullest among us can appreciate that men could never grow into the likeness of Christ without those specimens of Godly self-expression.

"H.M.," a staff reporter on the *Methodist Recorder*, has been discussing in that journal the difficulty often encountered by the amateur evangelist seeking to introduce religion to chance acquaintances. He says "You say you cannot go up to perfect strangers and say, 'Are you saved?' No, and neither can I. But can we not,

all of us, begin with a word about that useful topic the weather, and steer the conversation round to our Church, or our faith? I have done that thousands of times, and go on doing it." We pass on this hint to any young Freethought evangelist who is anxious to do something for the cause he has allied himself to. This aside, we hope the worthy "H.M." has had the pleasure of endeavouring to introduce religion to some of our readers. We have little doubt that the resultant discussion proved a lively one!

The same "H.M." remarks that: "In many a hotel I have seen the Bibles provided by the Commercial Travellers' Association, but nowadays I find most of them are put away in drawers, and are not left on the dressing-table!" Presumably, the Bibles, are so seldom used, and they merely harbour dust, that the chambermaids put them away to save a little work for themselves. We are inclined to fancy that the Association's pious effort is largely a failure.

Lord Macmillian suggests that this country may be on the verge of a period of the greatest prosperity it has ever known. For the parsons' sake, we hope not. Many of them are hoping that the present bad times will excite among the people a yearning for God that will lead to a revival of church-going. It would be a great pity if prosperity came to the nation and spoiled the parsons' present fine opportunity of exploiting human misfortune.

In Ilford the Methodist Churches have been busy of late with a campaign to convert Christians to Christianity. Or it would seem from a remark of the Rev. George Hopper, who explains the campaign as being started in order to "stir up our own people"—as a teaching mission for "insiders." This is very revealing as to the amount of religious enthusiasm to be discovered in the churches nowadays. An intelligent "heathen" hearing of this, might well wonder why so much money is spent on foreign missions while the "home" support of religion is so very weak. He might well suspect that the religious organizations are trying to export a commodity that is not wanted in their own country.

Fifty Years Ago.

THE Tories and the Bigots have been "done" at last. "We will not see the Oath profaned," they said, and Mr. Bradlaugh has "profaned" it in their presence. Before a full House he has made and signed and tendered his Oath of Allegiance, and taken his seat. The move was executed with characteristic audacity, and practically all was over before the horrified members recovered their breath. Whatever happens, this "profanation" cannot be undone; and to the Freethinker there is some comfort in that. Mr. Bradlaugh has succeeded in emphasizing the farcical position to which the House has brought itself. "In jostling with Mr. Bradlaugh," says the *Times*, "the House gets the worst of it." Then why jostle? From the first any sensible man could see that the action of the Tories and the Bigots would succeed, not against Mr. Bradlaugh, but in lowering the dignity of the House of Commons. We suggest that the best thing now to be done is to admit Mr. Bradlaugh quietly to his seat, and then let the judges decide whether he has legally taken the oath or not. Of course his enemies are averse to this, for they shrewdly suspect that Mr. E. Clarke was right in saying that no court in the country would entertain their application. But they have acted with such wanton absurdity that they must expect to eat little of the leek at last. The law is undoubtedly on Mr. Bradlaugh's side, and in the end the law must triumph over all opposition. When the case is finally settled we further suggest that a day of humiliation should be appointed, and that all the Tories, led by Churchill, Newdegate, and Northcote, should parade the streets in white robes of repentance, singing, "We are such a party of fools." And the true Liberals might follow, singing after them, "You are, you are, you are such a party of fools!"

The "Freethinker," February 26, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. TAYLOR, H. CUTNER AND R. TURNER.—Your replies are, owing to pressure on space, and the length of the letters, held over till next week. We must again impress upon correspondents the virtue of brevity when writing a letter.

J. MURPHY.—Many thanks for cuttings.

T. STEVENSON.—Mr. Cohen will not be in Glasgow again until the autumn. Glad you so much enjoyed Sunday night's address.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The Secular Society, Limited Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen's meeting on Sunday last at Glasgow was the largest Freethought gathering in the city for some years. The hall was much larger than the one in which the meetings are usually held, but it was quite full, and in the gallery some were standing. The lecture was listened to with great attention by an audience which must have included a number of newcomers. There was also a good sale of literature, but the supply of *Freethinkers* was exhausted before the meeting began. Mr. MacEwan presided, and conducted the meeting as a chairman should, that is with courtesy, firmness and strict attention to his duties. He made a strong appeal for new members, and we hope the appeal bore good fruit.

We were very pleased to see among the audience our old friend and contributor, Andrew Millar, who has almost recovered from his recent severe illness.

It is significant that even the *News-Chronicle* says quite flatly that the B.B.C. policy with regard to Sunday is a mistake. "Outrage" would be a far better, but the humbug that the British people long for Sunday services has to be kept up, and in its defence the B.B.C. and its committee of parsons resorts to the usual religious policy of lying. The *News-Chronicle* also says, without any qualification whatever that "British listeners always listen to Continental programmes on Sundays." Every one knows this to be the truth, the B.B.C. knows it to be the truth, and it would be interesting to know how many of those at the bidding of their parsons write

letters to the B.B.C. professing gratification at the Sunday programme, turn to the Continent for their Sunday entertainment. We question whether ten per cent of wireless users ever bother about the stupid religious services and religious addresses if they have the means of listening to foreign stations.

Meanwhile we again challenge the B.B.C. to accept our offer of a house to house canvass of wireless users on the question of the desirability of altering the Sunday programme. We expect the B.B.C. will be too cowardly to accept the challenge and too Christian to tell the truth about the way its Sunday service is received.

The course of lectures at the Fulham Town Hall has so far been successful. Mr. G. Whitehead had a well-attended meeting at which interest was maintained right through. Further consideration of week-night meetings in London will no doubt be considered next season.

The East Lancashire Rationalist Association has invited Mr. R. H. Rosetti to lecture twice to-day in the Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley. The afternoon subject, at 2.45, will be "Spiritualism v. Common Sense," and evening at 7.15, "Christianity v. Science: Anthropology." It will be Mr. Rosetti's first visit to Burnley and we wish success to all concerned.

Activity in Sunderland by the local Branch of the N.S.S. is beginning to tell, and three debates have been arranged between Mr. J. T. Brighton, and local champions of Christianity. On Thursday, February 25, in the Co-operative Hall, Green Street, the subject is "Will Christ Save?" affirmative Mr. P. Oxley. Thursday, March 3, in the Hallgarth Square Mission, subject—"Evolution or Christianity," with Mr. E. Bell as opponent, and on March 10, "Is Secularism Better than Christianity?"

The following is from the Paris paper *L'Œuvre*:—
AN UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCE OF THE
LATERAN TREATY.

The "Federation française de la libre-pensée" has sent the Committee of the Universal Suffrage of the French House of Commons, and also the members of the left wing, the text of a law which aims at enforcing upon ministers of the Catholic religion who are of alien nationality, art. 17, paragraph 3 of the Civil Code, whereby they shall be no longer electors nor eligible to the French Parliament.

The wording of this law sets forth that Pope Pius XI. having become a foreign Sovereign, the exclusive oath of priesthood required allegiance and obedience to the Catholic Church itself and renders migratory obedience to any other government.

Consequently, Catholic priests ministering in France, whatever rank they may hold in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, are liable to lose their French nationality.

It would appear that the "Federation de la libre-pensée" puts forward an irrefutable argument, the historical and judicial value of which cannot be ignored.

The *Daily Herald* boasts of having accomplished the suppression of a brothel designed for the use of those attending the Disarmament Conference. In his "Found Wanting: A Study in Catholicism," Mr. C. C. Dove writes as follows:—

Cornelius Agrippa (1468-1535) asserts . . . that Pope Sixtus IV. . . (1471-1484), erected a noble brothel at Rome, and that the harlots of this city had to pay the Pope a weekly tax, which sometimes amounted to more than twenty thousand ducats in the year . . . Thomas Fuller in his *Church History of Britain* (B. iii. S. vi. c. 48) says that "profit from Jews and stewards does much advance the constant revenues of His Holiness." Professor Friedrich in a Diary which he made of the Vatican Council held at Nordlingen, 1873, declares that a brothel for the clergy was kept at Rome by a reverend Professor of Ethics during the tenancy of Pope Pius IX. [1846-1878.]

Disease and Crime.

LORD BUCKMASTER, a Liberal ex-Lord Chancellor, is justly credited with more advanced opinions than many of his brethren learned in the law. His name has for years been identified with a movement for a reform of the Divorce Law of England, and he has now written a suggestive article on "My Plan to Cure Crime." His Lordship prefaces his article with a reference to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and goes on to say "The true function of laws is not to punish by inflicting pain as an act of retaliatory vengeance for pain which the criminal may have caused. It is to protect society against the repetition of the offence."

The whole article resolves itself into a cogent argument against vindictiveness in the treatment of crime; and the writer concludes "Disease and crime are the great enemies of all society, and over both we have obtained notable victories; but with regard to the latter we have not used the same scientific means of examination that have been successful in the other case."

It is no reproach to Lord Buckmaster to tell him and those who think with him that this conclusion was realized by Freethinkers and humanists many years ago. Where our pundits have gone wrong is in regarding disease and crime as causes instead of effects. It is refreshing to those rationalistic writers and speakers who have consistently condemned the futile attitude of the revengeful towards the criminal to encounter the sanity, wisdom and charity which characterize Lord Buckmaster's article. But how far will his plan be acceptable to the general body of legislators? So few of these possess the undeviating quality of judicial impartiality that one fears Lord Buckmaster is but a voice crying in the wilderness.

The results of many ages of enforced ignorance and repression are not easily or readily amended. Ignorance inevitably breeds fear; and repression inevitably leads to revolt. The privations of the ignorant and repressed have frequently led to social cataclysms. The majority of law-givers and law administrators in the past have been blind guides. Lord Buckmaster cites the rare instance of Queen Elizabeth reprieving a man who shot at her in her barge. And we are thereby reminded of the judicious clemency which Charles II extended to so many of his father's enemies when his advisers wished him to execute them. Occasionally in works of great writers we have a gleam of that wisdom, which if generally acquired, might have done so much to save us from a great deal of modern crime. For example, there is that simple old priest and ascetic in *Les Misérables*, who would not hand Jean Valjean over to the authorities when the latter stole the silver candlesticks. It was the making of Valjean.

On the whole ecclesiastical institutions have supported vindictive retribution and the enforcement of the *lex talionis*. Mr. Robert Blatchford, in his book, *Not Guilty: a Defence of the Bottom Dog*, has exposed the utter folly and ineffectiveness of revengeful retaliation, which is after all really a concession to, even an endorsement of, lynch law. "Slash these dogs of infidels!" was the medieval slogan. The modernist of whatever creed, accepts, without acknowledgment, the teaching of the "infidels," and labels it as a remedy painfully evolved from his own inner consciousness of modern needs. Well, let us be thankful for small mercies! If the teaching is actually accepted let us hope it may be acted on!

IGNOTUS.

Has Religion a Useful Function?

It is sometimes urged that while the facts of science are sufficient to demolish Christianity they still leave room for Religion.

It is only possible to argue in this manner when the protagonist has concocted his own pet definition of religion. But if religion be taken to be associated with the supernatural, science quite definitely excludes it. The era of science and that of religion, though they may overlap, hold two distinct chapters in the story of human development. Faced with the same phenomena, each has its own interpretation to offer. The man is ill because the devils are in him, taking advantage of some moral lapse. The man is ill because he caught a chill, and was not strong enough to resist the germs. We have a bad harvest because some individual has offended the Lord. We have a bad harvest on account of inclement weather conditions. And so on.

Show the redundancy of the religious interpretation and you have abolished the need for religion. For what is there left that religion can do?

Does it aim at satisfying our craving for a picture of the nature of existence? Then Philosophy can do its work better.

Does it promise to gratify the artistic impulse in man? Then music and painting, poetry and drama, sculpture and architecture, are the proper channels.

Does it undertake the formulation of a code of behaviour? Then why bother with Ethics and Sociology?

Once we have removed the necessity for the religious interpretation of things there is nothing left for religion to do that cannot be done in some other sphere with more satisfactory results.

Along with the various contemporary efforts to preserve the name and extenuate the function of religion, one finds writers who do not hesitate to denounce all it has stood for.

Russell says, "My own view is that of Lucretius. I regard religion as a disease born of fear, and as a source of untold misery to the human race." The Italian, Croce, observes, "It is sometimes thought that religion gives a fortitude and peace of mind that Philosophy cannot give, but my own observation is not to that effect. Creed believers are no more stable and no less agitated than others," and if we turn to history we find the saints restless, hesitant, racked by doubt, tormented by moral scruple and a sense of impurity.

Joad suggests that religion can for some afford an escape from a materialistic universe which is intolerable, though known to be true. Basing his observations on history, E. B. Bax remarks that religious systems lapse into politico-economic agencies for the maintenance of the *status quo*.

Therein we have a suggestion of the actual function of religion. Let us couple the next two quotations. One is an illustration of the other. First, the late Professor of Sociology in London Univ., L. T. Hobhouse: Religion "may use historical narrative and miraculous events as buttresses of the faith, but at bottom these are only *outworks* to impress the vulgar." (*Development and Purpose*.) The Emperor Napoleon was aware of this. "What is it that makes the poor man think it quite natural that there are fires in my palace while he is dying of cold? That there are ten coats in my wardrobe while he goes naked? That at each of my meals enough is served to feed his family for a week? It is simply religion which tells him that in another life I shall be only his equal, and that he has actually more chance of being happy there than I. Yes, we must see to it

that the floors of the Churches are open to all, and that it does not cost the poor man much to have prayers said on his tomb."

An opiate for the unintellectual, a social convenience for the intellectual, an outlet for the neurotic, a living for its priests; is there anything else for religion to do? It is not a vital force in modern life. It is just subject matter for the anthropologist. Meanwhile it produces an anti-social distortion of the young mind, which later becomes the adult mind, and often the legislating, administering, governing mind; it draws from other channels financial and mental resources, and degrades their output; it raises a warning forefinger to society's best-trained minds, and restricts the free reports of scientists. Listen to one who has been brave enough to admit his own cowardice: "When the anatomist seeks to apply Darwin's theory," "he finds himself encompassed by a sea of resentment so angry that if he seeks peace rather than truth, he keeps the secrets of the dissecting-room to himself and lets the world wag as it will." (Sir Arthur Keith)

Finally, it is argued that science derives inspiration and help from religion. Nothing could be more absurd. Science, to be science, must remain scientific. It does not go out of its way to find a universe harmonious with anybody's religious preconceptions. Nor does it set itself out deliberately to oppose religion. It is religion that gets in the way. Science is primarily concerned with truth, and if its findings disturb the religious scheme of things it is not the scientist who compromises, but the religionist. To show the futility of such compromise is the work of the National Secular Society. Whether we have a "right" to expect help from men of science, over and above their reports, is a matter of opinion.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Forty Stripes Save One.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England have been thus pleasantly described by those of her clergy, an increasing number in recent times, who desire to get out of that subscription to them, and to their meaning "in the plain and grammatical sense" of the words, which is still by law obligatory upon everyone who is ordained. This objection is no novelty, for it was the occasion of much acrimonious debate in the eighteenth century. Some echoes of those clerical quarrels are to be heard in a much quoted work entitled, *The Confessional: or a Full and Free Inquiry into the Right, Utility, Satisfaction and Success of Establishing Systematic Confession of Faith and Doctrines in Protestant Churches*, by F.B. [i.e., Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland] London, 1768.

It is interesting to observe that in those days nobody thought of the Church of England as other than one of the Protestant Churches. Thus the Calvinism of the Articles, and their denunciation of Roman Catholic claims and doctrines was not then, as now, the main point in dispute, but rather Arminianism and what would now be called "liberal" theology.

Parliament, whose authority in matters of doctrine and ritual is as absolute as it is now anomalous, has from time to time dealt with this matter of subscription to the Articles. Thus, on January 24, 1628, upon the motion of Sir John Elliott, it made this remarkable affirmation. "We, the Commons in Parliament assembled do claim, protest, and avow for truth, the sense of the Articles of Religion which were established by Parliament in the thirteenth year of our late Queen Elizabeth, which, by the Church of England and by the general current expositions of the writers of our Church have been delivered unto us. And we reject the senses of the Jesuits and Armenians and others wherein they differ from us."

Archdeacon Blackburne himself expresses in the blunt

fashion of his time his view of those who suggested then, as it is suggested now, that a certain mental reservation may be permissible in swearing assent to the Articles. One, Dr. Powell, preached a sermon in 1757, in which he said, "that young people may give a general assent to the Articles on the authority of others, more cannot be expected or understood to be done by those who are just beginning to exercise their reason—by which means room is left for improvements in theology." Of this Blackburne says: "The doctor will greatly assist our posterity in forming a true judgment of the liberal sentiments of the present age in the article of moral honesty, as well as give them a just idea of our improvements in theology, and how far we go beyond the zeal and dexterity of our forefathers in accommodating plain, simple, naked Christianity with the arts, ornaments, opulence, power and policy of the kingdom of this world."

The "dexterity" referred to is far exceeded by the "Liberal" churchmen of to-day. Their objection to the Articles is not their Protestantism, but what Blackburne calls their "naked" Christianity. It is too much for the fastidious stomachs and modest eyes of the twentieth century. The "Anglo"-Catholics, on the other hand, object to subscription to these Articles because of their explicit repudiation of Catholic doctrine. Two centuries after Protestantism had been established in this country Newman, in what was at once a diagnosis and a prophecy, said "liberalism in thought is breaking up ancient institutions in Church and State, and will not cease from its work until it has destroyed religion."

The work of destruction is far from finished, and, from the Freethinker's point of view, the "liberal" theologian is in the same position as the Anglo-Catholic so far as subscription is concerned—they both, to plain people, appear to subscribe to doctrines in which they do not believe, but subscription to which is essential for the receipt of their emoluments. When the Church is not established by law, and when clergymen are paid by those who require their services and not by the taxpayers, "subscription" will not interest anyone but members of the church concerned.

The average citizen, however, has to be brought to realize the character of this divided body which purports to be his national profession of religion. A devout and learned historian of her own (Augustus Jessopp) has thus described the English Church. "The Church of England has never known how to deal with a man of genius. From Wickliffe to Frederick Robertson, from Bishop Peacock to Dr. Rowland Williams, the clergyman who has been in danger of impressing his personality upon Anglicanism, where he has not been the object of ruthless persecution, has at least been regarded with timid suspicion, has been shunned by the prudent men of low degree, and by those of high degree been forgotten. In the Church of England there has never been a time when the enthusiast has not been treated as a very *unsafe* man . . . We with our insular prejudices, have been sticklers for the narrowest uniformity, and yet we have accepted, as a useful addition to the creed of Christendom, one article which we have only not formulated because, perhaps, it came to us from a Roman bishop, the great Talleyrand—*surtout pas trop de zèle.*" (Jessopp's *Coming of the Friars.*)

So long as the Church is a State Church it will have the characteristics above mentioned, which, the reader may perceive, are invariable in Government Department, and, in consequence, nobody ever looks for genius therein. But, while some Departments are inevitable under any system of Government organization, these are not the days to retain superfluous departmental officials who spend a large part of their time quarrelling with each other as to whether they should or should not observe the terms of their employment.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Some men make a womanish complaint that it is a great misfortune to die before our time. I would ask what time? Is it that of Nature? But she, indeed, has lent us life, as we do a sum of money, only no certain day is fixed for payment. What reason them to complain if she demands it at pleasure, since it was on this condition that you received it.—*Cicero.*

Paganism Triumphant.

AN attitude of mind which lingers on long after its foundations have been destroyed, is not only an encumbrance, it is an enemy to truth and progress. Particularly noticeable is this in the realm of history, where such an attitude still dominates the story of Christianity's birth. How the Christian historian, armed with his literary quotations from unreliable sources and fired by his righteous zeal as a defender of the faith, used to revel in his denunciations of the depraved Pagans. What vice, ignorance, and wickedness, what cruelty, sensuality, and lawlessness had flourished in a society that knew not the saving grace of Jesus!

Now the march of historical science has brought a change. Research has made defamation of the ancients none too easy. The Christian, to his dismay, finds that he even has to praise the Pagans for their wonders achieved and their glories attempted. But when it comes to the story of Christianity, this change itself changes. Though one side is radically altered, the other side remains untouched, and the balance of the equation is supposed not to be affected!

So we find modern historians of the Christian breed, compelled by weight of evidence to admit the achievements and the potentialities of the Greeks and the Romans, still go on repeating the parrot-cry that the world was revolutionized, purified, and sanctified by the coming of Christianity. From among innumerable examples we will take one. Prof. W. G. de Burgh, Professor of Philosophy at Reading University College, is quite modern. His *Legacy of the Ancient World* was published in 1924. Nor is our choice made with any motive of favouring the case we wish to make out, for according to another authority (E. S. Osborn, *Our Debt to Greece and Rome*, bibliographical appendix), de Burgh's work is "the only continuous and complete history in our language of the Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures, their complex relationships, and their influence on medieval and modern civilization."

Of the sincerity of de Burgh's Christian faith there is no doubt at all; it shines forth from almost every page. Tributes to Christianity, of the usual type (more genteel, if less sweeping) are spread liberally throughout the book. Lest, amid the marvels of Pagan civilization, the reader finds his admiration weakening for Christianity's "spiritual revolution," these tributes are not confined to their proper place (if, indeed, they have a proper place at all), but are subtly introduced at the most irrelevant points. Yet, to be fair to de Burgh, though his opinions may be prejudiced, his facts are not distorted, and the facts speak for themselves. He not only shows, but emphasizes, the diverse and all-embracing ways in which the whole of our civilization springs from the fount of the Pagan spirit, and particularly of the Hellenic genius.

When, time after time, the social, moral, and spiritual revolution wrought by Christianity is trotted out for the reader's edification, one almost begins to wonder whether de Burgh took the trouble to read the proofs of his book, and, if so, whether he thought seriously at all about the issues on which he had written.

De Burgh is a "personality Christian," that is, he affirms a "conviction that the history can only be accounted for by the unique personality of its founder" (preface, ix.). Consequently one is prepared for the announcement that Christianity "revolutionized the entire fabric of Mediterranean civilization" (p. 265) and that its "new spirit" was reflected "not only in the field of faith and worship, but in morals and law, in art and literature, in the treatment of slaves and women, in men's whole outlook upon life." (p. 266).

Well, well, a comprehensive revolution, eh? But where? In religion and worship? Decidedly not, for, even without going outside de Burgh, it is obvious that Christianity was not only a synthetic production of the thought and theology of various times and climes, but was a typical product of an age of religious revivals.

In Morals and law? Hardly, if one bears in mind the great moral, philosophic, and juristic precepts already

born of the Greek and Roman thinkers; particularly Virgil, with his breath of human tenderness, and the Stoics, with their cosmopolitanism, their brotherhood of man, and their *jus naturæ* (law of nature) of "all men free and equal." "The influence of Christianity on Roman law," de Burgh himself tells us, "was not so extensive as has been supposed." (p. 352). In his ensuing summary he can find only the removal of the penalties imposed on celibacy (obviously a measure dictated purely by clerical demands); the restriction, and subsequent prohibition of divorce (an "improvement" from the tyranny of which modern England seeks relief!); the prohibition of infant exposure (which had always been "severely limited," see page 189); the provision of facilities for the manumission of slaves in church (an extension, mainly geographical, of one of the results of the widespread Stoic agitation for the abolition of slavery); and certain minor details of maternal, paternal, and infantile legitimization. The new contributions by Christianity to Roman jurisprudence were "bloody laws against heretics" (p. 352n) and clerical exemptions and rights of interference. Hardly a revolution of the kind de Burgh implies!

In the treatment of slaves! The Pagans in their treatment of their slaves, attained a general level of humanity which was the exception rather than the rule when, centuries later, the Christians enslaved their coloured fellow-men. It was Virgil, not Jesus, whom Pitt quoted in the House of Commons on a memorable occasion when appealing for the abolition of a slave trade created not by the Pagans of the ancient world, but by the "enlightened and moral" Christians of a much later period (see page 408). It was the Sophist, Alcidas, who preached throughout the Greece of the fifth century B.C. that "the deity has made all men free; nature has enslaved no man" (p. 153); and it was the *jus naturæ* of the Stoics—Greek thought fructifying in the soil of Rome—that gave the times their best ideal of liberty for slaves.

In the treatment of women? Surely not, when one recalls the degradation of woman in the Ages of Faith, and when the author not only mentions the various restrictions placed by the Pagan jurists and emperors on the much-misunderstood *patria potestas* (supreme authority of the father in the family), but stresses the fact that "the Roman Matron enjoyed a dignity . . . a freedom and independence hardly paralleled in ancient or modern society" (p. 189).

In art and literature (and once more without need to consult other authorities) we again meet with deterioration from the sublime level of a past, a deterioration which, as soon as Christianity really obtained a hold on the people, spread to every branch of human activity, especially to "men's whole outlook upon life." So Christianity piloted the world to the darkness and squalor of the Middle Age, on which the "sweeping verdict of rationalism" was "ignorance and credulity, crime and witchcraft, tyranny ecclesiastical and secular, anarchy, war, rapine, and persecution" (p. 363).

And so the world would be yet were it not that the spirit of Paganism was not dead, but, maimed in its conflict, awaited its opportunity to re-awaken in the wider world of modern times the ideas and ideals so truly its own, the art and the science and the philosophy, the joy and truth and beauty which had their choicest blossomings in the "school of Hellas." The better world that we are creating from the ruins of antiquity will be better only in so far as it gathers sustenance and strength from the perennial spring of Hellenic inspiration, tempered by the breath of vision learned from the lessons of the past.

GRÆCULUS.

NATURE'S WAY.

This tradition of yours is only another word for Putrefaction. The clean way with Nature is dying and being born. Same with human institutions—only more so. How can we live unless we scrap and abolish? How can a town be clean without a dust destructor? What's your history really? Simply what's been left over from the life of yesterday.—H. G. Wells in "The Autocracy of Mr. Parham."

The Modernist Te Deum.

"E Te Deum Laudamus mi parca lidir mi voce mista
al dolce sous, Ch' or si or no s'intendon le parole."
Dante, Purg. ix. 140.

A SUNDAY or two ago, attending a church service, I was the subject of a strange visitation. Hardly had the clergyman pronounced the first words, when I fell into a kind of trance—totally different from the somnolence so familiar in places of worship. I was still able to take my part, to rise and kneel at the appointed moments, and to chant the psalms with the rest. But after a while I noticed that while I was in a kind of dream, my perceptions were sharpened to an unusual perspicacity so much so that they were able to break down ordinary barriers, and penetrate the very thoughts of my neighbours. I was, in fact, able at once to hear what was actually being sung or said, and to overhear, in a fashion, what was passing through the minds of the performers. For the most part, of course, this was of little import; for the majority were thinking of nothing at all, and, like Milton, I was "presented with a universal blank." Some, however, were more articulate, and their thoughts provided a remarkable contrast to their words. A lady, for example, as she sang, "And our mouth shall show forth thy praise," was really criticizing with mingled envy and severity the dress of another lady. A choir-boy was thinking of a football-match, the report of which he had, I suppose, just read in a Sunday paper. An elderly gentleman, close to my side, while chanting with gusto those words in the hundred and ninth Psalm, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the ungodly," was actually engaged in considering what kindness he could do next, and his mind, like his face, was suffixed with a benevolence which, even if it was but temporary, was a pleasure to contemplate. Another gentleman, during the Lord's Prayer, was substituting other words in his mind for those which his lips were repeating. "Our income come. Give us each six months our half-yearly dividends. Forgive us our debts, but don't ask us to forgive our debtors. And lead us not into speculation, but deliver us from bankruptcy."

All this was wonderful enough, and yet, at the moment, there seemed nothing wonderful in it to me. It was like a dream, in which nothing surprised us. Much of it, indeed, has entirely escaped my memory, after the fashion of dreams, however vivid. But one long portion, curiously enough, I retain verbatim. It was the words, subconsciously thought, which the Vicar, a theologian of extreme "Liberal" tendencies, was uttering, without knowing it, for my benefit: while, to the rest of the congregation, he seemed to be intoning words so familiar as to have lost all their meaning. His voice was clear and resonant, and—an excellent thing in a clergyman—in tune. The reader may perhaps be glad to learn what the words were as I hear them.

We praise thee, O Stream of Tendency! we acknowledge thee to be in a sense divine.

All men admit thee, as a kind of super-temporal abstraction.

To thee certain imaginary principles and fantastical influences continually speak with inaudible voice.

Asserting even tautologically that on the whole thou makest for righteousness.

The Apostles, though intellectually limited;

The Prophets, though their forecasts were usually mistaken;

The Martyrs, though an obstinate and perverse company of fanatics;

And men throughout the world, of all opinions, right and wrong, acknowledge thee without always knowing that they do so.

Some using to describe thee the inadequate image of parenthood.

Others the equally inadequate figure of sonship.

Yet others the poor analogy of spirituality.

Christ was a man of great distinction.

Worthy to be called (figuratively) the (tropical) son of a (metaphorical) God.

According to a childish legend he was the son of a virgin mother.

A still more childish legend speaks of him as dying and rising again;

And as sitting at the right hand of a deity who (being a mere tendency) has neither right hand nor left.

A fantastic superstition pictures him as the future judge of men.

But it does no harm to pray to him for help, and to use picturesque phrases about his blood and his atonement;

Or to pray that we may be numbered with the choir invisible of those who are remembered vaguely for a few years.

Nor can it do harm to ask him, in the words of the Psalmist, to bestow a blessing on those who follow him.

To rule them from his phantasmal throne, and to exalt them in an eternity entirely divorced from time.

To magnify him every day is a pleasant exercise.

There are worse ways of spending an hour than to praise his name.

Or to ask him to save us from those errors which are theologically called sins.

To pity us, for we are certainly pitiable.

Nor is even the repetition of such phrases more than grammatically censurable.

For there can be no objection to our saying that we should be glad if what is said about him is true.

And—though a coming eternal judgment is highly problematical—yet, should there be such a judgment, we have no desire to incur a severe sentence.

Of the rest of the service I recall but little, but I remember that the Benediction was about as hard to comprehend as a page of Kant's *Metaphysics*. This did not, however, worry the congregation; for their rendering of it, which I distinctly overheard, was "Well, all that is over for another week."

E. E. KELLETT.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

A REJOINDER TO MR. CUTNER.

SIR,—It is a pity that Mr. Cutner cannot criticize me without losing his temper. I have not questioned his good faith; but he has gone very near to questioning mine.

Mr. Cutner whispers, loud enough for all the readers of the *Freethinker* to hear, that he has read the article on "Hebrew Language," in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. He has not told us, however, what its "evasions" are, nor how they support his strange hypothesis. Mr. Cutner does not deny that Hebrew is one of a group of Semitic tongues, just as French is one of a group of some half dozen languages derived from Latin; but he does not see the significance of this fact. Why should priests, in order to keep afloat an esoteric system, "invent" a language that has such close affinities with other admittedly spoken languages like Phœnician, Assyrian and Aramaic? What a very clumsy way of excluding the uninitiated from their mysteries! Moreover, are not large parts of the Old Testament a polemic against priestcraft? And does Mr. Cutner believe that the Book of Daniel, which was obviously meant to appeal to the Jewish laity, whom many of the priests were betraying in the interests of the Hellenism of Antiochus Epiphanes, was written in a lingo which priests had invented and only priests could understand?

I said in my last letter that the Moabite Stone was "inscribed in a language practically identical with Hebrew." The Moabite of the famous Stone is as near to Hebrew as one English dialect is to another. Otherwise it could not have been read. No Moabite literature is extant to assist philologists. As for the characters, they are identical with those of the Siloam inscription, which Mr. Cutner ignores. The latter is of pre-Exilian date, and is in the Hebrew language. Its characters are also those of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which is a Hebrew document.

I was under no obligation to criticize Robert Taylor's two lectures. His mythical explanation of Mary, which was handled by Mr. Cutner with considerable sympathy, struck me as absurd, and I did not hesitate to say so. I do not recognize either Miss C. M. Yonge or Madame Blavatsky as authorities. Mr. J. M. Robertson's works on Christian origins I am as well acquainted with as Mr. Cutner. I should be sorry to seem to speak slightly of one whom I admire both as critic and historian; but candour compels me to state that some of that great scholar's mythological theories appear to me extravagant. Be that as it may, Mr. Robertson does not endorse the particular absurdity in Mr. Cutner's article which I criticized.

I have consulted the article on "Mary" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Its writer expressly says of the "interpretations" to which Mr. Cutner refers, that "as might be expected, they are almost all of them impossible, resting as they do on utter ignorance of Hebrew."

I was perhaps too dogmatic in saying that no Venus lore coloured the Mariolatry of the fourth and following centuries; but the quotation about Rosch's "bold attempt" has no bearing on the sources of the New Testament story of Mary or the etymology of her name.

Astarte is not "another name" for Venus, though the two goddesses have many points of likeness.

Having taken honours in the Cambridge Classical Tripos, I ought to know a little more about Latin than Mr. Cutner. Let me then assure him that classical scholars have no doubt that "Mare" was never pronounced like "Mary."

Mr. Cutner has read a great deal and is anxious to serve the cause of Freethought. If he would only recognize his limitations, he would make his work far more effective.

May I be allowed, sir, to trespass a little further on your space by drawing attention to a printer's error which makes me say "Miriam" on line twenty of my letter, whereas I wrote "Mariam"? "Miriam" on line fourteen is quite correct.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

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

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.—"Civilization—Whither?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Things that are not Cæsars."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson—"Prayer and the God Idea."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, February 29, at 8.0, Mr. C. B. Rush will open a discussion on "The Perplexed Philosopher."

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, Annual General Meeting, Branch members only.

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, March 1, at 7.0, A Barrett Brown, M.A. (Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford)—"The Quaker Faith."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Dr. Arthur Lynch—"The Philosophy of Philosophies."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ASHINGTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Princess Ballroom Cafe, Ashington): 7.15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"How Came Man?" (Genesis v. Evolution).

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance Lorn Street): 7.0, S. Wollen (Liverpool)—"The Riddle of the New Testament."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 6.30, Mr. N. McNeil—"A Plea for Theism." Questions and discussion. Silver collection.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (Phoenix Theatre, Market Street, Burnley): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 2.45 p.m., "Spiritualism v. Common Sense." 7.15 p.m., "Christianity v. Science: Anthropology."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe—"Secular Steps to Salvation."

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