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Views and Opinions.

*The Press and the Public.*

On September 19, the *Morning Post* issued an anniversary supplement commemorating the appearance of its fifty-thousandth number. As a mere effort in longevity it establishes a world record, and a number of prominent people said nice things about the *Post*. Among the letters published was one from Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, who congratulated the *Post* on its record, on its being true to itself, and never living on "stunts" as do other papers. Were Mr. Macdonald a man of wit we should regard his saying that the *Morning Post* is true to itself as quite in the line of Beaconsfield. In the circumstances it was a very clumsy, boomerangish kind of compliment. Certainly the *Post* has always been true to itself. It is as stubborn in its devotion to the most stupid variety of toryism to-day as it was when it made its first appearance, and it is typical that in its anniversary account of itself it starts with the tremendous information that it issued its first number on the birthday anniversary of the Duke of Kent and Marie Antoinette. We should not be surprised to find that quite a number of other people had birthday anniversaries on that day, but these other people may have been mere inventors, or poets, or writers, or historians, or scientists, or—we must whisper this—even reformers, and there could be no glory in being born on the birthday anniversary of any such as these. Unconsciously Mr. Macdonald is correct. The *Morning Post* has always been true to itself. It still lives in the mental atmosphere of a hundred and sixty years ago.

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Stunts.

But Mr. Macdonald is demonstrably wrong when he says that the *Post* does not try to live on "stunts." The *Post* is as great a lover of "stunts" as any member of the yellow press. In recent years I recall the Russian stunt, when the *Post* worked up the tale

of the Soviet closing all churches in Russia, forbidding religious worship, killed day by day men who had died years before, and stuck to its tales in spite of contradictions from its own supporters who had been in Russia and were conversant with the facts. Some time before this I recall how I revelled in a series of articles—said in Fleet Street to have been written by an impecunious German—on the great Jewish plot wherein was depicted how an international secret committee of Jews had been responsible for every trouble since the Reformation, including the Cromwellian and the French revolutions, on through the Chartist movement, the war of 1914, to the Russian Revolution and the General Strike. The way in which this small committee of Jews made the whole world dance to their piping was "intriguing," and I read that stunt with greater delight than I had read anything since I revelled in piles of boys' "bloods" many years ago. I owe the *Morning Post* hours of unalloyed pleasure and I wish they would start another series on the same lines.

Evidently Mr. Macdonald does not read the *Post* as regularly as I do or he would know that the *Post* delights in stunts as much as do many other papers. It does believe in them, but, of course, they have to be stunts which appeal to its own class of readers. All stunts appeal to ignorant, unformed, or misinformed minds, and this type exists as plentifully among those who have been to a public school and lounge in a west-end club, as it does among those who have been schooled in the gutter and spend their days leaning against the wall of a corner "Pub."

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The Prince Regent.

I was interested in the account which the *Post* gave of the change in life and manners since it issued its first number, and it would be interesting to know what proportion of reforms escaped the resistance of the *Post*. I expect very few. But there was one incident connected with its history which did not appear. Perhaps this was because it did not concern, creditably, a member of a Royal family either here or abroad. The incident I have in mind is concerned with the Prince Regent, afterwards George the fourth. Every schoolboy to-day knows the character of the Prince Regent, but in case this issue of the *Free-thinker* should get into the hands of some of the *Morning Post's* oldest readers, I quote Thackeray's description of him as given in his *Four Georges* :—

This George, what was he? I look all through his life and recognize nothing but a bow and a grin. I try to take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and blue ribbon, a pocket handkerchief prodigiously scented, one of Truefitt's best nutty brown wigs reeking with oil, a set of teeth and a huge black stock, under-waistcoats, more under-waistcoats and then—nothing.

Had there been nothing there *but* nothing, a tolerant posterity might have said nothing, for there was nothing in any of the Georges. They were all objects of pity, contempt, or derision. But there was a positive side to the Prince Regent and that was wholly vile. He was distinguished for his dissipation at a time when dissipation was the hall mark of a fashionable man about town. He was extravagant and dishonest, and bled the nation to fill the pockets of the pimps and prostitutes who surrounded him. The cartoons of Rowlandson and Gilray help one to understand the kind of object it was who in public was the recipient of the stereotyped flatteries showered upon kings and princes, and in private had the unmitigated contempt of nearly every man of worth and ability.

Naturally the *Morning Post* being true to itself, and which 120 years later congratulates itself on being born on the anniversary of the birthday of a nobody such as the Duke of Kent, and a wholly mischievous woman such as Marie Antoinette, could see nothing amiss in the Prince Regent. In one of its articles, March, 1812, it described him with such accompanying epithets as "noble," "exalted," "disinterested," "glorious," "upright," "dignified," "princely," etc., etc., and all, of a man who was a byword even then for his stupidity, his greed, and his immorality. The crowning effort of the *Post* to remain true to itself was made in one of its issues in which he was directly addressed with the following terms, "You are the glory of the people—You are the protector of the Arts . . . You are the Mæcenas of the Age . . . Wherever you appear, you conquer all hearts, wipe away tears, excite desire and love . . . you breathe eloquence. You inspire the Graces . . . You are an Adonis in loveliness," and bursting into rhyme proceeded:—

Thus gifted with each grace of mind,  
Born to delight and bless mankind;  
Wisdom, with pleasure in her train,  
Great Prince, shall signalize thy reign  
To honour, Virtue, Truth, allied—  
The Nation's safeguard and its pride;  
With monarchs of immortal fame  
Shall bright Renown enrol thy name.

And all this of the Prince Regent! The *Morning Post* did indeed in its youth exhibit the promise of its old age.

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#### Leigh Hunt and the "Post."

Fortunately all the British public were neither readers of the *Morning Post* nor subscribers to its sycophancy. Much might be excused a paper as mere exhibitions of the slaver poured over all who wear a crown or who share the light of royalty. Our own journalists who see a marvellous exhibition of rare courage in the Duke of York working to overcome a stammer, or an example for the nation in the Queen kissing her son when meeting after a lengthy separation, show that the species to which the *Morning Post* writers belonged is still with us. But to one man in Britain this eulogy of the empty-headed rake who was to one day rule England was too much. Leigh Hunt, one of the bravest spirits among the early radicals, was at that time publishing his *Examiner*, and in the issue for March 22, 1812, he dealt faithfully with the *Post* and the Prince. I should like to reprint the whole of that article, but space forbids. After speaking of the common talk of the streets concerning the Prince's deeds and character, he says:—

What person unacquainted with the true state of the case, would imagine, in reading these astounding eulogies, that this glory of the people was the subject of millions of shrugs and reproaches. That this Mæcenas of the Age patronized not a

single deserving writer! That this Breather of Eloquence could not say a few decent extempore words! That this Exciter of Desire (bravo, Messieurs of the "Post") this Adonis in loveliness was a corpulent gentleman of fifty! In short, that this delightful, blissful, wise, pleasurable, honourable, virtuous, true, and immortal Prince was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demi-reps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity.

This plain speaking about royalty could not be tolerated in 1812—I question whether it would be tolerated to-day. Both Leigh Hunt and his brother John were prosecuted, found guilty of a libel on the Prince Regent, when every man in England knew that the "libel" understated the truth, and were sentenced to two years' imprisonment with a fine of £1,000. Shelley and Byron were aghast at the prosecution and the punishment. Their fine might have been paid, but the Hunts were resolute in declining to compromise on such a matter. They had "libelled" the "first gentleman in Europe," and we have no doubt that the *Morning Post* was duly elated in its justification of the Prince Regent. It is a real pity that the *Post* did not refer to this case, only one of many instances in which the paper had proved its devotion to established institutions, in order to prove that Mr. Macdonald was quite right. It has always been true to itself.

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#### Then and Now.

We live a hundred and twenty years after this episode, but I am not sure that things have substantially altered, or perhaps it might fit the case better to say there is a difference without a distinction between 1812 and 1932. There is a very fine figure of progress drawn by Swedenborg, for which I have always had some regard. He pictured progress as an ascending spiral in which the same scenes were constantly being enacted on a higher level. That seems to me to fit human progress as well as anything. The qualities of human nature remain substantially unaltered century after century, and, therefore human actions remain the same in substance. The murderer kills with an automatic instead of with a club or a knife, the thief steals with a counterfeit cheque instead of taking a purse, the people are robbed by financial rings with a costly office and large clerical staff instead of being robbed by a baron living in a castle and attended by men-at-arms, the medicine-men gather in the Albert Hall under the patronage of royalty instead of in a forest clearing with the chief of the tribe in attendance. There is the same thing in each case, but upon a little higher level.

To-day royalty is better behaved, but then the times themselves are better behaved. The *Morning Post* and its kind are not quite so servile as their ancestors of a hundred years ago, but the people are not so servile as they then were. The servility is there, but on a higher level. People still prostrate themselves before a title, and the commonest and most human of actions by a King or a Queen or a Prince evoke astonishment and are held up for our admiration. A paper of to-day would not stoop quite so low as did the *Post* in its adulation of one of the most notorious blackguards in England, it might even politely and respectfully rebuke the King if he stepped beyond his constitutional duty so far as to send a message to a Freethought instead of to a Methodist Conference. But it would certainly not permit perfectly plain speech of any member of the Royal family, even did the facts justify such speech. In other words, servility and independence, stupid flattery and "faithful"

speech, courage and cowardice, honesty and dishonesty are still with us. These relative distinctions remain. I do not know that we can destroy them; our only contribution to progress must consist in raising them to a higher level. Human passions and powers remain unaltered, but their expression may be made less harmful in the one direction and more helpful in the other.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Relativity of Morals.

"The most ancient version of the Ten Commandments whatever the investigations of scholars may make it out to be, originates, not in the thunders of Sinai, but in the peaceful life of men on the plains of Chaldea. Conscience is the voice of Man ingrained into our hearts, commanding us to work for Man." (Prof. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 384.)

"To establish morality or the duties of man upon the divine will, is to found it upon the will, the reveries, and the interests of those who make God speak, without ever fearing that he will contradict them.

"There is no crime which men have not committed under the idea of pleasing the Divinity, or appeasing his wrath." (Meslier, *Good Sense*, pp. 82-73.)

We well remember the great impression made upon us by Professor Westermarck's great work, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, upon its publication, over a quarter of a century ago; by its immense erudition, and the masterly way in which its great collection of facts were marshalled, with such clearness and irresistible force. The immense sweep of Westermarck's learning which ranged from primitive savage life to ancient history, and from the Middle Ages down to our own time; along with the downright repudiation of all supernatural intervention in the origin of moral ideas, and the proof that they had a secular, human, and evolutionary origin, constituted this great work a worthy companion to the works of Darwin, Buckle, Lubbock and Frazer.

Prof. Westermarck's just published work *Ethical Relativity* (Kegan Paul, 12s. 6d.) is really a continuation of his *Origin of the Moral Ideas*. But really, he has done the work so thoroughly, in his previous book, that the present one seems rather superfluous, a killing of the slain.

People who believe in the Bible, believe that the code of morality contained in the Old Testament was a revelation from God to the Hebrews, to which, later on, the New Testament was attached as a codicil. The Hebrews, however, very earnestly protest that this codicil is a forgery, or at least, quite unauthorized by the original testator; and it is still a matter of dispute between them. However, while they were furiously arguing the point, it occurred to some philosophers that perhaps both parties were wrong, and upon making research, it was found that such was indeed the case. Many tribes and nations were found who had never heard of either the Old, or the New Testaments. Some of them, indeed, who were flourishing thousands of years before the Bible was written, yet had a high standard of morality. Not so high as the Christian, perhaps, as they seem to have neglected the duty of burning their heretics.

Then the witch doctors or theologians, came to the rescue. They declared that God had implanted in every human being a "moral sense," or faculty, called a "conscience," the still small voice of which, judged every action and distinguished right from wrong. This function, or faculty

filled Kant with the same awe as the star-spangled firmament. According to Butler, conscience is "a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so." Its supremacy is said to be "felt and tacitly acknowledged by the worst no less than by the best

of men." Adam Smith calls the moral faculties the "vicegerents of God within us." (Westermarck: *Ethical Relativity*, p. 51.)

We are told if we do right, conscience will approve and we shall be happy, but if we do wrong the divine monitor will convict us of it and we shall feel the sting of remorse. "But," says Westermarck, "what an unjust retributor conscience is. The more a person habituates himself to virtue the more he sharpens its sting, the deeper he sinks in vice the more he blunts it. While the best men have the most sensitive consciences, the worst have hardly any conscience at all." (p. 53.) If the conscience is divinely implanted, its method of working is altogether inexplicable. It surely should have increased in punishing power in proportion as its owner progressed in wickedness. As Westermarck observes:—

But if all external motives of a social and religious character be put aside, it may be fairly asked if the influence of the moral law upon the conduct of men is really so great as well-meaning moralists try to make us believe. It does not seem to command obedience in any exceptional degree, the regard for it can hardly be called the mainspring of action. It is only one spring out of many, and variable like all others. In some instances it may be a dominant power in a man's life, in others it is a voice calling in the wilderness; and the majority of people seem to be more afraid of the blame or ridicule of their fellowmen, or of the penalties with which the law of the country threatens them, than of "the vicegerents of God" in their own hearts. (p. 52.)

It was to this conscience that Kant gave the imposing name of the "categorical imperative," with its mysteriousness and awfulness, which led Schiller to write to Goethe, "There remains something in Kant, as in Luther, that makes one think of a monk who has left his monastery, but been unable to efface all trace of it." (pp. 55-56.) But the young men of today would no more think of studying the moral systems of Kant and Butler than they would study Ptolemy for Astronomy, or Strabo for Geography.

The object of Westermarck's book may be given in his own words, as follows:—

I have thus arrived at the conclusion that neither the attempts of moral philosophers or theologians to prove the objective validity of moral judgments, nor the common sense assumption to the same effect, give us any right at all to accept such a validity as a fact. So far, however, I have only tried to show that it has not been proved; now I am prepared to take a step further and assert that it cannot exist. The reason for this is that in my opinion the predicates of all moral judgments, all moral concepts, are ultimately based on emotions, and that, as is very commonly admitted, no objectivity can come from an emotion (p. 60.)

That is to say that morals were not planned, or invented by some power outside ourselves, but they are subjective and arise out of the emotions.

Heine in his *Confessions*, mockingly, tells us how: "One beautiful starlight night, Hegel stood with me at an open window. I, being a young man of twenty-two, and having just eaten well and drunk coffee, naturally spoke with enthusiasm of the stars, and called them abodes of the blest. But the master muttered to himself, "The stars! Hm! hm! the stars are only a brilliant eruption on the firmament." "What!" cried I; "then there is no blissful spot above, where virtue is rewarded after death?" But he, glaring at me with his dim eyes, remarked, sneeringly, "So you want a *pourboire* (a tip) because you have supported your sick mother and not poisoned your brother?"

In conclusion we may say that all those who appreciated Prof. Westermarck's earlier work will also appreciate this. It is a mine of information on the subject.

W. MANN.

## Legal Quibbles.

LAW, it has been claimed by jurists, is neither more nor less than common sense—"organized common sense."

Unfortunately "common sense is an uncommon grace" with mankind.

It results that law is frequently an inadequate medium for the application of justice to the ordinary affairs and difficulties of daily life.

For, in the first place, men are so constituted as to be capable of logical argument, but predisposed to illogical modes of living. Secondly, the pure light of reason proves all too often in practice an elusive guide to the concrete rules of law. Much dissatisfaction is rife because the citizen too often finds that the duties imposed upon him by law are different from those which he might have expected to find to be the case, and he seems to be denied his just rights by "legal quibbles." Dickens was by no means the first to discover or declare the asinine defects of the law, nor has he been without successors. We may go further and confidently predict that our system of law will never be immune from justifiable criticism which emphasizes its weaknesses and stupidities. Similar objections have always been raised to every system devised by man.

Law is a science, but it is not an exact science. Indeed, if it attempted to be such it would produce, in many instances, even greater evils than it could hope to cure.

A legal maxim has it that it is more desirable that the law should be certain than that it should be ideally just. Why? Because unless the rule of law appertaining to a specific right or duty is certain and definite, and therefore knowable by all subjected to it, unfairness would or might easily result. A bad law is often tolerable if it is clearly stated, because then at least we do know where we are. The sense of fairness inherent in our minds enjoys a certain satisfaction from the knowledge that a law, however bad, presses equally upon all of us. There is no favoritism. Which is something to be grateful for. An uncertain law produces irritation and worse by reason of the fact that it seems to place an arbitrary weapon in the hands of those who are entrusted with its administration.

The object of the legislature is to enact laws "for the general," whilst that of the judicature is to interpret and apply them in particular cases.

An Act of Parliament seeks to lay down the law applicable to a particular topic, e.g., compensation payable to a workman injured because of his occupation. To the uninitiated it might appear to be a perfectly simple matter to lay down a few broad principles, set them forth in the form of a statute, and so dispose of the matter once and for all. But Parliament, which is the only tribunal we have purporting to represent the will of the nation as a whole, must endeavour to hold the scales of justice evenly. In providing for the interests of the employee it must attempt to avoid penalizing the employer unfairly. Hence Parliament cannot simply declare that every employee injured in the course of his work is entitled to full compensation from his employer. All sorts of considerations arise which prevent so simple a consummation being achieved. The resources of an employer, for instance, are limited, and the amount of compensation payable to employees is necessarily limited by the extent of those resources. Even if the State be the employer a similar consideration applies.

We may go further. Even if all the wealth in an industry be considered to be a fund to be drawn upon for the benefit of all employed in it we still have

this difficulty to face. Our law must hold the scales of justice evenly as between one employee and another. To award too high a sum by way of compensation for his injuries to one may result in the other receiving less than his due. One workman is more careless than another; a third starts off with a weaker constitution than a fourth—so as more readily to succumb to an industrial sickness.

Parliament did attempt to cope with the situation by enacting the Workmen's Compensation Acts, 1906 to 1926. It attempted to lay down a broad principle of compensation payable to a workman for injuries "arising out of and in the course of his employment." That one phrase alone has given rise to many thousands of "leading cases;" the judges have been called upon to consider whether a particular accident falls within its scope; a perusal of the reports of those cases shows how difficult it often is to answer the question so raised. Indeed, the very definition of "accident" has often been "far to seek." Common sense tells us what we are normally accustomed to think of as being an "accident," but when it comes to precise definition we find we are "up against it." The search for such a definition produces legal arguments which, from one point of view, may be stigmatized as legal "quibbles."

Let us look at an actual case. In *Trim Joint District School v. Kelly*, the House of Lords was called upon, in 1914, to decide whether compensation should be paid in respect of certain fatal injuries. Those injuries had been suffered by a teacher in an industrial school, the pupils of which had, in an excess of high animal spirits, and in furtherance of some grievance which they entertained against him, risen up and attacked him. Could the teacher be said to have met with an "accident" "arising out of and in the course of his employment?" In fact the House answered the question in the affirmative. Yet it can scarcely be supposed that the framers of the statute had in mind such a possible case. They were concerned primarily with a desire to deal with harsh conditions liable to arise in industrial activities where dangerous machinery is used; it seems improbable that they could have had in mind dangerous pupils in industrial schools.

Experience shows that concrete cases heard in the courts will constantly bring to light loopholes or defects in an Act of Parliament under which they fall to be decided. These can be removed by amending legislation. But however carefully framed an Act may be it cannot envisage every possible contingency in human life. Moreover in the measure that it seeks to cover, in advance, numerous contingencies it becomes a defective statute—defective, that is to say, in that it lays itself open to the accusation of being replete with legal "quibbles." It is this strong desire to legislate, in an Act, for as many cases as possible that is responsible for the tautology so often criticized by laymen. Even more serious than tautology is prolixity. Thus, few pieces of legislation are more lengthy and involved than that governing national health insurance and unemployment pay. Parliament, pressed by innumerable, interested bodies, has repeatedly, since the broad principles were first admitted to the statute book, added amending Act after amending Act in order to cope with hard cases constantly brought to light.

The only alternative to complex legislation is to vest greater discretion in judges and administrators. In flying from the one evil we seek shelter in another. Which is worse, to be governed by strict Acts which must be administered and obeyed to the letter, or by judges and bureaucrats who aim to apply the laws not according to their letter but according to their spirit? The letter of the law is at least certain, whereas its

spirit is elusive; the former may work hardship in particular instances, but the latter opens the way wide to oppression and allows great scope for the exercise of the personal whims and the political and sociological prejudices of the administrators of the law.

A law, when all is said, must be a rule which seeks to be of general application. It is of little use devising a law under which more exceptions may arise than cases falling within the rule. A general rule is expedient; but it contains within it the inevitable weakness that litigants and the lawyers advising them will seek, by ingenious "quibbles," to show that their apparently exceptional case falls within the four corners of the law which embodies it.

Legal "quibbles," then, arise from the attempt to mete out justice in borderline cases. Often the "quibble" whereby the plea in a borderline case is supported fails, when we get an instance of those "hard cases" which proverbially "make bad law." It is easy to expose a law as being bad by showing its effect in hard or special circumstances. It is difficult, with the best will in the world, to frame a good law which shall always, in all circumstances, work fairly—bearing in mind the necessity for its phraseology to be lucid, compact and yet all-embracing.

When a law is framed its limits must be clearly and definitely laid down. Thus, if you desire—wisely or otherwise—to prohibit the sale of cigarettes after eight p.m., you must penalize the vendor whether the prohibited sale takes place five minutes or five hours after the appointed limit. To argue that a sale five minutes after time should be excused might be reasonable, in fact, in one particular case; but once admit the precedent and where are you to stop? The next offender will seek to be excused because he sold a packet only ten minutes after "closing-time." Similar considerations apply in all our laws, great or minor. Law, to be of general use, must be meticulous in its details. Meticulous attention to details will produce, in turn—do what you will to prevent it—objectionable legal "quibbles." Which only goes to show that it is a difficult world, this in which we live; it is so difficult to satisfy everybody. Law cannot expect to attain perfection. It can but strive to march along the hard road towards the goal of general acceptability.

LINCOLN GRAY.

### Religion: and a Modern World.

PEOPLE to-day have no faith in the Church. They have no connexion with it. Their work, their play, their home-life, rests on foundations more real, more substantial than the Church. Life in general, and English life in particular can no longer be fashioned by the Athanasian Creed, or the Articles, or the Eucharist. "It is with religion as with marriage. A youth marries in haste; afterwards, when his mind is opened to the reason of the conduct of life, he is asked, what he thinks of the institution of marriage, and of the right relations of the sexes. 'I should have much to say,' he might reply, 'if the question were open, but I have a wife and children, and all question is closed for me.'" The same attitude was once the attitude of the people, but times change, and we with time. Although the people raise no active voice against the Church their lack of faith is none the less obvious. The people in the mass are fatalistic. They are fond of saying, "What is to be will be." They say, "Why fight against fate, or lift these absurdities which are now mountainous? Better far to ignore this colossal rubbish-heap than attempt anything so ridiculously and dangerously above our strength as the destruction of it." But this contemptuous indifference, this cool disinterestedness has no effect on the pachydermatous hide of the Church. The Church is a conservative body with foundations deep in the life of

England. Foundations of the weakest 'tis true, but of sufficient strength to bear that ponderously fragile structure of ignorance, superstition, and fear.

I am told that the Church has its uses. What are its uses? Canonising deceased men? Giving this day one special significance, and that day another? Fasting on this day and feasting on that? Preventing wholesome enjoyment? Singing services in Latin? Fostering pilgrimages? Apparently *these* are the uses of the Church. I am reminded, by the word "pilgrimages," of that passage in Plutarch, in which it is stated that Furius Camillus, having sacked the city of Veii determined to carry Juno's image back to Rome. Accordingly he sacrificed to the goddess and asked her whether she would graciously accept of a place amongst the Gods in Rome. *And the statue answered* in a low voice that she was ready and willing to go. In the same chapter is stated: "Other wonders of the like nature, drops of sweat seen to stand on statues, groans heard from them, the figures seem to turn round and round and to close their eyes, are recorded by many ancient historians." That you see was the origin of all the mummary of the Romish Church. But this by way of parenthesis. A friend of mine, an orthodox Christian, wrote to me the other day, chiding me for "my lack of faith." The letter was pleasant enough, though it offended me a little by its *ex-cathedra* tone of admonitory expostulation. His arguments were the old arguments resuscitated; and like all arguments of the Christian Church, singularly jejune. Amongst other things he began to explain his religion to me, but before he had gone very far (indeed before he had even really commenced) he left it and passed on to something else. What explanation I got was this. That religion was the recognition of God as an object of worship, love and obedience; a system of faith and worship and so on. Now this explanation, though very rudimentary, is the only explanation ever vouchsafed to us by the clergy. Are they not able to give us another and deeper explanation? Or is that *all* that is comprehended in religion? "The vulgarization of rudiments," as Hamerton says in *The Intellectual Life*, "is not the advancement of knowledge," but the obvious truth of this statement is ignored by the clergy. We are given a few half-facts, commanded to have "faith," and this, it appears is the sum total of explanatory matter needed to satisfy any average human being. If the average human being required no more explanation than that, the average human being would be entitled to more than a modicum of compassionate sympathy. But this explanation does not satisfy the average man. My religion (and I am an average man) is something much more concrete and humane. I shall not trouble you with a rehearsal of my tenets; suffice it to say that it makes me fully cognisant of my moral obligations, and of the nature and grounds of my obligations.

It has often been said that the poise of one's body depends on the equilibrium of centrifugal and centripetal forces, but this is no *more* true than the fact that the balance of the mind depends on the amount of fact and fiction absorbed by the brain. If too much fiction (in the shape of religion) is absorbed by the brain an unbalanced mind is the inevitable consequence. And how many people have unbalanced minds to-day? But fortunately for us the Church is losing her strangle-hold, and in a sense she is to be pitied. She has nothing left but possession. No self-respect, no honour, no learning. As a well-known writer once said: "If a bishop meets an intelligent gentleman and reads fatal interrogations in his eyes, he has no resource but to take wine with him. False position introduces cant, perjury, simony, and ever a lower class of mind and character into the clergy; and, when the hierarchy is afraid of science and education, afraid of piety, afraid of tradition, and afraid of theology, there is nothing left but to quit a church which is no longer one." And faith will avail the priests nothing. For what have they got faith in? I have faith in electricity, wireless, talking motion-pictures, television, and engines, because these things are material and from these things I get definite and material advantages. These thing I can feel and see and hear, just as I can feel and see and hear the things they do. Moreover I have abundant faith in all things material, and, as all things, either directly or indirectly are material, what more would you? A beautiful picture, a beautiful poem, good

music, fine singing, all these things serve to make me what is called "a good Christian." Give me some pictures by Turner and Constable; the poems of Virgil and Dryden; some music of Schubert and Beethoven, and a singer like Melba or Caruso, and I require no sermons.

No! The people to-day have no use for the Church. As the mind matures and learning and civilization expands, the more impatient do we get of the childish superstitions which are thrust upon us. "What have I to do with jasper and sardonyx, beryl and chalcedony; what with Arks and passovers, epaphs and ephods, what with lepers and emerods; what with heave-offerings and unleavened bread; chariots of fire, dragons crowned and horned; behemoth and unicorn?" Good for Orientals, these things are nothing to me. The more learning you bring to explain them, the more glaring the impertinence. The more coherent and elaborate the system the less I like it. I say with the Spartan. "Why do you speak so much to the purpose of that which is nothing to the purpose?" Of all absurdities, this, of some eastern foreigner, proposing to take away my rhetoric, and substitute his own, and amuse me with pelican and stork, instead of thrush and robin; palm trees and shittimwood instead of oak and elm . . . seems the most needless." This should be plain enough. There is a definite and rooted objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to us. There is a movement afoot to reject all that which is not its own evidence, but to do this we must trust ourselves, and have confidence in ourselves. Some may think that our rejection of the popular religious standards, is a rejection of all standards; a mere antinomianism. But we know just what it is we wish to subvert, and we know just what it is we wish to establish. It has been truly said that it demands a great man to cast off the common prejudices, and trust himself for a taskmaster. But we are all taskmasters. But we are not all self-reliant. Everything else in nature is self-reliant; the genesis and maturation of a planet; the tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and every vegetable, are demonstrations of their self-reliance. "Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy or interloper, in the world which exists for him." Montesquieu says: "Countries are well cultivated not as they are fertile, but as they are free," and it is to this end all mankind should strive.

C. G. MORR.

### Acid Drops.

Writing on the Union of the Methodist Churches Mr. Arthur Henderson described it as significant of the "reintegration of Christendom." Let us hope that things will not turn out so badly as that. Mr. Henderson's knowledge of history should tell him that no greater disaster can happen to civilization than a completely integrated Christian Church. The unity of the Christian religion was largely responsible for the collapse of the Roman culture and civilization, and with a single Church in control in France, in England, in Geneva and in Scotland the consequence was an intolerable tyranny. Real progress, and genuine development was possible as the power of the dominant church was broken.

The only assurance we have of freedom lies in the divisions of the Christian Church. And it is worth noting that it is in those directions where the greatest measure of Christian co-operation exists that tyranny is the greatest to-day. This is the case with the development of a civilized Sunday, or in the case of the Blasphemy Laws. As it is the Union of the Methodist Churches contains as a grave a threat to civic liberty as the world has seen for some time. Give a Christian body power and its immediate result is to lead it to exert that power to tyrannize over other people.

We do not, of course, wish to blame the Duke of York for what he said at the Albert Hall meeting. Like other royal speakers he said what he was told to say. But we

should say he must have grimmed inwardly when he read out that the union of the Methodist Churches was a great "factor for world peace." Only a Christian gathering could swallow such poppycock as that. There is not a Christian Church in the world—the Quakers can hardly come under the head—that has not been a prolific cause of war, and when war has broken out that has not done what it could to excite the blood lust among people. When members of the Royal Family are invited to such gatherings as that of the Albert Hall they might at least be spared the necessity of making such ridiculous statements as the one we have selected.

We marvelled greatly at the courage of a man who finding the muscles of his legs weak had steadily taken walking exercise until he can now walk quite easily. We experienced similar wonder at the courage of another man who being unable to play Yo-Yo practiced daily until he became quite expert. We have never recorded the wonderful performance of these two individuals, but as we see that Mr. Hannan Swaffer, who attended the Methodist meeting at the Albert Hall the other day, solemnly records his amazement at the "great courage" of the Duke of York, who "by sheer hard work has almost conquered the disability of speech," etc., etc., we think it advisable Mr. Swaffer should know that he is not alone in his amazement at seeing men overcome disabilities by exercise. We would go further and say that it is by the example set by such men as the Duke of York that has led to the greatness of the British Empire.

The Rev. H. Wigley Haughbon writes to a religious paper to the effect that he is glad so many of his brethren are coming under the influence of the Oxford Group Movement. He explains that "The Movement represents primitive Christianity in the twentieth century." What he really means is that it represents primitive thinking in the twentieth century. And probably the novelty of it is that it is a little more primitive than modern Christian thought.

That gallant spirit-photographer, Mr. John Myers, who managed to rope in quite a deal of publicity by getting a "spirit" photograph of Edgar Wallace on a plate which he himself put into the dark slide, has now a magnificent chance of earning good money. The Marquess of Donegal, in the *Sunday Dispatch*, has offered him £100 to repeat the performance. There are no conditions whatever: that is, the only condition is that Mr. Myers will neither use his own camera nor his own dark slides or plates. We have an idea the challenge will not be accepted. Everything in Spiritualism is not necessarily a fraud; but there is nothing but fraud, and conscious fraud at that, in "spirit" photography. No "genuine" spirit-photographer really believes in "tests" or would allow a test if it can be avoided. But what a game it all is!

"Margery," the world-famous "medium" is once again to the fore. Her latest "phenomena" is vouched for by Mr. W. H. Button (President of the American S.P.R.). She sat with this gentleman and her husband only so that everything was fair and above board. Mr. Button put an American half-dollar with the letter "F" in the word "of" specially marked into a soap box we are told, "no one knew of these marks except Button, though a memorandum of them was handed to Dr. Cranston (Margery's hubby) at the commencement of the seance. This he put into his pocket." Considering there were only three people at the seance, two of them partners, the "no one knew" is really funny.

"Walter," Margery's "spirit control," then commenced talking in genuine American slang, and very soon the coin popped out of the box and Mr. Button found it was "gently laid on his wrist." This was repeated on subsequent sittings and Mr. Button was compelled to believe in "the passage of matter through matter" in this way. We offer no explanation of this "astound-

ing" feat, but we are prepared to give any medium a real golden sovereign if they can get it out, through "spiritual" means, of the office safe after the safe has been locked. We have an idea we shall still proudly possess that rarest (nowadays) of all coins.

To show how unanimous Christians are with "all in Christ," the *Church Times* points out how "Dr. Barnes jeered at Lourdes, Prof. Webb denounced fasting communion and Dr. Burkitt deprecated too-frequent Communion"—at Bristol the other day. And the same Catholic organ again calls attention to the statement of Dr. Barnes that St. Francis "infrequently washed." Infrequently" really is a mild word. Most of the saints never washed again after falling for Jesus. What a pity the editor of the *Church Times* never was called upon to interview them. He might have found the average camel smell as sweet as a rose in comparison with these "brothers in Christ."

We cannot get over the mystery that with the millions of Bibles regularly sold every year all over the world and everybody gasping for true Christianity, the world is not definitely Christian. Here is the British and Foreign Bible Society selling last year 1,005,662 complete Bibles, 968,864 New Testaments, and 8,517,758 books of the Bible—totalling 10,552,284 volumes and yet "Blatant Materialism is stalking through the lands!" And not only that, the Society calls attention to the serious condition of Christianity in Germany—that proud stronghold of the one and only true religion before the war. It is all very very sad, but surely the Society does not blame us for the complete failure of all this Bible selling? Or does it?

The ultra-pious who delight in slandering Atheists might do well to ponder on a recent dictum of Canon R. J. Campbell: "Human nature is prone to try to blacken that which is better than itself."

One of the weekly periodicals has been explaining at length the wonderful work being achieved by the Carnegie Trust. We notice that there is no mention of the fact that Andrew Carnegie, the founder of the Trust, the man who planned its activities, was a Freethinker. Now, if he had been a Christian . . . the world would never have been allowed to forget it. As he was not, the truly Christian policy is to suppress the fact.

Referring to the "moral tone" of seaside resorts, a pious journalist remarks that "I think all preachers are wise who go occasionally where the common people make holiday, and see for themselves exactly what modern pleasure-seeking is like." For the "common people's" sake, it would be better if the preacher kept away. The average chapel-parson with his notions of the sinfulness of pleasure-seeking would be an unwanted "skeleton at the feast," and more particularly if his visit was on a Sunday.

The Catholic *Universe* is furious at Bishop Barnes' exposure of that hollow mockery known as Lourdes. Father Day (known as Rabbi Day because of the thousands of Jews he manages to convert—or doesn't—to Roman Catholicism) admits the Church does not recognize the "miracles" of Lourdes, but claims they are miracles all the same, as they are "witnessed by modern scientists." This is quite on a par with the claims of the *Universe* that "cancer has been cured there many times," and blindness "again and again"; while Pierre de Rudder lost "a large section of the bone of one leg and was instantly cured by praying at the shrine!"

Well, nothing has been exposed so many times as the hopeless credulity of Roman Catholics, but one can go a little too far sometimes. In France there are thousands of Catholic soldiers who were blinded in the war. Is there a single cure among these poor unlucky chaps? If Lourdes could really cure blindness would there be

one blind man in the whole of France? As for supplying new bones, making short legs whole, etc., it is difficult to believe any reputable writer making such absurd and lying claims. Out of the thousands of pilgrims who visit Lourdes every year, is the proportion of cures as great as could be found in even a village hospital with limited funds and staff? We don't always agree with Bishop Barnes, but more power to his elbow in his fight against the fraudulent claims of Lourdes and similar "shrines."

Whenever the *Daily Express* touches religion it appears to specialize in almost unbelievable stupidity. For example. On September 24, it published a special article by Gerald Heard, whom it announced as one whose "Science broadcasts are famous," on "The Bible: It is True." We are not familiar with Mr. Heard's science broadcasts, but if they are on a level with his Bible Broadcast we should not advise anyone wasting their time in listening. For instance. Mr. Heard says that when people first began to question about the Bible they said it couldn't be true because at the dates it spoke about those great empires could not have existed. The world at that date held nothing but savages. People also said, that is Mr. Heard's people, that men could not have written books so early as the Bible because they were then not sufficiently civilized. Mr. Heard's ignorance on the matter is colossal. Every tyro in the history of Biblical "questioning" knows that the facts are quite the other way. It was because people began to learn that before Bible times there were highly-civilized empires that the chronology of the Bible was ridiculous. Mr. Heard has got things upside down. And his ignorance of the whole subject must be shared by the Editor of the *Express*. At least we assume it is shared. It may be that the Editor thinks any kind of rubbish does for his religious readers, and therefore, does not trouble to correct Mr. Heard.

The Rev. Absolom Deans (aged eighty) once Secretary of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, speaking at Oswestry called attention to the fact that "there were no Nonconformists in Australia" because there were in that land none of the disabilities of a State Church, nor, he believed did such a church exist outside England. As a result "the problems of education were nearer solution than in England for they had a national system of education, and ecclesiastical questions did not arise in the State schools." Mr. Deans added the significant statement that "adversity and force of circumstances" would, he believed, force the "statesmen of all churches" to "face this question as Australia had faced it." The sultry and selfish controversy by the "statesmen of all churches," which led to the abandonment of the late Labour Government's Education Bill recently, make it extremely difficult to share the rev. gentleman's confidence; but doubtless he is right that self-interest may ultimately do what considerations of justice have failed to accomplish.

The Bishop of Ripon, preaching in his Cathedral, said that "exclusiveness was more alien to the spirit of Jesus than wrong belief or wrong conduct." He "could and did mix freely with publicans and sinners"; it was with the Scribes and Pharisees that "he could not make terms." This was said, apparently, not to condemn the exclusiveness with which the clergy commonly treat those they regard as "sinners" (i.e., divorced persons, and unbaptized persons wishing their services); but only to emphasize the self-interested consideration that "while our own disunion continues we cannot preach peace and brotherhood to the world." Nevertheless the Church does preach these things however little it practises them. It is still a case of "do as I tell you, not as I do."

The Pope's recent attempt to identify Freethought with Communism has the same obvious object as a new movement just started called The Christian Protest Movement. It has offices in Westminster and is about to launch a campaign, the aim of which is to do for the Christian religion what the ordinary Christian Evidence

organizations can no longer do. Atheism, as such, no longer frightens; and "liberal" theology has given too much away to be able openly to attack rationalism. But dressed-up as a Bolshevik bogey Free-thought may even be attacked by means of pressure on "national" politicians. Lord Glasgow, one of the Presidents of the new movement, declares that "the spread of the anti-religious virus should not be tolerated by the Government." This is, we are told "a religious movement," and "it will not denounce the Russian people as such." It is, in a word, a movement to fight Free-thought whether in Russia or in England under the pretence of fighting Communism. Freethinkers may be, but few are in this country, communists, and this attempt, like the Pope's, at opportunist misrepresentations will deceive none but Christians.

Dr. Scott Lidgett, the first President of the now united Methodist denominations, lets out a suggestive fact about the Welsh Church Disestablishment Act. At the time of its passing he was editor of the *Methodist Times*. That journal, he says, while advocating the general principles of the Bill took an active part in opposing the harsh disendowment by which it was originally disfigured. Eventually the more generous, and Christian policy prevailed. In plain English, pious cupidity and political cowardice presented the Welsh Church with £5,000,000! We may expect a further example of this "Christian" and "generous" combination—against the taxpayer—when, if ever, the English establishment comes up for sentence by Parliament. Even Bishop's advocate disestablishment; but on disendowment—mum's the word. Yet, if it must come, the dissenters will assist the Church to pick the public pocket of as much as possible.

A staff reporter of a Methodist paper has been gently chiding some of his brethren in Christ Jesus. He suggests that when they encounter a sceptic it is not of much use shouting at him or handing him a tract. They ought, they are told, to try and make him feel that they want to understand his point of view "as a fellow human being," and they should send him away "a little less cocksure." It seems that they make no attempt to understand the sceptic's viewpoint, nor do they regard him as "a fellow human being." This, however, is hardly ground for censure. It is so typically Christian. It is the traditional method of treating the sceptic. We are inclined to fancy, too, that after an encounter with a sceptic it is the Christian who goes away "a little less cocksure"—we assume, of course, that he has a certain amount of intelligence. For we are told that, "The harm that is being done by unChristlike champions of the faith, who imagine modern infidels can be bowled over with a few texts, is just incalculable." It would appear that these champions of the faith, even with the assumed help of God Almighty, are no match for the modern infidel. And it is doubtful if being more "Christlike" would help them. The logic of the modern sceptic is not answered by Christlike assertion and "spiritual facts."

The *Church of England Newspaper* is running a Limerick Competition. The first line of the first Limerick was "There was a young curate of Bootle," and the resultant efforts show that the ridicule of curates is by no means the monopoly of irreligious folk. The following was not an entry:—

To hold up a curate of Bootle  
To fun and derision is brutal,  
But any old craze  
Will suffice in these days  
To hinder religion's uprootle.

At the induction of a new Vicar at Llangurig the Archdeacon of Merioneth suggested that the "seventy others" (i.e., in addition to the twelve apostles) whom Jesus sent "two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come" might be the first members of the order of priesthood, the twelve being bishops. Also "every place" revealed "the interesting truth" that Christ was concerned "for the villages and

hamlets far removed from big centres of population." This is the first suggestion we have seen that Jesus employed "advance agents" in the approved style of modern campaigners. The Archdeacon was careful to say that "they knew no more about the sending out of these emissaries than is recorded in Luke x. 1," but "if each pair visited six places to prepare the way for Christ's visit, then he must on that occasion alone have made over 200 visits in the district." This mingling of mathematical calculation with mythology is as audacious as it is absurd. Naturally, at the induction of a new vicar, the Archdeacon did not mention that his alleged predecessors were enjoined to "carry neither purse nor scrip nor shoes, and to salute no man by the way."

The Oxford Movement Centenary is not until next July, but, *pro tempore*, a pretty wrangle is proceeding. The Archbishops are "anxious" that it shall not be regarded as having a party significance only. Dean Inge, always more blunt than benevolent to his brothers of the cloth, thinks (and says) "it is a dexterous move on the part of the Anglo-Catholics." The *Times*, which advocates compromise when it is impossible, and "sticks to principles" in process of abandoning them, hopes the centenary will evoke interest and support from "all schools of thought" in the Church. The *English Churchman* (Low Church) invites "the English people"—who are sadly indifferent to all this ado—to "renew participation in the commemoration." The *Christian World* refers to the dilemma of the Church of England. It is like asking a Socialist to celebrate Primrose Day to ask the general public to celebrate this centenary. Those who make that request might well remember some wise lines:—

"How rare that task a prosperous issue finds  
That seeks to reconcile discordant minds."

The Rev. Prof. E. S. Waterhouse, in reviewing a new book, *The Psychology of Methodism*, by S. G. Dimond, says:—

Another noteworthy chapter is that upon social values. It is not generally realized that Methodism played an important part in the reform of social conditions, and shared with the Quakers the credit of the fight for the amelioration of the lot of the first victims of the industrial system that grew up, harsh and horrible, at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The charge that Methodism merely offered joy in another world for misery in this, is an inept attack. The new values and the ideals it gave helped thousands to endure the conditions of their otherwise unendurable lives, and indirectly helped also to create a livelier social conscience.

A faith that taught people to endure and submit to the misery of a horrible industrial system (run by Christian employers) was hardly the kind of inspiration to "create a livelier social conscience." Life here was believed to be a testing school for character and an opportunity for meriting everlasting bliss; life hereafter was believed to supply compensation for wrongs and misery endured with Christian fortitude here. Such beliefs are not the stuff from which reforms spring, although imaginative Methodists fancy so.

### Fifty Years Ago.

THESE clericals are cunning fellows in their own trade. They keep a ghost behind a curtain, and access to him can only be had through them. When any good thing is likely to happen of itself, they ask the ghost to be sure and send it. When it comes they cry "Our ghost has done it; he's a good, practical, working ghost after all, and worth more than the money he costs." But if anything goes wrong, if instead of a Tel-el-Kebir we get an Isandula or a Majuba Hill, they are as quiet as mice about their ghost. Mum's the word then. Sly dogs! They play heads I win, tails you lose; and we, like a lot of fools, accept these terms as the fairest ever offered.

The "Freethinker," October 1, 1882.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D. MAPP.—You can hardly expect the *Daily Express* to give Freethought a fair deal in its columns. Its game is sheer "spoof." We have not the slightest doubt that if you could show any of these members of the yellow press the certainty of an increased circulation of hundred thousand copies, they would become screaming advocates of Atheism.

R. BUNTON.—Report will appear next week.

A. B. LEMAIN.—Will appear as early as possible.

W. WEARING.—The sentence as quoted in our reprint is in the original report of the trial, both in the *Freethinker* and in the legal press. The phrase "I should say he is right," obviously refers to Foote's saying that he was not a licentious writer, and that the word did not apply to his writings. We do not see how any other construction can be placed upon it.

R. HENRY.—We quite agree with your estimate of Bradlaugh when compared with the others you name. He was head and shoulders above them, and to compare them with what J. M. Robertson calls the "academical sceptics," is to demonstrate his superiority. The pity is that as time passes it is the man who spoke only so far as it was safe to speak, a safety which was made by the non-academic Freethinker, who is praised and the other ignored. We are glad to have your approval of the *Freethinker*. We may re-state the attack, but we hope to remain true to the spirit which animated Bradlaugh and Foote.

R. TURNER.—Thanks for cutting. One can always rely upon a professional advocate of Christianity practicing economy with truth where the interests of his creed. If economies practised in this way would serve the purpose which the Government explain is the reason for the economies it urges on the nation the budget would be more than balanced without further efforts.

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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 connection 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.

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.

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

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.

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 2) Mr. Cohen delivers his first lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool. The doors will be opened at 6.30, the chair will be taken at 7.0 o'clock. Admission will be free, but there will be some reserved seats at one shilling each. There is certain to be the usual good attendance, and we advise as early an attendance as possible. His subject is "The Psychology of Belief."

We are asked to announce that the Conway Discussion Circle begins its Tuesday evening meetings on Tuesday, October 4. There is a good list of speakers, and on October 18 there will be a discussion between Mr. Chapman Cohen and Mr. Arnold Lunn. Mr. Lunn is the author of a criticism of Freethought entitled *The Flight from Reason*, and is a well-known writer on various subjects. He is to take the affirmative in a discussion on the proposition "That Materialism involves the suicide of thought." The discussion should prove interesting.

We made some comments in our issue of August 28, on an extraordinary incident in the East Kent Coroner's Court, when the Deputy Coroner declined to administer the affirmation to a witness because he did not wish to hear anything from one who did not believe in the Bible. We do not know whether or not it was our comments which reminded the Coroner that the action of his deputy was a gross impertinence, and contrary to the law in such cases, but we were pleased to see the following in a Kentish paper for September 16:—

The East Kent Coroner, Mr. Rutley Mowll, made a statement at an inquest held at Ashford on Thursday afternoon in regard to the action of the Deputy Coroner at an inquest which he held on August 10, on a miner named Crane, who was drowned whilst bathing at Sandwich Bay, when he refused to take the evidence of witnesses who declined to take the oath.

The Coroner said: My attention has been called to an incident which occurred at an inquest held by the Deputy Coroner during my absence. I understand that the Deputy Coroner declined to take some evidence on the ground that the witness did not desire to be sworn on the New Testament in the customary way. I wish to say that my Deputy was quite mistaken in taking this attitude, as there is a provision, on which I have acted myself in appropriate cases, whereby a witness who does not desire to be sworn on the New Testament can make an affirmation that it is contrary to his religious belief to take the oath, whereupon he makes a further affirmation that he will in fact tell the truth. This is the course that should have been adopted in the case in question, and I desire to express my regret, and that of my Deputy, to the witnesses in the case that the proper course was not then taken. I think where a mistake is made I should frankly admit it, and put both the Deputy and myself right about it.

That is quite good, and the sooner such cases are made the subject of drastic action by the authorities the better. But even now the coroner has not got his law quite correctly. A witness need not "affirm" that taking the oath is against his religious belief. He may demand the right to affirm on the ground of having no religious belief. The presiding official is legally entitled to ask but one question when a witness requests to affirm. This is "On what grounds?" The reply may be because it is contrary to my religious belief, or because I have no religious belief, and the judge, or coroner must accept this as final. Our report in the *Freethinker*, following the newspaper report, gave the presiding official as the Coroner. We see it was the Deputy-Coroner. The sooner the latter retires into private life the better. He mistakes the Coroner's Bench for a seat in a chapel.

September 26, 1933 will see the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Charles Bradlaugh. It is a date which Freethinkers in this country—and we hope elsewhere will not permit to pass without recognition. To give tangible form to this recognition of the centenary of one of the greatest figures in the nineteenth century a provisional committee of representatives of the R.P.A. and the N.S.S. has been formed in order to create a Bradlaugh Centenary Committee to arrange for a suitable national tribute to the life and work of the great Atheist. A number of prominent men have already agreed to join the Committee and a full account will be published later. Freethinkers should work to make this anniversary a very memorable one.

Next Sunday (October 9) Mr. Cohen will lecture in Woolwich Town Hall. His subject will be "Things Christians Ought to Know." The doors will be opened at 6.30, the lecture will commence at 7. We hope that Freethinkers will lend their assistance in inducing as many enquiring Christians to attend as possible. Those who can aid in distributing lecture slips will please write to the *Freethinker* office or to the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

We do not know whether Mr. Vernon Bartlett reads the *Freethinker*, but those who listened to his broadcast from Geneva on September 23, could hardly but be struck by the likeness of some of the things he said with what we

have been saying over and over again for many years. Speaking of the position with regard to war, he said that the British public had to make up its mind whether it really wanted peace or not. If they do, he said, then it was stupid for them to go to Aldershot Tattoos, indulge in big naval and military displays and congratulate themselves on having the most powerful navy in the world, etc.

All this we have said with almost "damnable iteration," and readers of Mr. Cohen's *War, Civilization and the Churches*, will be quite familiar with the argument. Perhaps the worst aspect of the whole is that while we are avowing to the whole world our hatred of the military spirit we actually arrange for schoolboy outings to such things as the Aldershot Tattoo, the only purpose of which is to advertise a military life. On the eve of a Disarmament Conference we staged a big naval display, and spent many thousands of pounds on it, and afterwards in a dispatch from the King, and in articles in the newspapers we boasted on the wonderful navy we possessed, more powerful than it had ever before been. We agree with Mr. Vernon Bartlett, that if we are intelligently in earnest we must cut out these encouragements to militarism if we wish to put an end to war. As it is when we are at peace, we do little to check the development of the military spirit, and when we have done all we can to make it possible, we declare it to be inevitable, and congratulate ourselves on the accuracy of our prophecy. The surprising thing is that at Geneva they have not had a military tournament to usher in the Disarmament Conference.

If one of our wealthier readers would foot the bill, we would undertake to bring out an edition of *War, Civilization and the Churches*, to be sold at purely nominal prices. The work covers about 160 pages, and if sold at about threepence it should do considerable good just now. It says quite plainly what few newspapers will print, and few publicists will say.

Mr. J. C. Keast sends us a report of the excellent meetings held by Mr. Whitehead at Brighton. He thinks that there is a good opportunity of building up a strong Branch of the N.S.S. there. Mr. Keast is himself taking a hand in the propaganda in the town, and we shall be glad to hear of further successes there.

Will Freethinkers in the Failsworth, Manchester district please note that Mr. A. D. McLaren (London) will speak in the Secular Sunday School, Pole Lane to-day (Sunday) at 2.45 p.m., on "Young England and the Freethought Movement," and at 6.30 p.m., on "Salvation by Faith and Salvation by Character." It is Mr. McLaren's first visit to Failsworth, and we are confident it will be mutually pleasant and interesting to speaker and audience.

The Brighton racketeers, who operate under the Government's Sunday Entertainment Bill, have decided to take from the earnings of the Cinema Proprietors, twelve in number, the sum of £200 weekly. Failure to pay will involve the same penalty as is demanded by the Racketeers of America, their places of business will be closed. As they say in the States, the proprietors having been "wised" to what is required, they will be put on the spot if they fail to comply with the demand made. If only our Government had been in charge in America there would have been no need for Al Capone and Company to run the risks they have run.

Under the auspices of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture at the Public Assistance Station, West Ham Lane, Stratford, London, E., to-day (Sunday), at 7.30 p.m., on "The Sermon on the Mount and Life in the Valley." Mr. Corrigan has many friends in West Ham, and we hope to hear of a full house.

Will the Intelligence Department of the Christian Evidence Society please note that the *Toronto Daily Star* of September 2, reporting the recent eclipse of the Sun, says at Acton Vale, Que., a little French woman promised to pray for fine weather? On the morning of the eclipse she sent her little daughters to a special mass, and she sobbed with joy when her prayers were answered. May we point out that little French women and little girls appear to have greater favour with Providence than big fat priests.

## A Ghost's Jest-Book.

"Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man."  
Matthew Arnold.

"Laughter is the prerogative of man."—Rabelais.

It is a source of amazement to Freethinkers how Christians have been able to maintain, after a perusal of their own Bible, that their three-headed deity was entitled to the credit of even a mild benevolence. This pious opinion is in the nature of an unmerited compliment, unsupported by any evidence. The sacred text says that "Jesus wept," but no mention is ever made that he laughed, or even smiled. The grim exponents of the religion of the "Man of Sorrows" seldom smile themselves. The study of "God's Word" has apparently, a depressing effect upon them. So much is this the case that one can tell a great many Christians by their facial expressions. It does not require a Sherlock Holmes to ascertain from the tell-tale features how far the owner is suffering from the disease of religiosity. From the slight droop of the mouth which distinguishes the High Churchman down to the resemblance to a tired funeral horse worn by the Methodist and from the flat-chested warriors of the Salvation Army one might classify them accurately.

For near two thousand years Christians have been cankered through with austerity. Generation after generation believers have been stifled under a sunless and joyless religious system. The results are to be seen in the dull, dismal, dreary, rectangular frequenter of the churches, chapels, tin-tabernacles, and mission tents. The professional pulpit-punchers and Bible-bangers are less capable of honest laughter than the undertaker who asks, "Would anyone like to see the old gentleman before he is screwed down?" The ordinary mortuary attendant is a Merry Andrew compared with them. The Christian world is in "a hell of a mess." How could it be otherwise? The "religion of love" teaches that life for the vast majority of the human race is but the ante-chamber to an eternal red-hot-poker department, and all because a pennyworth of fruit was stolen by a very remote ancestor thousands of years ago. Had Christians but the wit to perceive it, this story is an arraignment not merely of the three-headed Christian god, but of human nature itself. Implicitly believed by Christians, it transformed this world of ours into a darker and more terrible hell than the genius of Dante or Milton conceived. To a staunch believer, it makes "a goblin of the sun."

All this terrible suffering might have been avoided if the earliest theologians had been less fanatical and less literal. Millions of headaches and heartaches would have been saved if these unfortunate people had possessed a spark of fun or a scintilla of humour, and been able to perceive a joke without a surgical operation. It is entirely owing to the density and mental shortcomings of these fanatical Orientals that the Christian religion is a horrible nightmare, rather than a pleasant dream. These intellectual infants misconceived the central idea of the Old and New Testaments. Innocently and artlessly they took a

work, largely of a humorous nature, and read it in all seriousness. With what fearful results, a glance at the history of human hallucination reveals.

The Christian Bible may be considered as a work of humour. We must, however, "speak by the book, or equivocation will undo us." The Holy Ghost's humour is not as our humour, nor his fun as our fun. Transcribed by barbarians, this alleged sacred work is not as satirical as Heine, so ironical as Gibbon, nor so modern as Anatole France. Quips, repartee, and epigrams are strangers to the Biblical pages. Maybe, a ghostly humour is best suited to a book with a ghost for an author. Although we cannot boast that there is a laugh on every page, the primitive fun of this Bible should have sufficed. There are at least sly stories, Rabelaisian anecdotes, and quaint burlesques, sufficient to have enlightened the theologians, had they possessed any capacity for amusement.

As a humourist this most famous of all ghosts somewhat resembles Artemus Ward, although he is the American's superior as a writer of fiction. The ghost is a showman, absolutely calm about his exhibits, as a showman should be. He says the most deliriously funny things without turning a hair. The astonishing story of Jonah and the Whale is the perfection of unemotional jesting. Who can fail to be interested in the poor whale who had a bed-sitting-room in his interior, and a full-grown prophet as his lodger. The humour of the tale of the grand old gardener, Adam, is also infectious. He is stated to have been the first man. If he had been a shoemaker, he would have also been the last man, and made a double record. He starts life at full age, thus escaping both the parental hand and the cane of the schoolmaster. It was as well, for if he could throw hundredweights about on his first day on the earth, it would have been difficult to enforce discipline. It is said that he lived nearly a thousand years. Just imagine what that means. A boy goes to school when William the Conqueror is on the throne of England, lives through the eight Crusades, the Wars of the Roses, the Spanish Armada, the Napoleonic Wars, the World-War, Ramsay MacDonald's administration, and draws his old-age pension, game to the last.

The nautical yarn of Noah's Ark is, in its way, a masterpiece of absurdity, including, as it does, the suggestion that millions of creatures, from elephants to lice, with sufficient food, were crammed into a rudderless pantehnicon for a lengthy voyage. The climax is reached in the further suggestion that only two fleas accompanied eight Orientals on the excursion. It is funnier than the story of Sinbad the Sailor.

The stories of the talking snake in the Garden of Eden, Daniel in the Lion's Den, the ten plagues, the tower of Babel, and the sensational yarn of Lot's wife, are also examples of Eastern humour which should have "tickled to death" the early theologians. The life of the "Man of Sorrows" in the later pages is droll in the extreme. The hero walks the waves, argues with a fig-tree, turns water into wine, feeds thousands with some buns and a few sardines, and finally sails away in the ether like a fire-balloon. The atmosphere throughout is that of the Arabian Nights and the Adventures of Mother Shipton and not of sober history at all.

We admit that there is some falling off in the latter pages. There is a sprinkling of fun, a day's march between each jest, but what of that? A pearl is none the less a pearl even if it is surrounded by an intolerable deal of oyster. Learned men, who find out everything in time, have discovered additional jocosities. Mark Twain has pointed out that the phrase, "the street which is called straight," is ironic, for the thoroughfare in question is "staighter than a

corkscrew, but not so straight as a rainbow." Byron, as gallant an admirer of female beauty as Solomon, found a sarcastic reference to a lady's nose as resembling "the tower which looketh unto Damascus." Professor Huxley, the great Darwinian, extracted much fun from the bedevilled Gaderene swine, but never met a rasher opponent than Gladstone, who was almost as innocent of humour as the half-wits who misconstrued the Christian Bible. Col. Ingersoll, too, found hundreds of laughs in *Some Mistakes of Moses*, a book founded entirely upon the sacred records.

Fed on such food, Christians should have waxed fat and jolly. To class the Christian Scriptures as sober history is, to "take the wrong turning," like the girl in the play. It is a wonder-book of riotous, exuberant Oriental imaginings, about as reliable as the travels of Baron Muehausen, and just as entertaining. If people would only read the volume instead of chattering about it, such misconception as to its veracity would be impossible. For this particular ghost is a more subtle humourist than folks have ever given him credit for. Rightly read, with wide-open eyes, its perusal should add to the gaiety of nations. The refusal of stupid, goody-goody, pious believers to see his jokes must have astonished and perplexed this sacred bogey, unless he choked with silent mirth. Had he let himself go, he must have held his two sides, which are six, until his three heads, which are one, fairly ached from the explosion.

MIMNERMUS.

## Criticism and the Bible

(Concluded from page 620.)

### IV.

It is probable that ancestor-worship would have continued to exist in Samaria and Judah for many centuries, had the conquest of both kingdoms by the Assyrians and Babylonians not led to a complete extermination of the old gentile constitution. Samaria was destroyed by King Sargon in 722 B.C., and according to one of Sargon's inscriptions, 27,280 prominent Israelites were deported. In their place, Chaldean and Hittite colonists were settled. In 720 B.C., a part of Samaria in alliance with Arpad, Damascus, and Hamat, rose in revolt in an attempt to shake off the rule of Assyria. This planless uprising was quickly and easily put down. Further deportations took place. In the end the power of Israel was completely broken.

Judah remained as the sole bearer of the national hopes of Israel and preserver of the national cult of Yahwe; but this kingdom also fell in 597 B.C., a victim to the assaults of Babylon. The Babylonians entered Jerusalem and took away the greater part of the military-serving landed proprietors, the landed "gentry," into captivity in Babylon. Only a part of the mixed population of the towns and of the poor countryside, remained behind. When those trusting in Yahwe for help attempted to overthrow the rule of Babylon, there followed in 586, after the capture of Jerusalem for the second time, a further removal of the active adult population into exile.

No doubt, at first, during the internment in Babylon, the gentile organization continued to exist. Even the return from exile took place partly according to gentile formation;<sup>19</sup> but those returning gentes were not intact, and the fragments were soon completely absorbed in the degentilized remainder of the population of Judah. Although the mania for genealogical records remained for a fairly long time, the gentile

<sup>19</sup> Ezra ii: Nehemiah vii.

constitution was completely destroyed and was succeeded by the State with the priests at the rudder—a priest-State. Inevitably, with the collapse of the old gentile order, the gentile ancestor-cult also fell. So much the more easily and quickly did the cult of the national god, Yahwe, establish its complete sway. The priests saw to it that Yahwe was depicted as a good patriot, and they did not forget to hail him as the great deliverer when the Babylonians were defeated and Judah restored to its national independence. The worship of Yahwe became, as it were, the epitome of all aspirations and strivings after political unity, and of all that could help to preserve the identity of the nation in the midst of a world of foreigners.

Centuries later, when in the restored nation the old economic troubles re-appeared and the rich became fewer and richer, and the poor became more numerous and poorer, the priests of Yahwe, long accustomed to power and habituated to privilege, preached no more of Yahwe as a poor man's god who hated the rich and powerful and championed the cause of the weak and lowly. Their former patriotic spirit also became enervated, and in the civil wars and further invasions that ensued towards the beginning of our era, their old power to rally the masses in the cause of national unity had vanished.

It was left to other and more rebellious spirits to raise the standard of revolt against oppression and injustice, and against the "chief priests and scribes" who upheld oppression and justified injustice. Then the liberal and liberating Yahwe entered upon a new phase of his development. He who had been the ancestor-god of a gens and a tribe and later of a nation, began to acquire the form and features of an international god. But that phase of his career lies outside the province of our present enquiry, which, for the moment, comes to an end when we have shown, as we think we have succeeded in showing, that Jewish monotheism arose out of the social evolution of the Hebrews and not as a result of ethical speculations or monotheistic instincts.

Yahwe became a national god in the same way as national gods evolved among other peoples:—*through the development of a body politic or State out of the earlier gentile organization, and in response to economic necessity.* Among the Hebrews, the national and monotheistic cult arose more rapidly than in other States of the ancient world. That is to be explained by the fact that among this people, gentile and family communism dissolved more quickly than elsewhere, by the fact of the repeated deportations of the land-possessing and conservative element in the gentile constitution and consequently the speedier collapse of the old cults of the gentile and household gods. If, therefore, the so-called Jewish monotheism took shape earlier than in other antique States, that was due not to some singular monotheistic disposition of the Hebrews, or to a higher ethical outlook, or to some more profound grasp of the god-problem, but was the historical outcome of their social evolution. If, in general, Israel developed on the same path as other peoples of antiquity, there is, on the other hand, the important difference in the case of the Hebrews, of a relatively earlier development into a theocratic State based not upon blood-relationship but upon territory and property.

Finally, Yahwe was not in the beginning a Nature-god any more than he was originally a national god. Like all the gods of the Semitic peoples Yahwe was in the beginning an ancestor-god, and this cult preserved itself in the special forms of animism and of ancestorism up until a later time with greater lucidity than was the case with most of the cults of the Egyptian and Babylonian deities.

Such is the character of the pre-Christian God and the evolutionary course of the pre-Christian religion of the Hebrews.

W. CRAIK.

## "The Truth of the Bible."

### I.

It can, I think, be safely affirmed that there are few Biblical scholars with any pretence to learning and knowledge of the necessary languages, who would be prepared to maintain that the Old Testament (and I propose to deal only with that major portion of the Bible) is true in science, philosophy and history. It is not, strictly speaking, a single book. It is a literature and a special kind of literature at that. It contains all sorts of folk-lore, poetry, history, fiction, religious reflections and lamentations, curses and promises—in fact, it is a literature. Now the older Christians, who saw in the Old Testament the promise of Christ, who took its valuation not merely from the Jews—not necessarily the best-informed ones either—and the Church and Church Fathers, were taught that every "iota" was straight from God, that not a syllable must be disbelieved and that it contained (together with the "words of Christ") all that was needed for salvation. They deprecated Biblical criticism and so long as the Church could induce the State to punish heretics, so long was any genuine and informative criticism impossible. It is true there have always been commentators and no text has been so rigorously analysed as the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and in particular, of the Pentateuch. The Jews themselves have had many acute critics, indeed so acute were they, that many of them came under suspicion as unbelievers. The difficulty of studying the Hebrew text is enormous. There is only one definite Hebrew text—though naturally copyists and printers have made many errors in transcribing it or printing it. It cannot be compared with hundreds of variant texts like the Gospels. There are only available the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Greek Septuagint, the Old Latin text, where it exists, and the Massoretic text for comparison and these vary in many details as well as differing from the history written by Josephus. In fact in Jerome's time there was a Hebrew unpointed text, that is, there were no vowel points to make the meaning of each word clear and definite as the Massorites hoped to accomplish with their labours (about 600 A.D.), and there were at least eight more forms of the Old Testament in different languages or different versions of the same language. Not only was the Hebrew hopelessly obscure in many parts, but many of the translations utterly failed to make clear the meaning of portions in its own language. Biblical criticism then, is confined to a comparison of all the available texts with the definite and official Hebrew text as preserved so carefully by the Jews—but it should be pointed out and remembered that the great care in copying and transmitting the text dates only from the time of the Massorites. What sort of a text was available before then is a matter of conjecture and often salvation depends on correct interpretation when there are no means but faith finally to decide. These remarks, albeit elementary to the well-informed student, are a necessary preliminary to a discussion on the latest criticism—I was about to say of the Bible, but I ought rightly to say of some critics of the Old Testament. For during the nineteenth century in particular, the text of the Pentateuch submitted to a most damaging and disintegrating process, commenced by Spinoza or even earlier, carried on by

Astruc, who was one of the earliest critics to see that many documents by different writers were embodied in our modern text, and finally Colenso, De Wette, Ewald, Kuenen, Wellhausen, Robertson Smith and Cheyne. The conclusions of these scholars are briefly that the Hebrew text as we have it is a late compilation; that writers named the Elohist, the Javistic and the Priestly all contributed, changed and altered words and meanings to conform to their particular beliefs, that other editors and adaptors wrought in their share, that at the fall of the second temple many of their precious documents were destroyed, and that it was Ezra on the return of the Jews from captivity who finally re-arranged or even invented or re-wrote the Old Testament in substantially the form we have to-day. If all this is true, any idea of "inspiration" in the narratives or that there is anything "divine" in them is preposterous. Moreover these critics have even cast doubt on the so-called historical portions, such as the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, the exodus and even the invasion of Canaan.

It is here that the eminent Biblical scholar and philologist, Professor A. S. Yahuda, has stepped in. He has studied the whole question for many years, and aided by his knowledge of Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Babylonian cuneiform, has been engaged for some time on a work entitled *The Language of the Pentateuch in Relation to Egyptian*, shortly to be published by the Oxford University Press. Prof. Yahuda brushes the Higher Critics (as the gentlemen named above have called themselves) contemptuously aside. He ridicules the idea of a late composition or compilation of the Pentateuch and in his lectures delivered recently at University College, he pooh-poohed all their conclusions. He claimed that the Patriarchs (with a capital P) really did exist. The story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as narrated in Genesis is quite true, while the story of Joseph with its Egyptian setting could only have been written by someone, not merely contemporary with Joseph, but one who also noted Egyptian details with an unerring eye. His audience, composed mainly of obviously religious ladies and clergymen were loud in their applause. The Bible was being rehabilitated. Its truth was, in the year 1932, proclaimed by a noted scholar who was not afraid to attack the giants of Higher Criticism by the superior weapons of truth and knowledge. The *Daily Telegraph* noted for its sobriety and utter absence of both newspaper stunts and humour, took the Professor to its heart. It decided to give this marvellous championing of the Bible the benefit of wider publicity as an antidote to the crass materialism of the day. The title of the lectures or the book, however, did not strike the literary editor as having quite the drawing power necessary to attract the public. Why not call the articles "The Truth of the Bible?" It was a brain-wave and forthwith the power of advertising was involved and the sedate *Daily Telegraph*, after roping in many new readers who were anxious to see the Bible again (and finally vindicated against the assaults of half or utter unbelievers has proudly received shoals of testimony to its enterprise in publishing Prof. Yahuda's now famous lectures.

I am not quite sure if the Professor himself really believes he has vindicated the truth of the Bible. I am quite certain, however, that not even his best friends would credit him with the ability to make any educated man really believe in the miracles, the stupidities, the hopeless chronology, the absurd battles and the other nonsense with which the Bible is filled. It is one thing to show that a Semite of sorts could reach a high position in the Egyptian Court—just as

here in England one Jew became the Prime Minister and another, Viceroy of India. It is quite another thing to prove (and by this I mean supply irrefutable evidence) that an old woman of ninety could have a child, that the differences in languages originated in the building of a tower, that a flood destroyed all the peoples of the earth which was populated with teeming inhabitants a few years later, that a serpent and an ass could speak perfect Hebrew and so on *ad lib*. It is even more difficult, and I venture to point out to Prof. Yahuda that for him it is quite impossible to prove that God talked with Abraham and Moses or that he had any personal contact with anybody whatsoever, "The Truth of the Bible," forsooth! There is no one in this wide world of ours who can prove that, and I think Prof. Yahuda knows it as well as I do.

But let us examine his articles for what they are worth and see to what we are asked to assent.

First of all with regard to the language in which the official records are written (I am assuming that Professor Yahuda is a champion of the Massoretic text as against the Septuagint or the Samaritan.) I wish, however, to point out that there is quite a strong case for the two latter texts in a number of particulars where the Hebrew-Massoretic text makes nonsense. Not all the labour of Rashi or Abn-Ezra or of any renowned Hebrew commentator can make sense of numerous passages in the current Hebrew. The Professor says:—

The Patriarchs took with them from Babylonia to Canaan an Aramaic dialect strongly sprinkled with Assyrio-Babylonian elements. This influenced the Canaan dialect which they then adopted inasmuch as reminiscences of Babylonian myths and Assyrio-Babylonian expressions, reflecting Babylonian conditions passed into that dialect.

A careful reading of this passage will show that the Professor would hardly go wrong with his conjectures on the possible language of the "Patriarchs" (with a capital P). If these gentlemen lived at all, they must have spoken some language. It must have been, from the supposed country of their origin, either Assyrian or Babylonian or Aramaic, and if they went into Canaan they must have found some Canaan "dialect," which they either adopted or assimilated in such a way that both sides understood each other. A man need not even be a philologist to make this statement. It carries us no further whatever in the matter of the current Hebrew text of the Old Testament, for the simple reason that all languages change and the mixture spoken by the "Patriarchs" must have been as uncommonly unlike the literary Hebrew of a thousand years or more later as Saxon English is unlike that of *Peg's Paper*.

As to whether the Canaan dialect influenced the "Patriarchs" or vice-versa, there is no evidence whatever. Nor is there any evidence of the existence of the "Patriarchs." If Abraham really lived, his story could not possibly be like the one related in Genesis. Even his name is obviously a manufactured one. Whether the Jews (or Israelites) had one ancestor from whom they all sprung is a matter of pure conjecture. No one knows and so far no means have been discovered of settling the question. One thing we do know for certain. No excavation has yet given us any mention of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob or the twelve sons of Israel, or indeed any of the marvellous episodes of Biblical biography. Places mentioned in the Bible, yes, but nothing of the early people whose names are admittedly artificial. Whatever evidence then the worthy Professor may have collected in his book, he has given us none in his articles. And I submit we have been forced far too

long in the past to accept assertion as proof, to do so now.

H. CUTNER.

(To be continued.)

### Society Notes.

The open-air season now closing has been a very active and useful one for the N.S.S. In London the movement has been well served by regular lectures from the platforms of West Ham, Bethnal Green, South London, North London, West London, Fulham and Chelsea, and Woolwich Branches. In several instances a number of pitches have been worked by one Branch. During the season large quantities of literature have been sold and distributed, and London may congratulate itself upon the work done.

In the provinces we note the continued development of open-air propaganda. Liverpool, Newcastle, South Shields, Sunderland, Chester-le-Street, Stockport, Nelson and Brighton Branches have all been working with more or less regularity. The difficulty in Provincial Branches is the lack of speakers. All over the country the demand for competent platform talent exceeds the supply. That of course does not mean the supply of capable speakers has been exhausted, there is still plenty of good material, but it is lying dormant, in many cases through lack of opportunity.

The work of the Branches has been supplemented by special efforts for which the Executive of the N.S.S. has been directly responsible. Mr. G. Whitehead has been engaged on a lecturing tour stretching from Brighton to Glasgow in one direction, and from coast to coast in the other. Messrs. Clayton and Brighton have been working Lancashire and Durham respectively, and the combined efforts of the three have resulted in much new ground being prepared for further development. The wide circulation of literature in those places means that something else is left behind besides the remarks of the speakers.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

### Correspondence.

BRADLAUGH AND CHURCHILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Recently the Press informed us that Mr. Churchill had gone to Belgium to collect material for a biography of his ancestor, the "great" Duke of Marlborough. Ye (non-existent) Gods.

I am old enough to remember that Mr. Churchill's father, Lord Randolph Churchill, spoke contemptuously of the electors of Northampton as "the mob, the scum, and the dregs." Bradlaugh's reply was to deliver a lecture in the Hall of Science on "John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough." I had the pleasure of hearing this; and if a copy of it exists (probably in the *National Reformer* of that period), it would be an opportune moment to let the British public know how "great" a man may be in villainy as well as in military prowess.

W. G. PRIEST.

"NEWS."

"Awful railway disaster,"  
The newspaper chronicle—  
The men in the streets are buying—  
Gracious! the papers sell,  
And the publishers say in their usual way  
"Business is doing well."

Patrick MacGill.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 7.0, Tuesday, October 4, Prof. H. J. Laski—"Some Reflections on the Present Temper of the Time."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Two Great Teachers: Graham Wallas and Lowes Dickinson."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.) : 6.30, Remun. 7.0, Dr. Arthur Lynch—"The Use and Abuse of Philosophy." Mrs. Taylor (chair).

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Public Assistance Station, West Ham Lane, Stratford, E.15) : 7.30, Sunday, October 2, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"The Sermon on the Mount and Life in the Valley."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, October 2, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Monday, October 3, South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. Thursday, October 6, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 3.30, Sunday, October 2, Mr. A. C. Dunn. Wednesday, October 5, Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : Wednesday, September 28, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood, Thursday, September 29, at 7.30, Messrs. F. C. Saphin and W. P. Campbell Everden. Friday, September 30, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, October 2, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained outside the Park.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square) : 8.0, Thursday, September 29, Mr. J. Read. Friday, September 30, "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Sunday, October 2, Beresford Square, 8.0, Mr. G. Mead. Monday, October 3, Lakedale Road, Plumstead, 8.0, Mr. J. Read. Wednesday, October 5, "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Mr. G. Mead.

COUNTRY.

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BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street) : 7.0, Sunday, October 2, Mr. Charles H. Smith. Illustrated Lantern Lecture entitled—"A Short History of the World."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (New Premises above Temp. Co-op. Society) : 7.0, Sunday, October 2, A Lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Sunday, October 2, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Prayer and the Strike."

FAIRFORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole Lane) : 2.45, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Young England and the Freethought Movement." 6.30, "Salvation by Faith and Salvation by Character."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room) : 6.30, Special Meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Sunday, October 2, Dramatic Performance: "The Rib of the Man," by the Secular Players. Silver collection.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool) : Sunday, October 2, Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture on "The Psychology of Belief." Doors open 6.30 p.m. Commence 7.0 p.m. Admission free, reserved seats at 1s. each.

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Rooms, 5 George Place) : 8.0. A special meeting is being called for Wednesday, October 5. Members are urgently requested to attend to consider the future of the Branch.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (South Hall, Co-operative Buildings, Green Street) : 7.30, Sunday, October 2, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Principle of Secularism."

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(Continued on page 639.)

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(Continued from page 638.)

### OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.0, A Lecture. Literature on Sale.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 7.30, Saturday, October 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, October 5, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Thursday, October 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

### Obituary.

MR. JOHN DUFF.

The death took place on September 21, at his home in Woodhey, Bebington, of Mr. John Duff (late of Port Sunlight), at the age of seventy-five years.

During his early years Mr. Duff was associated with the late Charles Bradlaugh and George William Foote, and took an active interest in the Freethought movement to the last.

A lover of literature and philosophy, he had a great admiration for his fellow countryman, Robert Burns, and was often called upon to preside at the Port Sunlight Burns' Celebrations.

Great respect was shown by local Freethinkers, friends and representatives from Lever Bros., by attendance at his funeral. He was buried at Lower Bebington Cemetery on Saturday, September 24.

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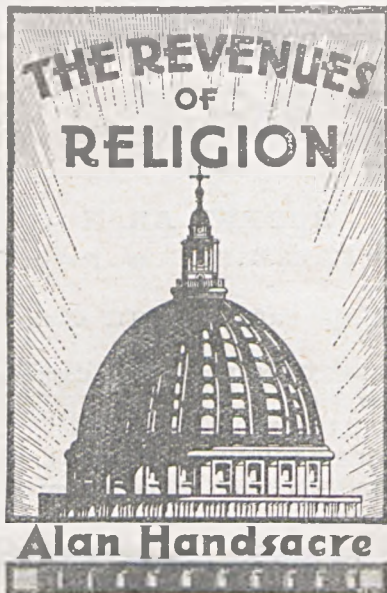
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